



Meet Four Women Who Are Thriving in Their Careers in the Automotive Industry

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The automotive industry is predominantly male but these four women, who are passionate technicians, say gender isn't getting in the way of their careers.

Ashley O'Brian, Diesel Technician

When she was a freshman in high school, Ashley O'Brian took an engine repair class. That's when she developed an interest in automotive repair. She and her father also worked on car projects, further fueling her automotive interests.

Now, O'Brian, a single mother of two, works at Astro Lincoln in Pensacola, Florida and is working toward her senior master certification. A graduate of UTI Orlando, she has six years of experience working specifically for Ford and Lincoln dealerships. Her employer is committed to supporting her career path.

"Ultimately I have a strong desire to work my way into management and become a service manager," said O'Brian.

She advises students, who are trying to determine their own career path, to do research and apply for apprenticeships and job shadowing opportunities to be sure the work is right for them.

Somer Marpole, Service Technician

Somer Marpole's passion for working on cars started when she and her father worked together on her first project car, a 1995 Toyota Tacoma. These days, she's an hourly technician at Havana Ford in northern Florida.

With only four of her 10 certifications left to complete, Marpole, who's a graduate of UTI Orlando, is working towards her Ford Senior Master level certification.

"My real joy is combining my love for painting and creating works of art that can transfer to custom vehicle projects," says Marpole, who plans to also obtain her welding certifications and follow her dream of owning a custom fabrication business.

Savannah Weatherly, Quick Lane Technician

Savannah Weatherly grew up in a Texas town where everyone talked about cars and trucks, especially diesels.

"Why am I passionate?" she asks. "I fell in love with the idea of being able to fix something with my hands."

These days, she works 30 hours a week as a quick lane technician at Westway Ford in Dallas and attends UTI Dallas full time, studying both auto and diesel certification programs. Next year, she'll graduate. Her goal is to transition into the main shop as a line technician and then follow the dealership's career path towards senior master technician.

She's unfazed by her role as a female technician in a male-dominated industry.

"I think nothing of it, there is no reason to put a label on it. I come from a family of technicians," says Weatherly, whose mother is a technician and father is a heavy duty tractor-trailer technician.

Cheryl Powell, Service Technician

Cheryl Powell has spent 23 years working in the indus-

try as an automotive service technician.

"I like to help people get their cars back on the road, but I also enjoy teaching and helping people understand their cars," says Powell, who works at Long McArthur Ford in Kansas City.

She's also on her way to earning her master technician certification from Ford.

"I have been tinkering with things since I was a child," she says. "I used to help my dad with various projects, and, when I was 25, I decided to make a career out of it. I want to inspire women and change the stigma of women not knowing anything about cars."

Powell has seen a lot of change over the years and encourages more women in automotive to talk about their rewarding careers: "We need women who are working in this field to share their stories with young students to help inspire them and let them know what's possible."

To get more information on Ford Technical Career Entry Programs and dealers in your area, visit www.newfordtech.com. ■

Kristen Castillo