

ABAC NEWS

May
June
2021

Embracing the Future

***Using the Tools &
Processes Presented by the
ABAC to Help Your Businesses***

***Getting Involved:
Read What Industry
Leaders Have to Say***



Your Car, Your Choice - Find us at www.abaconn.org

Also In This Issue

President's Message:
Embrace the Future
Technology 2-3

ABAC Offers Virtual
Membership Meeting 4-7

The Definition of Insanity -
Guest Interview with Tony
Lombardozzi 8-10

Stellantis Creates Mopar
Certified Glass Installer
Program 11-12

From the Desk of
VP Ashley Burzenski:
Welcoming "Normal" 13

On the Minds of Members
-with Tyler Rook 14-15

Vendor Spotlight - Lombard
Equipment, Inc. 16-19

ABAC Officers & Board of
Directors 20

Advertising & ABAC Sponsorships Available

Want to be a Sponsor?
The ABAC has many different
Sponsorships available to fit
any advertising budget!

Advertise and support the
Auto Body Association of
Connecticut by placing your
company ad in the Supporting
Advertisers Directory found as a
pull-out in this newsletter

Corporate, Affiliate and Meeting
Sponsorships also available

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

ABAC President's Message

Bob Amendola

Embrace the Future Technology



The future of the automotive industry is here and electric vehicles will be even more mainstream in our shops very soon. It is my belief that the rapid technological advancements will ultimately be great for our industry.

The technology in today and tomorrow's vehicles demands a higher caliber of repairs than we've seen before. With higher caliber repairs comes increased training and investing in different equipment, both of which require proper compensation.

Initially, there was a lot of "pay to play" programs rolling out. I think we're going to see that diminish pretty quickly.

I believe training will quickly become more easily accessible and affordable, so start to get ready for it now. For example, Tesla has already opened up non-structural repairs to qualified shops and begun offering training virtually on a per hour cost basis.

Position yourself properly to succeed. Technology is nothing to fear. Instead, it can be used as a tool to change the way our industry is viewed and revered. Although, that part is ultimately in our hands as the repairers.

As we round the bend of the pandemic and more and more cars are back on the road, now is the time to prepare for what lies on the horizon for our industry.

Continuing my message of what's in the future, the ABAC is making plans to get back to live meetings very soon. With this in mind, NOW would be a great time for you to get involved with the association.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

At each of our meetings we have guest speakers who present industry information to help you run your businesses. I can tell you, as you will hear from a couple of guest interviews in our newsletter this edition, that the information and education that you will take home from our meetings can be a game changer for every shop owner or manager, IF you listen closely and implement some of these tips into your daily operations. Don't be left behind. Become a member. Join us at our next event.

To all of our valued members, I hope you and your family are well and I look forward to getting together with you all in person soon. Thank you for your continued partnership.

All the best,

Bob

Bob Amendola
Autoworks of Westville - New Haven
President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut



**AUTO BODY
ASSOCIATION
OF CONNECTICUT**

**Unity is Strength
Knowledge is Power
Attitude is Everything**

Auto Body Association of Connecticut Offers Virtual Membership Meeting

AirPro Diagnostics Sponsors the Event on Zoom

The Auto Body Association of Connecticut held a Membership Meeting via Zoom on the evening of May 18th. ABAC President Bob Amendola thanked everyone for attending. *"It's been a long time since we've been able to meet live and hopefully that is all coming to a close as we move forward and leave this pandemic behind us,"* said Amendola. *Besides tonight's guest speaker and attendees, I'd particularly like to thank all of our ABAC News Supporting Advertisers as well as our Corporate Sponsors for their continued support throughout the pandemic. Your businesses are essential to this industry and we at the association truly appreciate your loyalty. I cannot stress enough, to all of our members, how important it is, as an association, to support those businesses that support us."*

Bob then turned the meeting over to his Vice President Ashley Burzen-ski. *"The ABAC Board of Directors has been meeting every month. We've been discussing issues and preparing for live meetings,"* said Ashley.

She then gave us up-to-date information on the ABAC's advertising campaign to reach consumers.

"The ABAC decided to use Out Front Media to handle several different messages on digital billboards throughout the State. These messages have been rotating in the high traffic areas of Interstate 91, Interstate 95, and can expand to Waterbury on I-84, New Britain on Rte. 9, and Meriden on I-691," she said. *"Audio messages on service station gas pumps have been strategically placed throughout the area. These messages are audio clips that are produced by Geomatrix Productions and then sent to Amp Radio Network for uploading to the various service station systems for sound at the pumps,"* she continued. Great reach for consumers. Great way to get the message out.



**WE BELIEVE IN
KEEPING YOU SAFE.**



Ashley also mentioned the new private Facebook page for all ABAC members, *"We recently announced our exclusive ABAC Facebook Group just for body shops, did you miss it? If you haven't joined yet or you're not sure where to find it, we can email you the link and guide you through the short verification process. During this virtual time, the group is a great way to stay in contact with colleagues, communicate directly with the board and stay up to date with the most current information. Since the group is private and monitored by our social media committee for security, you can rest assured it is a secure platform where you can share your ideas and read others' as well."*

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

Bob Amendola then recognized Board member and Past President Tony Ferraiolo.

