

Gary Butler

## "The Academy" Autobody Collision Training

The 'boot camp' of  
collision-repair training

PROFILE BY GARY BUTLER

MARYVILLE, Tenn. — Jeffery J. Koykar Sr., owner of "The Academy" Autobody Collision Training (A.C.T.), located at 5157 U.S. Highway 411 South, in Maryville, operates what he characterizes as the "boot camp" of collision repair training.

"At 'The Academy,' our training methods, technique, and philosophy are unique and as different from today's 'traditional-thinking' vo-tech training as they can be," said Koykar.

Koykar said his approach to collision-repair training begins as a simple two-pronged goal of providing qualified technicians to a beleaguered collision-repair industry.

According to Koykar, the solution is simple: "To properly train students for a realistic and successful career in the autobody-repair trade, we needed collision-damaged vehicles for training, along with a realistic training atmosphere that mirrors the real working environment of a quality production-repair facility."

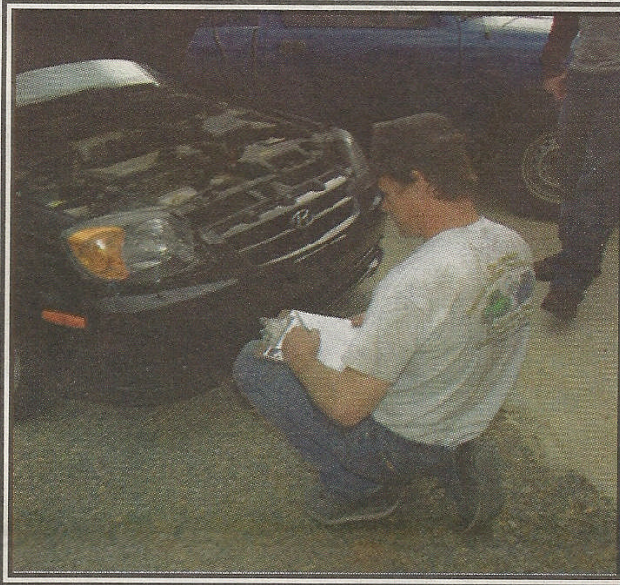
It is this two-fold scenario that Koykar said led him to design and create "The Academy."

"Just about all [collision-repair] shop owners will agree these days that finding and keeping good technicians is one of the most difficult aspects of their business," Koykar said.

And Koykar asserts that, although workload sources and a modern, state-of-the-art facility are important items, "they were just a few of the many obstacles that needed to be addressed in order to develop and complete an effective training program."

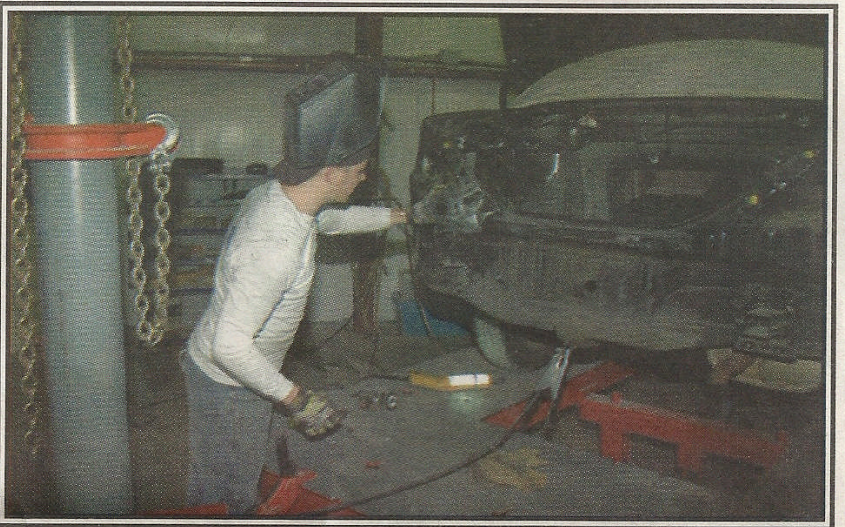


"The Academy" Autobody Collision Training (above) is located in Maryville, Tenn.



At left, owner Jeffery J. Koykar is making an estimate for damage repair on a Hyundai.

