

## Franchise repair shop finding solid place in Hub City market

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April 29, 2012 | By Walt Nett

After six months, the floor in the working bays at Christian Brothers Automotive, 6207 82nd St., shows no signs of oil spatter and other fluid stains that usually give garage decks the appearance of bad modern art.

It's white and glossy, adding to the feel of a well-lighted workspace. An epoxy coating and frequent sweeps with a floor machine maintain the luster.

And that's the way franchise owners Ron and Lori Bostick and executives of the Houston-based auto repair business like it.

In addition to helping maintain a bright working area, it also makes it easier for service writers to take a customer out into the working bays for a close look at a leaking brake cylinder or a hole in a muffler.

From that bright floor, to the leather sofas and fresh flowers in the waiting area and the cottage-like exterior facade, the message in the design is "this isn't your typical auto shop."

The difference comes forth in the shop's Twitter profile: "Glorifying God by providing Ethical & Excellent Automotive Repair Service for our customers."

And in a way, Ron Bostick isn't your typical auto business owner — he's a sales and marketing mind, rather than a "head under the hood" type.

He'd spent 16 years as a drug representative in the pharmaceutical industry and was looking for something different and a chance to be in business for himself.

A friend mentioned Christian Brothers, Bostick said, and he began his personal due diligence into the Houston-based chain, including a visit to the auto repair chain's Amarillo location.



Zach Long

**Christian Brothers Automotive in Lubbock features a waiting room not normally seen at auto repair shops. (Zach Long)**

the business's revenues off the top.

According to company documents, Christian Brothers requires a minimum net worth of \$100,000 with between \$75,000 and \$100,000 in liquidity.



Zach Long

**Christian Brothers Automotive is trying a different approach to the auto repair business in Lubbock. The repair shop features an upscale design theme. (Zach Long)**

While he was there, he decided that seeking a Lubbock franchise was his answer.

And, he admitted, he started contacting Christian Brothers executives by phone and email — a lot.

Ironically, Bostick said, as he was visiting the Amarillo location, another couple from Lubbock was meeting with Christian Brothers' executives to determine if the family and the business would be a good match.

When that deal didn't come together, Christian Brothers contacted the Bosticks and began the process again.

As franchise opportunities go, Christian Brothers isn't one of the more financially demanding for new operators, and takes a little different approach to receiving its revenues.

Christian Brothers corporate takes half the net profits after all expenses are paid, including the franchisee's salary, rather than taking a percentage of

The typical initial investment is about \$340,000, with the franchisee putting up a minimum \$70,000 cash and the rest financed through a 10-year Small Business Administration-guaranteed loan.

That covers the franchise fee, furniture, fixtures, a shuttle car and estimated working capital. The company conducts market research to find the site, buys the land and erects the building.

“They flew over the city with a helicopter, and they were impressed with the growth in Lubbock,” Bostick said, adding that the company bought the site from homebuilder Ron Betenbough, who Bostick said is a business mentor.

With Christian Brothers, however, obtaining a franchise is about more than money.

As a faith-based business, the company requires its franchisees to be professed Christians, and business practices are guided by a variety of biblical principles.

For example, Bostick said, once a year, the repair shops work through local churches to make available free oil changes to widows and single mothers, because of biblical teachings that encourage the faithful to care for them.

Bostick said business practices include such things as talking through an examination with the customer, and when they identify problems, employees are expected to discuss repair priorities with the customers — what work needs to be done soon and what can wait.

And upselling — pitching a service or a product the customer doesn’t need — isn’t part of the plan, he said.

The core principles of high-quality work and conducting business honestly are something the company treats as mandatory, and discerning that involves what Christian Brothers calls a “discovery day.”

It involves meetings with the executive management, real estate and training teams to take a close look at what’s really involved.



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Christian Brothers Automotive is trying a different approach to the auto repair business in Lubbock.

It was at that meeting that another Lubbock family opted out, making room for the Bosticks.

“We’ve been really excited with what the Bosticks have been able to do, introducing our brand to the market,” said Josh Wall, vice president of franchise and strategic development for Christian Brothers. “A lot of people are looking for a brand that services cars the way we do.”

Wall said that while the corporate office thinks there’s a second location in Lubbock’s future, it’s not on the company’s immediate horizon.

“Ron and Lori are chomping at the bit for it, and we certainly think they’re strong candidates for it,” Wall said. “But have some criteria we’d like to see. We want to build a strong foundation with a first location before we put in a second.”

And the company’s been plenty busy. Since it began franchising 16 years ago, Christian Brothers has growth to 100 locations in 12 states, and is on track to open at least 22 more shops and expand to five more states.

The company opened its 100th location last week in New Braunfels, Wall said.



Zach Long  
Christian Brothers Automotive is trying a different approach to the auto repair business in Lubbock. The repair shop is founded on christian morals and practices. (Zach Long)

<http://lubbockonline.com/business/2012-04-28/franchise-repair-shop-finding-solid-place-hub-city-market>