



Brian Allen decided to become an auto recycler early. It's a decision his children have made too.

GRAND PLAN

Auto Recycling Is In The Blood

Not every 13-year-old dreams of becoming an auto recycler. But Brian Allen did. Brian is the second-generation owner of Grand Valley Auto Parts, Inc. in Jenison, Mich. (GrandValleyAutoParts.com). His father, Loren Allen, bought the business in 1967. Brian and his eight siblings all helped, but according to Brian's daughter, Jennifer McDonald, he saw a future in the work.

"My dad was one of the kids who took a real interest," she explained. "He started working here at 13. By the time he graduated from high school, he knew he wanted to work with his father. He ran the shop with my grandpa and eventually bought it from him."

Brian bought Grand Valley Auto Parts in 1992 and shifted its focus from scrap to parts. He immedi-

ately became a member of the Automotive Recyclers of Michigan (ARM) and a few years later joined Absolute Premium Recycled Parts (Team PRP) and the United Recyclers Group (URG). Grand Valley Auto Parts is now a Michigan Certified Automotive Recycler (MICAR).

"He got us involved in the industry [associations], and we still are," said Jennifer, who is the business' office manager, an ARM board member and chair of its scholarship committee.

Grand Valley Auto Parts is still a family operation. Two of Brian's four children work at the business, both for nearly a decade. Besides Jennifer, son Mitch Allen is the production manager. Jennifer said Brian is training them to become third-generation owners.

"I'm in charge of the front office and Mitch is in charge of the back," she said. "My dad is behind the scenes, buying and overseeing the operation."

There are additional family members who contribute to the business as well. Brian's sister Kathy Sjoerdsma is the receptionist and his brother Larry Allen is a delivery driver.

"Obviously, there are sometimes challenges [that come with] working in a family business," said Jennifer. "But my dad is very open to our opinions. He really takes them into consideration."

In fact, the family worked together about four years ago to design a new state-of-the-art automotive recycling facility.

"We really didn't have a lot of storage," explained Jennifer. "We wanted to store parts inside, out of the weather."

The new 12,000-square-foot building reflects the family's high standards for auto recycling. It has radiant heat in the floor via a water pipe in the concrete and a waste oil furnace to heat the building. The family also installed energy-efficient lighting. It stores all fluids inside the building in secondary containers, removes and stores batteries and tires in separate areas, stores its cores and transmissions in the original 2,400-square-foot building. The family will use the original building for shipping and receiving.

"My father always said recyclers are doing a service for the rest of society," said Jennifer. "If we didn't have auto recyclers, what would the general public do with these vehicles and how would they harm the environment?" ❧

BY FELICIA LOWENSTEIN NIVEN

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