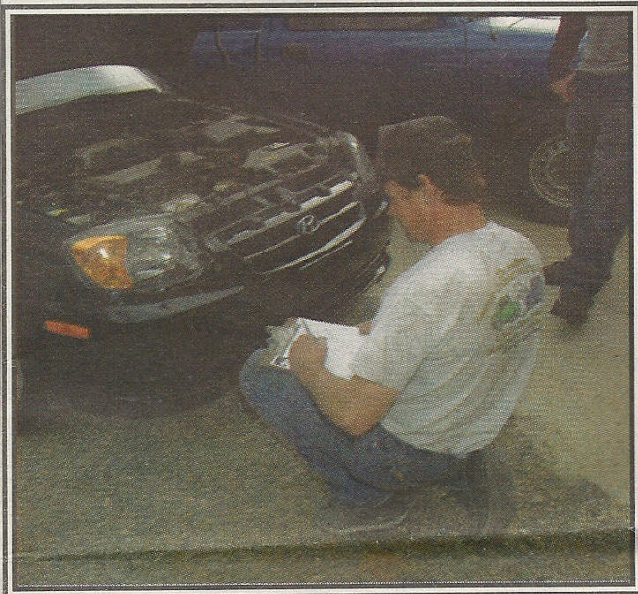
Below, Student/trainee Jordan Atchley, checking a weld on a 2001 Kia on the facility's Mega Rack frame machine.



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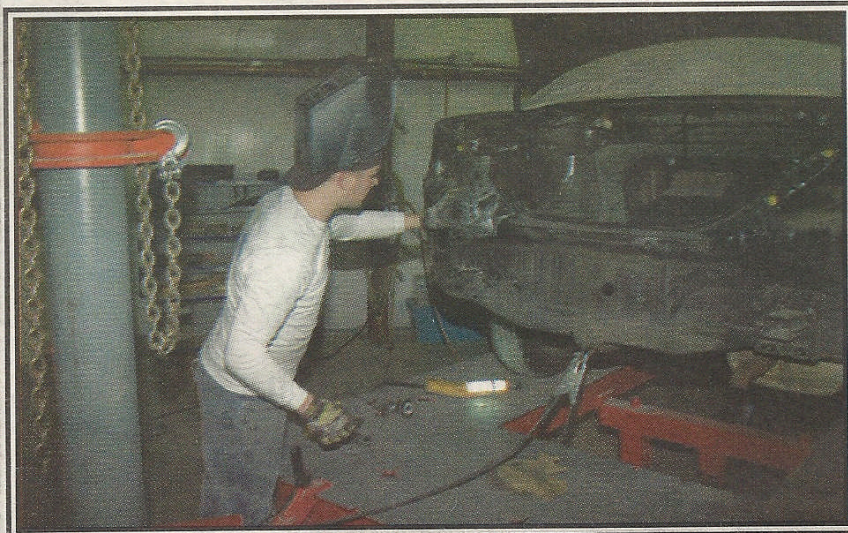


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*Below, Student/trainee Jordan Atchley, checking a weld on a 2001 Kia on the facility's Mega Rack frame machine.*



Koykar said his biggest challenge came when trying to format precise curriculum specifically targeted toward enhancing entry-level skills, development, and growth in a short period of time.

"I wanted a program that would produce a qualified, experienced, entry-level technician that would exceed industry standards," he said. "Although there is much information available out there about repair technique and procedures, the type of information I believe should be utilized for entry-level technician training was non-existent. This posed the greatest obstacle of all because it meant I would have to develop curriculum."

Koykar said that his 30-plus years of experience — through ownership, management, and technical expertise — have benefited him immensely.

"It gave me a solid foundational background best suited to gain insight and to view training from many different perspectives. Experience truly is the best teacher — my successes and, more importantly, my failures, have all played key roles in developing and creating a systematic design for entry-level tech training," he said.

"Furthermore, Koykar said he believes "situational" training provides the most complete, in-depth, comprehensive, hands-on training available. He said his system proves this assertion daily at his 4,000-square-foot training facility.

