

Former GM workers open state's first Christian Brothers Automotive

Published: Saturday, August 27, 2011 | By Julie Makarewicz

GRAND RAPIDS — Career opportunities with General Motors moved Kurt and Kathy Hein around the country for many years, but they are hoping their latest venture keeps them in their home state of Michigan.

The couple opened Michigan's first **Christian Brothers Automotive** last week. It's located just west of the intersection of Kalamazoo Avenue and 28th Street, next to Meijer.



Cory Morse | The Grand Rapids Press

Mechanic Weston Forbes works to align the tires of a car at Christian Brothers Automotive in Grand Rapids. "It's state of the art," Forbes said about the infrared sensors used to align the tires. "It's within a tenth of a degree."

"I grew up in Michigan. This is where I've always wanted to be and it's just nice to be able to come back to Michigan and hopefully have a successful business," said Kurt Hein, who grew up on the east side of the state but found the business climate more inviting in West Michigan.

Hein worked for GM for 20 years in many different capacities, the latest as a regional marketing manager of customer care and after sales in Dallas. It was there he learned about Christian Brothers Automotive, met with the owners and struck a deal to open the first store in Michigan.

"I have a passion for cars. But I also have a strong commitment to faith and this company seemed like a perfect fit," Hein said.

Christian Brothers was founded in 1982 in Texas by Mark Carr. His basic company principal has continued throughout all of the franchise openings: "Honesty and integrity should be the driving force behind the business."

Hein believes in treating all customers with respect and honesty and as he would want to be treated himself.

The Grand Rapids store is the 88th Christian Brothers franchise, with businesses now located in 11 states.

Hein said another aspect that sets Christian Brothers apart is its commitment to providing a friendly and inviting atmosphere for customers.

With a brick and limestone-facade, the office is upscale and professional-looking. The customer waiting area is furnished with comfortable leather couches, homey accents like pictures and coffee tables, and hardwood floors.

The garage area includes nine bays with eight lifts and an alignment center. Each bay is equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and tools needed to diagnose problems and make necessary repairs. Hein said technicians work on every aspect of the vehicle from simple oil changes to diagnostics and complete engine replacements.

The business currently has four employees, but Hein hopes growth will allow him to hire more soon.

Eventually, Hein would love to expand the franchise with more stores — a business plan he hopes keeps him in Michigan.

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