

# ABAC NEWS

**MARCH - APRIL  
2015**

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*The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut*



**Tony Ferraiolo**  
**A&R Body Specialty - ABAC President**

***"Time to Support!"***

Everyone is looking for support. We get daily phone calls from telemarketers asking for monetary support. We all support a cause that we feel is just. The cause could be near and dear to us because of personal experiences or could be something that just makes us feel good.

If we supported everything that was asked of us we would be broke. Therefore we need to support what we feel best fits our needs. I'm the last person to solicit my colleagues for donations. But I feel these requests are of the utmost importance to your business and our industry.

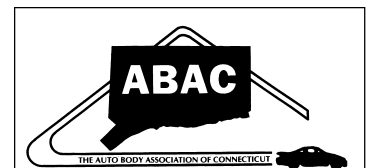
First I encourage you to support our U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal for his re-election to the US Senate. (*See "In the Headlights" on Page 8 of this issue*) He is one of the only public officials that has taken the interest in our industry and asked the US Justice Department to investigate the Insurance Industry and their wrong doings.

Second, I would ask that you join the National Association Society for Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS). Aaron Schulenburg who is the Executive Director for SCRS will be our guest speaker at our May Mem-

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bership meeting. Aaron will bring to us a summary of what is happening in our industry nationwide and what other state associations and their members face in the ever changing and evolving Auto Body Collision Industry.

SCRS has developed Repairer Driven News which is information for the Repairer. This information is shared daily to educate and inform your shops of needed information that is pertinent to you the repairer. For the support of the repairer and our industry I encourage everyone to become a member of this great national association. SCRS Website <http://scrs.com>

Third and the best place to start: Support the vendors in ABAC News. I can't express how vital it is to support the vendors that support this association. Through their support of our association we are able to operate one of the strongest and most respected associations in the country. I know this first hand from many industry leaders that have voiced their support for this association.

Be proud to be a member of an association that works endlessly for its members and the industry that is so important to us all.

Hope to see everyone at the May 12<sup>th</sup> membership meeting at the Chowder Pot in Hartford.

*Tony Ferraiolo* – ABAC President

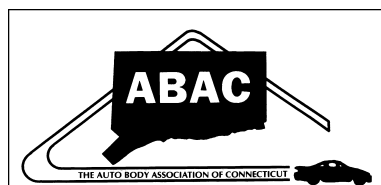
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## ABAC Kicks off 2015 Season Discussing Recent CNN Report, Imitation Parts and Education



ABAC President Tony Ferraiolo

A “Town Hall” style Quarterly Meeting held by the Auto Body Association of Connecticut (ABAC) for over 110 collision shop owners, managers, members and non-members was held on March 10<sup>th</sup> to kick off the 2015 ABAC season at the Country House Restaurant in East Haven, Ct.

The meeting commenced with Tony Ferraiolo, President of the ABAC, playing a March 9 radio station interview from CT’s WICC, Bridgeport with U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal promoting the association’s “Your Car, Your Choice” slogan.

Ferraiolo then welcomed everyone to the first membership meeting of the 2015 ABAC season and covered the agenda for the evening.

Tony then thanked the sponsors:

### Main Sponsors:

- **Balise Auto Group represented by Gary Danko – Wholesale Representative**
- **Law Offices of Buckley & Wynne – Represented by John M. Parese**

### Co-Sponsors

- **Enterprise Rent-A-Car**
- **Paul Francis & Co. – Represented by Paul Modica – Owner**

Tony then thanked all of the ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. *“I can’t stress this enough. Everyone please look at the list of the ABAC News Supporting Advertisers that are on your table. Please support those who support you! These advertisers financially support your ABAC. Use them for their products and services!”* says Ferraiolo.

