

ABAC NEWS

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Sept - Oct 2015

ABAC Quarterly Membership/Educational Seminar Draws Packed House!

Over 120 collision shop owners and managers packed the Country House Restaurant this past September for their usual dose of information and education brought to them by their Auto Body Association of Connecticut.

President Tony Ferraiolo thanked the large crowd for their support and interest and most of all for taking the time to attend and support their ABAC.

Tony began the evening by thanking the sponsors for the meeting. The Sponsors for the evening were:

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- Ron Vernick – Parts Manager
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Tony continued with thanks to the new ABAC Members:

- Harte Infinity
- Middletown Nissan

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Also thanking new ABAC News Advertisers:

- **Jackson Chevrolet**
- **Gates GMC, Buick & Nissan**
- **Tasca Dodge-Chrysler Jeep, Buick, Chevrolet, GMC, Nissan and Hino Trucks**

Tony then introduced Dave Kapitulik, Education Consultant – Transportation Technologies for the Connecticut Technical High School System. (CTHSS). Kapitulik oversees all the Automotive Programs in the state. According to Dave, there are 18 technical high schools in Connecticut. All 18 have automotive technology repair programs. 9 of the 18 have collision repair programs. There are about 1,000 students learning automotive mechanics and about 450 learning collision repair. ***“Not all of these students will want to stay in the trade and not all of them will want to go into the trade,”*** says Kapitulik. ***“You will need to find those who really have a passion for cars, really have a passion for the industry.”***

Kapitulik left pamphlets for shop owners with contact information for all 18 tech schools in the state. He also called for shop owners to consider getting involved in the Technical Training Advisory Committee (TTAC). Every school has one and they meet twice a year and ask for interaction and advice from the shop owner on the school’s curriculum, tool and equipment purchases and properly training the students. Several shops are already involved with students working in their facilities. Dave then fielded questions and stayed after the meeting to meet and talk with several business owners. For more information you can contact Dave Kapitulik at 860-807-2090.



Next up was ABAC Legal Counsel John Parese who summarized the Supreme Court’s decision in the Hartford Lawsuit. The review was informative and a great example of why the ABAC Board encourages as much participation as possible at the quarterly meetings. There’s no substitute for hearing something like this first hand and knowing what you, as a shop owner, need to know going forward. John, clear to point out that he was not an attorney on the case, then fielded questions from attendees. Tony reminded everyone to make sure they had copies of the “Conduct of a Motor Vehicle Physical Damage Appraiser” flyer nearby in their shops, and he stressed that our laws are there to protect consumers. We need to use them!

Tony then introduced our main presenters for the evening. They were representatives from General Motors. **This presentation was made possible by Richard Chevrolet through the efforts of Ron Vernick, Parts Manager.** Representing GM:

- **Jeff Shaw – GM Wholesale Specialist**
- **George Tuchman – GM Service Training – Wholesale Parts**

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Shaw thanked attendees and also thanked Richard Chevrolet for their main sponsorship. He then presented “RepairLink” offered through Richard Chevrolet and GM. **RepairLink** is a solution that is VIN driven and gives you accurate and up to date parts information and illustrations that are the exact illustration that dealers see and use. It gives you, the collision shop, the ability to get retail prices along with your price at participating dealers. There is no cost to the collision shop since the participating dealer incurs the expense of the program. It allows you the opportunity to schedule your time better so you can use it when you want or need to. Shaw says that not only GM but many of the OEM dealers offer this program. For more information you can contact Ron Vernick at Richard Chevrolet 800-355-2438.

Shaw then introduced George Tuchman. He covered specifications and repair procedures on replacing structural body components on 2014 & 2015 vehicles, safety ramifications of improper repair, different metal/steel construction and the challenges of having the proper repair equipment. George also gave us info on proper mounting requirements for frame and uni-body repairs, how to find the correct OEM service information and welding/cutting updates.



Once again, the Auto Body Association of Connecticut is at the forefront of providing educational information along with statewide laws to not only help the shop owners but for the safety of the consumer. Please consider joining us for our next seminar to be held in Groton, Ct in November. That information will be available soon.



**Information, education, dedication.....
that is what the Auto Body Association
of Connecticut is all about!**

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For more information contact: Dave @ 860-227-0653

ABAC President's Message

I Have a Mission

I was asked recently what is my mission as President of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut? I never thought about my mission, it's clear what the ABAC's mission is.