Tony thanked Ashley and Bob for their great information that they shared. ***"I like the ability to share information using Zoom meetings. It's an effective tool to get our message out. I wish more people would embrace this technology. With that said, I think the state is beginning to open up and I'm really hoping that by late summer we can have a membership meeting in person. We'll just have to wait and see what the state wants us to do. I also hope that everyone is getting ready for a potential surge in business. What I'm seeing right now on the roads is a big increase in the volume of traffic. More traffic means more fender benders resulting in more work for us. We need to make sure we are ready with our shops being in order and make sure we have the proper workforce in place so we can all be at 100% production,"*** said Ferraiolo

Tony continued, ***"I want to give a plug to the ABAC News. I think the ABAC News has been a great avenue for us to be able to get our messages out to members, as we're doing right now. I know that our publisher, Don Cushing has been able to take all this information and write articles covering meeting topics for those who cannot participate in this meeting. Don has also been reaching out to members for their views and thoughts on doing good business and sharing the information in the ABAC News. We're also interviewing our supporting vendors and spotlighting their businesses. If you are interested in having your business in the spotlight of the ABAC News, feel free to contact Don at abacnews13@gmail.com or call him at 401-578-6945. He will set up a date and time for your interview."***

I do want to say that insurance companies have used the COVID pandemic to try and control the repair process. They've used it to their advantage to get their customers to use mobile apps and get consumers to do all their appraisers work and to minimize their costs. They've made large profits over the past year and have tightened things up more by figuring that we won't do anything about it. Courts have been closed, the ABAC has not been meeting, etc..., "mentioned Ferraiolo.

"This brings us to the point of complaints. The reason that I'm saying that we must perform these complaints is because we need to show a pattern of abuse. And that's what's happening right now. The insurance companies are repressing our industry even more. They are trying to take total control of the repair process. We can't allow that to happen. Your customers are being taken advantage of if the insurance company is not allowing them to have their vehicle inspected in person or if they're not being compensated for pre and post scans or calibrations. And the list goes on and on. What about use (or abuse) of parts that are not recommended by the manufacturer? We're seeing these issues every day. And if your customer is being put in front of harm's way, asked to being forced to pay the difference in the costs of what their insurance company is reimbursing or indemnifying them for, then the complaint claim must go to the Department of Insurance and the ABAC."

"The ABAC has a one-page simple complaint form that should be sitting on everyone's office desk. It should be filed every time a customer comes in and they are being taken advantage of by their insurance company. The consumer needs to file that complaint form because it has more validity with the consumer."

"The shop can also file complaints to insurance companies for procedures or parts that are not proper and safe, pre and post scans, calibrations but I feel that it's the customer that's given the bill and files that complaint, that is proving they're being taken advantage of and possibly an unfair trades practice."

"We need to document this as much as we can by the complaints with the DOI, by complaints to the ABAC which will prove a pattern of abuse that is being done by the insurers and we will meet with the Attorney General's office, and we will meet with the DMV."

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

We will meet with legislators to educate them on what's going on out there to the consumers and then we will finally meet with the Department of Insurance and see what they will do about it."

"The problem is, and has been, the Department of Insurance is funded by the insurance industry. We all know that. It's kind of like the fox watching the henhouse. That needs to change. The only way to affect that is to get enough complaints filed that can prove a pattern of abuse. Then we can scream that the consumers are being taken advantage of. Complaint forms can be found on our website. You can also file this complaint right online. Make sure you fill out your customers email so the response goes to them. Make sure to copy the ABAC on the form."

"Remember, insurance companies cannot guarantee the repairs in the shop, cannot warranty the repair and are not liable for the repair. Only the licensed repairer is liable for the repairs. YOU are liable for anything that happens to the vehicle. Use the data provided to you by the manufacturer on how to fix that vehicle properly. The customer must be involved right from the start. Let them know that you are there to take care of them and their vehicle. There is no substitute for a proper and safe repair."

Following Tony was our Guest Speaker and Meeting Sponsor, AirPro Diagnostics.



**AirPro
DIAGNOSTICS**

We built our reputation by protecting yours.

Thomas Deacon – Regional Sales Director – Eastern US
C 216-924-8800 email: tom.d@airprodiag.com

Josh Cascanet – Field Operations Manager
C 904-318-7618 email: josh.c@airprodiag.com

AirPro Diagnostics provides remote diagnostics, scanning, programming and calibrations services to the automotive repair communities utilizing vehicle manufacturer (OEM) approved software and highly skilled technicians to ensure the safe functionality of vehicles designed by auto manufacturers.

"We're here to assist you and your shops with today's advanced technology," says Tom. "ADAS have become so advanced it's a challenge for shops to keep up as changes happen even on a day-to-day basis."

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

The Collision Repair industry is at a Crossroads.

- Less than 3% of body shops employ qualified trained Diagnosticians
- 92% of scan tools sold today DO NOT cover all 2021 model vehicles
- 56% of vehicles with NO dashboard indicator/light returned DTC fault codes
- Removing a battery, bumper, door or liftgate can trigger fault codes and require calibrations.
- Skilled labor, equipment and training costs continue to increase in the Technical Tsunami™
- Lawsuits are mounting for improper repairs and many law firms are now subscribing to CARFAX and engaging post repair inspection companies
- Shops must follow OEM repair procedures including Pre/Post Scanning of EVERY collision damaged vehicle to ensure safe repairs and minimize liability

What makes our service one of a kind?

