

# Spotlight on Student Success

## Ben Giuliano

### Desire and Determination

Ben Giuliano is the head painter at Honest Charley Garage, an industry leader, full service auto restoration shop (brass era - early 1900's to present) located in Chattanooga, TN. Most recently, Ben's work has been published on the cover of Street Rodder (Dec '13). Ben credits his career success to mechanical knowledge he learned at the West Shore Career Technical District and the relationship with his mentor, West Shore Auto Tech Instructor, Mr. Mike Szittai.

Ben started taking charge of owning his future at a young age. A 2006 graduate of Lakewood High and West Shore Career-Technical District, Ben was home-schooled during his middle school years. He wanted to play football in high school, but in order to be eligible, he needed two periods of high school classes a day. Having always been interested in cars, the introductory Power Mechanics class in Auto Technology was a natural fit for him to enroll. This is where he met his teacher and future mentor, Mr. Mike Szittai. The following year, Ben became a full-time Lakewood High student and eventually enrolled in the Auto Tech West Shore program.

As a stellar Auto Tech student, Ben took full advantage of the training and development his teacher, Mr. Szittai, offered. After graduation, Ben went on to Wyoming Tech in Blairsville, PA. There he took classes in automotive body & refinishing, collision, refinishing, upholstery, street rod, and chassis fabrication. Ben found himself a step-ahead of his fellow students at WyoTech. He ended up tutoring and teaching other students. He graduated from WyoTech in October 2007 and currently sits on both West Shore's and WyoTech's Advisory Boards.

Over the years, Ben and Mr. Szittai continued to stay in touch. Ben's first job after graduation was with West Star Aviation in Grand Junction, CO. Ben returned to northeast Ohio and worked for T-Jay's Collision in Bedford as the head painter. Ben credits Mr. Szittai with directly assisting him with his current job at Honest Charley. Ben and Mr. Szittai were attending a car show in Hershey, PA. Mr. Szittai saw Corky Coker, owner of Honest Charley Garage across the room and approached him. As they were talking, Mr. Szittai asked Corky if he was looking for new employees and as a matter of fact, Corky was in the market. Mr. Szittai waved Ben over to meet Corky and the next thing Ben knew he was interviewing for the head painter position.

When asked what advice he'd give to current students, Ben shared: "Take your high school classes seriously. Find something you enjoy doing and put an effort into it. Hopefully you'll be going to a job everyday like me where it feels more like 'play' vs 'work.'"

"Listen to the life lessons Mr. Szittai shares. Although you think they may be amazing or a bit unbelievable at the time, all the stories he shared with me at West Shore have played out in my life in one way or another."



Honest Charley Garage - [www.honestcharley.com](http://www.honestcharley.com)

2013 Street Rodder Road Tour 1951 Ford Final Countdown:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRPQn\\_nWxsQ&list=PLnQFIZbDc3fYmNTIQ9HYinopdUxW78sPm](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRPQn_nWxsQ&list=PLnQFIZbDc3fYmNTIQ9HYinopdUxW78sPm)

**Fun Fact:** The first episode of a reality television series starring Corky Coker and family based at the shop will air Wednesday February 5, 2014 at 9:30pm ET on Travel Channel. Following episodes will be every Wednesday night at 9:30pm.