

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Novak's Auto Parts off Route 68 in Daugherty Township. This is the auto yard, with row upon row of used cars.

PHOTOS BY LUCY SCHALY OF THE TIMES

DON'T CALL IT
A JUNKYARD

THIS IS WHAT
RECYCLING
LOOKS LIKE
WHEN YOU
DEAL IN AUTO
PARTS.

AND DAUGHERTY
TOWNSHIP
AUTO RECYCLERS
ROGER AND
PENNY NOVAK
ARE AT THE
FOREFRONT OF
NEW PRACTICES
AS THE INDUSTRY
GOES EVEN
GREENER.

By Justin Criado

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DAUGHERTY TWP.

Roger Novak can't help but laugh when recalling the impetus of his father's business in the 1950s.

"It basically started out that my dad wrecked a car and had it sitting there (in the yard)," Roger said, "and a guy stopped and asked about buying a part off of it."

And so Novak Auto Parts was born.

The business moved around before settling into its current 20-acre location off Route 68 in Daugherty Township in 1972. The industry has changed tremendously in the five-plus decades since the elder Novak dealt parts from his front yard.

"This isn't a junkyard; it's auto recycling," said Roger's wife, Penny. "We don't take washers and dryers or things like that. This is specifically for recycling."

"I don't think people realize the process of what goes in it so it's handled properly and environmentally safe."

The Novaks are dedicated to the high standards of automotive dismantling and recycling. This fall, they hosted the 50th annual Pennsylvania Automotive Recycling Trade Society convention and trade show, which focused on alternative-fuel vehicles — a fast-growing component to an industry immersed in high-tech advances. PARTS is an affiliated chapter of the national Automotive Recyclers Association.

Keynote speaker Judy Moore, assistant director of the National Alternative Fuels Training Consortium, discussed safe recycling practices as well as the value that hybrid vehicles bring to the auto recycling industry.

"I started learning about how important it was for this industry to know about the safety aspects and make sure that they know how to safely dismantle (an alternative-fuel-and-technology) vehicle," Moore said. "Alternative-fuel vehicles are as safe as other vehicles. They're just different."

"For our area, the electric-drive vehicles are the ones you're seeing the most of. You really need to know before you get to that point what vehicle you're dealing with."

NAFTC has trained more than 33,000 industry professionals in 1,800 different courses on alternative-fuel-and-technology vehicles. It continues to develop training materials and host seminars on the topic.

Breaking down an inoperable vehicle goes beyond just throwing it into a cluttered pile and picking off what's usable when necessary. Federal and state regulations and protocols hold industry professionals to a higher standard, Penny said.

"We bring them in and tear them down," she explained. "They drain all the fluids from it. When it goes out into the yard, it doesn't have any fluids in it, so you don't have to worry about contamination."

After the car is drained of all fluids, it's stripped of salvageable parts, which are stored in separate warehouses and organized by type or sent to outside recyclers, before the shell is placed in the yard by make and model.

"It's getting harder and harder to do this," Roger said. "To keep it environmentally friendly, we do everything we can. We try our best to recycle everything we possibly can. You keep progressing and getting things better."

PARTS, PAGE C2



OUTDOORS

Setting a
few things
straight
about
coyotes

Lately, coyote sightings — and the ensuing discussions — seem to be on the rise. Maybe it is the time of year, but every day, I hear or come across the debate on coyotes in our area.

Some of the funniest comments I find are on social media, such as Facebook. Someone posts that he saw a coyote in his neighborhood, and the craziness ensues. "Don't let the kids play in the backyard. They will climb the fence to eat your dog or cat. They are huge, vicious and run in large packs. Call the police to kill them."

Well, you get my drift. Inaccurate comments like these are not limited to just the non-hunting or non-"outdoorsy" public. Many hunters still believe that coyotes are a major threat to deer populations.

And so, here are a few thoughts of mine.

The one rule with all wild animals, especially larger or predator species, is that they can be unpredictable and dangerous. That being said, there has never been an officially documented attack on a human by a coyote in Pennsylvania. There have been numerous attacks in other states, especially California, where there is a different dynamic between the coyote and its prey. There have been only two deaths due to coyotes, one in California in 1981, and the second in Nova Scotia, Canada, in 2009.

Coyotes will take small pets as prey, they have a special fondness for cats, and they can be a problem for farmers. But it does amaze me how this is not a high priority a lot of the time.

I live on the edge of Allegheny and Beaver counties. This past week, my son and I caught a 22-pound female coyote not 50 yards from our house. My neighbors tell me they hear them weekly in the ravine behind their houses. Surprisingly, several of the neighbors' cats run loose at night and

OUTDOORS, PAGE C2



Recycling auto parts has changed quite a bit in the 60 years since Roger Novak's dad started Novak Auto Parts, Roger says. In an era of hybrid cars and growing federal regulations, "it's getting harder and harder to do this. You keep progressing and getting things better." **Above:** Engine parts are ready for tagging and selling, and stripped used cars are stacked up, ready to be crushed.



PHOTO BY LUCY SCHALY OF THE TIMES

Spaghetti dinner for homeless veterans

Dawn Singleton, left, president of the Baden American Legion Auxiliary, and Marie Buck prepare a meatball sandwich for a customer at a spaghetti dinner Tuesday. Proceeds from the event benefited homeless veterans.

COMMUNITY

New recycling practices, hybrid cars shifting focus of auto parts industry

PARTS, from C1

Novak Auto Parts started recycling fluids and separating parts in the early 1980s, Roger said, noting that the process wasn't as efficient as it is today. "When we first started, that was the typical thing," Roger said. "There was the motor pile. The (transmission) pile. Now, you have a Dumpster and everything is drained and covered, so there's no contaminant issues."