- True Dealer-Level remote scanning and calibration solution
- “ADAS Ready” all-in-one tool
- Approved for certification programs including Honda, General Motors, Subaru, Nissan (2018 & up)
- OE sourced software, connected directly to the Vehicle (software local with vehicle)
- Evergreen Tool Policy - free updates and replacements
- Integration with CCC - Secure Share
- Cloud based, Orion, Diagnostic Management System
- Service 98% of vehicles including 2020 and 2021 models (except Tesla)

Tom and Josh then fielded questions from members about their product. The presentation from AirPro was one not to miss. The ABAC will be uploading AirPro’s presentation along with the ABAC Membership meeting itself on the ABAC Website website. Please log into www.abacomm.org to view the entire meeting and AirPro presentation. AirPro will also be offering special pricing and discounts for all ABAC members for a limited time.

For more information please contact:

Tom Deacon – 216-924-8800 or email: tom.d@airprodiag.com

Josh Cascanet – 904-318-7618 or email: josh.c@airprodiag.com

President Bob Amendola thanked Tom and Josh for taking time to give us their informative presentation.

In closing, Bob said, ***“I want to thank everyone for joining us for this Zoom meeting. I know I speak for most when I say that we are certainly looking forward to live meetings soon. Look to your email, fax, Facebook and the ABAC Website (www.abacomm.org) for updated information and meeting announcements.”***

Submitted by Don Cushing

The Definition of Insanity

Industry thoughts from The CCRE President and Industry Leader, Tony Lombardo



We reached out to Tony Lombardo recently to get his opinions on a few questions that shop owners might have and some answers that may be able to help shops in their everyday businesses.

Why do we keep doing the things we do, over and over?

You know, that is an excellent question. I think if you look at what has taken place over the history of our industry, you can realize the problem. Back in the 50's and early 60's we were pretty much left to ourselves; we wrote estimates, appraisers did not come into a shop to nickel and dime you to death and we all basically did what we needed to do. For the most part, we all got along. In my opinion, and I stress that this is MY opinion, after the Consent Decree of 1963 was signed, US attorney General, Robert F Kennedy who was the "producer" and "enforcer" of that docu-

ment, kept the insurers in line. As we all well know, Kennedy was assassinated in 1968 and following his death, no one was willing to enforce the decree. In the early 70's (1970-71), Allstate decided to roll out its first DRP program to test the waters to see if there would be any pushback or enforcement. When no one stepped up, the rest became history. This was the beginning of the insurance companies control of our industry. And when you control the industry, you become the "bully in the schoolyard" and that pressure on the shops makes it easy for them (the insurers) to control the rates and pricing, basically. From this point forward, everything that we tried as an industry seemed not to work. Our associations tried going to the legislators to try to enact laws to help us get paid more money. we believe the insurer is the payor when it really is not. The payor is the vehicle owner. We tried to pass laws that would influence the insurance industry, but we have discovered that we are fighting a behemoth of a challenger. The insurance industry is much more powerful and much wealthier than we will ever be. And what makes it so strange is that the automotive collision industry gets so pissed when the insurance industry interferes in our business, yet, we continue to go back to the legislature, to pass laws that interfere with the insurance companies' way of doing business. So, why shouldn't they get pissed? We keep poking the bear and consequently, all we do, year after year, is watch and listen to associations continually try to get laws passed that will hopefully solve the labor rate and pricing issues in our industry and it is not going to happen.

Do you think the insurance industry is happy when the collision industry tries to pass legislation?

Oh, absolutely. Every time the collision repair industry attempts legislation governing the insurance companies, that legislation, if enacted, comes back to bite us in the backside. By the time legislation goes to committee and they talk, and they lobby and so on, the insurance company wins. The insurance industry knows that when those bills get passed, they (the insurers) have already figured out a way around it because 99% of the time it is because they know that no one will enforce it. If we cannot get enforcement of the 1963 Consent Decree, how can we expect enforcement of other laws?

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

Ok, I'll say that some of the laws that have passed have been ok. Look at what they passed in Rhode Island. The classification of A & B shops has been somewhat successful, although I'm not sure that the legislation has fully accomplished all that was hoped for.

In your opinion, how can this be fixed?

One of the problems we have is we keep trying to get someone else to fix something that can only be fixed by the collision shop owners. We are the ONLY ones that can fix our labor rate and pricing problems. We must learn to invoice properly. In order to bill properly, we have to realize that the insurer is not our customer. (Excluding DRP shops!) Non-contracted shops can raise their rates anytime it is appropriate. Many shops don't want to go through the hassle of dealing with the customer and trying to explain to the customer why they may have to pay a little bit out of pocket. One thing that's a challenge in this industry is that it's mostly male dominated and, in my opinion, most guys can't stand rejection. We don't want to tell our customer that they may have to pay because their insurance company isn't paying what they should be paying. And when we say to the customer, "You will owe us \$XXXX.xx," we don't want to deal with the backlash from the customer when they say "NO". You must get your customer involved. When your customer comes in initially and says, "You're going to take care of everything right?", it is at this point you MUST explain to your customer what might happen if their insurance company will not pay your labor rate or other procedures. Explain to them that if there is a shortfall, they may be responsible for the difference. Explain to your customer any option that they have if this happens.