Moving on to the next subject, Tony says, *“We have a lot going on right now in our state. Many of you have seen the CNN Report that aired recently. You’ve heard from Senator Richard Blumenthal who has been hitting the airwaves hard to support our issues. The ABAC is getting ready to launch our new Ad Campaign to get the message out there so that all of you aren’t fighting alone concerning imitation parts. We will be helping to educate the consumers so that they (the consumer) can help fight the battle on their own. It’s their car, their choice. If they don’t want these (imitation) parts on their car, educate them! The ABAC is very busy getting that message out there.”*

Tony continued, *“U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal had a press conference two weeks ago. He understands what’s going on. We (the ABAC) educated him over many years when he was Attorney General and now as a U.S. Senator he’s taking on that battle. He is going to the Department of Justice. He wants answers to these*

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*issues because he's concerned about the safety of these vehicles on the road that have been repaired with these parts that have not been crash tested properly and the serious danger that consumers can face. Get that information out to your customer. Let them help fight that battle. Get them to our website where they can watch the CNN broadcast. There's plenty of consumer info that we supply on [www.abaconn.com](http://www.abaconn.com).*"

Tony then covered:

- **Update on the Hartford Lawsuit**
- **Lobbyist Update**
- **Testimony Update on Taxes on Paint & Materials**

....among other topics.

Our first guests were Thomas J. Valentino, CPA and Jeffery M. Cheney, CPA, CFE from Meyers, Harrison & Pia, LLC. These gentlemen guided us on how you can arrive at your labor rate. *"The important thing to remember with labor rates is that there probably aren't two that are the same,"* says Valentino. *"Because every shop is different, you're located in different areas; you have different overhead, different rent, or different payroll structures. So, each one of you should be looking at your own expenses to determine your actual cost."* Mr. Valentino then continued to tell us everything that is involved in calculating your labor rate. *"It's a shop by shop determination"*, he says. You can contact Mr. Valentino or Mr. Cheney at [www.mhpcpa.com](http://www.mhpcpa.com) or call 203-789-1040.

Back at the podium, Tony recognized the new members of the Board of Directors. They are:

- **John Walsh – Oxford Automotive**
- **George Atwood – Atwood's Auto Repair**
- **Sabrina Indomenico– Santostefano's Auto Body**
- **Adrianna Indomenico – Santostefano's Auto Body**

President Ferraiolo then introduced John Parese, ABAC Legal Counsel who discussed the Labor Rate Survey and the importance of filling it out and submitting it. *"If you do a Labor Rate Survey, you cannot share it with others,"* says Parese. *"That infringes on the anti-trust guidelines. I know that tonight we will be discussing ways to make your businesses better and efficient and hopefully more profitable, but what we are NOT going to do tonight is come together in a concerted effort to try to raise rates for consumers because that is not our ultimate goal and if we did so, that would be illegal."*

The idea of a "Town Hall" style meeting is to encourage people to ask questions so that we can share them with each other.



**Attorney John M. Parese**

Bill Romaniello then addressed attendees with a video on where to find information on Utilizing Technology to Write a More Accurate Sheet. Bill also showed us where to find OEM Repair information.

We were then presented with the following information and documentation:

- **The Importance of Proper Repair Forms and Authorizations**

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- Repair Contract
- Direction to Pay
- Getting Your Posted Labor Rate
  - Assignment for Money Due
- Pre-Suit Options
  - First Party Demand Letter
  - Third Party Demand Letter
  - Small Claims Checklist – Third Party
  - Small Claims Intake
- Sample Labor Rate Survey
- The Conduct of Motor Vehicle Physical Damage Appraisers
- Towing and Storage
- Aftermarket vs. OEM Parts
- Paint and Materials
- Access to Technology
- Misc. Useful Documents
- Tortious Interference with Contract

These presentations were followed by our 50/50 Raffle and Gift Cards donated by **Gary Danko from the Balise Auto Group – Wholesale Parts Express.**

Once again, the ABAC would like to thank all who attended and participated and we look forward to seeing everyone in May at our Annual Meeting which will be held at the Chowder Pot Restaurant in Hartford on May10th, 2015.

Watch for the flyer as there will be several exciting guest speakers along with Election of Officers! See you there!



**Tony Ferraiolo presenting the differences between OEM & imitation Headlamps**



**Carol & Eddie Lupinek from Eddie's A/B showing the major difference between an OEM & imitation reinforcement**





## John Parese, Esq. An Outsider's Perspective on AASP/NJ's Northeast Trade Show

A few weeks ago, I was dragged kicking and screaming to AASP/NJ's 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Northeast Trade Show. I actually went kicking and screaming last year also. So, I guess I'm something of a regular at this point. I don't care much for all the spray booth and aluminum repair tool nonsense. That stuff makes me question how you guys don't jump off bridges more often. But, the show featured a few very cool classic cars, and all you can eat popcorn at various vendor booths. Who among us hasn't taken a day off of work and driven hundreds of miles away for free popcorn?