The ABAC continuously strives to educate the motorists of Connecticut, enhance the abilities and knowledge of its members through education to provide safe and dependable repairs to the public. Through proposing and monitoring legislation, the ABAC endeavors to protect the best interests of consumers, its members and the collision repair industry. This we have been doing for over 50 years.

I knew I needed to give back to my industry and the association that had taught me so much.

When I was asked to be the president of the ABAC, I didn't feel I could fill the shoes of our past presidents. Over three years later I still feel that way. I didn't have a resume that qualified me for such a position. What I did have and still do is a passion and a mission for this industry. I believe we all have to make business decisions which affect our futures. If you feel you need to have direct relationships with insurers, than that's your business decision. These relationships have to work for you and your business.

What I hope is that the ABAC can help educate you on how to become more independent. The decisions you make in your shops should be based on your confidence to succeed your own way. Don't do what everyone else is doing. Find your own Direct Referral Program. That program is your own satisfied customers. Don't underestimate the outreach of your own customers. If you do quality work, respect your customers, market your business, invest in the proper equipment and technician training, you can succeed independently.

I have been in business for over 25 years, with all that and a lot of hard work we have been able to operate without insurer contracts. So it can be done and I'm not the only one. Make informed decisions for your future and your business.

So my mission is for you to be successful in business in your own way. We must do what we have to survive. The motoring public is counting on us to survive and preserve the consumers right of choice. Remember the ABAC's slogan "Your Car Your Choice".

Now more than ever the insurance industry is trying to control our industry. They are squeezing out the independent shops and are convincing the rest that they need to become their partner. Not many partnerships I know of work for both parties. Know who your customer is and should be.

The ABAC will continue to bring you educational meetings and seminars to help you become more successful in your business. The ABAC next meeting is November 17th at Langley's Restaurant in Waterford. Main sponsor, Albert Kemperley. Also in late November, early December the ABAC will be promoting a one day seminar on Know your real costs, Run a more Profitable Shop.. Look for ABAC flyers for more details.



Tony Ferraiolo

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

Mitigation

The duty to mitigate damages recently came up in a case I tried for a repairer looking to collect on an unpaid storage bill. The scenario was typical. Insurer refused to pay the shop's posted storage rate, arguing that DMV "nonconsensual" rates either (1) apply because the vehicle was not consensually on the property; or (2) reflect the reasonable rate of storage in the market area.

The insurer also argued, however, that the shop failed to mitigate its damages by keeping the vehicle on its premises during the pendency of the dispute and litigation. Or in other words, the shop should have disposed of the vehicle once it knew there was a problem.

Mitigation of damages is a legal concept that, in this context, basically means a shop has to use reasonable care and diligence to minimize or avoid accrual of additional damages (i.e. unnecessary storage fees). In other words, a shop can't simply leave a vehicle on its premises for months and months just to rack up a big storage bill when there are reasonable alternatives available to minimize the accrual of storage charges.

The idea of mitigation makes sense in concept. Just because you were wronged, doesn't give you the right to exploit the situation by unfairly running up the damages. But, applying the mitigation of damages concept in practice can be unworkable and unfair to the shop, particularly when a vehicle is on a repairer's premises after an insurance dispute. What reasonable actions does the shop have to reduce the cost of storage – without prejudicing its own interest? Declare the vehicle abandoned? Return the vehicle to the customer without being paid in full? Give the vehicle to the insurer without being paid in full; then suing for the monies due? Giving up the vehicle often means giving up what little leverage the shop has.

There is no clear guidance as to what is necessarily required. Each case is different, with different variables that warrant different duties. I am aware of at least one trial court opinion that discussed this issue and held that storage was unreasonable because the vehicle should have been immediately junked after the insurer declared it a total loss, and thus storage after that point was not warranted. For now, you should have some awareness of your "duty to mitigate damages", which basically means the duty to take reasonable steps (when possible) to avoid unnecessarily running up a big storage bill.

Now go out and pick an apple or something.

Attorney John Parese

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.



Breaking News!

The ABAC would like to say "**Congratulations**" to Attorney John M. Parese for his **appointment as President of the New Haven County Bar Association**. Looks like they found out what we have already known about John! It's an honor to have Mr. Parese as a part of our Auto Body Association of Connecticut.

ABAC Calls for Fair Sales Tax Treatment of Paint Materials

Association calls for eliminating the double taxation of paint materials in Connecticut.

