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Message From Executive Director Sal Risalvato

Respecting Customers

Over the years I have run into many circumstances that presented an opportunity to cut a corner or achieve a favorable outcome that may be viewed as improper or even unethical. I learned in my first years of owning a business that too many bad actions in the business world get shrugged off or explained as “it’s good business”. Many bad actions that are legal may be considered “good business” but they are still in fact bad actions.

Many of these “bad action, but good business” circumstances have surfaced between gasoline dealers and their suppliers. Traditionally, when I owned my first Exxon station, suppliers were mostly “major oil companies”. Few dealers owned their properties, and no one even knew what a convenience store was. Virtually every gasoline service station had two service bays, and if you were lucky your location had 3 or more.

I begin this month’s commentary with this remembrance because much of this issue of *On The Road* is dedicated to Professionalism and Ethics. Over the years I have never taken issue or begrudged major oil companies the enormous profits that they have earned. However, I have had one constant beef with the manner in which they have treated their dealers. I simply will never get past the thought that they just never treated dealers like customers. Certainly they never treated them like customers who spend hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars purchasing products from them.

Why is this relevant in my writing? Because I also don’t think that enough thought is given by many of you *at times* to placing yourselves in your customer’s shoes. Before you start screaming that you always treat your customers fairly, courteously, and bend over backwards for them, I want to clarify that I said *at times*.

I thought I often bent over backwards to treat my customers better than expected at both my gas pumps and in my service bays. Certainly I was always honest. Often times I performed services or gave considerations when the customer truly didn’t deserve them, but I did it to be perceived as “performing above and beyond”. Often in situations when customers just couldn’t or wouldn’t understand the circumstances at hand, I made considerations just to not be perceived negatively, even when the customer was wrong. I am sure that you have heard the term “the customer is always right”. Unfortunately that applies even when the customer is actually wrong.

But as good as I was, I still could get lazy or careless *at times*. There’s the *at times* reference again!

How many of you check your pumps daily or even weekly with a five gallon test can? I’ll bet few to none of you do this. Neither did I. But back in those days, when a meter was out of calibration it was usually in the dealer’s favor and was shorting customers of

the proper amount of gas. Occasionally this was brought to my attention during Weights and Measures visits while performing an annual certification. I wasn’t cheating my customers purposely, but I was cheating them just the same. Would my customers have been happy had they known? Probably not. In my mind I wasn’t intentionally cheating customers therefore I wasn’t cheating.

I was notoriously lazy about having pump top signs replaced whenever they were vandalized or damaged by weather. I wasn’t trying to deceive customers *at times* when these signs were not properly displayed; I just never replaced them with a sense of urgency. In my mind I wasn’t intentionally trying to deceive my customers, therefore I wasn’t.

But the same guy who didn’t place an urgency replacing pump top price signs at his gas station, happens to be the same guy that is agitated, disturbed, annoyed, and outright angry when I am in a grocery store and *at times* the little price tags are missing or not properly displayed. Yes, that’s me. I am sure that the supermarket is not trying to purposely deceive me. *At times* the little price tags are accidentally knocked off by other customers. Yet as a customer I demand that the same sense of urgency that I didn’t apply at my gas station be applied when I’m shopping for tomatoes, which means I expect those little price tags to be replaced immediately.

This same guy who was too lazy to check the accuracy of his gas pumps everyday is also the same guy who would be angry and feel cheated if I pay for more tomatoes than I actually purchase. Of course I don’t think the supermarket intends to cheat me. Yes *at times* the supermarket scales are likely to be out of calibration. Yet as a customer, when I received two pounds of tomatoes, then I only want to pay for two pounds. I still demand the same sense of urgency that I didn’t apply at my gas station to be applied when my tomatoes are weighed, which means that I expect the supermarket’s scales to be properly calibrated every day.

Do you get my point? Put yourself in your customer’s shoes. All of us travel, which means it is likely that we fill our car with gas often at locations other than our own. When we fill up at another location, don’t we want to be treated fairly, honestly and courteously?

Let me be clear, I do make a distinction between lazy or sloppy and being outright dishonest. Although lazy and sloppy are unacceptable, being dishonest can never be tolerated. When a dealer knowingly sells gas from pumps that are cheating customers, then penalties should be harsh. When a dealer purposely alters the calibration in order to cheat customers, then mountains of pain inflicted upon the perpetrator is fine with me.

No business owner wants to earn a reputation as a cheater. People talk and unfortunately they even chatter about things that are untrue. I can’t tell you how many times customers confided

in me that they had heard that some of my competitors diluted the gas they were selling with water. Of course it wasn't true because cars won't run on a mixture of gas and water. Imagine if the rumor was about something that could have been true. It is important to be careful and never give any reason for bad rumors to circulate.

Public perception is just as important as reality. You can be the most honest and reliable shop in town, yet be perceived as shady for other reasons. I was a stickler for the image that was portrayed by my shop.

I mingled in circles with other shop owners and visited their shops often. These were men that I respected and thought to be very competent mechanics and they ran honest shops. However, these were some of the same shops that I had heard rumors about.

What gave customers the wrong impression of their shops? Several of them allowed the mechanics to display scantily clad or even nude photos of women on their tool boxes. Besides being offensive to women customers, these shops also were very messy and plain dirty and greasy. Their mechanics never wore uniforms, or clean clothes for that matter. They were covered in tattoos and had multiple piercing and looked like they were straight out of a horror movie. These guys were some of the best technicians I knew, but just didn't look professional.

My shop was exactly the opposite. I always made sure that the shop was sparkingly clean, and my gas attendants and mechanics always wore fresh clean uniforms. In fact, for a few years I required my employees to wear bow ties. I thought it gave a professional appearance and I was fearful that regular neck ties posed a safety issue. Employees that had visible tattoos were required to keep them covered, even if it meant that they had to wear long sleeve shirts in 90 degree weather. Long hair??? Not a chance! If an employee's hair could not be completely tucked under their cap, then they had two choices..... get a haircut or find another job.

One of the easiest rules to follow was requiring employees to be clean shaven. Beards were permitted, but growing one was not. Although I hired many employees that had their ears pierced or worse, these employees were never permitted to work unless their earrings were removed while on the job.

It was important to me that a professional image be presented at all times. Especially in a repair shop where customers may be pre-disposed to be untrusting, a professional image can also ease a customer's fears and translate into trust.

My front office was always kept very clean and void of anything that may be offensive.

Inappropriate pictures that were pornographic in nature were never permitted anywhere on the premises. The front office was always kept clean as were the restrooms. I even censored what programs were listened to on the radio.

One day while helping a lady who was a regular customer and we were speaking in the front office, another customer pulled up with his radio blasting the Howard Stern radio show. My

door was open as it was a beautiful day, and the radio was so loud it was impossible not to hear what Howard was spewing. The conversation from Howard's trashy mouth was extremely inappropriate and very embarrassing for my lady customer. Let's just say that Howard was describing the difficulties of performing certain sex acts while driving.

I was aware that some of my employees liked to listen to Howard Stern who I always thought of as a pig anyway. From that moment on I forbade any employee to listen to Howard Stern while at work. I made this restriction known whenever I hired a new employee. Only once did I encounter an employee who tried to obfuscate my ban on Howard Stern. After the third warning I took him outside to the parking lot with the radio and I smashed it on the ground. Then I asked him to clean up the mess. Hey...it was my radio; I could do what I wanted with it and I think the employees understood my point after that!

I did other things to help my customers understand that honesty was important to me.

When MVC established a new Inspection Program in the mid-eighties, I was forced to buy a new \$15,000 inspection machine. I remember an onslaught of customers asking to purchase a valid sticker because their cars could not pass inspection. Previously private shops only performed re-inspections. Now shops also were able to perform initial inspections and customer requests to commit fraud were on the rise. Back then, security and enforcement was not as capable as today to identify this kind of dishonesty. Dishonest shops were able to make lots of dishonest dollars.

I chose instead to post a sign on a large piece of bright yellow poster board. It took me hours to write it by hand using a magic marker. I explained why my shop would not participate in this dishonest application of inspection stickers. The sign ended with this sentence; **"Don't compromise your integrity by asking me to compromise mine"**. Did I lose customers who may have been required to make expensive repairs rather than slap a sticker on their windshield? Probably. But I reinforced with other customers that I was an honest business owner and was unwilling to compromise my integrity in order to gain a few extra bucks. In the long run my reputation was more valuable.



CHANGES AT NJGCA



In the past month there have been several changes that happened here at NJGCA headquarters.

Our staff is saying farewell to longtime and trusted colleague Nick De Palma. Nick joined the NJGCA team 6 years ago as the first ever NJGCA Communications Director. After dividing his time over the past 4 years between his duties here at NJGCA and attending Seton Hall Law School, he will be pursuing a career as a lawyer, having graduated on May 24. We expect that Nick will never be too far away and will always be in touch. He will be missed.

Replacing Nick is Jacy Lance who is a bright young lady with expectations of filling Nick's shoes with the same excellence. Jacy arrives at NJGCA after beginning her career while working for The Arc of New Jersey and gaining valuable experience learning how things work in Trenton.

Besides staff changes, NJGCA has recently elected a new Board of Directors at its Annual Meeting held on June 19, 2013:

The newly elected Board of Directors is as follows:

Tim Arata, Westfield Service, Ridgefield Park
Joe Amato, Amato Agency, Neptune
John Barbagiannis, North Brunswick Foreign Car, North Brunswick
Craig Copeland, Craig's Service Center, Middletown
Tony Crisalli, Holmdel Village Exxon, Holmdel
Meerafzal Fazaldin, Newport Exxon, Jersey City
Kashmir Gill, Gill Energy, Matawan
Dan Holsten, Milltown Liberty, Milltown
Tony Legros, Boyden Friendly Service, Maplewood
Joe Ocello, Pit Crew Lube, Bricktown
Jeff O'Connor, Summit Exxon, Summit
Lou Papale, Wheels in Motion, Union

Upon their election, the Board of Directors appointed the following officers:

President - Tony Crisalli
Vice President - Craig Copeland
Secretary - Lou Papale
Treasurer - Tim Arata

LETTER TO THE OTR EDITOR

May 6, 2013

Debbie,

Thankfully I have been reading Sal's emails every week and following his alerts and instructions about gas stations and auto repair shops being targeted by the **Department of Labor**. Thank you for your help guiding me thru this audit process. I have been handling my payroll exactly as Sal has instructed and keeping all of the proper records. My records show all of the hours worked, details of pay per hour, and I record all pay over 40 hours per week with overtime. DOL just finished with their audit and said that everything was in perfect order and that the way I have been maintaining my payroll made their job easy. It's thanks to you and your office that I had everything the way they wanted and was able to answer all his questions. How would I have ever known that the **Department of Labor** had this task force in place and was visiting every gas station in the state if it weren't for NJGCA? I will never miss reading one of Sal's emails or On the Road newsletter!

Thanks again,
Richard Broderick, College Tire
North Brunswick, NJ

U. S. Department of Labor Q&A

Your Questions, Their Answers!



Member questions are submitted to Debbie Hill who is the NJGCA Director of Member Services, and then forwarded to Joseph Petrecca of the USDOL. Joe's answers are published below.

**Note from Petrecca

Good Afternoon Debbie,

Many employers and employees alike ask the U.S. Department of Labor questions about required benefits under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Often times they are surprised to learn that the federal law is silent on many of the benefits they think are required. Whenever we answer we are always careful to say that; although something may not be required under the FLSA, an employer or employee should check with his or her state Department of Labor to see what the state requirements are. Where the employer or employee is subject to both laws, then the higher standard is always applicable.

Having stated this caution, I suggest that any NJGCA member with concerns should contact the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, or visit their website http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wagehour/content/wage_and_hour_compliance for more complete guidance.

Member Question: Are there any notices that I should give my mechanics and gas attendants before I terminate them or lay them off?

Petrecca: No notice is required to be given under federal law. None is required by state law either, and the employee is also not required to give notice to the employer when they leave employment. If the employer has 50 or more employees and is subject to a collective bargaining agreement they may be required to give advance notice of any layoff but that is not covered under either the FLSA or NJ State law.

Member Question: Do I have to have a reason to fire an employee?

Petrecca: Again, this is a matter between the employer and employee. The only reason you may not terminate an employee under both the FLSA or state law is if the reason for termination was due to filing a complaint under either of those laws, or for providing information or cooperating in an investigation under FLSA or state law. There are other prohibitions against termination under other laws such as for reasons of discrimination but those questions should be referred to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission www.eeoc.gov or the NJ State Division on Civil Rights. www.nj.gov/oag/dcr/index.html

Member Question: Will I owe severance pay? If I do, how is it calculated?

Petrecca: Severance pay is not required under the Fair Labor Standards Act however under state law severance pay like some other employee benefits, may be required when the employer is obligated to make such payments under "contractual obligations, custom or company policy."

Member Question: Is extra pay required for weekend or weekend work?

Petrecca: Extra pay for weekend or night work is not required. Premium pay is only required when an employee works in excess of 40 hours in a work week. Keep in mind that if you do pay an employee extra for weekend or night shift work, you must include that additional pay in the employee's regular rate of pay for purposes of calculating his overtime rate.

Member Question: Are pay stubs required to be given to employees?

