

Truck driver 'absolutely loves this job'

By **BRANDY LEROUX**

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Carla Schillereff, Norton, has been a semi-truck driver for Crete Trucking for the last three years. She started driving a truck after being laid-off from her manager's position for Qualex in Denver, a subsidiary of Kodak.

"I didn't want to be a manager anymore," said Ms. Schillereff. "I was relieved when I got my pink slip."

She spent three weeks in truck driving school in Denver to earn her commercial driver's

license, and then drove with a trainer for eight weeks.

"He was an absolutely wonderful teacher," said Ms. Schillereff. "He taught me a lot about driving."

She said it isn't hard to learn how to drive a truck, and in fact, even after four years, she's still always learning. Within one year of being behind the wheel, she had been to all 48 states in the continental United States. She has driven through all types of weather, including torrential downpours, straight-line winds, ice, lightning, blizzards, tornadoes and sandstorms.

"If I don't feel safe, I get off the road," she said. "You just do the best you can."

Now she hauls groceries to Wal-Mart in North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado and Kansas. She drives between 130,000 and 150,000 miles every year, and drives for 11 hours per day. Ms. Schillereff is an owner-operator, which means she owns the truck she's driving. She said she doesn't plan on changing the paint job, which is currently red.

"I absolutely love this job," she said. "The freedom is really good. I'm my own boss, I don't have to manage people, or deal with quotas or

rates. This career fits my personality."

Ms. Schillereff said she loves driving in the spring and seeing the scenery and wildlife as she's driving to her destination.

"The down side is I used to go hiking and was a photographer," she said. "Now, I don't have time for that."

Though truck driving is still a profession predominantly male, Ms. Schillereff said it's becoming more common to see women truck drivers.

"It's like a big family," she said. "I'm not treated any different by the other truck drivers."



Carla Schillereff drives a truck for Crete Trucking, hauling groceries to Wal-Mart stores in several states. She owns her own truck. She's been to 48 states and has

weathered everything Mother Nature comes up with.

- Telegram photo by Brandy Leroux

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