In written testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly State Tax Panel on Wednesday, Anthony Ferraiolo, president of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, called on legislators to address the double taxation of paint materials used in collision repair.

According to ABAC, until a recent ruling by the Department of Revenue Services, collision repair facilities were able to purchase paint materials exempt from sales tax. Prior to the ruling, paint and materials purchased by a collision repair facility were considered a "sale for resale" and the shop did not pay sales tax on the products. They then billed sales tax to the consumer for the retail price charged.

The association was supportive of Connecticut House Bill 5655 in the 2015 legislative session, "An Act Concerning The Taxation Of Paint Used In Motor Vehicle Repair" that would clarify the tax treatment of paint materials.

In his prepared testimony, Ferraiolo stated, "We advocated for reform because auto body repairers had been unfairly penalized by a recent Department of Revenue Services interpretation that paint and materials used in auto repair should be taxed twice: once at wholesale purchase and once at retail sale. In addition to being inequitable from a tax policy perspective, it was inconsistent with reasonable regulatory interpretations to the contrary and years of industry practice to the contrary.

A key concern for the association is that industry practice has changed dramatically since the regulations were last revised in the 1990s. Since then, collision repair facility operators have moved to purchasing their materials in bulk and mixing the paint themselves versus buying color specifically for one customer's vehicle from a wholesaler.

Ferraiolo's prepared testimony stated, "Years ago, auto body shops would order paint from a supplier (wholesaler) specifically for use on a certain vehicle. That purchase was considered a sale for resale and nontaxable to the shop; the sales tax would be charged to and collected from the end user customer. The paint used in today's repair process is purchased differently than it was over 15 years ago. Most, if not all, auto body repair facilities purchase paint related materials in bulk form. The product is computer mixed as needed for each individual repair job. The totals are recorded and billed to each specific repair job. The sales tax is then to be charged to end user customer."

Ferraiolo continued, "The purchase of liquid paint related materials at the wholesale level should likewise be nontaxable to the repair shop (sale for resale), and when product is mixed for each specific customer's job, taxes should be collected on final invoice to the end user customer."

ABAC Shop of the Month

Artie's Auto Body - Wolcott



Artie George Sr. began working straight out of high school in 1958 at Apex Auto Body in Waterbury. Three years later he moved to Strollo's in Cheshire and after a few years decided it was time for his own business so Artie opened up his own shop in Wolcott in 1972.

His son Art Jr. started part-time in 1975. Art Jr. began working full time from 1978 to 1980, then went on to graduate school at CPI for computer operations. After graduating in 1980 he worked at Hartford National Bank as computer operator for a year and a half, while still working part time for the body shop.

Then in 1982 Art Jr. came back full time along with his brother Dan George where they both been ever since. In 1993, their sister Deb Gaudiosi became the full time secretary and treasurer and still is here today. In 2010 Russ Swenton became a valuable part of the Artie's Auto Body team where he is their estimator, insurance negotiator and parts manger.

Artie's Auto Body's building is approximately 6,500. Sq. ft. And they currently have three office personal and five technicians.

We asked Art what his believes is the future of the Automotive Collision Industry:

"Auto makers are creating more sophisticated vehicles that require knowledge of the latest technologies used for state-of-the-art car repairs. According to ICAR. As an industry we are beginning to see a 'tsunami' of new vehicles, new technologies and new materials – like aluminum, magnesium, carbon fiber and advanced high-strength steels. They also state, in a typical model year, OEMs launch 65 or more new or significantly re-engineered vehicles. So Artie's Auto Body feels, in this era of rapid technology change, that it is imperative that Artie's Auto Body and the rest of the collision repair industry embrace a robust and earnest learning culture, keeping pace through up-to-date and continuous training. With stating that, there should be a great career future for those properly trained technicians. Also an even brighter future for auto body shops that can fulfill those needs!"



The ABAC News would like to thank Art Jr. and his team for their time and responses and of course their dedication towards the future of the industry and their support of the Auto Body Association!

“Following in the Footsteps”

This is our first of several articles and interviews featuring 2nd and 3rd or more, generation shops. These family run businesses share their experiences, thoughts and ideas on how they keep their vision alive. **(Thank you to Sabrina & Adriana Indomenico for their help!)**

South End Auto Body, LLC, Rocky Hill



In 1957, George Emmanuel Sr. opened his first auto body shop in Hartford's south end with three employees. Ten years later, he moved it to a one and a half acre site on Cromwell Avenue in Rocky Hill – and he's been here since!