Even the rhetoric associated with the industry and its workers has changed. Terms such as "grease monkey" and "wrencher" are no longer part of the industry's vernacular, having given way to "auto technician" and "automotive recyclers."

"I think it has evolved," Penny said. "It's not the type of thing where you'd be afraid to send your wife or daughter into the yard. I think our office looks like pretty much any other office. It's not a scary place."

Doug Reinert, past president of ARA and chairman of the 2014 PARTS events committee, said auto recycling facilities are often



PHOTO BY LUCY SCHALY OF THE TIMES
Roger Novak, owner of Novak's Auto Parts on Route 68 in Daugherty Township, talks to employee Curt Davison who is carrying cars to be crushed.

mistaken as the junkyards of the past. "(Novak's) facility is a great representation of what our green recycled parts industry has become," he said. "We are committed to environmental responsibility and outstanding service, and we remain current with advancements in the auto industry. That's why the topic of hybrid vehicles is so timely."

According to Auto Alliance, a research and development report funded by auto manufacturers, the auto recycling industry repurposes enough steel annually to produce 13 million new vehicles. It also reduces

85 million barrels of oil needed to manufacture new or replacement parts, and recycles nearly 85 percent of each vehicle's weight.

Roger said that the industry's value is often overlooked — even though automobiles are recycled more than any other consumer product. According to the ARA's most recent data, auto recyclers acquire 4.7 million vehicles each year for the purpose of recycling.

"We recycle Freon, transmission fluid, antifreeze, batteries, steel and most everything else," he noted. "Our own trucks are fueled by

recycled gasoline, and our buildings are heated by recycled oil."

Don's Auto Salvage in Beaver is like Novak's. A family-owned business for nearly 40 years, assistant Kelly Bruce said that alternative fuel vehicles are something workers have to train for, but most of the business still deals with older vehicles.

"A lot of times, people have brand-new cars and they don't buy many new parts," Bruce said. "We haven't gotten too many (alternative fuel vehicles) yet because they don't have many of them at the auction. They're a little new to be worked on now for us."

Typically, Don's and Novak's have upwards of 1,800 cars in the yard, they said.

Members of PARTS, the trade association dedicated to guarding the interests of state automotive recyclers and dismantlers, meet regularly with elected officials, as well as with staff from PennDOT and the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"We're all in this together and just sharing the knowledge," Penny said.

Territorial dispute develops after daughter goes to college

Dear Abby: My husband and I have been married for eight years. We have no children of our own, but he has an 18-year-old daughter from a previous relationship who has been coming over every other weekend and holidays since she was 10. Even though she lives with her mother, she has a dedicated room that's packed to the gills with her clothes, games, toys, etc.

I would like to repurpose her room now that she is off to college. My husband says no. We don't have a guest bedroom, so I feel strongly that it makes no sense to keep her room intact when we could use the extra space. I have made many sacrifices as a stepmother over the years, and feel I deserve to finally stretch out a bit and enjoy the extra space.

Am I being unreasonable or asking too much too soon?

Frustrated In Florida
Dear Frustrated: If you want peace and tranquility under your roof, my advice is to slow down and don't jump the gun. Your husband appears to be suffering from a form of empty nest anxiety right now. It would be better for the daughter not to feel that the minute she left town you dismantled "her" room.

If you'll be patient, and trust me on this, you'll look like a saint. If you don't, you



DEAR ABBY

DEARABBY.COM

may come across as heavy-handed and be labeled a wicked stepmother.

Dear Abby: My husband and I are friendly with our neighbors. We're all smokers, but they don't smoke inside and we do.

It seems as if they have decided that coming to our house every day to hang out is acceptable. They come in, sit on our couch and don't say a word to us. Their eyes are glued to their tablets or cellphones instead.

I have the feeling they're using our house as a "smoking room" so they won't have to stand in the cold or be away from their entertainment. Is this as rude as I think it is?

Puffing Mad In Maine
Dear Puffing Mad: Yes, it is. Although you and your neighbors are all smokers, it appears you have little else in common. I recommend you speak up the next time these people show up and "suggest" that they leave their electronic devices at home. What boors!

Universal Uclick

Setting a few things straight about coyotes

OUTDOORS, from C1

have so for years. They always come back in the morning. I have chickens, which I do not lock up at night; haven't lost one in years. In fact, the last one I lost was to a neighbor's dog.

Coyotes are opportunistic hunters, eating whatever they can. The one truth that is evident throughout all their feeding methods is that they will always take the easiest meal. Pennsylvania offers coyotes a large prey base, and this is why they do not need to prey on deer. In other states, especially north of us, coyotes hunt in packs as their main prey, and in some cases, their only prey is deer. Here in Pennsylvania, coyotes tend not to form large packs for hunting because their prey is smaller or easier to come by. There is quite a bit of road kill lying along Pennsylvania's roadways.

A couple of years ago, I was spring gobbler-hunting along the edge of a cut field in Washington County. A large doe walked out into the field to the left of me and started feeding. After about 10 minutes, I noticed a coyote trotting toward us along the edge of the field about 200 yards away. The coyote had come from the other side of a hill not knowing the doe,

or I, was ahead of it. When it got to about 40 yards from the doe, it stopped. The doe, which had been feeding all this time, finally took notice of the intruder. After what seemed to be a very long time, but was actually less than a minute, that doe took off after the coyote, which turned tail and ran. The doe stopped short and came back to where it had been feeding, while the coyote stopped about 50 yards farther down the field edge and continued to stare at the doe. After a couple of minutes, the coyote slowly started toward her, and once again, she ran the predator off, this time for good.

Once the coyote was gone, the doe quickly disappeared into the woods. I would assume she had a young deer hidden somewhere behind me. As efficient a predator as the coyote is, it doesn't always get its meal.

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