



George Stark, former Redskin star and auto dealer, founded the Excel Institute to teach men and women auto technician skills. WAPA members donated suits and shirts and ties and a check for \$500 to the "dress for success" portion of the program. Accepting the check are (left to right) Excel CEO Jack McCullough, Katie Clark Board of Trustees, WAPA President Mark Solheim, George Starke Excel founder, Hillary Harter and John Harter a founder of WAPA.

WAPA Teams Up with Excel for Service Project

Excel provides path to auto tech employment for school dropouts, unemployed and unskilled youth and adults

The Excel Institute, founded by John Lyon and George Starke, is a place where "at risk" young men and women who may have lost their way can create a successful life through training to become certified ASE auto technicians, combined with, education and life skills.

The Institute first opened its doors 10 years ago, when George Starke, former Head Redskin Hog and Ford auto dealer in the 80's and 90's, decided there were too few auto technicians and dealers were constantly trying to steal good ones away from each other. But Starke's vision was not only to create more technicians it was also

to reach out to the unemployed or under-employed in the D.C. area and turn their lives around with an education and skills training for specific jobs in the auto industry.

"We have watched the work Excel has done over the years and realized that we wanted to help," said WAPA President Mark Solheim. With that in mind, WAPA launched it's first "service" meeting to acquaint WAPA members with the mission of the Excel Institute. At a press briefing and tour of the Institute, WAPA members brought clothing that would help the students "dress for success" at job interviews. WAPA

will continue this effort at the October 17 WAPA rally, where participants will be asked to bring appropriate interview clothing for both male and female Excel graduates. The Association also presented George Starke with a \$500 donation for the Dress for Success program. "We consider this sort of a first date in the start of a relationship with the Excel Institute," Solheim said.

Excel has graduated over 600 students since 1998. The Institute helps place their graduates with Metro, VW and Toyota dealers, fleet services agencies, Jiffy Lube and local auto service agencies.

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The shop at the Institute provides hands-on experience for trainees. Antonio Harrison (left in far right photo) and Keith Bailey, Jr. stand by a 60's vintage Thunderbird their class is restoring, which will auctioned off to benefit the Institute.

They have an 85 percent placement record for their graduates.

Excel recruits about 200 students a year and graduates 50 percent of their recruits. The graduation record is actually quite high since all their recruits are school dropouts or unemployed and unskilled.

Starke, fresh from addressing the newest class at the Institute, said Washington has a large unskilled population that are unemployed and unemployable. Some of those unemployed have also had trouble with the law. But those facts do not keep them out of the Institute, because those are exactly the folks that Starke wants to reach, teach and employ. The minimum age at the beginning was 16 now it is 18. Excel spends about \$20,000 a year on each student. All students are on scholarship. That scholarship is based on a simple agreement with each student: You can't miss a day and you can't be late. Otherwise, Starke tells them, "you won't make it."

The program runs for a year to a year and a half. During that time, students study auto technician skills including: the General Services Technician/Pre-Apprentice Training, Intro to Automotive Technology/Alternative Fuels, Safety and Pollution Prevention Training, and computer literacy. In addition students receive GED instruction, basic literacy training, life management and job placement skills. "That's a long journey," Starke said, "but you have to want to do it and you have to have the people on staff to help you do it."

In 2008, Excel received certification from the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation. In 2009, Excel and Volkswagen of America Group began a five year agreement, "Partners in Education" which is a comprehensive education initiative for institutions in the greater Washington area.

Michelle Williams, VW general Manager of Diversity and Organizational Development, said: "VW is committed to the

communities where it works. Sometimes we are reduced to being simple check writers but every now and then an opportunity comes along which allows us to partner with an organization and impact people's lives. We are very excited to be able to provide vehicles for the students to train on and provide training for the technicians and that we have provided the opportunity for 225 of the students to go through the life skills program. And that is much more rewarding than any check writing could be for us."

Asked where he recruited his auto technician trainers, Starke said that he originally recruited trainers who already worked in shops, "because they already know how the real world works." He now has some graduates who have come back after success in the field to teach at Excel.

Asked how students are recruited, Starke said that after operating for 10 years, "people know we are here and they come." Students have graduated and brought their sons into the program or sons have graduated and brought fathers into the program.

Starke told about taking a graduate over to Alexandria Toyota to try and get him an interview. Starke was getting ready to pitch the sales manager when the man says: "Stop, George. You don't have to pitch me, I graduated from Excel. And by the way, I'm going to send my cousin to Excel."

Luncheon guests were treated to a tour of the spacious facility on V Street, NE, acquired in 2005, which includes state-of-the-art classrooms and shop where trainees were hard at work on a variety of service and donated vehicles, including a classic 60's vintage Ford Thunderbird that the students are restoring and which will be auctioned off to benefit Excel.