“Making the customers happy,” is what son Jamie has learned from his father. “My parents started with nothing, and worked hard”. At a young age Jamie could remember getting off the school bus and working in his father's auto body shop. “I would sweep the floors and do what ever needed to be done,” says Jamie. “I enjoyed working by my fathers side over the years”. For this auto body shop, it was easy to see the strong relationship and bond that this father

and son share. Jamie appreciates the lessons his father has taught him over the years, and admits that he still goes to his father for suggestions. “There were some cool perks... like being able to work on your own car,” says Jamie, “you couldn't call out sick though, because he knew where you were,” he jokingly laughs.

With over 50 years behind him, George has enjoyed retirement, leaving the day to day operations to Jamie and George's nephew Tom Emmanuel. Stepping in as owners came natural for Jamie and Tom. They grew up working at the shop and helped for many years. Although George may be retired, you will still find him (at 85 years young!) still stopping in daily to check up on the boys.

Hamden Auto Body, Hamden

“Hard work does pay off, and if you take chances, it's worth it” Those are the words of second generation owner Karl Mauhs III and he also says that he believes it is the most important lesson that he's learned from his parents.

This American dream, better known as Hamden Auto Body, was founded in 1992 by his mother and father, Maureen & Karl Mauhs II, when they first began their business adventure together. Twenty three years later, Karl III is now running the show, and they couldn't be more proud.

Many years before stepping into his current role, Karl can remember going to the shop after middle school and sweeping the floors. Since then, he has had to touch all aspects of the business including managing the parts inventory, working in the office with his mom, building relationships with vendors and their customer base, getting involved with the insurance side of the business and so much more.



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Before his ownership role, Karl attended and graduated from Quinnipiac University with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Business Management. ***"It wasn't always easy,"*** Karl admits, ***"especially during the transitional stage"***. During this time, Karl found some of his biggest challenges. He had to break the mold of once being the "kid" in the shop, to the decision maker and, like anything; it took some time getting used to.



Since those days he can proudly say that because of the support from his family and co-workers, he is able to do what he loves, and is thankful for everyone who is a part of his team.

Karl understands the importance of keeping the family business going, and feels that taking over a family business is a good thing. ***"It helps bring in new ideas, and reinvigorates that excitement,"*** he adds.

As for Hamden Auto Body, there is a bright future ahead for this family business, as Karl states, ***"you can't stay stagnant"*** and plans future growth.

Autoworks of Westville, New Haven

"It comes down to believing in yourself, and telling your customers the truth- truth will always come out," is owner, Robert Amendola's exact words when explaining his family business of thirty-two years.

A true optimist and delight to speak to, it is no wonder this mechanical engineer graduate has been successful in the auto repair industry.

At a young age, Bob knew he wanted to own his own business. His once vision- became a reality for him in the mid 80's when he first opened up his shop. Bob initially started off in the mechanical end of the industry, but was attracted to the collision side, and states, ***"the insurance companies used to pay for most losses, and would pay to do things properly"***. Although times have changed since then, he is hopeful that the industry will pick up again.



Each day Bob attends work he is accompanied by his wife and Office Manager, Liz, who handles all of the front end operations of the business and his two kids, daughter Ashley a licensed appraiser who handles the interactions with customers and insurance companies and son Tyler who is according to Bob, "in training" for the family business. Ashley is a graduate of Albertus Magnus College and Tyler is in his junior year there also.

This family business is wonderful to see, and although it can be tough at times to work with the same people you see at home, this auto repair shop seems to have it covered. ***"We have been blessed to be able to do it,"*** says Bob. As for Ashley and Tyler, there is still time for them to decide if they plan on taking over their family business one day. ***"It's important that you like what you're doing,"*** Bob explains.

Autoworks of Westville, and the family understand the importance of educating their customers about the repair process, ***"If you gain the hearts and the minds of your customers they will come back to you"***.

Reporter: Former Auto Body Teacher Blasts Green River College Over Program Cut

By John Huetter on September 28, 2015 – RepairerDrivenNews.com

With audience members holding his photo to show support, a former Washington auto body instructor blasted a college board last week over cuts including his own program, according to the Kent Reporter.

