

# SHOPOWNER®

Business & Technical Intelligence for Automotive Repair Shop Professionals

**Babcox**

## THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB

JOEL & PAIGE  
HENSLEE,  
OWNERS OF  
QUALITY BRAKES  
& ALIGNMENT



**INSIDE:**  
Content from...

**BRAKE  
& FRONT END**

importCAR

**UNDERHOOD  
Service**

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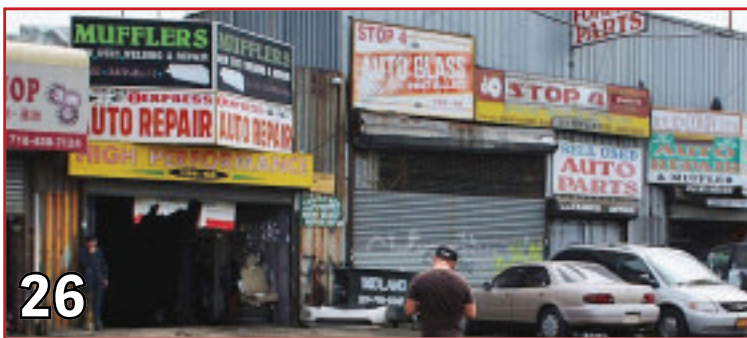
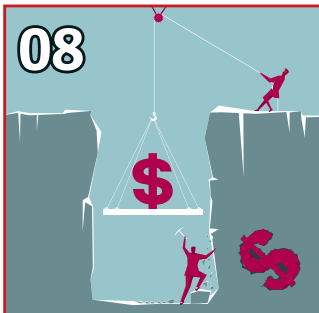
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## SHOP PROFILE



**A**sk him who he is around Quality Brakes & Alignment in Cleburne, TX, and Joel Henslee will give you a lot of titles. Big Cheese is not among them.

"You could say I'm OOC, Founder, Chief Cook and Bottle Washer, Porter, Janitor, Accounting, Payroll, Human Resources, Safety Committee President and Teacher, but I'm not the boss," Henslee says. "My wife, Paige, has actually been the owner since 2017 – I just get to come in and look pretty."

Something else you won't hear from Henslee is the word job.

"Well, I guess I did in high school but since then I will never say I have a job because I love what I do so much," he says.

Quality Brakes & Alignment has been true to its name since its founding in 1994, and has been



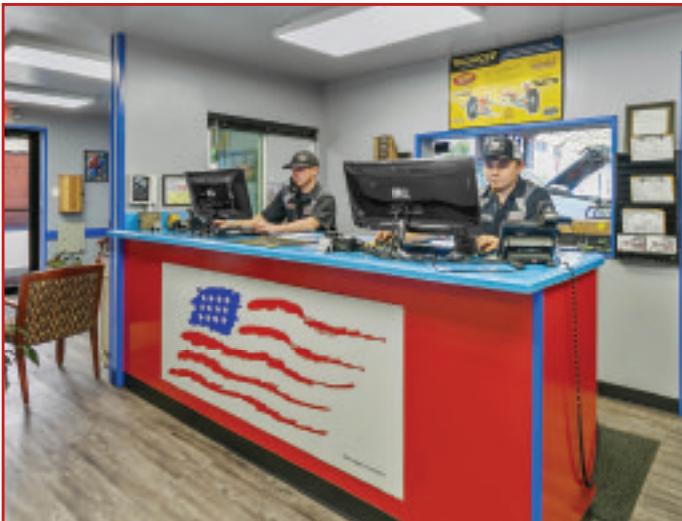
specialty needs.

"It's a lot for a shop to be able to do everything and to stay on top of the changes that are happening so fast. So we have stayed specialized – we do brakes, front ends and air conditioning.

In addition, Henslee is partnering with a friend who is installing a brand new building for ADAS recalibrations. "This will be perfect for us to sub our ADAS needs out to him," he says.

Of course, Henslee says, there are always customers who demand customized service. "For special customers, we do other things. They beg us, they don't want to take them anywhere else. So we can align their motorhomes and we can align the huge monster trucks that are really too big for the road anyway."

Henslee says his customers' experience would have been markedly different if he had been just a little



more flexible in his youth. "My father had an RV repair business, and I would probably still be working in that field if it weren't for plumbing. I cannot stand to do plumbing, and 80% of the repairs on an RV is plumbing that is hidden behind everything. You must either disassemble everything or you have to be a contortionist."

Henslee said his father expected him to continue in the family business and, during high school he actually did do RV detailing for his father. "I made really good money in it, but when I started in college (Tarrant County College, doing accounting, business management, air conditioning, refrigeration and electrical) I didn't have that much time anymore. A friend going through the college's automotive program worked at a dealership, and they needed a person to detail their new and used cars."

The general manager was bowled over by Henslee's detailing skills and offered him a job on the spot. About two months later, he says, he was offered a promotion.

"He knew what classes I was taking for my major and he said, 'We need you for other things. Would you be interested in going in the parts department?'" "I told him I didn't want to hinder my education, which he understood," Henslee says. "But he told me he saw great potential in me."

Throughout college, Henslee says he was blessed to work with several people who recognized his true potential for customer service. "They helped bring out what was already in my blood and genetics or however I'm wired – that I care about people. People tell me that I missed my calling, that I should have been a teacher. No thanks – I couldn't do the schooling. But, in a sense, I think I am somewhat of a doctor, because we're fixing people's problems. If we can make that car happy, then the customer's going to be happy and everybody's going to feel good."

