

HOMETOWN PROGRESS

Small businesses are vital to the community. They meet the needs of local residents and support the economy by serving as the largest retail employers in the area. Locally-owned businesses build strong neighborhoods by sustaining vibrant town centers and contribute to area causes. In Hometown Progress 2017, presented by Siuslaw News, these hometown businesses seek to show how they impact the Florence-area and western Lane County's culture and community.

Tony's Garage is a real family affair



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

The Phillips family works together at Tony's Garage, a car repair facility in Florence.

BY MARK BRENNAN
SIUSLAW NEWS

Tony Phillips is a very busy man. He is the owner of Tony's Garage in Florence and, along with members of his family and longtime employee Stuart Cross, repairs and provides maintenance services for most brands of domestic and foreign automobiles.

The parking lot at Tony's is usually full of vehicles, of all types, waiting to be repaired or picked up by their owners. The reason customers bring their vehicles in growing numbers to the business is the experience and knowledge he brings to his work.

"I spent 22 years at a new car dealership in the service department. I was a technician, so I got to watch a number of different service managers and the different things going on around the shop," Tony said. "I got to see what works and what doesn't work, and see where the mistakes were made and how to avoid them."

Tony has been operating the garage since 2001, but it was only recently that his wife joined him on a daily basis, working with customers at the front desk as they drop off or pick up their car.

"Melissa retired from Banner Bank last year and came to work here with us," Tony said. "She gets to hang out with me and the boys now,

everyday. That is pretty awesome. Having her here is really going good and the customers love to see her in the office and visit with her."

Tony and Melissa's sons, Kevin and Kyle, are also integral parts of the team, and both are well-trained, dedicated young men who bring a strong core of automotive knowledge to every repair they undertake.

"We sent both boys to college in Portland, to automotive school, and they got their degrees and came back and work here with us," Tony said. "It's great to be able to work with my boys and my wife, doing something that provides a service to our community and that we all enjoy."

The continually increasing sophistication of automobiles, and the equipment needed to diagnose and repair modern vehicles, requires an understanding of the latest automotive systems and a familiarity with software programs that have fundamentally changed the manner in which repairs are diagnosed and completed.

"The boys keep honing their skills everyday. Cars change every year and there is always new stuff to learn and new problems to figure out and fix," Tony said. "We can pretty much do everything you need to do on your car, with the exception of the warranty work that the factory will only pay the dealership to do."

Tony is a friendly, engaging man with a twinkle in his eye and a lilt in his voice that make it clear he enjoys his work. He is also hesitant to share the contributions he has made to local nonprofit organizations in town that often have older vehicles and limited financial resources to keep those vehicles in running order.

For the past few years, Tony's Garage has assisted with repairs on the vehicles owned by the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County and Florence Food Share, among others, often covering the costs associated with those repairs.

Jack Davis, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club, believes the contributions are essential to the continued operation of his nonprofit organization.

"Tony's contributions are nothing short of amazing. He has never charged us a penny for any of the repairs he has done on our van or bus. It is the generous support of community businesses like his that keep our club viable," Davis said.

Tony said, "I feel like my name is on everything that rolls out of this door, so I have a personal stake in everything done by everybody here. If your name is on it, you need to make sure everything is done right and the customer is happy."

Tony's Garage is located at 1730 21st Street and can be reached at 541-902-1955.



The Phillips Family
Kevin, Melissa, Tony & Kyle

**Complete Bumper to Bumper
Auto Repair and Service
Since 2001!**

TONY'S GARAGE

**1730 W. 21st Street
541-902-1955**