Petrecca: Although not specifically required under the FLSA, pay stubs are required to be given to employees under state law. Those pay stubs may be given electronically or via hard copy but they must show the employee how many hours he has worked, amount of pay and any and all deductions.

Though employers may not be required under federal law to provide workers with paystubs, those detailed records and others such as the days worked, the hours worked each day including time started and ended, along with pay rates, regular and overtime pay, all additions and deductions from pay etc., must be kept for each employee by the employer for at least three years and made available upon demand by the Wage and Hour Division under Regulation 516 Title 29 of the US Code. You may find the answers to these and many other questions by visiting the US Department of labor's Wage and Hour Division website at www.wagehour.dol.gov

I hope this satisfactorily answers your questions and I am glad that you read the USDOL Questions and Answers section of the NJGCA On The Road. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT: **AMT DIVIDEND 4.5%** **FOR PARTICIPATING NJGCA MEMBERS ONLY!**

Coming July 2013!

NJGCA members that are enrolled in the NJGCA Association Master Trust (AMT) Health Coverage Plan will be receiving another dividend. By the time of this newsletter's arrival in your mailbox, participating members will have already received their dividend which showed up as a credit on their July Health Care Coverage invoice.

Recently the Association Master Trust Executive Board approved the return of surplus revenues to NJGCA members who are in good standing. This return of surplus funds (dividend) has been approved by Department of Banking and Insurance (DOBI). AMT financial activity is strictly governed by DOBI which ensures that all financial benefits are returned to members. Other Health Insurance Companies return similar funds not to their plan holders, but rather to their stockholders. This is truly an amazing benefit to NJGCA members.

Only NJGCA Members who are in good standing will receive this benefit. The dividend represents 4.5% of the annual premium paid to AMT for health coverage during 2012. The dividend will be issued thru a "Premium Holiday" that will show up on the participant's July Healthcare Coverage invoice.

Last year AMT issued a similar dividend representing the Health Care Coverage premiums that were paid by NJGCA members during the year 2011. Many NJGCA members received over \$3,000 and several received over \$5,000.

We know many members purchase healthcare coverage from agents that they are friendly with and keep their loyalty. However, other health care insurance companies call their surplus a "profit", and return profits to their stockholders. Only members of NJGCA and the other trade associations who comprise AMT are permitted to purchase their health care coverage thru AMT. Member companies who participate as plan holders in essence are the stockholders.

AMT is a self funded trust that has been organized and grandfathered under the laws of New Jersey. It consists of NJGCA and 14 other trade associations; and state law dictates that only members of those 15 associations can be allowed to purchase AMT Health Coverage.

If you are not in the NJGCA/AMT Health Coverage Plan you can call for a quote. AMT is usually able to save NJGCA members big money. When our members save...they save BIG! Nine out of ten businesses who receive quotes from AMT save lots of money. AND THEY SAVE on monthly premiums even before any dividends are declared. Dividends are only declared after an evaluation of the total claims that were paid by the trust against the total premiums that were received by the trust. When money is left over, it is sent back to the members in good standing rather than stockholders. NJGCA members are the AMT stockholders!

Stop wasting time. Call today for a quote from AMT. Call NJGCA Headquarters or email greg@njgca.org



Less Than Ethical = Bad Image For All

By Jacy Lance



We've all heard those stories about the businessmen that have tried some sort of crazy "get-rich-quick" scheme and have cheated their customers to increase their own profits. Maybe you even know some of these guys, who think that they can beat the system. Well guess what? I'm here to tell you that sooner or later, these scammers will go down, and in the process, their businesses, their employees and their reputations will get dragged through the mud. Eventually they will lose everything, and it's just not worth it.

In a recent conversation with Enforcement Supervisor John McGuire, of the New Jersey Office of Weights and Measures within the Division of Consumer Affairs, I learned more about exactly how stupid some station owners could be, just to earn an extra buck. John shared with me many instances where cases have gone to trial and business owners have paid a hefty price for their greed. I would like to share *just one* of those examples with you. Since NJGCA members are generally a cut above others who don't care to belong to a professional trade association, it is unlikely that any of our members could be *this careless*. This story provides a cautionary tale of sorts ... an illustration of "what NOT to do."

According to my research, and the information provided to me by the Office of Weights and Measures, the story of Irfan Hassan, owner of 5 Delta gas stations in Bayonne and The Oranges, with a rap sheet as long as my arm, goes back to the summer of 2008, when he was charged with "failing to maintain two pumps in proper operating condition" in June and then "failing to maintain one pump" and "failing to send written notice of repairs made" in July. Weights and Measures then alleged that on August 19, one of Hassan's stations was charging its customers a price for a higher grade of octane gas when, in fact, it was dispensing a lower grade. Eight complaints were brought against Hassan, and he was fined \$10,000 after pleading guilty to overcharging customers for gasoline. However, Weights and Measures could have opted to close the gas station for 5 days for each violation charged, which would have resulted in the station being closed for 40 days.

In 2009, Hassan was caught deceiving customers a second time, being cited for selling regular grade gasoline as premium grade. At that time, he was assessed a \$6,000 civil penalty and barred from selling gas for 10 days.

Flash forward to 2010 and Hassan is in the papers again. He was assessed a \$9,800 penalty and barred from selling fuel for 15 days after being found guilty of selling regular grade gasoline as premium grade, in addition to other pricing violations, which were uncovered during an unannounced inspection in October 2010.

Finally, in 2011, Hassan was assessed \$5,000 in civil penalties (\$1,000 for each of the five stations that was found in violation) for operating without Motor Fuels Retail Dealer Licenses. The terms of the agreement stated that upon payment, conditional license renewals would be issued, which could be revoked, and his stations closed, if further violations occurred. Once the \$1,000 fines were paid, the Division of Taxation would only issue a one-year conditional license renewal to Hassan's stations.

The Division of Consumer Affairs said it best in a September 29, 2011 press release, "Enough is enough. Mr. Hassan, by his history of violations, has demonstrated his utter contempt for consumers and our laws regulating how to properly conduct business."

Now, personally speaking, it wouldn't have taken me 4 years to reach that conclusion, but each time Hassan was given another chance, he proved just how contemptuous he is. His contempt for the law is exactly the kind of behavior that gives everyone who operates a gas station a black eye, and makes motorists untrusting whenever they enter a location that may be unfamiliar to them.

The most important lesson for all of our members is this: once the Office of Weights and Measures even *suspects* you of doing anything wrong, they will monitor you closely forever.

So your best option here is to play by the rules and run an honest and ethical business.

Don't commingle fuels

Don't sell an unbranded fuel at your branded station

Don't charge customers more at the pumps than the price that is posted along the road

Don't give regular fuel to someone who thinks they are getting (and paying for) premium

Don't post signs that may be considered confusing or deceiving

Besides operating gasoline service stations, convenience stores, and auto repair shops, each of you are customers and consumers too. Place yourself in your customers shoes, and imagine how you would feel if you weren't receiving what you expected from your purchase.

Part of NJGCA's mission is "to promote the highest levels of ethical standards and professionalism." If we hear of somebody doing something even slightly questionable, we're going to address it. We take pride in the industry and the small business owners that we represent, and we take seriously our mission to "enhance public awareness and project a positive image of our members." However, we need your help in ensuring that our members rise above all of the temptation and greed that is out there in a hyper competitive world, and hold themselves and their employees to the highest of standards. ■

Legislative Roundup



The important issues impacting your business!

By Eric Blomgren

Please see the updates below for the most recent activity in Trenton and around the state. These issues are important to all NJGCA members.

Zone Pricing

After years of struggles and negotiations we have finally seen meaningful progress on the issue of zone pricing. NJGCA was finally able to hammer out a series of amendments to the bill, A-2729, with the Fuel Merchants Association of NJ, who represent many of the state's distributors. These amendments would ensure that only the major players who are the actual offenders of zone pricing are affected by the ban on zone pricing, and not the smaller distributors that NJGCA members find to be more cooperative in their business dealings. While many dealers were freed from zone pricing when Exxon and Shell divested their properties, there are still hundreds who suffer massive price differentials from their competitors. Sunoco and especially LUKOIL employ aggressive zone pricing strategies, as do a number of mega distributors. NJGCA has evidence of some of these companies charging as much 40 cents per gallon over the cost of rack, and as much as 30 cents per gallon more from one station to another only a few miles away.

On June 6th the Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee unanimously passed A-2729 by a 5-0 vote. The bill was scheduled to be voted on by the full Assembly on June 24th, just before the summer recess, however representatives of Sunoco were able to have it pulled from a vote. A senate companion, S-2856 was also introduced in June, sponsored by Senators Gerry Cardinale (R-Bergen) and Paul Sarlo (D-Bergen). In the Assembly, the bill is now sponsored by Assemblymen Patrick Diegnan (D-Middlesex), Jon Bramnick (R-Union), Paul Moriarty (D-Gloucester), and Reed Gusciora (D-Mercer). As you can see, the bill has strong support from members of both parties and from all corners of the state.

Getting this passed into law is very far from being a sure thing, it will take a lot of work and a display of support from you. If your business is being hurt by zone pricing, please let us know what you're available to do to help us finally get this practice banned. The Legislature is in recess until the fall but throughout the summer we will be meeting with legislators and their staff to build support among those with the power to get action on it. We will need your help any way that you can give it to us. That may be through writing letters, sending emails, attending meetings with legislators alongside NJGCA, and making contributions to the campaigns of key legislators. Please

email Eric@njgca.org if you wish to help.

Right to Repair

Right to Repair also saw some progress recently. Asm. Paul Moriarty, the Chair of the Consumer Affairs Committee held a hearing on Right to Repair on June 6th. NJGCA testified in favor, and the Chairman was very much in support of our effort. National groups representing the car manufacturers and car dealers, have been negotiating with groups like NJGCA that represent auto parts suppliers and auto repair shops in order to agree on a national policy that will provide repair shops with the technical information needed to repair all vehicles. An agreement on a national policy will avoid the car manufacturers having to create a unique policy in each of the 50 states that pass their own version of Right to Repair. This is in reaction to Massachusetts passing its own law last year. The automotive aftermarket industry has set a July 31 deadline to reach this agreement. After that NJGCA and other groups that represent auto repair shops and auto parts stores have promised to resume efforts to achieve results in each and every state. Chairman Moriarty and NJGCA assured the representatives of the auto manufacturers that if they are unable to come up with a satisfactory Right to Repair agreement by the deadline then Right to Repair will move forward in New Jersey when the Legislature returns in the fall.

Tobacco Update

Cigarette smuggling is a serious problem in New Jersey, with some studies estimating that 40% of cigarettes smoked in New Jersey are smuggled in from other states or other countries. Those who have been caught smuggling cigarettes have ranged from the owners of a deli to organized crime and even groups with ties to terrorist organizations. Illegal cigarettes take business away from honest retailers who can't compete with the prices charged by smugglers. Thankfully, both the Assembly and Senate unanimously passed the bill to increase the penalties for conviction of smuggling cigarettes. It only needs to be signed by the Governor to become law. Hopefully the increased fines will be an effective deterrent that will make potential smugglers think twice about breaking the law and cheating the state and the legitimate business community.

Cracking down on cigarette smugglers is good news. Adding burdens to those who sell cigarettes legally is bad news. Across the Hudson, NYC mayoral candidate Christine Quinn has proposed increasing the minimum age that an adult can buy tobacco from 18 to 21. Following her lead, Senator Dick Codey (D-Essex) and

Continue on next page...

Assemblyman Ruben Ramos (D-Hudson) have introduced a measure that will do the same thing in New Jersey. The 19 and 20 year olds who would be banned from these purchases in NJ are legal adults entrusted with the power to vote and the ability to fight in the military, but apparently are incapable of deciding whether or not to buy tobacco products. The worst news for your business is that you are deputized as the cigarette police and responsible for enforcing this ban. Unlike laws that limit the age of alcohol purchases where it is illegal for someone under 21 to purchase alcohol, under this bill it would not be illegal for someone under 21 to purchase tobacco. It will only be unlawful for it to be sold to them, meaning your business will be guilty of committing the crime if a 20 year old purchases a tobacco product in your store.

Generators

While many members of the Legislature thought that the best way to prevent a gas crisis like what we saw after Sandy was to mandate gas stations have backup generators, NJGCA has been successful in convincing them otherwise. Rather than pass legislation that would mandate every gas station install a generator, the Assembly passed a bill that would assist those that voluntarily wished to do so. On June 24th the Assembly passed A-3930 by a 77-0 vote. This bill establishes a pilot program to provide zero interest loans for the installation of the wiring and hookups necessary for gas stations to be "generator ready", enabling a generator to be dropped off and plugged in during emergencies like Sandy. The cost for that wiring typically runs around \$7,000, the maximum the government loan can be is \$10,000. In order to be able to apply for a loan, the station must be located within half a mile of the Garden State Parkway, NJ Turnpike, Atlantic City Expressway, or any of the roads that have been classified as coastal evacuation routes. To find out which roads are coastal evacuation routes, visit <http://www.state.nj.us/njoem/plan/evacuation-routes.html>

If you're considering installing this wiring and are waiting for this bill to become law, you should know that the Senate did not take action on it before the summer recess. The bill also states that the program will not take effect for seven months after signing into law. This likely means that the soonest these loans will be available is July 2014.