These things have been going on for years and years. It all boils down to the same old thing; regardless of what we try to do, if the insurer offers \$50 an hour for labor and you accept that offer, that is called "Offer and Acceptance". And that will become the accepted quoted rate. It may not be what your charging, but it's the rate that you accepted. We have fought hard over the last 25-30 years trying to get bills passed that have been non-effective. If we had fought, with that same effort, to learn how to increase our prices to fair and reasonable, and stuck to our guns, we wouldn't be in the situation that we are now in. We would be way ahead of the game. Mechanical shops don't accept less. If you go into a mechanical repair shop, you pay the rate that's posted. If we keep accepting less, we will continue to be our own worst enemy. It's better to expend your energy on being successful and educating your customer and collecting on balance billing. You can't keep repeating what you've been doing over and over the past years and expect different results. You must change what you're doing.



How can we teach collision shops better business practices?

Do you know how hard we've tried? You know that we have all put in a tremendous amount of effort into education. The CCRE and ABAC are prime examples. As the President of CCRE, (theccre.com) I have held seminars for the Auto Body Association of Connecticut many times. I've held seminars for CCRE.

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

We can only lead the horse to water. Many of these shop owners and managers will tell you, "You're right! This is it. This is the information we need." Then they return to their shop and they begin to implement these different processes to make this work and the first time an appraiser says, "No. This is all we pay," the shop caves and returns back to their old practice of being dominated by the insurer. What is annoying is when I hear a shop say that what they learned at one of our seminars doesn't work. That's bullshit. It didn't work because you didn't try to make it work. It was easier to cave to the insurance company's demand. Then I see some of these shops push the associations to try to get them to introduce legislation to pass a bill to get you the money that you think you deserve.

You must remember that your customer has already been brainwashed by the insurers with their mega dollar TV advertising campaigns and magazine articles. The motoring public believe they are "in good hands" and that the insurance company is "like a good neighbor", when most times that's not the case. Always remember, **INSURANCE COMPANIES DO NOT REPAIR VEHICLES.** They are a "for profit" business. Well, so is your business.

How would you respond to the question we sometimes hear, "What has the Association done for me?"

It's always the same. We want the association to solve our problems. The association can only give you the tools for you to use. It is your responsibility, as a shop owner, to put those tools to use as we've previously mentioned. If you purchase a new buffer and you don't learn to use it properly and you've never used a buffer before, and you put it to a brand-new Acura MDX hood and you burn the paint or the buffer flies out of your hand or what have you, you can't blame the tool! The tool is something that will make your job be done correctly, but you need to know how to use that tool. When the Auto Body Association of Connecticut has seminars and brings in guest speakers and spends a lot of money to educate you on proper business practices, financial methodology, shop management, employee management, and legal proceedings, they are giving you the tools for profitability. The association can't come to your shop and run your business. You don't have enough money to pay them to do that. These are proven tools that are used every day in many shops throughout Connecticut. By instituting these tools and processes, shops are becoming more profitable. If your goal is to be able to say, "I'm just getting by," then so be it. But if you want to be able to say, "I'm in a better position to dictate my future" then you need to start implementing what is given to you.

Today, we are dealing with a completely different version of a collision shop than we have ever had in the past. Shops must be professionally managed to be profitable. There is much more of a financial investment than there has ever been in the past. The days of starting up a shop with a DA sander, a paint gun and a few tools are long gone. That is impossible to do today. Today, you're looking at a minimum investment of at least \$1M+ dollars. Not only do you need to understand the repair industry, but you also must understand business and finance management. Unless we decide on our own, as shops owners, to control OUR pricing, we will never succeed. No one else will ever fix our problem.

As we finish up, can you give us a parting comment?

Yes. Shops need to learn. The only way that you can effectively change the revenue stream coming into your shop is to take a hard look in the mirror. The person you see is THE ONLY person that can make the changes to be more profitable and successful.

I wish you all much success in the future!

Interview submitted by Don Cushing

Stellantis creates Mopar Certified Glass Installer Program



I-CAR on Thursday announced it would provide training and support for a new Mopar Certified Glass Installer Program — “the industry’s first OEM glass repair certification.”

“As vehicle glass installation continues to become a much more advanced repair given today’s technology-laden vehicles, Mopar’s new program is a step forward for the inter-industry,” I-CAR CEO John Van Alstyne said in a statement. “In pursuit of complete, safe and quality repairs, this program reinforces the many new ways we can accomplish this overarching goal.”

The shops will use “factory-engineered and factory-backed Mopar Glass,” according to a Mopar Certified Glass Installer fact sheet. They also will be held to OEM repair procedures, according to I-CAR.

“FCA US LLC does not approve of or recognize glass replacement procedures where Authentic Mopar Parts are not used for Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep®, Ram and FIAT® brand vehicles,” Stellantis (formerly known as FCA) wrote in a Nov. 20, 2019, position statement. “Any repairs performed not using Mopar Replacement Glass, and not following published repair guidelines and procedures, may expose current or future vehicle owners and occupants to unnecessary risk. FCA US LLC vehicles, systems and components are engineered, tested and manufactured to help protect vehicle occupants. They are engineered based upon both government-mandated and internal corporate requirements relative to Durability, Noise Vibration & Harshness (NVH) and Vehicle Safety.”

I-CAR said it would virtually audit glass installers to see if they met Stellantis’ requirements, a list the educational organization said it helped craft.

“With the constantly advancing technologies within the glass repair and replacement industry, and the trends to become even more sophisticated moving forward, the need for proper training, procedures and tools is more important than ever,” Mopar product line manager Mike Fisher said in a statement. “Working together with I-CAR and the JRT Agency, our industry-first Mopar Certified Glass Installer Program addresses all the needs of dealers, repair shops, insurance agencies and distributors, ensuring our customers receive a factory-backed repair that meets strict original equipment quality and safety standards.”