Faculty have claimed the cuts were meant to punish Mark Millbrauer, who had also been the head of the United Faculty union and involved in a year of contract negotiations for his colleagues, according to the newspaper. The college says the auto body program was cut because of a tight budget and low interest, the Reporter wrote.

“I think it would be unfair if we made other choices just on the basis that ‘Oh, this is the lead of the union,’” Green River Vice President Derek Brandes told KPLU earlier this year. “Should I cut another program to avoid dealing with the obvious retaliation claims that were going to come about?”

Millbrauer, a 22-year-employee, recently took what he called a “satisfactory” buyout after making headlines protesting the cuts, according to the Reporter. “It doesn’t matter what I think. It doesn’t matter what I say,” he told the board Sept. 17, according to the Reporter. “And therein lies the problem with Green River Community College.”

Millbrauer also criticized the cut of the auto body program following construction of a new trades building, according to the Reporter. The college will put a different trade program into the space, the newspaper said. “It was a gross waste of taxpayer dollars that went into designing the perfect auto body training facility and equipping it,” Millbrauer said, according to the newspaper.

Faculty like Millbrauer were given chances to come up with cost-cutting measures or enrollment cap increases in other programs, KPLU reported. The Kent Reporter noted that other programs targeted for cuts did come up with solutions. Still, auto body technology is predicted to be a jobseeker’s market in future years, so it does seem a bit shortsighted of the college — as well as the students seeking degrees at Green River, not to show more interest.

Source: www.repairerdrivennews.com

“Meet your ABAC Board Members” & “Shop of the Month” **will be continuous features in the ABAC News**

How can YOU become an ABAC Shop of the Month?

At every ABAC Membership Meeting just fill out the entry card on your table or drop your business card into the drawing basket. We will be drawing at the end of each meeting. If selected, we will visit your shop to take photos and interview you for the article.

Attend more meetings and Increase your opportunity!

Meet your ABAC Board Members!

Bob Skrip - Skrip's Auto Body

Recently, the ABAC News caught up with Board of Director Bob Skrip. We asked for his thoughts about his business and his involvement with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. Here's what he had to say:



Shortly after opening Skrips Auto Body in the fall of 1978, I realized the need to align myself with, and learn from seasoned successful owners of other collision repair shops. We all have colleagues we look up to, and mine at that time was none other than Mike Wilkowski, of Stanleys Auto Body in Waterbury. In the early 80's Mike encouraged me to join the association that he had been a part of for many years, at that time, known as The Auto Body Association of Greater New Haven. Shortly after, all the local ABA's in the state became one, known as The ABAC. I made it a priority to attend ABAC meetings, putting aside fun and games most guys my age were partaking in, with the hope there's going to be time for fun later.

Every ABAC meeting I had the pleasure of attending, I walked away with knowledge, confidence, and a boat load of information I was able to bring back to my shop the next day, and run with it. I learned how to properly write a ticket, how to treat my employees, how to find and retain customers that more often than not, became friends.

Sometime in the early 90's I was honored to become a Board member of The ABAC. This is the "think tank", of The ABAC. This is where the ideas for upcoming meetings are discussed, correspondence with other national associations take place, legislation is proposed, politicians and other Government officials are introduced to our concerns, and problems of the industry are addressed and attacked for the benefit of us all, by the group I am now part of, The Board of Directors of The ABAC.

Fast forward, I went from Board member, to Treasurer, VP, and then in the Spring of 2008, I was humbled to be nominated to the position of President of the ABAC, that I graciously accepted and held until 2012 when I handed the office over to our current President, Tony Ferriolo.

I can honestly say, my business has prospered and succeeded because of what I learned, and who I met through The ABAC. I became a "sponge" at the meetings, and absorbed every bit of knowledge that was offered, and that knowledge I now offer to my two sons that have worked for me since high school, and God willing, they will continue to carry the Skrips Auto Body culture for years to come.

And as far as the fun I missed in my early years. Those of you who know me personally can attest to the fact I'm more than making up for it now.. Thank You ABAC

And thank YOU Bob for all of your hard work and dedication to the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. It's people like you that have helped the ABAC and our members to continue to move forward. ABAC News

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Save These Dates!

Tuesday Nov 17th
ABAC Membership Meeting
Langley's Restaurant at Great Neck Country Club Waterford

Saturday December 5th
"Running a More Profitable Body Shop"
Presented by Superare
9:00am - 2:30pm
Best Western Plus, North Haven

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Middletown Nissan

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