

FEATURE

Auto Skills Center's excellent customer service is 'no hog-wash'

Story and photos by Senior Airman Jason Smith
437 AW Public Affairs

"We're only here because you're here. We're serious about taking care of our customers, and that's no hog-wash," said Terry Pugh, Auto Skills Center manager.

The Auto Skills Center here offers many repair and maintenance services, along with a well-equipped garage area for do-it-yourselfers. From oil changes to overhauls, the center's experienced staff can provide expert advice and assistance with almost any project.

The center has flat stalls, lift stalls, computer systems, tools, machines, books, parts, fluids and anything else that may be needed to service and even rebuild vehicles. The staff will gladly help in any way they can, but they will also give lots of space to those who want to do things on their own, said Pugh.

"A lot of our customers want to do things by themselves," said Bobby Sarine, Auto Skills Center mechanic. "Sometimes they tear something apart and then realize that it's a little more complicated than what they expected. That's when they usually turn to us for help. Even if we don't know the answer, we have car manuals on CD-ROM and they can usually find any information they need on there."

Sarine, a retired Air Force master sergeant, said he has been working on cars all of his life. While he won't say exactly how long that is, he promised it's been a long time.

"I was in transportation for 23 years," said Sarine. "I was fixing cars before that, and I've been doing it ever since."

Along with services offered at minimal fees, the center participates in the Car Care, Because We Care program through the Family Support Center. The program gives spouses of deployed military members a free oil change courtesy of the Charleston AFB Aid Society.

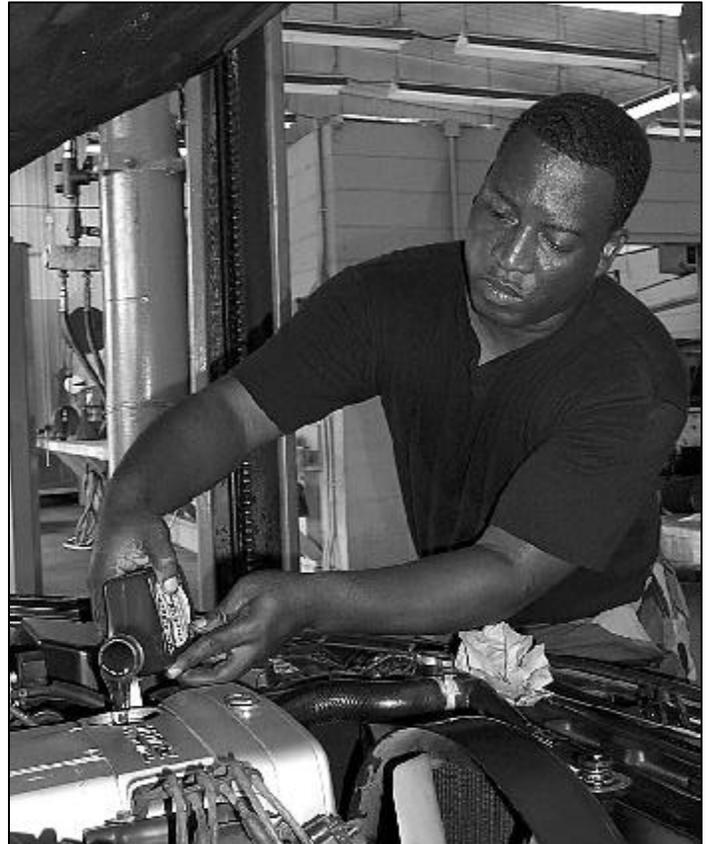
"My husband is on a remote to Korea," said Anna Greenhalgh, Auto Skills Center customer and Car Care, Because We Care program participant. "Even if it wasn't free, my husband wanted me to get everything done here. He's a mechanic, and if he can't be here to do things himself, there's no one else he trusts to service our car."

A lot of the trust from customers comes from long relationships with the Auto Skills Center, according to Jeannie Adkison, tools and parts attendant.

"I've seen lots of repeat customers who won't go anywhere else," said Adkison. "I've talked with people who have been regulars here, gone overseas and then come back to Charleston and still come here to work on their cars."

New customers are always welcome also, said Sarine. While the staff may already know about certain problems with its repeat customer's cars, they are anxious to help new customers. New customers with new cars provide valuable experience for the staff.

"We try to keep up with new technology as best we can," said Sarine. "I learn about most of it from the new cars that come in here for tune-ups. I'm



Master Sgt. William Brown III, 437 APS, NCOIC of cargo movements, takes advantage of his lunch break to change his car's oil.

always anxious to take a look under the hood."

Outstanding staff knowledge and customer service are two major Auto Skills Center selling points, according to Pugh, but he also said value plays an important role.

"You're not just getting help from people who actually care about you and the military, you're also getting auto service at less than half the price you're probably going to pay off base," said Pugh.

Anyone with a valid military identification card, to include DOD civilians and contractors, can take advantage of the Auto Skills Center.

The center is open Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. It's closed on Sundays and Mondays. For more information, call 963-4942.

Bobby Sarine (right), auto mechanic, washes-up after finishing an oil change.



Terry Pugh, Auto Skills Center Manager, looks over an engine head.

