

INSIGHT



Man's World... *Really?*

Meet the women of
NAPA AutoCare



Jackson and Jarosik Are Among Elite Group of Female Shop Owners

Women deliver up to two-thirds of the vehicles brought into shops for maintenance and repairs, but only between one and two percent of those repair shops are owned by women. Auto Innovations Collision and Repair in Marietta, Georgia, and Xpertech Auto Repair in Englewood, Florida, are among them.

Auto Innovations Inc. owner Shelly Jackson and Xpertech owner Kathleen Jarosik didn't have their career paths aimed in the shop ownership direction. In fact, Jackson has a degree in psychology and Jarosik married into the field, her former husband being a master mechanic.



Auto Innovations
Marietta, Georgia



Xpertech
Englewood, Florida



Jackson Strives to Make Every Customer's Experience a Great One

After three years as a social worker, Jackson decided she needed a change. Since she had always had a natural talent with cars, she went to work in a collision shop. "I did sanding, and then painting and body work. I went on to become shop manager," she said.

Jackson added to her skill set by working as an adjuster at an insurance company where she learned the other side of the repair business. With hands-on collision and repair know-how, shop management experience, and insurance knowledge on her side, Jackson opened Auto Innovations Inc. in 2013. When it comes to dealing with insurance companies, Jackson's background is especially valuable. "One of the most common questions we get is, 'Do I have to use the body shop that my insurance company recommended?' The answer is no. In the state of Georgia, for example, vehicle owners have the right to take their car to the body shop of their choice," she explained. "As a former insurance adjuster I advocate for my customers. I know what insurance companies owe, don't owe, and what is negotiable."

Auto Innovations repairs not only cars and trucks, but other types of utility and commercial vehicles. Her team of technicians has over 30 years of combined experience in the field. Jackson herself has 14 years' experience, is I-CAR and ASE certified, and her shop is a NAPA AutoCare Collision Center.

Jackson said being part of the NAPA AutoCare family offers many advantages. "NAPA is a well-recognized name that people know and trust. We also offer NAPA EasyPay financing that helps customers afford repairs and spread the cost over a period of time."

"The NAPA warranty is very important," she added. "NAPA's AutoCare Collision and Refinish Warranty is a nationwide lifetime warranty meaning it provides coverage up to a vehicle's lifetime based upon ownership. It's good for as long as the customer has that vehicle."

Jackson knows she's one of only a handful of few women who own an automotive repair shop. In fact she said, "I've visited hundreds of shops as an insurance adjuster and I don't know of another female body shop owner in Georgia," she noted. But that doesn't bother her.

"Getting my business going was tough at first. I made a lot of calls to companies to gain fleet business. Even though it's a male-dominated field, I've found if you know what you're talking about and have confidence in yourself and can explain things, people don't question that," she explained.

Jackson said most of her business comes from referrals. In addition, providing information to customers and prospective customers – both male and female – is key. "I think the most important thing is to educate all customers," said Jackson.

The Auto Innovations website from CarCareCONNECT and Facebook page do just that. The easy-to-navigate website explains services and the repair process, answers frequently asked questions, offers testimonials, and includes a blog with tips and advice on auto maintenance and repair as well as collision repair and coverage. In the shop, Jackson and her team work with insurance companies on their customers' behalf and then take care of the collision repairs. As Jackson states on her website, "I strive to make your experience with us a great one."

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Jarosik Loves Every Minute of Being an AutoCare Owner

Jarosik worked with her husband at Xpertech Auto Repair for about six years before they divorced and she bought him out. “I never thought I’d love every minute of owning and operating a repair shop, but I do,” she said.

Jarosik joined the NAPA AutoCare program in 2009 shortly after becoming sole owner. “Becoming an AutoCare Center was one of the first steps I took,” Jarosik said. “It’s one of the best business decisions I’ve made.”

Jarosik has taken advantage of most of the AutoCare programs including NAPA TRACS, EasyPay financing, sales drivers, MechanicNet CRM, and the Digital Menu Board from AutoNet TV. Jarosik said Xpertech was one of the first AutoCare Centers in the area to complete a PROimage exterior. “It gave my locally owned shop a national name brand connection that customers know and trust,” she said.

The NAPA Peace of Mind warranty is another huge benefit since Englewood, Florida, is a seasonal town with nearly half of the population heading north during the hottest months. “My customers know they are completely covered wherever they are,” said Jarosik.

In addition to those programs, she said training is another major advantage. “I knew nothing about cars before I started working here. NAPA programs made it easy for me to learn. Now, I’m an ASE C1 certified Service Consultant. And it’s not just the technical training. I believe the business training, from Vin Waterhouse for example, has had even more impact,” she explained.

While Jarosik said the industry is becoming more accepting of female shop owners, “There are still

assumptions made because I’m a woman,” she said. “New customers sometimes think I must be married to one of the technicians. And some suppliers are a little shocked at first when they find out I am the owner, but they get over it quickly.”

Jarosik remembers a time she dealt with a relatable challenge quite common in the auto industry. “I was a teenager and I had to battle the dealership over my car. I knew they were telling me things that weren’t true. I still carry that with me and have vowed never to let one of my clients experience that.

“I want my customers to feel at ease. For women especially, speaking to me, a service writer, provides them with an extra measure of trust,” she said.

Jarosik has also offered car care clinics just for women. “We met on a Friday evening in the shop. I showed the women how to check tire pressure, put air in the tire, check the fluids, and other basics. I also had light refreshments and everyone received a car emergency bag with a flashlight, duct tape, a small set of jumper cables donated by NAPA, a bottle of water, and granola bar. It was well attended and everyone had a lot of fun. I have plans to do it quarterly.”

As at most repair shops, the majority of Xpertech’s customers are women. That’s one reason Jarosik recently remodeled her customer service area. “The waiting area definitely has more feminine appeal. I added super comfortable furniture. I want it to feel like a living room. There’s coffee and snacks, so customers can stay here and feel at home while their car is serviced.”

Xpertech Auto Repair has a website, Facebook page, and Instagram account. “I also have a monthly newsletter that’s emailed to all my customers. It’s also on our website and includes special offers and thank yous for referrals. My customers also love the information provided and seeing pictures of my kids.

“Growing up, my daughters have spent a lot of time in the shop. My 15-year-old helps with Instagram but it’s my 12-year-old who has the most interest in what goes on here. She’s helped change oil, turn brake rotors, and has a pretty good working knowledge of TRACS.

“When I got into this business 14 years ago, I felt like a unicorn, but things are better now.”

No doubt they’ll be even better if Jarosik’s daughters choose a career in the automotive repair industry.



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