Inspections

In May the state finally announced a decision regarding the emissions inspection program. For years NJGCA has been lobbying for a complete privatization of inspections. Originally MVC had planned to announce the future of the program in December 2011. NJGCA expected at that time that an RFP would have been issued asking for contractors to bid on PIF only system, that would have resulted in the closure of all CIFs. Since that time there has been much discussion behind closed doors between various government agencies and administration officials regarding the issuance of the RFP. It is unknown to us and the rest of the public exactly how exactly the RFP was taken off the table or who was responsible for it. The

significant disagreements among officials caused a nearly 2 year delay to decide what inspection system would be in place when the present contract with Parsons expires in May 2013. The delay forced the state into an extension of the present contract. The original contract with Parsons included a provision for a contract extension of up to 3 years. MVC has decided to extend the current contract for the full 3 years, meaning there will be few differences in how inspections are run for the near future. During public testimony before the Assembly Budget Committee, MVC Commissioner Ray Martinez made clear that complete privatization was being seriously considered by the Christie Administration as a solution once the contract expires in 3 years. As expected, it was also made clear at that hearing that there would be some opposition to a privatized inspection program among some members of the Legislature. NJGCA's fight will continue.

Ban the Box

"The Opportunity to Compete Act" (S-2586) from Senators Sandra Cunningham (D-Hudson), Teresa Ruiz (D-Essex), and Ray Lesniak (D-Union) is part of the broader Ban the Box movement, whose goal is to increase employment among individuals with criminal histories. In most cases, the goal is to remove the box from employment applications asking whether or not an applicant has ever been convicted of a crime. Advocates of Ban the Box say that many employers simply throw away any applications in which that box is checked without ever even conducting an interview. This particular bill would force employers to go through the entire application process and must first offer an applicant the position before they can ask about a candidate's criminal record. This legislation is especially burdensome for members who sell lottery tickets, and whose employees must be approved by the New Jersey Lottery Commission. Managers who oversee lottery transactions will be scrutinized for criminal history before being approved by the Lottery Commission. NJGCA is also concerned about our members who employ auto technicians who must road test vehicles and have access to the keys and other personal belongings of their customers. NJGCA has joined with other business associations to oppose this legislation. As a result of the pressure from this coalition the sponsors have agreed to exempt businesses with fewer than 15 employees. Significant issues with the bill still remain. Still of concern are the onerous process, paperwork, and notifications that are triggered once an applicant is denied employment on the basis of a criminal record, and lack of strong enough liability protections for employers who turn down employees who have a criminal history.

Lottery Changes

In April the state announced that they would privatize elements of the state's lottery. While it was reported originally that the entire lottery would be privatized, in actuality only the marketing of the lottery was given over to a private company. The contractor, Northstar, will not have the ability to change retailers' commission rates or institute

Continue on next page...

new fees on retailers. It also means they will not be able to institute internet lottery on their own. This satisfies the main concerns NJGCA had regarding this deal. A private company that has invested \$120 million, which unlike government must make a profit to survive, would be highly motivated in growing lottery sales by any means necessary, including increasing sales over the internet. Internet sales would profit only the contractor and not the small businesses that are lottery agents, and take sales and foot traffic out of agent's stores. There are however some positive changes Northstar intends to make. Lottery retailers will now be permitted to return partial packs of scratch off tickets. Previously the Lottery didn't have the manpower or the cash to invest in an extra line at the warehouse to scan partial packs, so if you opened a pack of 300 and only sold 1 ticket you had to eat the remaining 299 tickets. Northstar has agreed to invest in the ability to count partial packs. Also the current sales force of the Lottery is less than 50, and Northstar will be increasing that to 90, which will mean better and quicker relations between you and the Lottery. They also intend to roll out better accounting tools for retailers and better marketing to expand the pool of lottery players.

Reward Programs/Below Cost Selling

In January 2010 Governor Christie signed into law legislation that would allow New Jersey to join most other states in allowing companies to give their customers rewards at the pump for shopping with them. When we came to an agreement on this law, it was understood that the cost of these loyalty programs would be born entirely by the company offering them, and not by the gas retailer. Some companies, using a quirk in the way the text is written, have instituted rewards programs that do involve charging the retailer for participating in their reward program; either as a flat monthly fee or a few cents per gallon. NJGCA has begun working with legislators to amend the bill and fix this to ensure that the cost of the loyalty programs devised by these corporations will not be paid for by the small businesses that implement them.

Mileage Tax

In May NJGCA testified at a hearing discussing S-2531, a proposal from Senator Jim Whelan (D-Atlantic) to institute a tax on the number of miles a motorist drives. The original language of the bill called for replacing the gas tax for New Jersey motorists of certain vehicles; but rather than eliminate the gas tax, the bill would have required retailers to give a refund AT THE PUMP of the 14.5 cent state gas tax to every New Jersey motorist, while continuing to charge the tax on similar vehicles from out of state. This would have been a serious burden, requiring retailers to calculate and then deduct 14.5 cents per gallon off the sale price on the pump for applicable sales. Since the tax would have already been paid on the invoice at delivery, retailers would then have to complete a monthly tax return and apply to the state of NJ in order to receive a refund. Sen. Whelan later stated that he wished to amend the bill so that it would only affect alternate energy vehicles, which use the roads

as much as gas powered cars but don't pay any road tax. It was clear at the hearing that Sen. Whelan's goal was more to create a discussion about how to fund the state's Transportation Trust Fund in the face of declining gas tax revenues. The idea of a mileage tax has been kicked around in a few other states as a way to deal with the fact that cars are getting better gas mileage and therefore consumers are paying less in gas tax. Theoretically, if the gas tax were to be abolished and replaced with a mileage tax, it would mean a decline in the pump price of gas, which would be good for retailers. The problem with mileage tax is that it creates a "big brother" issue. Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of reporting to the government how much travel they engage in, especially since the most accurate way to track an individual's mileage would be to put a GPS tracker on their car. Although this specific proposal isn't moving ahead anytime soon, expect to hear more about mileage taxes in the years ahead.

Biofuels

In June the Supreme Court rejected a challenge by the American Petroleum Institute (the oil companies' national lobbying group) to stop the sale of E15. The oil companies are concerned that more ethanol in the fuel market will hurt their business and are claiming that the EPA was wrong in saying there are no adverse effects from E15 for cars model year 2001 and newer. With this Supreme Court decision, there is effectively nothing more the government can do to stop a more widespread adoption of E15. More stations throughout the Midwest have also begun selling E15 to customers. Meanwhile, President Obama recommitted his support for the Renewable Fuels Standard and both chambers of the New Jersey Legislature overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting the development and use of biofuels.

FY 2014 State Budget

What was most remarkable about this year's budget was how peaceful it was. Traditionally, budgets are passed with great controversy, with most or all the members of one of the parties voting against it and sometimes the Governor hacking out pieces with his veto pen afterward. This year, both Republicans and Democrats came together and were able to work out a true compromise that sailed through the Legislature, and did so much earlier than usual. It's also remarkable because it is a balanced budget that doesn't include any tax increases for the fourth year in a row. The budget will spend \$32.9 billion over the next year.

Election 2013

On June 3rd, New Jersey's longtime US Senator Frank Lautenberg passed away at the age of 89. Lautenberg was first elected to Senate in 1982 and served, with the exception of a brief 2 year retirement from 2001-03, through his death. With his passing, it fell to Governor Christie to appoint a temporary replacement and choose a date for voters to select someone to fill out the remainder of the term. Some argued that the Governor could have

made the date November of 2014, but several legal experts indicated that he would have not been able to wait that long. Instead, Christie chose to give voters the earliest possible chance to make their decision. The primary for the special election will be on August 13th and the general election will be on October 16th. The winner will serve just over a year. Until a winner of the general election is decided, Republican Jeff Chiesa will serve in the Senate. Chiesa has been serving as Attorney General for Christie.

There are 6 candidates running in the primaries. Leading the field for the Democrats is Newark Mayor Cory Booker. Congressman Frank Pallone, who represents parts of Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, and Congressman Rush Holt, who represents portions of Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset, and Union counties, are both running as more experienced, progressive alternatives to Booker. Also in the race is Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, who NJGCA has had the privilege of working well with during her tenure as Speaker. On the Republican side, it will be a race between conservative activists Steve Lonegan and Dr. Alieta Eck. If you are a registered member of either party; please spend some time on their websites in advance of the August 13th primaries. Since it's during the summer, there will likely be a very low turnout so your vote will matter!

NJGCA PAC

In June our Political Action Committee was able to hold a very successful fundraiser. This was the first ever

fundraiser and it will help NJGCA make the necessary political contributions to the legislators who have supported issues that are important to our members. With the stepped up efforts that NJGCA is making to work with legislators, it is important that we show support for those who support us. We wish to thank NJGCA members Kashmir Gill and Roger Verma for their help organizing the evening. We hope to have a second fundraiser sometime later this summer that all NJGCA members can attend and support, and of course we still ask for you to make contributions whenever possible. Political contributions are a necessary part of playing in the Trenton sandbox. This is an extremely important election year for our organization. The governorship and all 120 seats in both houses of the Legislature are up for reelection and with all the issues we have on our plate we need to make sure our friends and allies know we support them and that our industries are a force to be reckoned with. Any amount of money you can contribute, from yourself or your business is appreciated. Please mail contributions, written out to NJGCA PAC, to 66 Morris Avenue, Suite 1E, Springfield NJ 07081. Thank you for your support. ■



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FINISH

Horror Highlight

Bad employees can cost you your business

By Debbie Hill

Fraudulent Activities of Dishonest Employees Cost One NJGCA Member Almost \$20,000 New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission Proposes Permanent Suspension and Civil Penalties

An NJGCA member who is the retired owner of a Private Inspection Facility (PIF), and no longer involved in the day to day activities at his business, has chosen to have the business managed by his employees. His employees handle all operations at his shop which allows him to essentially be retired while still receiving a monthly income.

Unfortunately the old adage “when the cat is away the mice will play” became a reality for this retired member. Activities he was unaware of were uncovered when the Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) Mobile Inspection Team (MIT) pulled over a vehicle that had been fraudulently issued an approval sticker, which then triggered further investigations. Once MVC notified our retired member that he was in hot water, he called NJGCA and asked for assistance. Here is his story:

MVC operates a program called The Mobile Inspection Team (MIT). MIT pulls over vehicles to do routine roadside inspections. As part of these mobile inspections, MIT also verifies all relevant documents such as vehicle registration, insurance, and inspection history. It is customary for local police departments to work cooperatively with MIT.

In March 2013, MIT and local police made a random and routine stop of a 1997 Ford Explorer. The vehicle had a valid inspection sticker affixed to the windshield. However, MIT checked the vehicle’s inspection history and tracked the sticker number in their data base. MVC records showed that the approval sticker they were seeing on the 1997 Ford Explorer that they just stopped, actually had been issued to a 1995 Nissan Pathfinder. MIT then tracked the 1995 Nissan Pathfinder that should have had the sticker that was affixed to the Ford Explorer that was sitting roadside with them.

They were able to determine that a PIF which is owned by our retired member had issued the sticker to the Pathfinder one month earlier in February 2013. The roadside investigation continued. MVC records showed that the Pathfinder had been properly inspected and was issued a valid inspection sticker in August of 2012. Clearly the MIT was dealing with fraud although it could not be determined yet by whom.

MIT went directly to the PIF that is owned by our retired member, since that is the PIF that issued the sticker to the 1995 Nissan Pathfinder but affixed it to the Ford Explorer.

It turns out that the PIF that affixed the sticker fraudulently to the Ford Explorer had performed an inspection on the Pathfinder while it was in for service in February 2013. An unsuspecting customer had brought their Pathfinder in for other service, and the technicians there performed the inspection without the customer’s knowledge. Because the vehicle passed, they issued a valid sticker

but did not affix it to the Pathfinder. They saved the sticker for future use when they would need it to pass another car they knew would be unable to pass inspection.

One month later the need arose when a 1997 Ford Explorer they were inspecting was unable to pass the emissions test. They affixed the sticker that they had fraudulently obtained one month earlier. (Although unproven, it is highly likely that the dishonest techs sold the valid sticker to the owner of the Ford Explorer rather than charge him for expensive repairs)

MIT and the local police contacted New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission which then triggered an investigation of the PIF owned by our retired member. This of course opened up a “can of worms” to use another old adage. Further investigation revealed that the Explorer/Pathfinder was not an isolated instance. MVC found a similar case of an unnecessary inspection being performed in January 2013 on a 1992 Toyota. As had previously been found, the Toyota already had a valid inspection in October 2012. Just as had previously been discovered, the dishonest techs at our retired member’s PIF had performed an inspection on the Toyota when the customer brought it in for other service. The Toyota passed and the dishonest techs saved the sticker to affix (and probably sold) to another customer whose car would not pass the emissions test. As of this writing the sticker and the vehicle that it was affixed to have not yet been found.

What happened next? MVC contacted our retired member to inform him that his PIF license would be revoked along with the inspector licenses of his two employees. Fines to the PIF and the inspectors totaled well over \$20,000. In the end NJGCA helped our member to receive only a one year suspension with a \$15,000 fine. The two employees who caused the problem in the first place each received suspensions and fines that totaled \$2000.

