



# MAKING THE Connection TO Career Technical Education

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## MAKING THE CONNECTION

# Fitzgerald auto graduates: Navigating the automotive world after high school

By Sayak Kapali

Located on Ryan Road in Warren, Fitzgerald Senior High School stands proud. Among courses offered in the area of Career and Technical Education, one of the shining jewels that Fitzgerald has to offer are its auto programs. Not only because of the mere classroom aspect of what students are being taught, such as how to properly handle parts, how to handle certain situations, but all of these components and more are put to the test as students first enter the classroom. Minutes later, students are out in the garage in separate groups, working with the tools and technology that you would often see being used in mechanic shops everywhere.

Working on the Auto floor requires safety precautions that can be easily viewed if you were to step into the garage: an eyewash center, goggles and jumpsuits donned by the students, along with, at every car station, overhead tubes used to connect to exhaust pipes to keep the fumes from being inhaled. With these precautions and professional equipment in place, it is a guarantee that Fitzgerald's Auto Program is something to consider in case there are young adults willing to enter into such a field.

Fitzgerald's Auto Program has had many graduates over the years. Some recent, even one who has graduated and still works at Fitzgerald to this very day, teaching the same classes that he once took himself, Mr. Jeff Bruni. Bruni graduated in 1986, a whole 30 years ago. Mr. Bruni started his career at Fitzgerald High School when his Auto teacher, Mr. Jack Huhn needed assistance in the shop. Mr. Bruni states it is important that students work hard and don't mind getting their "hands dirty." "You never know where working in a garage might lead," Bruni adds. In today's current day and age, it would be interesting and informative to know how the Auto program has helped recent graduates progress in our world.

Enter Fitzgerald graduates Austin Quill (2015 graduate) and Paul Page (2013 graduate), here to give their account on what the experience had done for them and how their future is now because of being exposed to this kind of opportunity.

Starting with Paul, his beginnings trail down to his freshman year, where his experience in a small engine repair class motivated him to continue down his path. He attended the auto shop classes that Fitzgerald had to offer from his sophomore to his senior years and he loved it. He goes on to add that the best part of the class was being able to work on his own vehicles and talk with, and still communicate with, friends even now, years after graduation. His mentors also assisted him by preparing for multiple competitions such as Ford AAA and Skills USA.

During his senior year, Paul



Auto Papa Pro and Certified ASE Mechanic Jeff Bruni (1986) graduate of FHS with Auto students Tiffany Morgan and Zack Daniels.

was able to attend school and work in the same day. This allowed him to still learn the multiple steps of preparation before graduation and helped him decide what he would do after he graduated. Once he did, he began working at Crest Ford, where even then he was still learning new things every day. Later on, Paul was state-certified to perform repairs and attended Ford Training Centers to further expand his knowledge with Ford vehicles. Admittedly, Paul goes on to answer that in his senior year, he had not planned on attending college and getting a degree. Three years after his high school graduation, his mind hasn't changed.

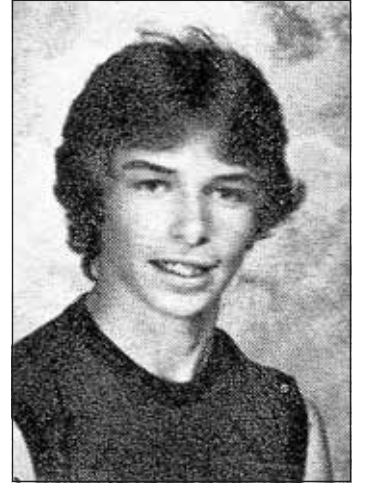
Paul had originally stated, "The grass is not always greener on the other side, but everything happens for a reason." Paul's advice to students currently taking the Auto program is as follows: "Do not hold yourself back from doing what you love! You won't be able to learn something right away, as it takes time to learn. Just because you can't do something right away doesn't mean you have to give up. Persistence

and hard work pays off."

With Paul's words of experience and wisdom to close, we move onto our next Fitzgerald graduate, Austin Quill. Austin's current professional position is in Automotive Technology. Like Paul, Austin had undergone Fitzgerald's CTE Automotive course. The impact imprinted onto him is big because of how hands-on the whole course was. As he says, there had to be a lot of building onto your skills and knowledge in order to complete tasks within the class. He uses the lessons he learned in school on a daily basis. "Every bit of information is taught for you to use in the field," Austin explains. Currently, Austin is employed at a local garage, but has been given a position at Audi after his post-secondary training. As he puts it, "Taking an automotive technology class as young as high school shows the employers that you're devoted, passionate, and educated." After high school he received an Associate degree in Applied Science of Automotive Technology from Macomb Community College, and is going on to complete training at Audi.

Austin plans on working for the Volkswagen Group of America, starting at Audi, and then working his way to their Porsche division. There, he hopes to gain enough knowledge and resources to assemble his own facility. Also after high school, Austin was certified by the state in all eight required categories to be known as a Michigan Master Mechanic, along with an ASE Section 609 certification for Air Conditioning and is currently completing requirements to qualify for additional ASE certifications. Final advice Austin would give, "The best way to learn is to want to learn; don't waste your time by learning something you don't want to learn or by ignoring something you need to learn." Austin continues, "Advisors and instructors need to inform students of the variety of automotive service career areas. Starting in this position can lead to many different paths. Mechanics are some of the most valued employees on the planet. They can be a home town farm worker or working on the most sophisticated cars. Automotive service is a path to a variety of success and opportunities."

## ACHIEVING GOALS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jeff Bruni high school photo

## A Hero in Automotive

By Abid Ahmed, Junior

In the auto shop, many students are given the opportunity of a lifetime: the chance of using your newfound knowledge to search for a career path. Jeff Bruni took Auto I, Auto II and Auto III to be informed of the automotive field, and earned an internship that allowed him to work after school for cash. This also was Bruni's most memorable moment in his CTE high school courses from Fitzgerald. Bruni also participated in the Career and Technical Education Programs in Automotive. He graduated from Fitzgerald High School in 1986, and has been employed at Fitzgerald High School for 29 years! Bruni intended to work for Fitzgerald High School for a short time until he was called back to work. But it soon turned into a long-term position with more job security.

He now works in Fitzgerald's auto shop as a certified auto mechanic who teaches students how to get their hands dirty. Bruni deduced that working with his hands was most effective at the age of 14. Because of this, Bruni was aided by Fitzgerald's hands-on activities from the Auto classes. The impact of his CTE teacher, Jack Huhn, affected his decision to work at Fitzgerald because he realized he received benefits similar to the job where he was laid off.

The benefits he's gotten from Fitzgerald allowed him to achieve his goals: being an auto mechanic, and teaching students how to troubleshoot and problem solve. He finds it best to assist students who are interested in the automotive field. Bruni recommends that his students take the ASE certifications test. If the students pass, they may receive college credit toward their post high school technical degrees. Jeff Bruni shows everyone how his ambitions of becoming an auto mechanic were fulfilled: by hard work.

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