In my humble opinion, however, the real value of this trade show lies in the roundtable forum comprised of industry leaders from across the country. While the forum was conspicuously devoid of free popcorn, it made up for it with spirited and interesting discussions. I really appreciated the perspective and ideas from industry leaders from other states. This year, mostly because the bars were not yet open, I took notes on what was said. Here are some of my loosely reconstructed observations.

Massachusetts talked about its strategic plan and the utilization of committees to facilitate the work of its association. I think the ABAC can benefit from implementing some of these ideas. Oklahoma was able to facilitate a public service announcement from its Insurance Department. This can be viewed on YouTube by searching: "Collision Center Repair – The Choice is Yours". You will be amazed at what OK's DOI did. The ABAC will be discussing this with our new DOI Commissioner in hopes that maybe she would be willing to do something similar. Oklahoma and most states talked about the importance of social media and reaching the next generation.

Indiana talked about its new website: [www.ihavebeensteered.com](http://www.ihavebeensteered.com). Check it out. Oregon talked about legislation aimed at State Farm's most favored nation clauses and whether that represents an unfair restraint of trade. Oregon also talked about teaming up with the construction sector, which is likewise being underpaid and manipulated by the insurance industry; and discussed its successes fighting insurers in Small Claims Court.

New Jersey discussed using prewritten complaint forms to facilitate more complaints to the DOI. This strikes me as a great practice and something we should be doing also. Everyone, including New Jersey, discussed the Anderson Cooper story on CNN. This was great publicity for the industry and opened a lot of eyes.

Tony Lombardozi spoke on behalf of CCRE and encouraged more emphasis on enforcement of existing laws rather than getting tangled up in the morass of attempting to pass new laws through state legislatures. Vermont discussed its aftermarket parts bill, which ultimately was not in the consumer's best interest because it implicitly condoned the use of aftermarket parts on vehicles older than two years. Vermont also shared its success fighting insurers in court via legal assignments.

New York reinforced the dangers of legislation and how insurer influences can cause good bills to turn bad

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quickly. New York also discussed recent tax audits, calling for repair shops to be taxed not on the actual work done, but on the insurer estimates. Yikes!

In short, the meeting was interesting, informative and eye opening. I'm glad I went. And you should know that your Association was well represented by President Ferraiolo. Events like these help to highlight how Connecticut remains a nationwide leader in the advancement of the industry. Keep up the good work.

May you and your families have a happy and healthy transition into spring!

***John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley & Wynne and serves as general counsel to the ABAC. Buckley & Wynne maintains offices in New Haven, Hartford and Stamford, and services clients throughout all of Connecticut. The opinions set forth in Attorney Parese's articles are for education and entertainment purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or legally binding. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this or any of Attorney Parese's articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Parese directly.***

## **P&L's Larry Montanez Teaches LIABRA about Aluminum Repair**

On Saturday, March 14, the Long Island Auto Body Repairmen's Association (LIABRA) held an aluminum repair seminar with guest trainer Larry Montanez of P&L Consultants at Touch of Class Collision in Valley Stream, NY. The event attracted 50 attendees.

At 8:30AM, LIABRA's Executive Director Ed Kizenberger began by explaining that the association will be holding OEM training seminars throughout the year to keep members updated on the new technology and materials being used by vehicle manufacturers. He emphasized the importance of being properly trained to repair modern vehicles.

After reading the standard Anti-Trust statement, Montanez's PowerPoint presentation began by discussing the varieties of steel and aluminum used in today's vehicles. He explained that these new, lighter materials help to reduce weight and comply with federal CAFE laws mandating increases in gas mileage. As he outlined the different types of steel and aluminum being used, Montanez described how to repair aluminum and high-strength steels, noting that many parts used with these materials must be replaced instead of repaired.

Focusing on specific vehicles manufactured by various OEMs and the materials used in these cars, Montanez notes that dedicated benches and work areas, as well as special tools, are often required to properly repair these models. He also spent a significant amount of time discussing how to repair and weld specific types of aluminum.