The actions of these two dishonest employees included performing two fraudulent and unauthorized emissions inspections on vehicles that were not due for inspection and in fact had recently already passed the required inspections. These two clowns issued fictitious invoices to accompany the fictitious inspection reports that were issued to MVC. Did they sell these stickers to the customers in exchange for not performing expensive emissions repairs? We do not know, but it is certainly plausible that they did. It’s not as if these guys are trustworthy individuals, and selling the fraudulently obtained stickers seems to be a likely motivation for their actions.

This is an unusual story and we want you to know it could happen anywhere, by any inspector and you should be aware of the circumstances. The integrity and actions of your employees are a direct reflection on you. Read below for an account of what happened next.

It’s a shame that two dishonest employees cost the business owned by a retired gentleman almost \$20,000 in penalties and the loss of the PIF license for one year. How do you calculate what the loss of the PIF license will be for the one year it is suspended? What would have been the consequences of permanent revocation? How many customers will go elsewhere for their service because they can’t get their car inspected for the next year? How many will return? How many customers will be turned away forever because of the dishonesty that was perpetrated unknowingly to other customers? Do you want to leave your car for service where dishonesty has been so blatant?

What does this teach other PIF owners? Keep a watchful eye on all of your employees, and guard the inventory of inspection stickers. Don’t be lulled in to a false sense of security....Pay attention!! ■



Professionalism, Appearance, and Your Customers

By Jacy Lance

When you walk into the supermarket, a movie theater, or a store in the mall, how do you expect to be treated? You are the customer, a consumer who has chosen, upon your own free will, where to shop and spend your hard earned money. You expect that when you go into a store, restaurant or other establishment, there will be an employee waiting to serve you... and that they will do so eagerly, pleasantly, professionally and with a smile. You want to be treated as someone who is important and that you are a valued customer. It's just common courtesy. So it makes sense that when customers arrive at your service station, convenience store, or auto repair shop, they will have a similar expectation.

Please don't dismiss the elementary yet fundamental nature of this article. Please read on.

It is important for everyone working in the service industry to remember that the customer always comes first. Just like it frustrates **you** to wait for someone to take your order when you walk up to the service counter at the deli, you can imagine that it is likewise frustrating for customers to wait for an employee to assist them at **your** gas pumps or service counter.

So, to keep customers happy, we wanted to provide you with a few important reminders:

- **NO PHONES**: Your customers deserve your full attention. It is distracting and rude to try to carry on a conversation over the phone at the same time you are helping a customer.
- **BE POLITE**: Remember to greet the customer when they arrive. Say "please" when you tell them the cost of their purchase, and "thank you" when they pay. Say "have a nice day" as they leave.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE CUSTOMERS**: Being busy is understandable and sometimes it is difficult to serve a customer if you are busy helping another. When a customer is waiting simply acknowledge that you are aware that they are there and give an indication that you will serve them just as soon as you are able to do so.

This article isn't meant to suggest that you aren't

already doing these things however; NJGCA takes very seriously our mission "to enhance public awareness and project a positive image of our members to the general public, media, and legislature; AND to promote the highest levels of ethical standards and professionalism." We cannot do this alone. Let's face it, *gasoline retailers will never be compared to Santa Clause*. We spend a lot of time and effort talking with the media to try and present a message that gasoline retailers and auto repair shop owners are small business folks, struggling to make it in the marketplace and are not out to hurt anyone. We need our members to hold themselves to the highest standards, to play by the rules and earn a reputation as honest entrepreneurs. As the saying goes, "it only takes a few bad apples to spoil the bunch." We work hard to support our members in every way we can, and one of the easiest ways for you to help yourselves is to maintain an ethical, courteous and professional staff at all times!

Though I've only been at NJGCA a short while, I have begun to realize the struggles that NJGCA members have in the marketplace, in addition to dealing with mountains of regulations and onerous laws. Yet, as a customer who makes frequent gas purchases, has had my car serviced for many years, and regularly stops at convenience stores, I never recognized all of these things. I did however recognize other things that make me think like a customer. I saw things through your customer's eyes that are only beginning to make sense to me now.

For instance, it does matter to me, and I am quite sure that it matters to your customers, that your place of business is clean and attractive, and that your employees look professional. Let's face it, professional looking employees portray competence and honesty, two good traits that I want when I bring my car for service or to fill up with gas.

You get one chance when a new customer enters your business for the first time. That first impression of you, your business, and your employees is going to have a lasting effect. It may even be the deciding factor on whether or not that new customer will want to spend money at your business today, or if they desire to come back in the future. When you operate a small business you should take a step back and evaluate your business through a "new customer" perspective.

Appearance of your location will be first thing they see. At a drive by glance what would someone see of your location? Is the lot maintained? Clear of any debris and clean swept? Are there bushes, plants, flower beds that have to be mulched and pruned? Are painted surfaces maintained? Are the windows of your location cleaned on a weekly basis? Are there disabled vehicles on your lot? How accessible is your front office? Are the signs at your business faded and need replacement? How is the lighting? Are the bugs and cobwebs removed from the overhead areas?

If the customer drives into your location, who is going to approach them? Is the employee wearing a uniform? Is the uniform torn, or faded or stained? Is he/she unshaven, tattooed, and pierced? Is the employee wearing a name tag? How is the greeting going to be to your customer? Are they going to yell out "hey buddy you can't park there!"? Or will they greet them with a friendly and positive attitude and better approach like "Hi, How can I help you?"

Let's say the customer feels good so far, so he enters your building. Who is greeting him inside? Does each employee know how to greet your customers? What is he going to see inside? Is there clutter and dirt in your front office? Are your floors clean and shiny? Is your counter area clean of dirt and grime? Do you have a waiting area? Is it maintained properly?

How are the bathrooms? Again, cleanliness is vitally important. Are there any indecent or pornographic photos posted?

Appearance can be viewed as professionalism. An exceptionally clean appearance is hard to maintain but can have a lasting positive effect on your business. Who you are, and what your expectations are, will

shine through. After all, as a small business it is all a reflection of YOU.

The questions that I have posed may seem elementary, but they come from a newbie to this business who has only been a customer. When I learned that the first *On The Road* issue that I would be working on as the new Communications Director would have "Professionalism" theme, I knew exactly how I would write this article. I was your customer before I ever walked through the doors here at NJGCA. ■

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LETTER TO THE NJGCA EDITOR

July 1, 2013

Sal,

We so appreciate you taking time from your busy schedule to meet with us yesterday. The meeting was very helpful. We have been NJGCA members for many years. Your efforts reaffirm what we've known all along - that becoming members of NJGCA was the smartest thing we've done since becoming business owners.

Whenever I've had a question - no matter what department -- the people I've spoken with are always so kind and helpful, and if they are unable to answer my question, they always connect me with someone who can. You really do have a terrific staff! Please thank Debbie for us and Greg also. We wish you all a very Happy 4th! Thanks again.

Bob and Myrlet Ober, Ober's Service Station
Fairfield, NJ

PIF'S and Certificate of Approval's

* * Stickers * *

By Debbie Hill



I have a couple questions for you. Would you leave your cash box out in open and unsecured? Would you trust your employees with your cash box? How about your vendors, do you trust them with an open and unwatched cash box? Do you trust your customers? Do you just automatically trust everyone that enters your building?

I know you are thinking; hey I'm not nuts, of course I don't leave an open cash box for all to access! Of course you would never leave your cash box out in the open. What about inspection stickers? How do you secure your inventory of inspection stickers? MVC tells us that the street value of inspection stickers is as much as \$500 per sticker. One package of 50 stickers could be worth as much as \$25,000! Do you think that you should secure this inventory better than you do now? A truckload of gas is worth as much!

It is time to take this seriously! NJMVC is cracking down on those of you that are not securing your inspection stickers properly. Why? Because of their street value there has been a rise in the number of stickers that have gone unaccounted for at PIFs. Thieves recognize the value and have targeted shops that may have sloppy or loose security habits regarding their sticker inventory.

Recently, on two occasions, I went to Trenton to help members who encountered problems because of their sticker security and safety policies (or lack thereof).

In one case a new employee helped himself to a couple of the stickers. After being questioned by the police the unscrupulous employee left this place of employment. Who knows, he could be working for you now. Regardless of the reason, ultimately the owner of the shop that holds the PIF license is responsible and will be held accountable for any and all missing stickers. In this situation the owner had to take time away from his business and travel to Trenton with me to meet with an MVC hearing officer. He had to provide details and explain how the stickers became missing and give details of his plan to prevent this from happening again.

On another case of missing stickers, the owner arrived at his location early to open up his business. When he arrived the uniform company driver was already waiting for him to arrive. The owner noticed that it was not the uniform company's usual route driver delivering the uniforms for the week. The shop owner was busy so he simply pointed the unfamiliar driver in the direction where the dirty uniforms and soiled rags are kept. The owner foolishly left the uniform driver alone and continued to prepare for his busy day.

A short time passed after the uniform driver departed from the shop after he finished delivering the week's clean uniforms and taking the dirty ones away. One of the shop employees who had been performing an emissions inspection on a customer's car went to retrieve a sticker from the lock box where the inventory is kept so he could affix it to the car he had just inspected. The lock box with the sticker inventory is kept in the back office where no one other than employees have access. The lock box is kept very near where the dirty uniforms are placed for pick-up.

The lock box was not there. It was missing. In a panic the shop employee who had gone to retrieve the sticker also noticed that there were other missing items, including air guns, scanners, and computers. The owner and shop staff noted that at all of the missing items had been in the shop at closing on the previous day when the shop was locked for the night. They also noted that other than the new uniform driver that was now working their route, no one else was present in the shop, or even allowed in the back office. No one else had access to the missing items and the missing lock box with the sticker inventory.

The shop owner immediately called the uniform company and spoke with the manager and explained what had happened. The manager of the uniform company said he would get in his vehicle and pay a surprise visit to the new route driver. Rather than surprising the driver, the manager decided to save time and simply call him to find out what had occurred.

A short time later the route driver circled back to the shop where the incident occurred and was angry that the owner had accused him of stealing the missing items and the stickers. He stormed out in a rage. It may have

been obvious that this new driver had stolen the missing items, but since his manager didn't surprise him and alerted him with a phone call as he said he would do, no one will ever know what actually happened. They blew the opportunity to catch the driver with the missing items, and most importantly, the missing stickers.

In both of the cases described above, the PIF owners had to call NJMVC and give details of what happened. They called the local police and filed reports for the missing stickers, and unfortunately they both had to travel to Trenton and explain what happened, and provide detailed plans that they would now put in place to prevent the same thing from happening again.

A second offense will be met with serious fines, suspensions, and possibly permanent revocation of PIF licenses.

You should analyze your procedure for accounting and securing inspection stickers from the moment that they arrive, right up to the moment that a sticker is affixed to a customer's car. You should alter your procedures immediately if you determine that there are any holes in your present procedures. Prevent this from happening to you!

Here are some simple steps to take:

- 1) **Always** – Count the stickers when they arrive via mail. Have someone else check them too and verify what you have counted. Check the sequence of the numbers and make sure that you have received your sticker order correctly.
- 2) If you pick up your stickers – **count and double check** them directly in front of the MVC person who is handling your purchase. It's too late if you find the missing sticker when you get back to your business...they will automatically blame you for discrepancies.
- 3) **SECURE** your stickers in a locked safe. Limit the persons who have access to the safe. Keep track of all employees who have the combination. Continually count the inventory and account for every sticker. Noticing a missing sticker is easier to trace when a lot of time hasn't passed since it went missing. It is easier to determine who may be responsible.
- 4) **NJMVC** does not want you to even keep a small supply unsecured. They want you to go to the safe every single time you need to affix a sticker to a customer's car.
- 5) **SMALL SUPPLY** – We suggested that if you are going to use a small cash box in order to hold a small supply and avoid trips to the safe, that you bolt the cash box to the inside of a drawer or someplace where it can't easily be lifted. The box should have a lock that can only be opened with a key and only a trusted employee should hold the key. The key should be held by this employee only on site and only during inspection hours.
- 6) **Video Camera and Surveillance is highly recommended.** Keep a camera permanently focused on your sticker supply.

Be wary of everybody. *Call Debbie Hill to discuss this matter in more detail. Or email debbie@njgca.org*

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THE MEMBERSHIP MEMO

By Greg Cannon



Hello NJGCA Members:

I hope everyone is feeling good, and that your life is on an even keel, and I wish you all have a fun and prosperous summer.

I have to begin by saying that I am a bit disappointed in the response that I have received to my request back in the January

On The Road newsletter. Here's what I wrote back then: "If you have suggestions that you think will improve how we can help members, please send me an email greg@njgca.org and write "Feedback" in the subject line. I'll be interested to hear from you". I wrote that because I am genuinely interested in what everyone thinks about NJGCA, whether it's good, bad, or ugly.

Ok, maybe it's my fault because I wasn't fervent enough with my request, because here are the results of my endeavor to gain feedback from members Zero ... Not one member emailed with a complaint, constructive criticism, suggestion, compliment, or even go jump off a bridge! ... nothing!