"Situational training can only take place as the repair is in process," he insisted. "You can't develop good, solid curriculum for every repair scenario — that would be 'mumbo-jumbo' and it would fill volumes. And you can't stage problems in a lab-type environment, either. That's not real world.

"You must make repairs and solve problems as they come up throughout the repair process and look for viable, applicable solutions for any and all problems," said Koykar. "When you

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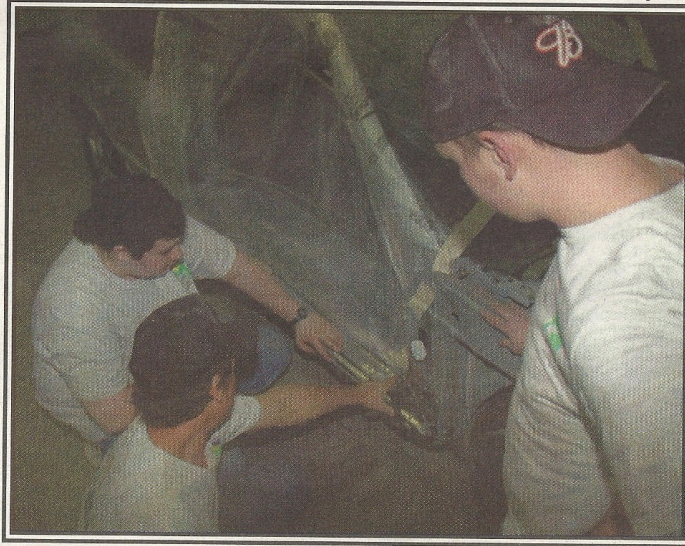
do that, you can begin developing a solid teaching platform conducive to learning quickly. It is this type of training model that we implement in our facility and it yields remarkable results while helping to ensure a smooth transition from student to employee quickly."

Koykar said his flexible training design and mode of operation allow him to conduct business on a number of different levels in a variety of ways.

"For example, student training coincides with the type of repair that is scheduled in on a daily basis," he said. "Flexibility through training methods and curriculum adjusts to any given type of repair — whether it's a quarter-panel replacement or a frame rail section, it makes little difference. We simply correspond our training technique to match the repair."

Koykar said this technique allows a student to see the full spectrum of repairs that comes into a collision-repair facility.

"Another example of complete training is the concept of teaching every possible aspect of repairs, including estimating, supplementing, panel repair or replacement, frame repair, paint prepping, and refinishing," said



*Pictured left to right are Jeff Koykar, Jordan Atchley, and Steve Seymour. Koykar is instructing students on repairs to a Kia on the Mega Rack frame machine.*

Koykar. "If it's done in a collision-repair shop, we train for it."

Koykar said that flexibility also affects his ability to offer better than industry-standard pricing.

"When a customer brings his vehicle to our training facility, it becomes much more than just a damaged car, truck, or SUV in need of repair," he asserted. "At 'The Academy,' our viewpoint is this: We see it as a vital training tool that affords our students a real-world opportunity to gain a wealth of repair experience and information in

a controlled training environment.

Therefore, when the customer gives us that opportunity, we reciprocate by offering him a significant discount in appreciation."

Koykar said he is currently in the process of building a job placement network.

"Our Employer Sponsorship Program is designed to unite qualified students with concerned, caring employers locally, statewide and nationwide.

"Our students will have 1,100 to

1,500 hours of real world experience, and will prove their profitability to any employer searching for a quality fast-track technician," he said.

Finally, Koykar said he is "very excited about the progress of the training program.

"After years of scrutinizing, tweaking, adjusting and testing, I believe our complete training program is now worthy of exportation to repair shops across the country," he said. "Our unique and effective in-house training package program is a no-nonsense approach to customizing a production workforce.

"Our 'boot-camp,' insertion-style method of delivery makes in-house training convenient, quick, and profitable.

"Our designed training format incorporates and utilizes the in-house technical talent that currently exists within a company," said Koykar. "We offer programs to fit any shop size and offer repairers real solutions to production-employee labor concerns facing the collision-repair industry." For more detailed information about his program, Koykar said he can be reached at (865) 856-6444, or by e-mail at [theademvact@bellsouth.net](mailto:theademvact@bellsouth.net). ■