While he was being lauded for his commitment to his customers, and he was climbing the ranks of the dealership repair world, he was beginning to feel overwhelmed by his commute. "I was assistant manager of service and parts at a dealer in Irving, TX about 60 miles away. My wife and son were here in Cleburne, and I was gone 14 hours a day, five days a week and probably every other Saturday. I was missing out on him growing up and I was missing out on my relationship with my wife. She said I needed to find something else or we were



## QUALITY BRAKES & ALIGNMENT

**Owner's Name:** Joel and Paige Henslee

**Location:** Cleburne, TX

**Hours of Operation:** M-F 7:30 am – 5:30 pm.

**Founded:** 1994

**Number of Employees:** 7

**Facility Square Footage:** 5,000 Square Feet

**Bay Count:** 6 double bays

**Number of hoists/lifts:** two alignment lifts: 12,000 lb. and 18,000 lb. capacity;

four two-post lifts: two 10,000 lb., one 12,000 lb. and one 14,000 lb. capacity

**Average Daily Car Count:** 12

**Business Affiliations:** Auto Value Repair Center, Cleburne Chamber of Commerce, Keene County Chamber of Commerce, Hill College Automotive Technology Program

## SHOP PROFILE

technician is my right hand and both legs," he says. "He's been with me for 11 years and is an incredible talent. Dale Pogue is assistant manager/service writer/technician and he does everything Steven doesn't do."

In addition, Henslee says the shop couldn't operate without expert technicians. Jeff Stolte, Joe Scott and Bryce Wood each have special skills and complementary industry training to handle any undercar or air conditioning service need.

"And of course, my wife, Paige, has been CEO since 2017 is the real boss. That means I get to come in and do the fun stuff, like talk to people."

When talking to Henslee it's obvious that communication, empathy and understanding are in his nature. He strives to meet the needs of his customers and his team on every occasion, from ensuring the job is done correctly to searching for a new employee.

"We've had our share of turnover over the past 28 years or so but it's been minimal," he says. "We've lost some people to tragic accidents but I base my relationship with coworkers on the beliefs, their desires and wants and needs. And if I can feel like that I can help with that, then therein I have long-term employment."

"I want to call it luck, but I let prospective teammates come to me. I've had ones that I would love to steal from another shop, but I don't believe in that," he says. "That's no good for anyone."

Henslee explains that when a prospective employee does come to him the interview process is usually different than expected. "I've only done two 'job interviews' in my life, and that was years ago and I don't remember them. To me, my interviews are not the norm, because I need to know what's in their heart. I need to know what matters most to them."

Of course the talent and skill level



are important, Henslee explains, but he encourages students at nearby Hill College to join his team to gain industry experience. "We're losing technicians too fast for our industry, so we encourage the next generation. I've been on the Hill College advisory board as chair or vice chairperson since '97 and we're regularly taking interns."

Yet the ones who stand out to Henslee are the ones who don't necessarily decide to work in this industry. "We need them in the automotive field, but if it's not their calling, and things can change in life, I encourage them to take a different career path. I let them know, 'Hey, I

with them to pull what they're experiencing. We want them to feel like family and not feel scared or nervous to come to us. The number one thing is it just needs to be taken care of," Henslee says. "Because we want to see them over and over. We want their family, their friends, their neighbors...we'll even take their enemies!"

Henslee says customers get an electronic thank you note after every visit but he does very little actual advertising. The shop's website allows customers to leave reviews, and although he doesn't ask for them he appreciates when customers talk about their service experience.

of transportation to get their kids back and forth to school, doctors, grocery stores and work. Recipients were randomly selected through nominations by the community," says Henslee.

"In addition, we pride ourselves in our abilities with classic cars and trucks. We've had many incredible classic vehicles come through our shop over the years – usually when the owner can't get their vehicle to drive or stop safely. We've made them very safe for our roadways."

What's next for Joel Henslee and Quality Brakes & Alignment? Continued success, of course. "A lot



think you're wired like this, because I see how you are. Have you thought about doing this?' Several of them definitely changed their career path."

Acknowledging a technician shortage yet not trying to push everyone into automotive service may seem counterintuitive, but Henslee says what's important is to be a mentor, exhibit understanding and to help a young person to succeed

"I was so lucky to find my calling earlier. I've never had a job. I love the people contact, and again, helping to solve their problems. Sometimes that's not automotive."

When the problem IS automotive, Quality Brakes & Alignment continues to serve as mentor and teacher.

"Most people don't know what's wrong - they may think it's one thing but it's totally something different. We still need to have that communication

"It's incredible. That's my report card to know how I'm doing," he says. "It's actually 'us' because the guys are the ones making the reviews possible, but it is what drives me. It's very humbling that our customers will take the time that they do and post the things that they do."

Just as his customers give to him, Henslee and team give back to the community through several local non-profit organizations and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as with their local Auto Value parts distributor.

"We helped 4M Parts Warehouse do a vehicle give away a few years ago - we had 2 cars and 1 van that were gently used and brought back to life. We, along with another shop, donated out labor and 4M Parts Warehouse supplied all the parts to bring these vehicles back to life for single mothers in need

of the knowledge I have is due to all that Auto Value has put in front of me to help me grow as a person and as a business owner, a positive co-worker and caring friend," he says.

Ever the mentor, Henslee says succession plans are already in place for Steven Cheatham to take over the business. Henslee says "Steven is an awesome young man and the plan is for him to continue what we've built. I'm still going to be here a little longer, but I am ready to start dialing it back a little bit."

What won't be dialed back is Quality Brakes & Alignment's continued commitment to fixing the customer's complaint and problem the first time.

"Quality Brakes & Alignment wants all of its customers happy, the vehicle repaired correctly at a fair price and in reasonable time," says Joel Henslee. ■