So I guess my dilemma here is this; I am still trying to understand "how we're doing", or what the membership wants, needs, or cares about. The truth is that if the members don't start getting involved, then it is harder for me and my colleagues here at NJGCA to help you. Both payment of your dues and your involvement help NJGCA to be a vibrant and influential organization.

In our last issue of *OTR*, the front cover depicted a train barreling toward your business with only a split second before crashing thru your front door. I am still amazed at how many of you reach out to Sal and Debbie when the train is at your doorstep. I want to make sure that NJGCA is around for a long time so that you have someone to call when the poop hits the fan. Time after time, members who never imagined that they would have their backsides in a ringer because an enforcement agency like NJDEP or MVC stopped by and found a problem, turn to NJGCA for assistance. Too often Trenton politicians seem to think of dumb laws that will hit your wallet. I guess that is the proverbial train crashing thru your door.

Since I am only here at NJGCA for a year I am still getting acclimated to the problems and issues that face our members. A few conversations with several long time members have started out with each lamenting about how "things were back in the day". My response was simple; "Forget about back in the day".

I've snooped a bit since I am here and this is what I found. "Back in the day" was when NJGCA members received a newsletter that was nothing more than a legal sized piece of paper that was mailed a few times a year. Communications with members barely existed. Today NJGCA has evolved in to a premier organization that rapidly and weekly communicates

with members.

Like everything else the issues that we deal with here have evolved too. It is easy to understand that members don't fully grasp the value of what we do behind the scenes to prevent Trenton from dispatching more trains barreling toward your front door. If I wasn't here in the office everyday I wouldn't recognize the value myself.

In my job as Membership Director I have the opportunity to call on members to follow up on renewals. The question I am asked most often is "What am I getting for my \$450"? Of course once I explain our members understand and happily renew. Of course many of my replies have already been written about in the great communications that I just mentioned above. Heck, the newsletter that you are reading right now is an example. You should take the time to read the *Road Warrior* email that is sent every Thursday night, and of course spend 15 minutes to catch up reading the quarterly *OTR* newsletter that is mailed to you. Place it in your bathroom for goodness sakes!! Read it when you can! Believe me NJGCA members who get involved in more than our Healthcare and Worker's Comp Insurance programs have discovered that we have a lot of ways for you to offset your membership investment.

My point is this; be willing to invest some time to see what's offered here at NJGCA, and take some time to email me and give me some feedback, so I can get a better feel of how we are doing, and how I can help you.

So I am going to take one more stab at this. If you have suggestions that you think will improve how we can help members, please send me an email greg@njgca.org and write "Feedback" in the subject line. I'll be interested to hear from you.

I do have an announcement regarding members who participate in the NJGCA Association Master Trust (AMT) Health Benefit Program:

Beginning on September 1st, 2013, all current and new members enrolled in this program will be required to pay their NJGCA dues in one of the following ways:

- Credit Card with automatic renewal. Payment schedules can be set up monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annual.
- Direct Bank Account Debit with the same options.

More details will be mailed in the coming months.

All other members are also welcome to participate and have their dues paid by the automatic bank account debit option.

In closing I want to say that it has been an exciting year for me. I've learned a lot about the industry, its challenges, and its victories. I certainly have learned how tough it is to own a gas station, convenience store, or an auto repair shop. I look forward to helping create a positive, focused atmosphere and to have our membership be strong and be heard.

Cheers!

THE LEGISLATOR SPOTLIGHT

NJGCA has seen many legislative successes over the past few years. We'd like to take some time to tell you a little bit more about the men and women who have been instrumental in helping your small business prosper.

ASSEMBLYMAN PAUL MORIARTY



The Honorable Paul Moriarty was first elected to the General Assembly in November 2005. He was reelected in 2011 by a double digit margin. Assemblyman Moriarty, a Democrat, represents the 4th Legislative District, which consists of nine municipalities in Gloucester and Camden Counties. Asm. Moriarty previously served as Mayor of Washington Twp., in Gloucester County, from 2004-2008.

It's always refreshing when our elected leaders have experience in the "real world", not just in a series of elected offices and/or law offices. Before entering politics, Asm. Moriarty worked for CBS 3 (servicing the Philadelphia and South Jersey markets) for 17 years as an investigative journalist defending consumers and going after deceitful businesses. He still works in the media field as a consultant and has earned over 30 Emmy Awards.

Over the last several months NJGCA has worked closely with Assemblyman Moriarty in his capacity as Chairman of the Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee. When it comes to your business, the Consumer Affairs Committee is one of the most influential in the entire legislature. Through the issues we've worked on with

him, it's clear just how unfairly the big corporations out there treat your business, and how that forces you to put pressure on the consumer in order to survive.

To give you an idea of just how important this committee is, on June 6th alone the Committee had a hearing which discussed both the Zone Pricing ban and Right to Repair. What bills are voted on and which are not is up to the discretion of the Chairman. As a former resident of Massachusetts, the Assemblyman had been following the developments regarding the Right to Repair issue, which was passed by the public overwhelmingly last November. He made clear to the big auto manufacturers during the hearing that if a national Right to Repair agreement was not reached this summer, then come the fall he would be using his Committee to lead the charge to move Right to Repair in New Jersey.

We've worked closely with Assemblyman Moriarty on the issue of credit card fees as well. He held an unprecedented hearing recently investigating the huge interchange fees small businesses are forced to pay and then forced to pass onto consumers. We continue to work with him on possible first-in-the-nation legislation to inject real competition into the credit card market and allow the forces of the free market to start lowering those fees.

It's not just the bills he has heard in his Committee, it's also about the ones he hasn't. The new tax on plastic and paper disposable bags, potentially a huge burden on convenience stores, would have to pass his committee before it could become law, and thankfully he has not called for a hearing on it.

Our experiences with Assemblyman Moriarty have shown us that he is a fair-minded judge of every issue we bring to him. He asks tough, insightful questions, and is always there to stand up for the little guy when he is getting taken advantage of. We look forward to continuing to work with him for a long time to come. ■



CA\$H is green...is *your* business?

Are you thinking green practices and your bottom line can't possibly be related? That could be misguided and costly to your business. Over the past few years, it has been well demonstrated that green practices actually **SAVE** and even **MAKE** money for businesses that employ them. These practices range from relatively simple and inexpensive efforts like recycling to larger efforts (and benefits) such as lighting replacements, solar panels and everything in between. But who has the time and resources to go through **YOUR** shop and identify these potential cost-saving items? **NJGARP** does.



The New Jersey Green Automotive Repair Program (NJGARP) is a partnership with your association, **NJGCA**, and the AASP, NJ CAR, NJDEP, and NJMVC, who together promote the use and **BENEFIT** of green practices. While these efforts help improve community perception and relations, as well as the environment, they also can keep and/or add money to your business' bottom line. Rather than using the program, this is what several of our certified facilities have said:

*"We switched our lighting to a more efficient and environmentally-positive choice and saw a **67% reduction in energy costs**."* **Mahwah**

*"Working through the survey opened up issues that continued to snowball but, when all was said and done, we realized an incredible **\$150,000 in savings**."* **Flemington**

*"[The] decision to switch from aerosol brake cleaner to a refillable system **saves \$10,000 per year**."* **Madison**

*"Just making a few changes to our waste disposal and cardboard recycling **saved us money**."* **Morristown**

So...decision time: Take advantage of the benefits with NJGARP, or risk the continued waste of resources AND cash flow? Additional points to consider:

Time – Yes, it typically takes about two hours to go through the survey; BUT, we help walk you through it.

Resources – While we are there, we actively look for and point out areas that could improve your operations and bottom line.

Certification – If/when your facility is certified, NJGARP provides you with our Certified Facility Logo, Window Clings, and Media Kit to help promote your certification and business.

Money – Our low NJGARP fees (\$400 for less than 6 bays for 2 years), typically can pale in comparison to the THOUSANDS of dollars in savings noted by our certified facilities above.

Added incentive? NJGARP has discussed the benefits of this program, as well as the reality of struggling small businesses in the current economy with its partners, including NJGCA. **As such, NJGARP has established a preferred rate for NJGCA members, reducing the fees by 50% through December 2013.**

It's a great idea for many reasons; the potential return is substantial; and the initial fee is even lower for the next few months. Isn't it time to stop cash flowing out of your building and back into your wallet, all while doing a good thing?

For more information, please visit us at www.njgreenautorepair.org and **PLEASE** remember to mention that you are an NJGCA member or contact Debbie Hill at NJGCA by email: debbie@njgca.org or call 973-376-0066.

**PLEASE PATRONIZE
OUR ADVERTISERS!**

Are you selling Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD)????

Beware of possible corrosion in systems storing and dispensing ULSD!!



Reported by Debbie Hill

I recently attended the annual trade show and conference of the Atlantic Region Energy Expo (AREE) in Atlantic City, NJ. While there I attended the New Jersey Petroleum Equipment Contractors Association annual meeting. The meeting is held during the AREE trade show that I have attended the past four years.

As in previous years, Mr. Robert Renkes, the Executive Vice President and General Counsel of the Petroleum Equipment Institute lectured on many items. But one item really caught my attention that I thought NJGCA members needed to know: Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD) and corrosion in the systems that store and dispense it. While Mr. Renkes included it in his power point presentation, I also noticed that the PEI Journal included a recent article on the same subject written by Mr. Prentiss Searles of the American Petroleum Institute. I called PEI Journal's Editor in Chief Mr. Rick Long, who granted permission for NJGCA to use an excerpt of the article in the OTR newsletter. We thank PEI, Robert Renkes, Prentiss Searles and Rick Long for their assistance (contact rlong@pei.org)

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“Corrosion that has been seen at many retail stations makes various UST components look like tools that were lost in a garden and dug up many years later.”

Corrosion has been seen in diesel tanks for many years. However, the acute corrosion in ULSD systems was first identified in late 2008, and results of initial reports gathered by the Steel Tank Institute (STI) were presented at a 2009 SDTM meeting. In January 2010, PEI heightened awareness of the issue by hosting a meeting of all of the potential stakeholders; fuel suppliers, truckers, retail marketers, additive manufacturers, and federal and state regulators.

That meeting led to a preliminary scoping survey and ultimately to the Battelle research study. Members of the CDFA taskforce that funded and oversaw the research project were the Association of American Railroads, American Petroleum Institute, Ford Motor Company, NACS, National Association of Truck Stop Operators, PEI, Petroleum Marketers Association of America and STI.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The Battelle study developed three working hypotheses:

1. That aerobic and/or anaerobic microbes are producing byproducts that establish a corrosive environment in ULSD systems.
2. That corrosive chemical characteristics in the fuel—more specifically, acetic acid – may be to blame; or
3. Additives are causing the unexpected corrosion.

“The corrosion in the ULSD systems appears to be taking place in a very short timeframe – sometimes in as little as six months.”

Once the hypotheses were identified, a sampling and analysis program to test those hypotheses was created. The protocol ensured “uniform and thorough inspections of the UST’s by sampling fuel, water bottoms, vapor, bottom sediments and scrape samples from six sites – five that were expected to have severe corrosion and one that was not expected to have symptoms of corrosion (but actually did, to a much lesser degree). The samples were taken from three stations in California, two in New York and one in North Carolina. The committee sought stations in the mid continent, but unfortunately, was unable to identify such a station. All samples were analyzed for genetic material and chemical characteristics. After completing the sampling and analysis, Battelle’s final hypothesis was that “corrosion in systems storing and dispensing ULSD is likely due to the dispersal of acetic acid throughout UST’s. It is likely produced by Acetobacter bacteria feeding on low levels of ethanol contamination. Dispersed into the humid vapor space by the higher vapor pressure (0.5 psi compared to 0.1 psi for ULSD) and by disturbances during fuel deliveries, acetic acid is deposited throughout the system. This results in a cycle of wetting and drying the equipment concentrating the acetic acid on the metallic equipment and corroding it quite severely and rapidly.”

What is the source of the ethanol? It is hypothesized that the ethanol could be coming from switch loading or from a gasoline tank ventilation system that is manifolded with the diesel tank.

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There have been serious problems found in ULSD tank systems. In Missouri an above ground ULSD tank rotted through. This is serious!! At a recent class that I attended with NJDEP; they spoke on this same subject.

NJGCA suggests that if you are operating a ULSD system, that you call a Petroleum Equipment Contractor that specializes with corrosion problems. You should have your operating system checked for corrosion and avoid problems that could cause you serious contamination problems. We can recommend a Petroleum Equipment Contractor that can help you. Call Debbie Hill at NJGCA for more information 973-376-0066 or email debbie@njgca.org ■

Legislature should change social media bill



Gov. Chris Christie's conditional veto of A2878, the so-called "Facebook Privacy Bill," strikes the right balance between allowing New Jersey to compete in a 21st-century marketplace and protecting employees' privacy ("Christie says Facebook privacy bill needs a few updates" May 6).

Businesses of all sizes — from pizzerias to large corporations — are increasingly using social media to market their products and communicate with consumers. The bill passed by the Legislature would prohibit employers from asking for prospective employees' passwords and other social media account information, consistent with other laws across the country. But it became problematic for New Jersey employers by making it illegal to even ask about a candidate's social media savvy or experience with Facebook and Twitter. And it became more problematic yet by allowing job candidates who are ultimately not hired to sue if they believe social media was invoked in any way.