The program requires every vehicle to “have a documented repair process and procedures.” A shop must prove they could document “proof of FCA OEM repair procedure access and usage. Store the record of the procedure used and proof of calibration(s) performed for compliance.”

It also includes an OEM scan tool and Stellantis-approved calibration equipment, when applicable.

Glass installers working on a vehicle which requires calibration must “have record of wiTech 2.0 scan tool usage,” and they must carry “ADAS calibration tools as specified by FCA or provide documented sublet information.”

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 11

The shop must also have more common glass-related equipment, including chip repair tools, a power knife and cold knife, a cable reed and wire tools and suction cups. They also need adhesives and adhesive equipment “required/recommended per Mopar repair procedures,” and all technicians need “the proper PPE including gloves and safety glasses.”

Five I-CAR glass courses will also be required to achieve certification. The shop must finish this curriculum within 90 days after Stellantis accepts their application for the certified network.

Stellantis (formerly known as FCA) and I-CAR have collaborated in the past. I-CAR has created Stellantis-specific courses, including “Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) Collision Repair Overview” and “2018 Jeep Wrangler JL.”



I-CAR said Stellantis also had various ProLevel and Gold Class requirements for its networks of certified shops. The most stringent of these was Alfa Romeo requiring certified shops to reach a minimum of ProLevel 3 in all roles in addition to Gold Class. (This is a step up from standard Gold Class, which is initially achievable after staffers in the four roles reach ProLevel 2)

“I-CAR’s mission is to provide education, information, services and solutions,” Van Alstyne said in a statement. “This program represents a solution that brings to life the breadth of our mission. Along with education, audits, reporting, and network support in collaboration with the Mopar team, this makes I-CAR a unique and perfect fit for Mopar’s new program.”

I-CAR said glass installers could pursue the certification by calling 1-800-I-CAR-USA or by visiting the I-CAR course catalog [here](#).

Perks for applying include admission to the I-CAR glass courses for two installers (though all glass personnel must ultimately complete the classes).

The Mopar fact sheet said repairers would get free access to I-CAR’s Repairability Technical Support portal and to “Mopar body and glass repair manuals.” However, certified glass installers won’t receive a free subscription to Stellantis’ official OEM repair procedures on TechAuthority.com, though the automaker said it will offer a “deep” discount on it.

Certified glass shops also receive marketing support, including a listing on I-CAR’s shop locator tool “Bodyshopology.com”; “Mopar promotion to certified shops, dealers and insurance agencies”; and “customer referrals, shop locator services,” according to the Mopar fact sheet. Repairers can promote themselves within their own facility with gear “including certification plaque, posters, window clings, counter mat, vehicle stickers and more.”

Source: www.RepairerDrivenNews.com



Welcoming “Normal”

As we already know, on May 19th the indoor mask mandate was lifted for those who are fully vaccinated and the outdoor mask mandate was lifted completely (both with exceptions) in Connecticut.

In the near future, teleworking will be reduced and many state offices will resume in person services etc. In many cases, these announcements are signs that we are beginning to return to “normal”.

As small businesses, these changes are certainly welcomed but not without a different set of hurdles. Personally, we contemplated how to address the mask mandate being lifted within our business.

While we were excited to forego the masks (for those who are fully vaccinated) we also did not want to deter any customers based on varying comfort levels or create an uncomfortable work environment for our team. Ultimately, we decided not to instate our own mask requirement and follow CDC and local guidelines.

To help address any concerns or hesitancy from our customer base and provide a smooth transition, we began with a special focus on **transparency**. We added a COVID-19 feature to our website to explain our policy and provide reassurance that we remain in compliance. We announced our decision on all of our social media platforms, pinning the post to the top of our pages so that it is visible. We then made sure that we had very clear signage at every entrance to our facility. Doing so has helped to prevent any confusion prior to visiting our office and offer those who would like to remain socially distant a chance to make alternate arrangements.

Second, we decided to continue to extend accommodations to customers who are still practicing **social distancing**. This has included interaction free drop-offs/pick-ups, emailing paperwork, repair contracts, providing estimates curbside and reviewing them with customers virtually instead of in person etc.

Finally, we held a meeting with our **team** about the vaccine and had an honest conversation to gauge what they felt comfortable with. Doing so helps continue an open dialogue with each other and ensure everyone felt safe about their work environment.

As small businesses, we have a responsibility to our customers and team to safely transition to post-pandemic life. While everyone's decisions regarding what is best for their business, staff and customers will be different from others', I hope sharing what we've been doing will be helpful.

One of the best things about being in our association is that we have a network of colleagues who are going through so many of the same things. I'd like to encourage you to reach out to your neighbors and share ideas. In doing so, you may find a new technique that might work well for you or help someone else along the way. When we put our heads together, great things happen.

Ashley Burzenski

ABAC Vice-President

Ashley Burzenski

Ashley Burzenski can be reached at autoworksofwestville@gmail.com

On the Minds of Members

This is another in a series of interviews that will be appearing in the ABAC News going forward. We will be contacting ABAC Members and Directors each edition for their input on many topics that can assist and help ABAC Members in their businesses.



We interviewed Victor Auto Body's owner Tyler Rook and asked him about his involvement as an ABAC Board of Director.

2020 was a challenge. What did you do to try and offset these challenges?

Let's start off by saying things were well with my business and everything was moving along nicely the first two months of 2020.

