

Fender Bender favorite

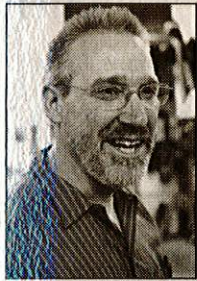
Kenosha man receives national accolades for auto body work

BY MATTHEW OLSON

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WAUKEGAN, Ill. — Robert Wisniewski has been making damaged cars whole again at Casey's Body Shop in Waukegan since he was a teenager, starting his work in auto repair while taking classes on the subject.

The years of hard work and high standards have led the Kenosha resident to be recognized as one of the best in the business by a national magazine.



Adam Gorsuch, manager at Casey's Auto Body in Waukegan, nominated Kenosha resident Rob Wisniewski.

Fender Bender, an auto repair industry magazine, recently named Wisniewski

the runner-up for best auto shop worker in the nation.

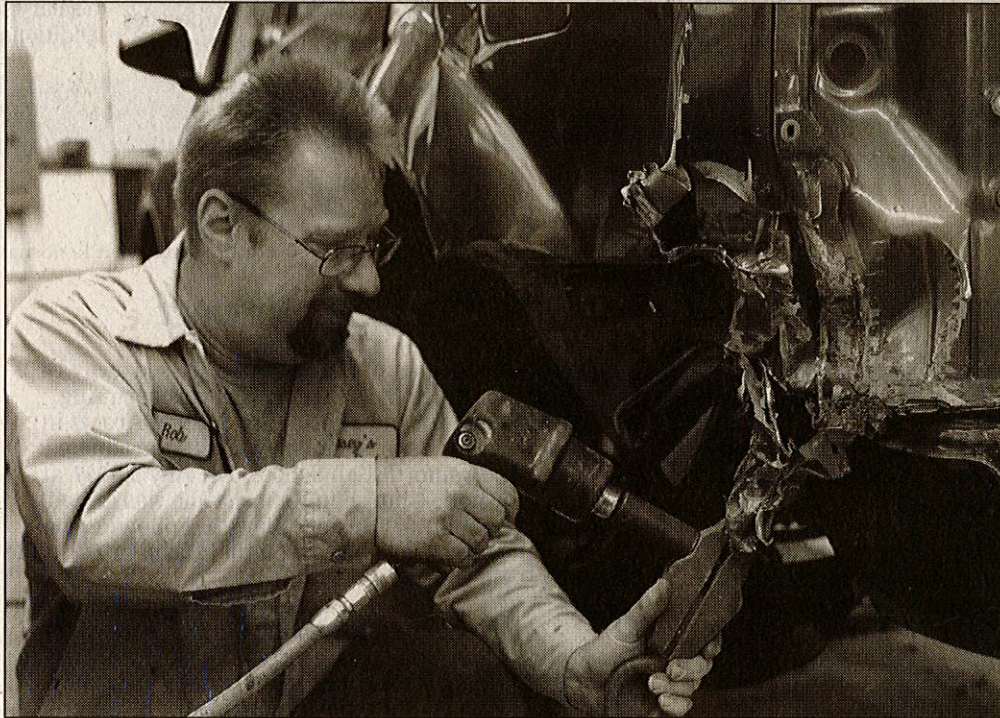
"It's an honor," Wisniewski said.

The magazine asked for submissions from across the nation for worthy candidates. Adam Gorsuch, a manager at Casey's, submitted Wisniewski for the honor.

"He's worthy of it," Gorsuch said. "He's just a very dedicated employee, and he deserves recognition."

Surprise honor

Wisniewski said Gorsuch told him of the nomination but neither man had received



KENOSHA NEWS PHOTOS BY BILL SIEL

Rob Wisniewski of Kenosha works at Casey's Auto Body in Waukegan. He was runner-up in Fender Bender magazine's contest for best auto shop worker in the country.

word from the magazine about the award. Their

answer came when the October 2011 issue of Fender Bender arrived.

"We opened up the magazine and then we saw the story," Wisniewski said. "The magazine didn't call about this, so it was definitely a surprise."

The magazine selected Zachary Utecht of Bellevue, Neb., as the best shop worker. But Wisniewski's runner-up finish led to a small sidebar in the magazine and a plaque displayed in the office.

Gorsuch said he also nominated Wisniewski for the

award last year, but found more favor this time around.

23 years on the job

Wisniewski, 40, has been working at Casey's, 840 S. Genesee St., for the last 23 years.

He started working in the shop at 16 as a painter while taking vocational school and high school classes, sometimes not finishing his work/school day until 9 p.m.

"I've been here the whole time," Wisniewski said.

Wisniewski grew up in Zion before moving to Kenosha in 1996. Despite the move, he continued working on

cars at Casey's.

'Artistic field'

Wisniewski said he enjoys his work.

"It's kind of an artistic field," Wisniewski said. "You have to be creative and artistic to fix cars, and you work on a different car every time."

Those changes and challenges keep Wisniewski going.

"If you're going to do the same job all your life, you might as well make it something you enjoy," Wisniewski said.

And Wisniewski also

The award

Who: Robert Wisniewski

What: Best auto shop worker

Sponsor: Fender Bender

Finish: Second in nation

views his work as something that should be done to the quality he expects.

"I try to fix every car as if it's my own," Wisniewski said. "If everyone did that, than we would have better repairs everywhere."

High standards

Gorsuch said Wisniewski's standards are high, but they are what keep customers happy.

"If Rob's happy, then everyone's happy," Gorsuch said. "He's a craftsman, and there's not many of them in the industry. Without Rob, I would never be able to leave and go on vacation."

The shop remains small at four employees, but Wisniewski said the quality of their work, their reputation and the advent of many repair orders being done by insurance companies through the Internet allows Casey's to stay busy.

Wisniewski said he also finished second in a repair competition while in high school and hopes he can break his streak of runner-up finishes soon. For now, he'll just keep on doing what he's done for more than two decades.

"I don't see myself doing anything else but this," Wisniewski said.