Eliminating the latter two provisions would allow employers to hire the most qualified candidates for positions that require social media skills while keeping them out of prospective employees' accounts.

Marcus Rayner, Executive Director, New Jersey Lawsuit Reform Alliance.

LETTER TO THE NJGCA EDITOR

May 8, 2013

Hello Debbie, Sal

Thank you for all the assistance you have provided in establishing a Lottery account at my Guttenberg Location. I have tried very hard for several years to have officials at the NJ Lottery pay any attention to me at all. I could never get them to consider my location to become an official lottery agent. Thanks to your efforts my application is being processed and my location should be an official lottery agent very soon. I am grateful for your efforts and time. Your expertise and help have been invaluable during this process. I am very glad to be an NJGCA member.

Again, thank you so much. I sincerely appreciate your generosity.

Best Regards,
Girish Patel, Shiv Shivangi Inc
Guttenberg, NJ



Station Owner “Clocked” for Failure to Pay Overtime



Since 1949, New Jersey has banned consumers from pumping their own gas. Deemed a “highly combustible” issue, lawmakers claim creation of jobs is the primary reason for retaining this archaic law. With over 3,800 gas stations populating the state, that amounts to a significant number of jobs.

The U.S. Department of Labor proposes to protect station workers through an enforcement initiative designed to ensure that New Jersey fuel attendants are properly compensated for overtime hours.

As some New Jersey stations have recently discovered, violating the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) can have calamitous financial consequences and subject station owners to prolonged monitoring and training programs geared toward owner accountability and FLSA compliance.

The Department of Labor recently obtained a \$3 million consent judgment against a chain of New Jersey gas stations for alleged violations of the FLSA affecting hundreds of station workers.

Daniyal Enterprises LLC, its owner, Waseem Chaudhary, and numerous station entities owned and operated by Chaudhary must pay \$2 million in overtime back wages and \$1 million in liquidated damages to 417 employees of Chaudhary’s 72 New Jersey gas stations. In addition, the Department assessed \$91,000 in civil penalties against Chaudhary for “repeated and willful” violations of the Act.

The Department claimed that employees worked as many as 84 hours per week without receiving overtime pay, and were often paid cash “off the books.” The Department claimed further that the stations failed to properly document and report the actual number of hours worked by the station employees.

In addition to monetary damages, the consent judgment also provides that each station subject to the agreement must participate in a three-year, supervised monitoring program that includes installation of biometric time clocks; formal notification to employees concerning the terms of the consent agreement; FLSA training for all employees; an anti-kickback protection clause; and provision of a toll-free number to all employees so that future violations may be promptly reported to the Labor

Department’s independent monitor.

The Secretary of Labor, Seth Harris, issued the following warning: “All gas station owners and operators in New Jersey should take note of this precedent by reviewing their payroll practices and legal obligations.”

Remember: FLSA is federally mandated and strictly enforced. Consider the following FLSA takeaway points:

- ▶ The FLSA requires that covered, nonexempt employees be paid at least the federal minimum wage. Effective July 24, 2009, the minimum wage rate in New Jersey is \$7.25 per hour.
- ▶ Overtime wages: FLSA requires that employees be paid one and one-half times their regular rates for each hour worked in excess of 40 hours per seven-day work week.
- ▶ Employees cannot waive their right to overtime pay: employers and employees cannot mutually agree to violate the law, even if an employee agrees to accept payment for straight time.
- ▶ The employer must keep accurate records of employees’ wages, hours, and other conditions of employment, such as vacation or sick leave.
- ▶ State laws such as the New Jersey State Wage Payment Law govern the time, manner and mode of payment, and prohibit the withholding of wages for illegal deductions, such as breakage, spillage and cash register shortages.

The bottom line is that employers who violate the FLSA may be liable for repayment of back wages, payment of liquidated damages and in some circumstances, significant civil penalties. All dealers should be on guard, so that they will not be targeted for these substantial penalties.

http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/wagehour/lawregs/wage_and_hour_laws.html. ■

eMail: pgunst@agtlawyers.com

To access the latest articles by the Service Station Dealer’s legal counsel, please visit the “Service Station Dealers: Legal Issues” section of the Astrachan Gunst Thomas Rubin, P.C. website at:

<http://www.agtlawyers.com/resources/petroleum.html>

Membership has it's privileges – Start \$aving TODAY!

THE NJGCA MEMBER BENEFIT PARTNER PROGRAM

NJGCA continually updates our Member Benefit Partners (MBPs) program to better serve your small business. Most MBPs offer discounts and special programs exclusively for NJGCA members ONLY – You cannot get these negotiated arrangements anywhere else!!

Here is a list of our current MBPs:

ABLE-TECH – Industry Specific Business Consulting
ADP - Payroll Processing
AFFINITY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION – Credit Union
AMATO INSURANCE AGENCY – Garage Liability, Auto, Homeowners, Flood, Disability
ASSOCIATION MASTER TRUST (AMT) – Health Coverage
ATS ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – Tank & Vapor Testing, NJDEP Compliance
C. A. WINKLER, INC. – Tank and Pump Replacements
DANA TANK INSURANCE SPECIALISTS – Tank Insurance
ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE, INC. – Environmental Remediation Services
ENVIRONMENTAL & GEOTECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC – Environmental Services (LSRP)
FIRST DATA CORPORATION – Credit Card Processing & Consulting
KOPA – Efficient Energy Lighting Solutions
MEADOWBROOK INSURANCE GROUP – Workers Compensation
MERIDIAN ENVIRONMENTAL – Tank and Pump Replacements
PH2 SOLUTIONS – Quick Diagnostic Emissions Tools
PRESTIGE ENVIRONMENTAL – Environmental Remediation
SALOMONE BROS. INC. – UST, Pump, and Tank General Contractors
SERVICE STATION VENDING EQUIPMENT – Air & Vacuum Systems
TMP ENERGY SOLUTIONS – Discounted Electricity and Natural Gas
UNIFIRST – Uniform service and station supplies

INSPECTION UPDATE: PARSONS CONTRACT EXTENDED

A contract extension to the current Vehicle Inspection Contract was negotiated and granted to Parsons effective May 6, 2013 expiring on May 5, 2016. All maintenance and transmission fees remain the same for the life of the extension. The only increase will be the cost of purchasing an Add-On Gas Analyzer which went from \$2,794.18 to \$ 3,382.14. When purchasing both a PIF Base Unit together with an Add-On Gas Analyzer, the combined price will be \$ 8,130.92.

Parsons agreed to reduce the cost per inspection from \$20.93 to \$20.29 for anticipated savings of cost and expenses to the State of \$1.2 million per year for each year of the three (3) contract extension. The State also has the option to implement measures that would reduce the inspection volume at CIFs during the third year of the extension.

Further details of the Contract Extension can be found on the State of New Jersey webpage at

http://nj.gov/treasury/purchase/noa/contracts/t1628_08-x-39078.shtml

MEET YOUR OFFICE STAFFER!

Jacy Lance, Communications & Research Director

Tell us about yourself and your background.

I was born and raised in Morris County, NJ (Long Valley), the same town my father grew up in. After graduating from West Morris Central High School, I attended Elon

University in North Carolina. I earned a double major in International Studies and Political Science, with minors in Latin American Studies, Business Administration and Spanish.

Tell us about your past work experience.

During college I interned in a Senator's Office on Capitol Hill, working closely with the staffer who handled Labor and Education issues. After graduating college, I accepted a job as the Coordinator of Legislative and Advocacy Services at The Arc of New Jersey, a non-profit that supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. I then worked as the field coordinator on a campaign for US Congress in District 9 of New Jersey (Bergen/Passaic Counties).

What brought you to NJGCA and tell us about your role in the organization.

It was my work on the campaign that led me to NJGCA. I made many valuable contacts in the political world, and a friend of a friend was kind enough to inform me of the open position at NJGCA. I was immediately excited about the opportunities that this position would afford me to broaden my horizons and learn new skills. As the Communications and Research Director, my primary responsibility is to conduct the daily internal and external communications activities of the organization. This mainly includes website management, communication with members via weekly Road Warriors and quarterly OTRs, and overseeing public relations efforts, handling media inquiries, writing press releases, editorials, letters to the editor, and setting up interviews.

You have a background in advocacy from your time working at The Arc. How does that help you

in this industry from a government affairs and communications perspective?

I spent my time at The Arc doing both grassroots advocacy and legislative advocacy. This experience taught me to always analyze and attack a problem from multiple perspectives. My familiarity with the legislators and the legislative process is certainly an asset when crafting a message to our membership. The more motivated and informed our membership is, the more successful we will be as an organization at effecting change in Trenton.

Looking ahead, what do you hope to achieve as the new Communications and Research Director?

It is my hope that NJGCA is known as an expert in the field. We want to be the source of the most credible, up-to-date and reliable information for our members. Nothing is more important to a Communications Director than ensuring that our organization is recognized as a well-respected resource for the industry. Through our communications with the members, and the information posted on various online platforms, we strive to anticipate the concerns of our membership and provide helpful solutions to problems, before the members even encounter them.

What do you do in your spare time? Any hobbies or interests?

Outside of work, I look forward to spending my nights being active - swimming, working out, and playing sports such as softball and volleyball. I love little kids, and I spend a lot of time babysitting. On the weekends I enjoy catching up with friends, and I go into New York City whenever I can!

What would you say to prospective members about joining NJGCA?

I would strongly encourage business owners to investigate the benefits of NJGCA membership. We are a clearinghouse of so much critical information related to the industry. Our legislative successes in Trenton speak for themselves. And our healthcare insurance recently provided a 4.5% dividend to all members that have purchased a policy. Each day I see how hard this entire staff works on behalf of our membership, and I don't think you could find more dedicated advocates anywhere. ■

THE ENERGY EXAMINER

FROM TRADITIONAL RESOURCES TO ALTERNATIVE ENERGY INNOVATIONS

By Nick De Palma



Since our debut in 2007, NJGCA *On The Road* has brought you timely updates on changes in the energy and automotive industries. Today, each new issue of *On The Road* will bring you more update and information in our *Energy Examiner*. The *Energy Examiner* will offer readers news from around the energy/transportation industry and how it will affect your small business. If you have any questions or comments on what you review in these quarterly pieces, please feel free to reach out to NJGCA. You may also visit www.njgca.org/energy-examiner for more details.

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UPDATE: FOSSIL FUELS TRANSMISSIONS TO GET MORE GEARS TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY, CUT EMISSIONS

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The last decade has seen any number of automotive technologies adopted by automakers around the globe in hopes of gaining power and efficiency, while cutting vehicle emissions. Most of the focus has revolved around complex areas, including motor size, engine architecture, forced induction, and battery technology.

However, in order to comply with future regulations, automakers are now focusing considerable resources on improving a mostly overlooked area of the vehicle: the transmission.

For most consumers, and even many automotive technicians, a transmission is an essential – yet arguably dull – part of an automobile. After all, unlike a flashy exterior design or a feature-laden interior, most motorists will never see their transmission or fully understand how it works. Most just know they move the gear-selector to D, step on the gas, and take off. A smaller number of drivers today, they also know how to move the stick to first, let up off the clutch, and row through the gears. Drivers never think twice about how all those bits mesh together, though they are vaguely aware that a transmission takes power generated from the engine and mechanically sends it to the wheels to propel the vehicle – but that’s about as far as it goes.

Fortunately, auto manufacturers and engineers have been thinking quite a bit about the commonplace transmission as they seek to squeeze more efficiency from today’s gasoline and diesel engines.

In the last few years, car makers and automotive suppliers have been spending billions to update contemporary transmission technology. To put things into perspective, it was only a decade ago that most automakers moved from four- and five-speed automatics to today’s standard six-speed units. Researchers now believe that seven-speeds will be found in 54 percent of new vehicles by 2020, from merely 2 percent in 2010. The trend is accelerating as many of today’s luxury cars, SUVs, pick-ups, and sports-cars now come standard with seven- and eight-speed automatic transmissions. Even the manual transmission, which represents only a sliver of the total market, has moved from mostly five-speeds to six-speeds, with new seven-speed manuals soon debuting on sports-cars like the Chevrolet Corvette and Porsche 911. As the past has shown, these new and costlier systems will eventually filter down to more affordable offerings as costs are amortized and the technology catches on to other vehicle segments.

Today, industry analysts are now observing a developmental shift toward transmissions with up to 10 speeds debuting in the next four years. They will play a key role in helping to make gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles viable for a longer period of time in order to meet strict fuel economy rules and firm government mandates by the end of the decade. In doing so, industry watchers believe that today’s six-speed transmissions will eventually give way to 9 or 10 speed automatics. In fact, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and Chrysler Group all have plans to introduce 9 and 10 speed automatic transmissions in the next few years. Fuel economy and emission standards aside, drivers will also notice vehicles will operate more smoothly as additional gears lower engine revolutions and keep motors from being overburdened in normal driving conditions.

Only a few years ago, most automotive engineers were skeptical of developing transmissions with more than six gears.

Continue reading on next page...

However, peripheral technologies have advanced to help make new designs and implementations possible. Among the most noted breakthroughs were using new, thinner oils to control viscosity and improving the flow of lubricants to reduce drag on internal moving parts. Furthermore, new software programs will also allow for better precision and dependability when the system moves from one gear to another.