Montanez concluded by emphasizing that training on proper repair techniques is critical for today's vehicles. He also outlined the costs and time required to become certified through an OEM, most of which begin with being sponsored by a dealership.

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# In The Headlights

## U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal



The ABAC is proud to shine a light of appreciation on United States Senator Richard Blumenthal.

Senator Blumenthal has been a great friend to this industry and to the consumers we serve. From advocating for more oversight of insurer practices to promoting more consumer awareness, Senator Blumenthal has been a tireless advocate.

We proudly stand with Senator Blumenthal in calling for the enforcement of laws and practices that will result in better and safer repairs, including enforcement of the 1963 Consent Decree and reducing the use of aftermarket and counterfeit auto parts. Senator Blumenthal knows well the dangers created from the widespread imposition of aftermarket and imitation parts. Indeed, over the past several months, Senator Blumenthal has engaged in a media campaign including press conferences and radio interviews promoting this message, and the slogan: Your Car, Your Choice!



The Senator has also requested the U.S. Department of Justice investigate the widespread disregard for the 1963 Consent Decree. The ABAC and other state associations have praised Senator Blumenthal for his courage to stand up to the insurance industry and to bring these issues to the public's attention.



Therefore, for his unwavering support of our state and this industry, we thank Senator Blumenthal and enthusiastically support his campaign for re-election, and encourage all of our members to show their support for Senator Blumenthal by contributing to his re-election campaign.



# ABAC Shop of The Month Zoel's Autobody LLC

Zoel's Body and Auto Center is a family owned auto body paint and repair shop that has been serving satisfied customers in Connecticut for over 50 years. They maintain a commitment to customer service and provide our automotive technicians and mechanics with the latest in high-tech equipment and training. From their waiting room and the attention to detail that goes into the repair of automobiles, to setting up rental cars and providing rides when needed, their complete insurance claims handling, their goal is to help relieve any stress customers may have associated with their automobile repair. Zoel's Body and Auto Center recognizes that its customers are its greatest asset and places the highest priority on meeting their needs.



(L-R) Joel Sirois, Mechanical Service Mgr,  
Glenn Payanis, Asst Auto Body Mgr,  
Mark Anderegg, Auto Body Manager

Zoel's Body and Auto Center is a second generation auto body and mechanical facility founded by Zoel Sirois in 1963. His son, David Sirois, became President in 1979. David's continued commitment to excellence in automobile collision repairs and uncompromised focus on customer service has been reflected by over 40 years of satisfied customers.

The Auto Body Association would like to thank Zoel's Auto Body for their participation and support of the ABAC and congratulates them as this issue's Shop of The Month!



## Twins take over grandfather's auto shop in Middletown



Sabrina and Adriana Indomenico, 24-year old twins from Middletown, learned the importance of connections at an early age. While they were growing up, they had a close relationship with their grandfather and hung around his auto body repair business.

Now, they are running the shop.

“Interdependence is better than independence,” was a phrase Stephen Covey used in his best-selling book, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” says Sabrina, and it is a saying that has

stuck with her. His message was that if we all work together, the better off everyone would be. The fraternal twins own Santostefano Auto Body on Old Saybrook Road and take care of their grandfather, Sebastian, in his retirement – going to the grocery store and taking him to doctor’s appointments – much as they had once relied on him in their younger years.

When Sabrina told her grandfather she wanted to take on the business, he had tears in his eyes. The twins’ mother and an aunt had tried it for a time, but it didn’t last long. The grandfather was a great role model and someone on which the women could always rely, the women said. “If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t be the person I am today,” says Sabrina. “He’s taken care of us throughout our lives. And now, it’s our turn to help.”

The twins’ ownership is also significant in other ways. Not only are they most likely the youngest people to run such a business in the state, but also the youngest twins to work in auto body repair. They manage marketing, insurance and customer service, while longtime employees continue to work in the shop. Joe Russo has been there since 1987 and Mark Reiman has been there since 1979. The newest member of the team is Nick Pagani, who started in January, part-time.

