



Eastern-in-the-News



REBOUND OF AUTO INDUSTRY RALLIES REPAIR SERVICES TOO

Moorefield, WV — Aug. 7, 2009 — Car dealers make for a happy bunch these days. As consumers swarm the showrooms in response to the ‘Cash for Clunkers’ program, cars are rolling off the lots in record numbers. And not just new cars.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that the federal program—providing rebates up to \$4,500 for new car purchases—“is also boosting used car sales.” Because even with the generous discounts, new car sticker shock still pushes many family budgets into overdrive, and—if they’re still in a mood for a trade—shifts consumers to the used car section.

“It’s not only high prices that might lead them to choose a used vehicle,” said Doug Swick, the Auto Tech instructor at Eastern WV Community and Technical College, “it’s also that some of them don’t meet the program rules to get the rebates.”

To qualify as a clunker under the program, a vehicle must have been continuously insured and registered by the same owner for at least one full year before the trade-in date, and get no more than 18 miles-per-gallon (mpg) as listed in the government’s official mpg estimates (listed online at www.cars.gov).

The unforeseen surge in used car purchases also signals a steady traffic flow for car repair services, Swick pointed out. “Even a good used vehicle is going to need its regular maintenance, and of course, the occasional large repair.”

Registration Open Now

And because the nation’s economy largely runs on wheels, the hoped-for recovery will depend on them too. So Swick feels good about what he does: teaching

the skills of car repair, and so making sure that area garages have ongoing access to a steady supply of local, trained auto technicians.

“Registration for fall semester is open now,” he emphasized, “and classes are starting to fill up.” For more information about Eastern’s auto tech program, financial aid opportunities, student support services and other programs of study, call toll free: 877-982-2322; or check the College’s website: ‘www.eastern.wvnet.edu’.

“Eastern’s auto tech program combines classroom instruction with practical, hands-on training,” said Larry Bloom, the college’s Academic Director for Industrial Technologies. “So our graduates can enter the workforce directly at the technician level—confident of their abilities to diagnose, troubleshoot and repair today’s complex vehicles—for dealerships, independent repair facilities or automotive suppliers.”

According to the US Department of Labor, automotive service technicians and mechanics in Cumberland, MD and the nearby WV area earn, on average, more than \$14.00 per hour, with an average yearly salary of nearly \$29, 500. “And those wages go up as mechanics become more skilled and more experienced,” Bloom noted.

Eastern offers its comprehensive Auto Tech program in concentrated five-week segments. That schedule allows maximum flexibility, so learners can efficiently plan for the two-year Associate Degree, a one-year College Certificate option, or shorter sequences of specific Skill

Sets. Learners at all levels of experience will find classes suited to their individual backgrounds and needs, Bloom said.

Professional Training

“For students who have already studied some automotive technology in high school, this program will build on their knowledge base, and provide more advanced training.” Successful graduates of secondary school programs can also gain advanced placement or college credit where appropriate, he noted.

Working mechanics whose employers want them to focus on specific areas of auto tech can choose to register for just those needed Skill Sets, Bloom pointed out, “and do-it-yourselfers can upgrade their skills with professional training. Even absolute beginners—who don’t know a wrench from a razor blade—will feel comfortable at the college when they start with our introductory class.”

The program’s technical core covers engine performance and repair, manual drive trains and axles, automatic transmissions & transaxles, suspension and steering, and brakes, electrical/electronic systems, and heating and air conditioning. Hands-on training includes the use of computerized and electronic diagnostic tools as well as power and hand tools.

Serving the residents of Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton and Tucker counties, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, is a comprehensive and equal opportunity community and technical college bringing the resources and assets of Education That Works to the families, communities and employers of the Potomac Highlands.