What is driving this new investment in transmissions when added resources can be spent on engine or battery projects? According to some, the proverbial “bang for the buck” is the central reason. Experts believe that there could be a 10-percent increase in fuel efficiency for a comparatively small investment, making new vehicles comply with stricter regulations without an enormous capital outlay. Regardless of the reason, such an investment will help make internal combustion engines viable for decades to come.

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UPDATE: ETHANOL / BIOFUELS / BIODIESEL

BIO-ENGINEERED BACTERIA COULD LEAD TO HIGH-OCTANE BIOFUELS

Scientists at Harvard University have recently revealed a new engineered bacterium that may one day help replace ordinary gasoline. The advancement comes as researchers were able to “program” ordinary E. coli bacteria to produce “precursors” of high-octane biofuels. Known as fatty acids, the precursors can then be easily converted into high-potency fuels.

In developing the bacteria, scientists focused on “medium-chain” fatty acids, which contain between four and twelve carbons molecules. The medium-chain fatty acid variant is ideal for internal combustion engines since they are packed with energy while remaining in a liquid state. Fatty acids with shorter chains aren’t able to store enough energy for automotive use, while chains with longer than twelve carbons are too “waxy” to be used for liquid fuel.

To accomplish these aims, Harvard scientists manipulated the metabolic pathways in E. coli that produces fatty acids so they can be easily converted into octane. In consuming sugar, the metabolic pathways in the E. coli create carbon as a long-chain fatty acid. Researchers, however, used a special enzyme to arrest the process, leaving only eight-carbon chains.

Presently, medium-chain carbon compounds are refined from crude oil at refineries. Rather than use petroleum as a starting point, however, researchers hope to supplement an appropriate microbe or bacteria in the refining process.

The use of medium-chain fatty acids will also help maintain the proper amount of energy in the final fuel product. As compared to gasoline, ethanol is only two-thirds as “potent”. If researchers hope to one day use biofuels to power the millions of vehicles with internal combustion engines, a more powerful and cost-effective “starting material” must first be sourced. Furthermore, since using ethanol presents logistical issues (corrosion, water absorption), the Harvard science team hope to ultimately develop “gasoline-like biofuels” that can be used and stored the same way motor fuel is today.

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UPDATE: ELECTRICITY & ELECTRIC POWERED VEHICLES

BATTERY SWAPPING PROCESS COULD MAKE ELECTRIC CARS MORE PRACTICAL, ACCEPTABLE TO EVERYDAY MOTORISTS

In the continuing pursuit to make electric cars more attractive to motorists, auto makers and suppliers have focused extensively on addressing the issue of “range anxiety” among potential consumers.

Range anxiety refers to concerns that an all-electric vehicle will run out of power during ordinary operation and before a motorist finds a power source to recharge the vehicle. In addition, this anxiety also speaks to the long period in which an electric vehicle’s batteries must be recharged before it can be driven again; which curtails the effective, everyday use of an electric car for many drivers. For example, an electric vehicle may get 100 miles on a full charge, but the range is limited by road or environmental conditions, driving habits, and related factors. If the range should drop from the optimal level, and the vehicle loses complete power while commuting, the motorist must then find an electric charging station and wait for the car to recharge. Depending on the type of electric vehicle, the size of the battery pack, and the kind of recharging station, the time to completely charge the battery may range from 1 hour to 8 hours.

Obviously this phenomenon has hampered the widespread acceptance of electric cars by many consumers, relegating their use to those who travel or commute short distances.

However, engineers are now working on a novel method of addressing range anxiety by speeding up the time it takes to

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“charge” a vehicle. One approach being promoted by Tesla Motors, the creators of the all-electric Tesla Roadster and Model S, is to “swap out” depleted batteries at service stations for fresh batteries, enabling a motorists to circumvent the long, multi-hour recharging time.

During a recent demonstration, Tesla was able to swap out a vehicle’s spent batteries for fresh units in 90 seconds; less time than it would typically take to fully fuel a conventional vehicle with gasoline.

Tesla now plans to build stations that will swap out such batteries in order to demonstrate their effectiveness with consumers. The first stations will be erected between Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as Washington, D.C. to Boston. Customers would be charged \$50 to \$60 per fresh battery pack. The depleted batteries would then be recharged on site and reused. Customers who do not exchange battery packs could also use a fast-charging station to repower their vehicles, which usually takes 30 minutes.

Electric car supporters hope that the quick battery swap – as well as the quick charging stations – will help elevate electric cars sales to reach a wider number of customers.

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UPDATE: HYBRIDS
NEW 48 VOLT ARCHITECTURE COULD SPUR MORE MILD- AND MICRO-HYBRIDS TO MARKET

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In reviewing the overall landscape of vehicles sold in the United States, hybrids make up roughly 6% of the total vehicles sold. Though that may seem like a small number, it is the second largest vehicle group-type sold in the market (behind vehicles powered by internal combustion engines alone) and significantly larger than the number of electric cars that find a home each year. As the number of hybrid offerings continues to increase, many analysts believe that the hybrid vehicle segment will continue to grow for the foreseeable future as government fuel and emission policies become more stringent.

In order to meet that demand, and spread the technology to new segments, automakers are now seeking ways to make these systems more cost effective. That’s because, as an “efficiency hiking” technology, hybrids are expensive and command a significant premium price over comparable vehicles equipped solely with an internal combustion engine. The expense and complexity has spurred manufacturers to explore the “partial implementation” of some of these systems in other offerings to help gain greater efficiency for a smaller price.

One such direction is the concept of mild- and micro-hybrid vehicles.

Very broadly stated, a “full-hybrid” vehicle uses a standard internal combustion engine that is tuned for the best-possible vehicle fuel economy (as compared to the best performance, lowest noise-vibration-harness, etc). This motor is then paired to an electric motor that works in tandem with the engine to assist under heavy loads or may even drive the vehicle directly, which lowers gasoline consumption and increases fuel economy. Depending on the kind of hybrid system, the electric motor may then be used to recharge a dedicated battery pack to power the electric motor when the vehicle is accelerating or be used to propel the vehicle alone in the case of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV). Additionally, such “full-hybrid” vehicles use a series of related technologies to help incrementally improve efficiency, including start-stop systems and regenerative braking.

Comparatively, mild-hybrids also use internal combustion engines equipped with an electric motor and implements start-stop technology to save gasoline. However, the electric motor in a mild-hybrid does not propel the vehicle alone and offers some minimal assist to the engine under acceleration, but to a much lesser degree than a full-hybrid. The lower-level of assist means that mild-hybrids do not typically have the added weight of additional cabling or the large battery packs associated with a full-hybrid. As such, mild-hybrids are less costly and lighter than full-hybrids, but also do not return the same degree of efficiency.

Micro-hybrids are a step below mild-hybrids in that they typically utilize start-stop technology alone – that is the system will shut off the conventional engine when the vehicle is idle, coasting, braking, or stopped, and seamlessly restart the motor when needed. Micro-hybrids are less expensive than mild-hybrids, but are also less efficient than either full-hybrids or mild-hybrids.

In making better use of this technology in various forms, experts now believe that the move from a 12 volt to 48 volt electric architecture may now be needed. The current 12 volt system has been in place for many decades and has been resilient in powering most of a vehicles power needs. However, as vehicles become more complex and add new, power-sapping technologies, the old 12 volt system may soon disappear.

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First proposed in the late 1990s, a move to a 48 volt system would permit more accessories systems to be driven electrically rather than relying on power supplied by the engine. These would include steering, coolant, lighting, climate controls, as well as electrical systems used for popular features such as vehicle navigation and satellite radio. Rather than using heavy, belt-driven mechanical systems to power these items, smaller electric motors could be used to eliminate complexity and increase efficiency. This alone would save vehicle weight, reduce the need for heavy cabling, and lessen the strain on the engine.

If implemented, moving to a more powerful electrical system will mean automakers can essentially turn every car on the road into a “hybrid” of varying degree; in either full, mild, or micro guises. That would not only help save fuel and reduce emissions, but give consumers the ability to select from a wider degree of vehicles to fit their budget and their needs while still getting the benefit of hybrid technology.

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UPDATE: HYDROGEN / HYDROGEN FUEL CELLS

RUST COULD HELP UNLOCK CLEAN HYDROGEN ENERGY; GM & HONDA TEAM UP FOR HYDROGEN CAR PARTNERSHIP

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Though normally associated with decay and neglect, a new process has been discovered which uses rust to manufacture hydrogen and create a new source of powering hydrogen fuel-cell cars.

The process involves taking nano-particles of rust (known as crystalline iron oxide), combining it with water and using solar energy to create hydrogen. A team of researchers from the United States, Israel, and Switzerland have discovered that such particles, when placed in water, react with sunlight to split the water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen. The result is hydrogen gas that can be used in a photo-electrochemical cell.

Though other catalysts have been used with electric or solar energy to produce hydrogen in the past, none have been as cost effective as iron oxide. That’s because rust is cheap, making the process much more affordable, and could eventually lower hydrogen production costs.

A method of producing hydrogen more affordably is especially important as automakers continue to explore hydrogen fuel cell vehicle production. Though today such vehicles have a limited footprint in the market, car makers and industry watchers believe they will become viable in the long term.

Recently, in fact, General Motors and Honda announced that they will jointly develop hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles together over the next seven years. Since hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles are considerably more expensive to build than electric cars, GM and Honda will utilize each others existing technology and develop a new architecture together to lower the cost of production and components.

Furthermore, GM and Honda plan on creating a refueling infrastructure for the vehicles they produce. Both companies feel that the availability of hydrogen fuel stations will be of enormous importance for the long-term viability of fuel-cell vehicles among consumers.

The new partnership is the latest such alliance as automakers scramble to meet looming emissions and efficiency deadlines. Recently Toyota and BMW announced a fuel cell partnership, as did Daimler, Ford Motor Company, and Nissan Motor Company. With so many industry powerhouses behind the development of hydrogen fuel-cells, small business retailers will have an additional method of serving the motoring public by offering hydrogen refueling at their establishment.

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UPDATE: NATURAL GAS / PROPANE

ARE DUAL-GASOLINE/CNG HYBRID PASSENGER VEHICLES ON THE WAY?

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Plug-in electric hybrid vehicles (PHEV) are an attractive way for manufacturers to increase fuel efficiency and lower vehicle emissions. These vehicles are essentially electric vehicles that are “backed up” by a conventional engine to increase range when the batteries are depleted. Today, products like the Chevrolet Volt and Toyota Prius are examples of this technology.

But what if that same premise were used on a conventional engine utilizing two different fuel sources?

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Recently CarLab, a California company, has been pursuing the same approach for conventional engines that can operate on both compressed natural gas (CNG) and gasoline. Though popular in markets like India, the dual CNG/gasoline synergy has remained relatively unexplored in the United States outside of heavy-duty trucks and equipment manufacturers.

When most consumers think of CNG powered vehicles, they think of a large, pressurized tank that is installed in the bed of a pickup or under a heavy-duty equipment chassis (such as a dump- or sanitation-truck). However, CarLab is attempting to breach this barrier in a seemingly simple way: reducing the size of the CNG canister and leaving most of the other vehicle components alone. The idea is to equip vehicles with a natural gas reservoir not much bigger than a patio grill's propane tank to operate a vehicle approximately 55 miles in all-CNG mode. The canister would be slotted beneath the floor of the cargo area to save trunk space and leave useable room for normal daily activities.

Just as PHEV vehicles are charged with electricity at home and can later switch to gasoline-power for extended commuting, a dual CNG/gasoline-powered vehicle could "fill up" with natural gas at home overnight using a compressor and then use gasoline when the CNG is depleted. However, unlike other bi-fuel cars, the internal combustion engine could switch back and forth between CNG and gasoline at any time, even running a mix of both when needed. Since CNG is considerably cheaper than gasoline, it makes it an ideal alternative-fuel for increasing fuel efficiency in an affordable way.

In focusing on a smaller tank size, a dual-fuel CNG/gasoline conversion will be less expensive than replacing the entire fuel system. What's more, the cost of the conversion – at approximately \$3,000 – is considerably cheaper than the cost of an electric motor, software, and lithium-ion batteries that are used in today's electric vehicles. ■

LETTER TO THE NJGCA EDITOR

June 15, 2013

Dear OTR Editor,

In January 2013 I made a decision to relocate my auto repair business to a new location in order to service my customers better and be in a larger facility. The facility had been vacant for many years and it took three months for the renovation to be completed.

One of my concerns was what about my Private Inspection Facility License and Inspection equipment. My PIF license couldn't be inactive for three months. I did not know what to do. I had heard horror stories about others in similar circumstances trying to get a new facility PIF license. I knew the process could take four months or more.

I called Debbie Hill at NJGCA for help and I made an appointment with her at NJGCA Headquarters. On my first visit, Debbie Hill contacted MVC officials both in Trenton and at the Westfield office. She also contacted SGS. She was able to put my PIF license on temporary suspension.

Then she helped me get site approval for my new location, and set up all of the paperwork with MVC and SGS to transfer my license to the new location. I am happy to report that I opened up at my new location and I am up and running with my PIF license.

