

Single parents, STAND receive cars from Mike's Auto Body

AMY CRANE

Special to the Clayton Pioneer

Christmas came early for three deserving families and one nonprofit organization in Contra Costa County. Mike's Auto Body, owned by Clayton residents Mike and Lauri Rose, is one of more than 55 shops across the nation that participated in the Akzo Nobel National Benevolence Program, which presents refurbished cars to deserving individuals or organizations during the holiday season. Mike's Auto Body, along with help from participating parties, has fixed up and donated 19 cars over the last seven years.

Mike's Concord location refurbished a 2000 Honda Accord donated by AAA of Northern California for Gloria Parker, who lost her daughter in a car accident and is now raising

her 4-year-old granddaughter. Six months after Parker's daughter's death, a relative totaled her car in an accident. She has been renting cars for the past year and a half.

Kanika Guillory-Ashford is a single mother of two. Originally from Contra Costa County, she moved to Oakland for work, but still attends Los Medanos College in Pittsburg. She spends sometimes up to five hours getting to school on public transportation. The 2003 Hyundai Santa Fe, donated by Safeco Insurance and repaired by Mike's Pittsburg shop, will help her balance her life between Oakland and Pittsburg.

Non-profit organization Stand! Against Domestic Violence received a 2003 Ford Windstar, donated by Mercury Insurance Group and repaired by Mike's Brentwood location. Many women flee their homes

with their children due to life-threatening abuse. It is critical that STAND be able to provide families with quick and safe transportation.

Ruben Garcia received full custody of his grandchildren due to his daughter's fight with substance abuse. In Garcia's struggle to be a better role model for his grandchildren, he joined the Proud Father's Men's Circle Support Group. He currently relies on public transportation for shopping and all of the children's activities as well as attending his group. The 2001 Dodge Intrepid donated by Todd W. Ellicott and fixed up by Mike's on Broadway in Walnut Creek will help Garcia's days run more smoothly.

"We are in an industry that has the means to get these vehicles road ready," says Mike Rose. "It is just a matter of getting all our vendors on the same page."



LAURI AND MIKE ROSE AND THEIR SON BRENNAN (holding baby) with three representatives from STAND.

Clayton Post Office rates high on customer service



THE CLAYTON POST OFFICE TEAM: Linda Martin, Johnnie L. Johnson (Postmaster), Andy Caceres, Jimmy Hernandez, Jocelyn Devera, Judy Corbett (Customer Service Supervisor)

ANDRÉ GENSBURGER
Clayton Pioneer

Johnnie L. Johnson, Postmaster of the Clayton Post Office, will be the first to tell you that he takes his job very seriously.

"Our goal is five minutes or less in line," he said, explaining the district office "Secret Shopper" program, where they randomly visit post offices and stand in line. "They do this twice a quarter," he said. "We scored 100 percent both times."

Johnson's been on the job as Clayton's Postmaster since August 2004, after transferring from a supervisory position at Concord's post office. He had

been there since 1979 and has seen all the changes over the years, including online stamps, the effects of e-mailing and, of course, those "other guys."

"It's all about service," he said.

Judy Corbett, customer service supervisor, agreed. "He's all about the service."

"We just received a Five-Star Customer Service Award from the Oakland district office," Johnson said, holding up the plaque and letter from District Manager Kim Fernandez. "This is a rating done by customers."

Following a tour of the Clayton facility, Johnson said it is the post office goal to have all mail delivered before 5 p.m.

When asked about the old motto: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds," Johnson laughed as rain poured down outside the office.

"We don't have that," he said, "but we do take our delivery seriously. We want our carriers safe," he said. "It's God first, then the post office. Even when we're busy, we focus on our customers. They depend on us."

This holiday season, the post office was very busy. "I think we got a lot of 94521 business," he said. "They like coming because of our friendly clerks. And we have very friendly clerks."

Employee, from page A1

organizing the police property evidence room.

"I liked getting rid of all that stuff," she said, laughing. "I'm detail oriented, so that was a fun job. I like success."

Christ describes herself as "married, with one dog." Husband Steve is a BART police officer.

Also receiving peer recognition awards for the second year in a row were Officer Rich Enea, who was named Sworn Police Employee of the Year, and Russ Eddy, who was "hands down" the favorite for Police Reserve Officer of the Year.

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