

Woodman Collision Center named Business of the Month

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By [FRED POLLARD](#)

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ALTON - Jess and Ginger Woodman, owners of Woodman Collision Center, say they are honored to be wreck-ognized as the River Bend Growth Association Business of the Month for June.

"There is no question that the RBGA is an invaluable tool," Jess Woodman, who also serves on the RBGA Board of Directors, said. "It offers endless opportunities for networking, and we would definitely recommend being a member."

Woodman, a third-generation collision and auto body expert, opened his shop at 4515 Alby Road on Feb. 2, 2004. He said his father's and grandfather's legacies helped to build the reputation of trust and reliability in the family name.

"My grandfather (Jess O. Woodman Sr.) started in the business in the 1940s, and my family has been involved in the collision repair business almost continuously since then," he said.

After playing an integral part of the family business, co-owning the shop at Ninth and Belle streets in Alton with his father, Jess O. Woodman Jr. and his brother, Danny, Jess spent the next 21 years working in the insurance industry, first as an adjuster and later as assistant vice president of claims. Ginger Woodman said that experience in the insurance field gives Jess the expertise and know-how to ensure his customers receive the best possible service from their insurance provider.

"In 2003 we came to the realization that (opening our own body shop) is what we wanted to do," Jess said. "We began the process of building this business and opened the next year."

Reviving the dream of a "Woodman family business," Ginger has worked with her husband since day one as the secretary and treasurer, and son and auto body technician Ryan has been there since the beginning, as well.

Son Chad joined the team three years ago.

"People knew the family name, and the business grew slowly and steadily," Jess said.

Today, the shop has nine employees, and prides itself on its professionalism, rapport with its customers, and clean and attractive waiting area.

"We had one customer who left his wife in the car when he came in," Jess said, laughing. "He looked around, saw our waiting area, said 'this isn't what I expected' and then went back out and got his wife."

Seeing a trend in the industry as well as a growing concern in the health of the employees pushed Jess to switch to exclusively waterborne paint in 2008.

The switch to "green" paint reduces volatile organic compounds, which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and are potentially harmful to the technicians who breathe the fumes, by 600 pounds for every 2 gallons of mixed paint per year, or the emissions equivalent of 200 cars.

"The use of waterborne paint is already mandated in California, Canada and Europe, and 85 percent of the vehicles manufactured today are sprayed with waterborne finish anyway," Jess said. "That movement is coming this way as far as what the EPA is going to require, and we wanted to be ahead of the game. It's better for the environment, and it is better for our employees, and it just makes sense."

The benefits of the waterborne paint outweigh the higher cost, and "that expense does not get passed on to the customer," Jess says.

"We also have a concern about our own (environmental) footprint," Ginger said. "We just knew it was the right thing to do."

To date, Jess says no other shop in the area has switched to the environmentally friendly paint.

Woodman Collision Center is open 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, with Saturday hours available by appointment. The center offers free estimates, claims assistance, unibody repair, paintless dent repair, color matching, auto glass replacement and repair and lifetime guarantees.

For information, call (618) 466-1450 or visit the website at www.woodmancollisioncenter.com.