

BROWARD BUZZ

IT'S A PLEASURE



PHOTOS BY CANDACE WESTERHALD STAFF

HANDS-ON BOSS: Davie Garage owner Robert Tubach goes over paperwork with office coordinator Susan Pritchett. Tubach also works on cars.

MASTER MECHANIC

THE OWNER OF DAVIE GARAGE, WHERE CLIENTS SAY CARS ARE REPAIRED AT 'FAIR' PRICES, IS JUICED BY MAKING ENGINES HUM

BY ASHLEY FANTZ
afantz@herald.com

When was the last time your car mechanic handed you a bill and explained the term "after-market price?"

This occurrence, a daily miracle at Davie Garage, means owner Robert Tubach orders parts at a lower price and in turn charges his customers hundreds of dollars less than the marked-up amount they are likely to be charged elsewhere.

This bizarre act of fairness has prompted customers to drop off their vehicles at night and leave their keys in the mailbox at the Davie Road shop, which appears plucked off the *Little House on the Prairie* soundstage with its wood frame and "Come back, y'all" front porch.

So trusting of their car mechanic, customers have handed him their credit card before he has even looked at their vehicle.

"You just feel he's fair," said Kristin Way, 44, of Davie who was having trouble with a van that has traveled 149,000 miles.

Way's insistence on keeping Tubach's number programmed in her cell phone has paid off. Tubach is charging her about \$260 for a part that would have likely cost \$850 at



IF YOU GO

Davie Garage is at 4301 Davie Rd., Davie. Call 954-587-2310.

SMILING FACES WANTED

It's A Pleasure profiles people who go beyond the call of courtesy in jobs serving the public. To nominate someone, call the Broward news desk at 954-538-7102 or e-mail browardnews@herald.com.

other shops.

"I've been to other garages — a specialty Toyota place, which I won't name. I've been unhappy," she said. "My neighbors say, 'Go to Davie Garage.' My chiropractor loves it."

"Dr. Larry?" Tubach asks her. "Yeah! Dr. Larry!" she replies.

A PLEASANT RESPITE

A respite of Mayberry decency in a bottom-line industry, Davie Garage main-

tains a staff of three mechanics.

Including Tubach, who bought the shop in 1998, all are certified in Automotive Service Excellence, a process that requires study, focus and testing. They repair an average of 12 cars a day and Tubach test-drives every vehicle before it leaves the garage.

The office still uses paper records, but depends on a computerized data system that allows him to punch in the make and model of a car to retrieve its unique wiring blueprint and a corresponding pricing menu for parts and service.

And speaking of the office, for a car garage, it's surprisingly free of the grime that cakes most of them.

A wall shelf that holds screws, plugs, caps, and an array of thingamajigs looks more organized than Martha Stewart's spice rack. There are no babe calendars, unless the men of NASCAR count. The bathroom is freakishly clean.

The massive tool chests — painstakingly organized — of Tubach and his co-mechanic Mark Brombacher of Pembroke Pines are pushed together. After the shop closes, the two have been known to go to work on a car,



QUALITY CONTROLLER: Robert Tubach works on a van's radiator. "It's just about doing quality work," he says.

dismantling an engine or dashboard to solve a particularly baffling problem. They are juiced by the process, their ability to put it all back together and turn the key to hear the engine hum.

"NOT GREASE MONKEYS"

"We're not grease monkeys. We don't build hot rods," Tubach said.

"Some people think of mechanics as not being very intelligent, but to fix a car nowadays, it's more technical," he added.

A father of three, Tubach learned how to repair cars from his father, who owned two repair shops in New Jer-

sey. Alfred Tubach grew up in Germany, where he worked as a mechanic for Volkswagen. He polished his trade in England, and then in South America. Now living in New Jersey, buying and selling luxury cars, the elder Tubach calls his son once a week.

During his eighth-grade summer in New Jersey, Tubach apprenticed with an "old German guy named Heinz" who would whack the back of his legs with a hose if he made a mistake.

"It's just about doing quality work you can be proud of," he said. "Work you can stand behind."