

by **Autobody News Staff**

Bob Waldron, owner of *Waldron's Auto Body* in Marlboro, MA, was among the first shop owners to join the CARSTAR franchise network in 1989.

"It's hard to go it alone. CARSTAR does tons of research and development, and while I must be the driving force behind implementation, what they do for shops is huge — I can't quantify how greatly it has benefited my business!" Waldron said. "Joining CARSTAR has given me a wonderful quality of life, and I believe it will someday give me a really good retirement."

Waldron entered the collision repair industry as a votech student in 1975, working in the field part-time after graduation until an opportunity to purchase his own shop presented itself in 1981. "I started as a one-man crew, and it grew from there," he recalled.

In the mid-1980s, Waldron attended courses taught by **Lirel Holt** of Auto Repair Management Systems (ARMS), and when Holt branched off to found CARSTAR, Waldron was right with him.

"Lirel's classes caught my attention because he was the first one to show us how to manage a body shop. When he founded CARSTAR, I joined the organization because I believed in him," Waldron said.

Waldron's confidence was not misplaced. With the success enjoyed as a CARSTAR facility and an excellent reputation for customer service, he opened CARSTAR Waldron's A-1 Auto Body in Lancaster in 2000.

In 2010, he added CARSTAR *Henna Color Auto Body* in Clinton, and CARSTAR *Thomas Auto Body* joined his list of facilities in 2013.

Waldron's growth hasn't yet reached its full potential, though. "We have another repair center on the horizon," he said.

Boasting more than 31,000 square feet of combined production space between them, Waldron's four CARSTAR facilities employ 50 collision repair professionals who repair an average of 350 vehicles each month.

The shops are all I-CAR Gold certified, and the shops' technicians have obtained welding certifications, as well as BASF painting certifications.

Waldron's CARSTAR A-1 Auto Body is Honda/Acura ProFirst certified and offers aluminum repair



Bob Waldron was recognized as a 30-year member of the CARSTAR family during the 2019 Conference in Chicago.

as well as storage and towing services.

While there are multiple factors contributing to Waldron's success, he largely credits CARSTAR for his growth into new markets.

"As part of the CARSTAR franchise, we have the advantage of better research and development which keeps us well-informed about what's going on in the industry," Waldron said. "Insurance companies are more comfortable dealing with us because they know our repairs are backed by corporate, and customers enjoy knowing that CARSTAR offers a nationwide warranty, which the average body shop just can't match."

As a longtime leader in the collision repair industry, Waldron has seen many changes over the years, mostly on the technology side of the business.

"We didn't have information at our fingertips 30 years ago like we do today. Collision repair consisted of a lot of trial and error, and while we repaired almost everything in the 1980s, replacement is more prevalent today," he said. "Vehicles have become so high-tech and complex that it's no longer possible to repair them like we used to."

Fortunately, as vehicle technology has advanced, so has access to information as well as the tools and equipment needed to perform safe and proper repairs. Waldron's shops have stayed abreast of changes in the industry by investing in training through I-CAR and keeping up to date on the equipment necessary to repair modern vehicles.

CARSTAR also provides educational opportunities for its franchise partners, and Waldron believes one of the most valuable benefits they offer is access to

their EDGE Performance Groups (EPG.)

"The CARSTAR EPG internal groups provide a chance to meet with other owners within the CARSTAR organization multiple times each year," Waldron said. "The organized format provides an excellent forum for exchanging business practices, seeing how other owners operate their businesses and sharing ideas to benefit the industry as a whole. The networking aspect has also allowed me to develop wonderful longterm friendships with industry professionals around the country, and it's great knowing I'm not in this alone."

The solidarity and collaboration with other franchise partners, as well as the support received from CARSTAR, has been invaluable to Waldron, and he cannot imagine operating a facility in today's industry without that foundation upon which he's grown his business.

"Independent shop owners are going to need to align themselves somehow," Waldron said. "Between developing vendor and insurer relationships, getting referrals, marketing and keeping up with changes in technology, I just don't know how any individual facility can do it alone these days."

"CARSTAR has been really fantastic for me, but it depends on your business model because the purpose is to run your repair center like a business and take advantage of the education and opportunities available in the collision repair industry," Waldron said. "There are just so many factors that have to be considered—why try to do it alone when the resources of CARSTAR make it so much easier and more effective?"

CARSTAR Waldron's Auto Body

Location: Marlboro, MA

(508) 485-9426

www.carstar.com/locations/marlborough-15010/

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair

Facility Employees: 50+

In Business Since: 1981

Number of Locations: Four

Combined Production Space: 31,000 square feet



Waldron operates four CARSTAR facilities in Massachusetts.



Waldron with **Gary Boesel** at the CARSTAR EPG meeting.

CARSTAR

(888) 638-5062

www.CARSTARFranchise.com