I sat down with ABAC President Bob Amendola and Vice President Ashley Burzenski at their shop in New Haven, in February 2020. I was looking for some educational information and then returned to my shop to begin implementing some of the ideas that I was presented, and then we were hit with the COVID-19 Pandemic. I will say that between the enthusiasm of Bob, Ashley and a few other Board members, it kept me going.

I received some great tips and tools to use in my business. One of them is how to go to court. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, I haven't been able to use that tool. We weren't allowing anyone into the shop. More recently, I have a customer issue that should be ready to go. I have the right customer, the right paperwork, and the right situation. I'm told the most difficult thing to do is take that first step in going to court. I'm tired of being dictated to.

I'm using the information provided to me by ABAC Legal Counsel, John Parese (of the Law Firm of Buckley, Wynne & Parese) on how to use litigation to my advantage so I can reduce the nonsense of being suppressed by the insurance companies. Part of preparing to go to court is to use those tools presented to us by the ABAC.

Why did you decide to join the ABAC Board of Directors?

I'm on the Board because I don't want to miss anything that I can use to my advantage. Therefore, I volunteered to be on the Board. I don't like to miss meetings. Especially the ones where I'm always able to use the tools that are given to me to help make my business better. I want to be the best. That's me. I like to aim high. I became an ABAC Director in April of 2020 after years of attending meetings.

This year alone, I've had much better success getting paid in full for my services without even having to litigate, and that was accomplished, in large part, on what I've learned from my experiences with the ABAC. I was able to get 4 insurance companies to pay what I asked based on having a good conversation, negotiating with them in a professional manner, showing them my labor rates, presenting them with my credentials, my certifications and, knowing what it costs me to run my daily business.

Going forward, I now have a track record of what these insurance companies have paid me for future reference.

Continued on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

Has what the ABAC offered in education been an important part of your business?

Without question, the ABAC has been so important to my business for providing me with information and critical steps to our success. My habits now include customer contracts, direction of pay, power of attorney, emailing the customer and the insurance company, sending the insurance company pictures of my posted labor rates, a copy of a labor rate survey, (select shops within a 10-mile radius of my business) along with pictures of the vehicle, keeping records of those events, all of which are taken from the membership meetings and events I've been part of with the ABAC. You must provide the insurance company with information they can verify so that they know you're not just pulling this information out of thin air. They can confirm any of my information with a phone call. That (the labor rate survey) seems to be an exceptionally good step to take to make things happen! So, using the tools provided by the ABAC have been successful in allowing me to NOT have to use litigation. With the ABAC in my life, educating me in my business, for me, has been a great experience. I've been attending meetings for a long time so becoming a Board of Director was high on my "want to do" list.

How can the ABAC continue to spread this information?

Look, I don't mind sharing what I've learned. My doors are always open to any shop owner or manager. We are not competitors. We are in a fight for our business lives against the insurance industry. Stop by. Let's have a chat. Let's all learn together. We're using each other's experiences to keep ourselves in business. Everything that we all learn at meetings should be used and shared by everyone. I can't stress enough on how important it is to attend these ABAC meetings. Virtual or live. There is always a process or tool that you can implement at your shop to help make your business more effective resulting in being more profitable.

Bottom line, maintain yourself in a professional manner, using good faith negotiating and implementing of tools provided to you by the ABAC will make your business life less challenging, more streamlined and, as a result, more successful as you move forward in our industry. It's all about how you carry yourself in this business. If the insurance company feels they can knock you off your game, force you off center and get you out of your element, they will win all day long because your frustration will force you to make bad business decisions. Don't give in. Stay the course.

Can you share a statement to all shops?

If you are not part of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, you are setting yourself up for failure and you will continually be a victim of the insurance company's domination. Remember, WE fix the cars, NOT the insurance companies. **Know your worth!**





Lombard Equipment is one of the most well recognized and respected collision repair system suppliers in the business, serving the industry since 1991. Their commitment to quality and service is second to none.

Lombard Equipment offers top of the line equipment, cutting edge technology, and a full training package to keep your business running efficiently and cost effectively. Their Techs can train your staff at your facility on any make of machine or in their facility classrooms. Lombard Equipment repair Techs can travel to your shop for service or pick up your equipment and bring back to their facility for service and reconditioning.

Lombard Equipment offers over 30 years' experience in the Collision Repair Systems industry with over 50 million dollars in equipment sales. Their technicians are factory trained to answer all your questions and fully service every system we sell. Their Factory Certified Instructors offer training at your business or their facility class rooms. If you are deciding on a completely new collision repair system or looking to enhance your existing system, Lombard Equipment will help you to determine what's right for your business. Lombard Equipment can service any brand of collision repair equipment and they recondition, service, and sell complete pre-owned systems too.



Kevin Lombard

Kevin Lombard began his career in 1978 working for Marshall Equipment installing anchor pots in body shops. Marshall Equipment also sold collision repair equipment. They sold the floors systems and tracks which, at that time, were state-of-the-art. Says Lombard, *"I still see shops all over New England that have the anchor pots and track systems that we installed in the 80's!"* Times have changed and so have your equipment needs. Marshall sold Continental Equipment (the best in those days). We always tried to pride ourselves by selling the best equipment available to the collision repair shops."

