

Texas Body Shop Chooses I-CAR Training to Boost Both Veterans and Newcomers



by Autobody News Staff

On the Road Garage is a busy auto body shop with two I-CAR Gold Class locations, in Irving and West Dallas, TX, where 25 employees repair a total of about 150 cars per month.

But it's also part of a larger mission. Its parent company, On the Road Companies, was founded in 2011 by CEO **Michelle Corson**, and has since grown into a portfolio of a wide array of ventures aimed at getting people and communities "on the road" to success by bringing down transportation-related costs.

On the Road Garage joined the fold in 2020. Not only does it provide quality collision repair services to the area, but it also boasts a Department of Labor-registered paid apprenticeship program to train people in collision repair, ADAS and other smart car technology, filling a skills gap and talent pipeline shortage. With I-CAR Gold Class recognition, On the Road Garage is demonstrating to its customers and community it is employing trained professionals who are acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to perform complete, safe and quality repairs.

The apprenticeship program includes five pathways: body repair, painting, estimation, mechanics and technology, and office management. Each provides a blend of classroom and hands-on training, all provided by master technicians and senior management leaders.

Roy Villarreal, vice president of operations for On the Road Garage, is a 30-year industry veteran who took his first auto repair class in high school because a classmate assured him it would be an easy A. "It sucked me in," he said with a laugh.

After high school, Villarreal attended WyoTech in Laramie, WY, then landed his first job at a Lincoln-Mercury dealership, sweeping floors and cleaning bathrooms. He had worked his way up to doing small body work jobs when the advent of computerized estimating - which his manager didn't understand - got him promoted to a service writer, and he progressed from there.

He has been with On the Road Garage since it opened. "One of my former bosses told me I needed to



On the Road Garage, with two locations in Texas, uses I-CAR's training subscription to keep everyone from apprentices to industry veterans up to date on the skills and knowledge they need.

come check [On the Road Garage] out," Villarreal said. "I met Michelle, and I learned about the vision behind the work."

Villarreal said I-CAR's training subscription plays a major role in training everyone from apprentices to the 45-year industry veterans and employees teaching them because it includes live, online and virtual courses for everyone at the shop.

Villarreal said the apprenticeship program at On the Road Garage takes about three years to complete, so the first cohort of six apprentices is still in it. He said the garage envisions having room to hire everyone in at least the first two cohorts and give recommendations to anyone who wants to venture elsewhere.

"The overarching mission is to give people an opportunity in life," Villarreal said. "We bring somebody in, teach them a skill, and they can make a good living for themselves. We can also replenish the technicians in the industry."

"We use I-CAR's solutions to leverage the theory behind it," Villarreal said. "We want them to know why they're doing what they're doing. That's one of the ways we use I-CAR."

I-CAR's training subscription provides unlimited training for all technicians and shop employees and is available to Gold Class shops. I-CAR says its program lets shops manage and plan their training more effectively while helping reduce training costs due to technician turnover. It also enables

shops to build their bench strength and increase employee retention.

The training subscription includes live, virtual and online courses, which covers the majority of the Gold Class required courses, and offers flexible payment options.

Villarreal said I-CAR's training allows them to accept into the program apprentices with zero industry experience, as well as those who have already taken relevant courses in high school or college.

Every single apprentice and employee of On the Road Garage takes ADAS courses through I-CAR, Villarreal said, as both locations work on more technologically advanced vehicles. The Irving location is now a certified Rivian repair shop.

"Even five years ago, we were [repairing vehicles] differently," Villarreal said. By achieving Gold Class recognition, On the Road Garage is committing to training that helps its technicians keep up with the latest advancements with each Gold Class renewal cycle. For that reason, continuing training is just as important for technicians with years of experience, he said.

Villarreal also appreciates the I-CAR training subscription plan's ease of use. "You have the entire catalog in front of you. You can be assigning classes even outside of a learning path, so people can explore other subjects or specialty areas."

For On the Road Garage, I-CAR training is a key partner in its mission.

"It's important to us to train the next generation, to give someone a great opportunity," Villarreal said.

On the Road Garage

Irving & West Dallas, TX
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Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair
Facility Employees: 25
In Business Since: 2020
Number of Locations: Two
Combined Production Space: 44,000 square feet



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