“We wouldn’t be able to do it without them,” says Sabrina. She and her sister are extremely grateful for all the staff has done and continue to do. At the start, the men in the shop had secretly bet the two women wouldn’t last six months, but after a time they eventually fessed up, seeing that the twins were committed to the business. All staff share a ritual coffee break in the morning. “We do anything from minor to major collision work,” said Adriana. In the future, the women also hope to be selling cars. Sebastian, “nannu” to the twins, started the business in the early 70s in the garage bays he built behind his home, after 10 years of working for others. He still lives in the same house and the twins and their mother live next door.

The twins took over for their grandfather, a Sicilian immigrant, in September 2013. They both had other jobs after graduating from college that same year, but quit to run the business. Sabrina was at a bank and Adriana was selling radio advertising.

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They graduated from Central Connecticut State University, Sabrina with a degree in public relations and communication, Adriana with a degree in marketing. A graduation picture of the girls and their grandfather sits in the office, along with pictures of the twins in their younger years scooting around in a go-cart. The twins want people to know that the business offers the same quality service as it has in the past, with a few updates. They created a website and replaced handwritten paperwork with computer printouts. In the office, they replaced a metal desk with a wooden counter, painted walls, hung photographs and Brent Aresco, an art student at the University of Hartford, is painting a mural of a Ferrari in Tuscany. "We decided to give it a nice little facelift," says Sabrina. They also repainted the sign along the road.

They always knew they wanted to run their own business, but weren't sure what it would be. They also knew they would make good partners. They obviously get along, talking and laughing easily. Perhaps their relationship works because they aren't exactly the same. "She sees things differently than I do," says Sabrina, who agrees that she focuses on the big picture and her sister the details.

The women have had many adventures along the way, many humorous. Sabrina said she needed to cut the grass at her grandfather's shoreline cottage. This meant driving an '86 Chevy truck to carry the tractor mower. She cut the grass and headed out, but the truck broke down along the way and she had to call her sister. Adriana had to come down to get her with a tow truck. "I could barely get it out of the parking lot," says Adriana, who drove the tow down with another girl. Anyone looking at them would have thought it unusual to see three Italian girls with sunglasses in a tow truck, but they kept their cool, they said. "It's all good. We got this," Adriana said they told themselves.

Indeed, that is now how they feel about the business overall.

The twins had to learn about auto body repair from start to finish, including bookkeeping and taxes. "This is honestly a great learning experience," says Sabrina. Adriana jokes: "I'm still learning how to pay my own bills." It was challenging in other ways. "Walking into this business was very hard. It's a manly business," says Sabrina.

The sisters make an extra effort to make sure everyone feels comfortable coming into their shop, especially women who might not be used to dealing with car matters. "We want it to be an easy experience," says Adriana. "We care about quality. We care about overall customer experience." When told the owners were probably the youngest twins in the business, customer Eileen Thomas of Portland, said: "They're wonderful, too, so nice. I was referred by my sister who was a very happy customer and my regular mechanic said he's never heard a complaint."

Santostefano Auto Body is at 105 Saybrook Road, Middletown. Visit [www.santostefanoautobody.com](http://www.santostefanoautobody.com), email [santostefanoautobody@gmail.com](mailto:santostefanoautobody@gmail.com) or call 860-346-8886.

*Source: Valerie Bannister - The Middletown Press*



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*The goal of the ABAC News is to provide a forum for the free expression of ideas. The opinions and ideas appearing in this publication are not necessarily representations of the ABAC and should*

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Throughout the training seminar, Montanez answered many questions and interacted with attendees. As usual, his presentation was informative and educational, in addition to being highly entertaining. Attendees were very satisfied with the seminar and felt they learned much about repairing modern high-tech vehicles.

LIABRA would like to thank Gabe Scognamiglio, owner of Touch of Class Collision, for allowing the association to use his facilities for a second time.

The association is also thankful to Enterprise Auto Rental and International Auto in Lindenhurst who provided coffee and bagels as refreshments for attendees. Although LIABRA will not hold a general meeting in April, they will hold their annual Lobby Day on April 21.

The next general meeting is scheduled for May 19 at Eagle Auto Mall and will focus on GM Structural Repair.

*Written by Chasidy Rae Sisk*

*Source: [www.autbodynews.com](http://www.autbodynews.com)*

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