Lombard Equipment has 25 employees and 3 different locations. Their service area is from Maine to Florida. That's a big footprint. They are big on service and support to their customers. *"Our involvement doesn't stop after the sale. Most of our service and support is done in the collision shops. It's nice to have the technology available to connect with our customers whose questions can be answered by connecting with us on the internet and sometimes we can answer your questions online or over the phone. But, make no mistake, this is NOT the type of equipment that you buy online and expect to get that high level of customer service that we provide,"* says Lombard.

Lombard Equipment will come into your shop and evaluate your needs. *"We can demonstrate our products live to you and your technicians. Our TEAM supports you after the sale. With today's technology, we work extremely hard on our training and our service. Let's use an example of technician turnover. If one of your technicians decides to leave or you've hired another technician, we are right there to support and train your new employee."*

Continued on Page 17

Continued from Page 16

We don't ignore you after the sale. These are important steps to creating a strong relationship with our valued customers. We are hands on! I'm not bragging but we are the best when it comes to customer service after the sale. We sell nothing other than collision repair equipment," he continues.



LEI spending time at Busch Gardens after 3 days of LEI hands on training in Florida on equipment, new products, never ending quest to improve customer service, and the continuation of how to improve custom service so we can continue to give our customers the best service in all areas.

In celebrating 30 years as Lombard Equipment, Kevin opened in 1991 after his aforementioned former employer, Marshall Equipment went out of business. LEI Headquarters is located in Massachusetts. He then bought a company in Florida in 2016 which allowed him to expand with another location in Richmond, Virginia in 2017. All these locations are fully staffed with office personnel, service technicians, salesmen and technical trainers. *"We do not push our customers to a general voice mailbox. We handle our customers live. We know our customers. We want to make the experience personal when you do business with Lombard Equipment. We use the same business formula in each location that we have been honing and polishing in our Flagship store for years. If you want to buy collision repair equipment you don't call your local paint supplier, you call Lombard Equipment," says Lombard.*

How do manage to keep your stores at the top of their game concerning product knowledge?

"I travel a lot. We use today's technology to our advantage. Every week we meet face-to-face online where we see each other on Zoom. We go through all the key business indicators to make sure we are tracking in the right direction. We discuss any issues or challenges that any of us are facing. Are we following up with our customers? Are we taking care of the customer? At our headquarters, we meet every morning to make sure there are no challenges that we haven't addressed. The general trend in the collision repair equipment industry is very lackadaisical. Some companies don't have the staff or are not managed properly. Not so at Lombard Equipment. We are here and ready to address any problems that a shop may have. Every location meets with their own staff every day to discuss which customers we are scheduled to service and how. My brother constantly makes customer contacts to make sure we are doing everything we can to keep our customers satisfied. I'm certified to teach Zig Ziglar's training, and we run the company off of those principles. I learned that if you can just help a person get what they want, you'll get what you want. If you can service a customer when they don't need you, you'll hear from that customer when they do need you. We dropped a product line that we had carried for 23 years due to that product not performing to our high standards for OUR customers. We are willing to make the necessary changes if we don't see a high level of satisfaction for our customers. Our team never stops learning. They are continually updated to any changes that are made with our equipment. Product knowledge is critical in our field. We just had all of our field reps including our reps from Florida, Georgia, Virginia and the Carolinas fly in for a one-day training seminar. We want to have them exposed to this training.

We flew them in on a Sunday, they spent the day networking with each other, attended the seminar on Monday, flew back on Monday night and back on the job Tuesday morning armed with new knowledge on our equipment. Knowledge is power."

Continued on Page 18

Continued from Page 17

What product lines does LEI carry?

GYS – for all of your spot welding, MiG welding, steel and aluminum, dent repair and riveting. GYS offers the largest range of repair equipment in the world for vehicles involved in accidents.

Chisum – Lavell Chisum is the proud creator of the modern-day frame rack for collision repair. He invented the EZ Liner. The Chisum Workhorse is your essential drive on collision repair system. There has been a great deal of effort placed on the design and manufacturing of the Workhorse to be your go to drive on bench for any car, SUV or heavy-duty truck. The Workhorse improves on and surpasses all other bench-style frame racks on the market – from holding, lifting, anchoring, and pulling – to diagnostics and repair to final check and documentation. It has been developed and tested to meet rigorous safety requirements and is a crucial piece of equipment for any shop. If you're looking to take on more business, the Chisum Workhorse Bench-Style Frame Rack is your path to reap greater productivity and profits for years to come.



LEI Hands on training of the New Chisum Workhorse.

Spanesi – Spanesi designs, develops, and manufactures an entire range of body shop equipment. With its worldwide presence, branches and a large distribution network, the brand has the exclusive feature of an operational body shop at its headquarters, where all products are tested and improved daily.

The Spanesi Touch electronic measuring system is the measuring system for modern collision repair facilities. With its simple and intuitive interface, Spanesi says its Touch system can provide the ability to measure a vehicle on any lift, frame rack, bench or on the ground. According to Spanesi, technicians can expertly diagnose structural, suspension and cosmetic damage within minutes using the tool. Measurement data includes underhood, underbody and body-side openings for expert vehicle analysis. During the repair process, the Touch provides live pulling information, showing the technician straightening operations results in real-time. Proper documentation is made simple, and users can generate graphical and tabular pre- and post-repair documentation to verify the vehicle's dimensions have been restored to OEM specifications.

How is equipment availability?

"We always have at least a rolling \$1M inventory. We probably have over 45 welding machines, rivet guns, hydraulics, parts for all of the equipment we carry as well as the older equipment. Just because we don't sell the older equipment doesn't mean we don't service it. Many of the older products are still in use and it's our responsibility to service those items. All of our 15 service vans are equipped with hydraulics too. We also carry a complete line of refurbished equipment."