I want to express thanks to Debbie Hill for her knowledge and support. I could not have done it without Debbie and NJGCA!!

Sincerely,
Tom Sadowski, Sadowski Auto Care
North Arlington, NJ

NJGCA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Paul Kelly of Kelly's Sea Bay Sunoco

By Nick De Palma & Jacy Lance



NJGCA Member Paul Kelly with his employee of two years, Stanislav "Stan" Kanchev.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

I'm 56 years old, was born and raised in Lavallette, and have been here all my life. My wife Laurie is originally from Kearny, and we have three children, Kelly, Paul, and Matthew. My daughter is married; my two sons are in their late teens and still in high school. I coach their soccer team at Monsignor Donovan High School in Toms River.

How did you get into this business?

I had a buddy in high school that used to tinker on cars. We used to do everything together including working on cars. I went to college at Monmouth University and wanted to study architecture or drafting. At the time, I worked as an automotive technician at a local Toyota dealership. They trained me and helped me get certified. Eventually, I stopped my studies to work full time. I couldn't sit still in a classroom listening to lectures, but in hindsight, I wish I had finished my degree.

When did you become an entrepreneur?

I was 25 when I bought this station. When I was with Toyota, I used to rent a bay to do repair work on the side. I'd leave the dealership, go to the garage, and put in a few hours for myself. Eventually I ended up working for the former owner of this location. He needed someone who understood foreign cars. One night he said Sunoco was looking to sell the property. He had enough of the business and asked if I was interested. My parents helped me purchase the property; they initially held the note and sold it back to me after our first year in business. Our station has eight gas pumps and three repair bays, with most of my activity coming from the repair side of the business.

The Jersey Shore was hit hard during Hurricane Sandy

and Lavallette was among the hardest hit. Tell us about that experience, both as a small-business owner and a home-town boy.

I don't know if I can fully put that entire experience into words. Like a lot of locals, when a storm hits, we typically stay put rather than evacuate, and that was also true for the start of Sandy. The morning after the storm, Route 35 was 4 feet under water and there was confusion everywhere. There were military helicopters flying over head and earth moving equipment all around. Lots of questions surfaced about "what to do" after the storm passed. Our house was only a few blocks away from the business, but thankfully was relatively "okay" compared to the rest of the area. Two out of three family vehicles were totaled, but luckily one remained in running order to get around. It came in handy too, especially since we had to "rescue" my daughter, Kelly, and son-in-law, David, in Ortley Beach because the house they were renting was quickly filling up with water.

What about your business?

The station was 2 feet under water, with 10 inches of sand and mud covering everything. It was a mess. After the water subsided, my sons and I started to clean up. We were able to power wash most of it, but our clean up was cut short when we were ordered to evacuate the island the Saturday after the storm due to a natural gas leak.

Where did you go?

We ended up in Toms River and were fortunate enough to rent a home about a mile away from my sons' school. A Good Samaritan rented the house to us for a very modest amount per month. That was our home from November through December, and we were grateful for their generosity. We were able to move back into our house before Christmas once the heat, gas, and electricity were all back on.

Where you able to make it back to your shop during that time?

Yes, though it was a bit of a nightmare. Toms River controls the bridge that leads onto the island. Every morning they would let cars back into town. We waited on line at 6:00am with other cars waiting to cross. It would take hours to get on the other side because the police were taking steps to stop potential looters trying to take advantage of the chaos. We had no choice though, so it became part of our daily routine as we got the shop back up and running.

How long did it take you to reopen?

That kind of depends on what you mean by **reopen**, I suppose. We had cleaned up the physical location, removing sand, silt,

"How do you rebuild your business and get your shop back to normal when many of your patrons are gone and haven't returned to town?"

Continue reading on next page...



and muck pretty quickly. My bays were open and we were here, but couldn't pump gasoline without electricity. We had a lot of people pitch in to help get us running so we could then, in turn, help others. A vendor I've used in the past, Fuessel Pump & Tank, came in with a backhoe to help clean up and removed a section of the boardwalk that crashed into one of my pumps. The Salvation Army was one group that I am tremendously grateful to. I received a phone call to jump start one of their trucks and it was the start of a wonderful partnership. They set up a base-of-operations at my station, with a canteen lunch-truck serving hot meals all day to anyone in town helping with the recovery. I offered coffee and my restroom facilities to anyone who needed to stop, clean up, or just wanted to rest. There was also a rotating group of volunteers from a Baptist Church in North Carolina who came to help. They would make the trip to New Jersey, work for free in any way they could, and after two weeks, another group would come take their place. I have a lot of people to thank for getting me through that difficult time.

Were you pumping gasoline then?

Not quite yet. Sal Risalvato and NJGCA put me in contact with the proper folks to get a generator to power my site. Unfortunately, security was so tight that they wouldn't allow the generator to be delivered! It was really chaotic. Eventually two gentlemen from a power utility in Georgia surprised me with a visit. They told me the town wanted to get me set up and operational since I was one of the only businesses not crushed by the storm. They restored my power quickly and I went on to service their vehicle for free. After that I was able to pump gasoline.

That must have been a relief.

It really was. With power restored, I was finally able to pump gasoline and allowed me to fuel up police, first responder, and contractor vehicles that were in the area helping with the recovery.

How long before you were out of gas?

I was out of gas a week later, but my supplier, Buckeye Energy, pulled through. They were in contact with me daily, had a repair company come out to service my equipment, repair the credit card terminals on my pumps, and made gasoline deliveries to my station even though I wasn't able to fully pay with my funds tied up in other areas. Later, they even came in with Sunoco to paint, repair canopies, and help

in any way they could.

So your business became a kind of "base camp" for the area?

Yes. We are centrally located in town and were the only business really open, so there was a lot of activity at our station. We did as many repairs as we could in the beginning, which were mostly tire patch jobs since everyone was driving over road debris. The Salvation Army gave me a placard to help me gain more access to other areas of the island, which also helped me get to others who needed assistance and get them back to my shop.

At that point, what did a typical day look like?

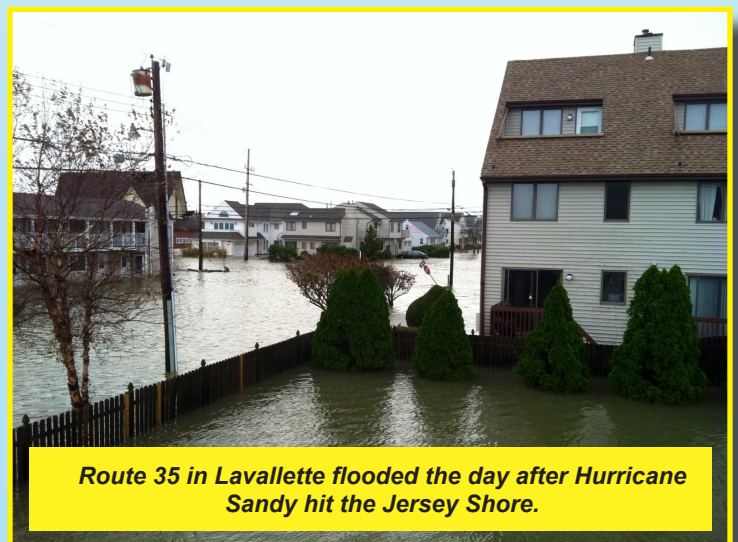
We literally had hundreds of folks a day come to the station. Some came to use the restroom and get cleaned up. Others came to get food from our Salvation Army friends or coffee in our waiting room. We had a lot of contractors who came through with gas cans to fuel up their generators. Police and first responders came by to refuel their vehicles or exchange information. In a very real way, we became the center of town for a few months.

Did you have all hands on deck to make it work?

Yes and no. My sons were there to help, but I lost a few employees. In fact, since the media was telling everyone that it would be six months to a year before the area was up and running, six people quit on me in the days after the storm. I knew they needed money and had families to provide for, but I asked them to go on unemployment and we'd get them back working ASAP. Since that time two of them have returned. One young man in particular was a tremendous help. His name is Dominick Narcisi and I couldn't have made it all work without his help. He was there with us seven days a week, pumping gas, repairing tires, and doing everything he could to help. Ironically, while I was waiting on line to cross over the bridge to get to the shop, Dominick rode his bike and usually had the station open before I could even drive in!

Were you able to stay informed about what was going on after the storm?

Yes. I was receiving emails from NJGCA keeping me up to date on events around the state. Locally, however, the



Route 35 in Lavallette flooded the day after Hurricane Sandy hit the Jersey Shore.



A local home in Lavallette still waiting to either be repaired, torn down, or rebuilt after Superstorm Sandy. Sadly, this is still a common sight in the area eight months after the storm ended. Meanwhile, residents and vacationers still aren't returning as in years past, which is affecting local businesses.

Lavallette Business Association was a tremendous help. The president of the association, Mark Speaker, sent emails every morning for two months after the storm, giving updates and information from the local authorities working in the area. I really looked forward to getting his emails everyday since it made me feel like I wasn't alone.

How is the community now?

Things are much better than they were, but still not completely back to normal. There are lots of residents who haven't made it back yet because their homes are still being repaired. The number of vacationers and beach-goers is still very low for this time of year, which means most of the local businesses haven't fully recovered. I have no doubt we'll be back and better than ever, but it's going to take some time.

What is business like today?

We still have a lot of activity as people continue to rebuild. I still do dozens of tire repairs everyday due to people driving over random debris, and service vehicles aiding in the recovery. However, I still don't have many "regular resident" customers patronizing my shop for vehicle repairs or gasoline sales, which is really worrying me. People who used to be customers aren't around anymore; their houses are still in bad shape, need to be fixed, or they've just given up on the area. How do you rebuild your business and get your shop back to normal when many of your patrons are gone and haven't returned to town? Drive around and you'll see what I mean. I'm also still short staffed. Like I said earlier, some of

my workers weren't able to return, so I'm here more than I've ever been to make sure things get done.

I'm sure you can't go through such an experience without having it change you.

No, you really can't. I'm up and running today thanks to some incredibly individuals and their extraordinary generosity. Their examples have made me more conscious than ever to help others in need.

Any tips for fellow business owners on how to run a successful business?

Take advantage of technology and don't be afraid to embrace it. A lot of people in our industry shy away from it, but they must realize their customers have long since made it part of their daily lives. For instance, my business has a website (www.kellysseabaysunoco.com) which helps me connect with potential customers. What's more, I also use an email marketing system that let's me send out reminders to customers about routine maintenance, notifies them of specials we're running, or just updates them on new services we're offering. Then, those customers are able to leave customer feedback and rate their experience. Any business owner doesn't have to know how to "do it" all. I certainly don't, but I pay for this service, and it's both affordable and necessary today.

Do you have any words of wisdom to share after Sandy?

If there is one thing this experience has taught me, it's that you have two choices: **give up or get it done.** Do what you can to help your customers and your community. You don't have to do everything for free, but realize that you're in the service industry and that means helping people. You have to nurture that symbiotic relationship with your customers since it will not only keep them coming back but also help you reach new patrons. Also, it's important to be charitable. In the past, we've sponsored and run a skin board tournament every year, sponsored fireworks, helped renovate a soccer field in town, and supported local charities. But today, I feel like I have more of a reason than ever to give back after all that was given to me since Sandy. ■



Paul and Salvation Army volunteers at his shop after Hurricane Sandy. The Salvation Army used Paul's station as a rally point to help responders and others in need.

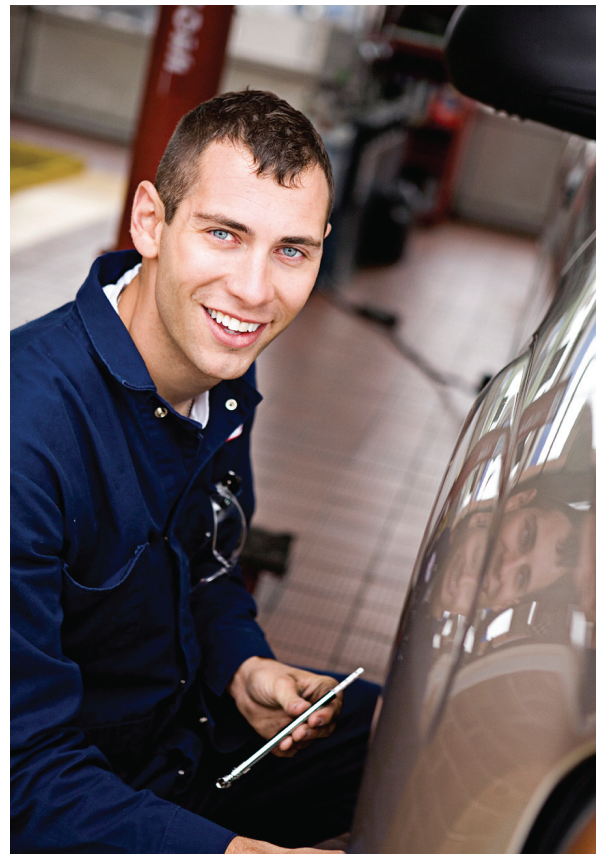
Great News for NJGCA Members

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Unless you're a large business with hundreds or thousands of employees, providing and administering a health benefits plan can be a huge burden. However, if you're a NJGCA member, you can now take advantage of a great group offering through the **Association Master Trust**

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