Street Dreams 2010 Antique Car Show

Vern Parker's "Street Dreams" invitational antique car show featuring cars that he has profiled since 1988 at the Washington Times or on his Web site, www.vernparker.com was held at the Spring Hill Recreation Center in McLean, Va., September 5.

The invitational event is a free annual gathering of antique car enthusiasts. This year WAPA was a co-sponsor.

Vintage classics such as the 1939 Standard Ford Woody Wagon (photo top, right) were proudly parked around the Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Gullwing. Each year one car-- the newest of the new cars -- is on display. Usually that car is provided by an automobile manufacturer. But this year, the new Gullwing Mercedes-Benz is privately owned (photo center right) by Ace Rosner, and it is only the second sold in U.S. (photo bottom right) Vern Parker as sheriff of the 20-year old show stands next to a 1951 Ford sheriff's car.

There were 90 cars on display at the show. In absolutely perfect weather the owners of the antique cars selected as their favorite a red 1939 Chevrolet school bus. The bus played a prominent roll in the Indiana basketball movie "Hoosiers." The discerning spectators, however, picked a blue 1966 Corvette as the people's choice award winner. At next year's car show the Corvette and owner Denney Keys will have the honored location beneath the big tent on the hill.

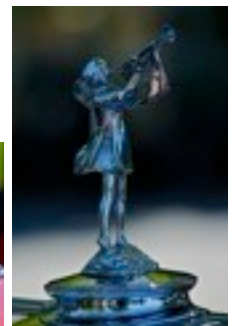
Be sure to mark, Sept. 4, 2011, the Sunday before Labor Day, on your 2011 calendar. You don't want to miss the 23rd annual car show. For more info and photos check www.vernparker.com.



Test Your Knowledge: match the hood ornaments below to a model and date? See answers below.



1929 Packard, 1953 Oldsmobile, 1939 Plymouth Pickup, 1928 Chrysler, 1936 Cadillac, '85 Series Fleetwood, 1929 Cadillac V8



President's Message...

Our last event, on August 25, was a lunch at the Excel Institute, a vocational school in Northeast DC for at-risk students who want to learn how to be auto technicians and mechanics. WAPA donated \$500 to the school's Dress for Success campaign and WAPA members will bring (I hope!) clothes appropriate for job interviews to the WAPA rally on October 17.

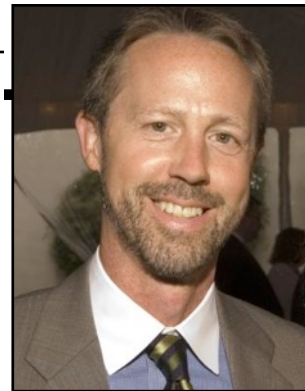
After lunch, we went on a tour of the facilities--this is the real deal, and Excel Institute graduates more than 100 students a year and helps place them in dealership service divisions and other repair facilities around the region. Excel's benefactors and supporters are a who's who in the DC scene. Former Redskin George Starke, a co-founder, was at the lunch. So was board member Katie Clark, a VP at Merrill Lynch, as well as representatives from VW, who are also Excel benefactors. Eleanor Holmes Norton is an honorary board member. As Starke explained, the only requirement for admission is for the students to commit to show up and to be on time.

WAPA was also a sponsor for Vern Parker's Street Dreams classic car show. Many WAPA members were among the 100's of participants.

Also on tap for WAPA events: On September 15, Loren Angelo of Audi will talk about the new A8 and other Audi news. The WAPA Rally is on Sunday, October 17, and Toyota comes to the Press Club on October 20. On November 17, Either Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs David Sandalow or Patrick Davis, Program Manager for the Office of Vehicle Technologies the battery initiative for electric vehicles, and GM is on tap for December.

As always, feel free to email me at msoelheim@kiplinger.com with comments.

Mark Solheim



2010 WAPA
President

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Sept. 15 WAPA Meeting
 NOON at NPC
 Loren Angelo,
 Mgr., Audi Brand Marketing
 Audi North America



Angelo joined Audi of America in April 2008 as Manager of Audi Brand Marketing where he oversees the advertising and marketing communications programs.

Prior to joining Audi, Loren oversaw Communications Planning at Merkley+Partners Advertising in New York. During his seven years with the agency, he oversaw a variety of communication campaign developments for clients such as Mercedes-Benz, Smith Barney, and Pinnacle Foods.

His passion for automobiles began when growing up in a family car business that also included several classic car restorations. In the late '90's, Loren turned this personal interest into a career pursuit as the Vice-President/Associate Media Director at Lowe Lintas & Partners where he oversaw media planning responsibilities on the General Motors GMC truck and sport-utility business. The September 15 meeting is at noon at the National Press Club. For reservations please go to www.washautopress.org.