Tell us about your involvement with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut. (ABAC)

"When I worked for Marshall Equipment, Connecticut was my territory. I was in Connecticut every week. As I mentioned before, I installed many, if not most, of those anchor pots in the shops. I even remember attending meetings in Connecticut with a broken leg in the mid 80's networking with my customers. It was always the better-quality shops that we would see at those meetings and shops that were looking to become better businesses. I always picked up something new or tidbits of information (Nuggets of Gold!) that I could use to help other shops or my team.

Continued on Page 19

Continued from Page 18

Here we are now, with the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, supporting however we can, being an advertiser in the ABAC News, being an ABAC member. We are in such a specialized industry, and we need to work together. It's a good industry with a lot of changes going on. We encourage all shop owners, managers, and employees to go to their association meetings where they have guest speakers coming in to give them knowledge on how to run their business better. My team must attend association meetings. It's part of their job description and I pay them to attend. The ABAC spends a lot of money to bring in these guest speakers to help shops. It's all the little things that you take away from those association meetings that add up. And you shouldn't stop. Every meeting that you attend just makes you more knowledgeable and stronger. As an example, Tom Brady, even being the GOAT, continues to hone his craft to this day. He is a great example of never being complacent."

What's on your horizon?

"We're in the process of preparing a new training center. It's ironic. As I mentioned earlier, about my former employer, Marshall Equipment, they had a training center and showroom that they built in 1984. After they went out of business, we moved to our own location but 3 years ago that former Marshall Equipment building came up for sale. We ended up buying that building and constructing a 5,000 square foot addition for a training center and showroom. So, we are going back to our roots of where I started! Part of the old building still has the original anchor pots too!"



New remodeled 14,000 sq. ft training Facility

You sound like a busy guy. What method(s) do you use to destress?

"What a great question! I'm in the gym 5 days a week. When travelling, no matter where I'm at, I find "boot camp" classes in that area, find the schedule and attend. There are ways to eat healthy on the road too. You can still take care of yourself while traveling. Once I'm out of the gym, it's time to refuel then I'm making calls to my guys, recapping the day and keeping that line of communication really tight."

It's been a pleasure getting to know Lombard Equipment, and Kevin Lombard a little better. The ABAC appreciates the involvement of his business with the association.

For more information go to <https://lombardequipment.com/>

Lombard Equipment, Inc.
(Servicing CT, MA, ME, NH, RI & VT)
157 Mendon Street
Bellingham, MA 02019
T: 800-422-PULL (7855)
F: 508-482-9593

Lombard Equipment South, LLC
(Servicing Florida)
10750 Endeavour Way
Seminole, FL 33777
T: 866-440-9593
F: 941-979-9013

Lombard Equipment, LLC
(Servicing VA, NC & SC)
2102 N. Hamilton Street
Richmond, VA 23230
T: 833-644-9353
F: 804-747-4371

Find them on Facebook at Lombard Equipment, Inc.

Submitted by Don Cushing

ABAC EXECUTIVE OFFICERS 2021

PRESIDENT

BOB AMENDOLA

Autoworks of Westville - New Haven

VICE PRESIDENT

ASHLEY BURZENSKI

Autoworks of Westville - New Haven

SECRETARY

MARK WILKOWSKI

Stanley's Auto Body - Waterbury

TREASURER

MIKE WILKOWSKI

Stanley's Auto Body - Waterbury

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

TONY FERRAILO

A&R Body Specialty - Wallingford

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

HEATHER ROMANIELLO

(860) 283-4154 abacadmin.heather@gmail.com



**AUTO BODY
ASSOCIATION
OF CONNECTICUT**

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 not be construed as legal advice.

ABAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

GEORGE ATWOOD

Atwood's Auto Appearance - Deep River

TONY CATAPANO

Walt's Auto Repair - No Branford

JOE CAVALLARO

Airport Rd. Auto Body - Hartford

TONY CAVALLARO, JR

Airport Rd. Auto Body - Hartford

WILLIAM DENYA

Denya's Auto Body - Meriden

MARIO DIMICHELE

Jake's Auto Body - Waterbury

ADRIANNA INDOMENICO

Santostefano Auto Body - Middletown

SABRINA INDOMENICO

Santostefano Auto Body - Middletown

CAROL LUPINEK

Eddie's Auto Body - East Haddam

ED LUPINEK

Eddie's Auto Body - East Haddam

RONALD POIDOMANI Sr.

Town Line Body Shop - Monroe

RONALD POIDOMANI Jr.

Town Line Body Shop - Monroe

TYLER ROOK

Victor Auto Body Works - Middletown

RANDY SERKEY

A&R Auto Body - Torrington

JOHN WELSH

Oxford Automotive - Oxford

JOHN M. PARESE, Esq.

ABAC Legal Counsel

Law Offices of Buckley, Wynne & Parese

ABAC NEWS

Don Cushing - abacnews13@gmail.com - (401) 578-6945

Dave Fogarty - (860) 227-0653



Your ABAC Board of Directors

Vendor Spotlight

**Are you a Supporting
Advertiser in the
ABAC News?**

**Are you interested in having
your company in the
Vendor Spotlight?**

**Contact Don Cushing at
abacnews13@gmail or give
him a call at 401-578-6945
and he will set up an
appointment to feature
your company in the
ABAC News!**