

Be Car Care Aware takes consumer education to a new level

Rich White, Car Care Council executive director, explains the campaign's benefit to the aftermarket.

The Car Care Council has launched a new Industry Tool Box for aftermarket companies and organizations to find everything they need to participate in the “Be Car Care Aware” consumer education campaign for National Car Care Month in April. The tool box is featured on the Car Care Council’s website at www.carcare.org/industry-tool-box/.

Rich White, executive director of the Car Care Council, explains the benefits of this initiative in an interview with *Professional Tool & Equipment News*.

Q: Can you please explain National Car Care Month and the objectives of the program?

A: National Car Care Month in April is a time for the Car Care Council to focus the attention of motorists and the media on the benefits of routine and proper vehicle care, maintenance and repair. It’s also a good time to remind everyone that the automotive aftermarket is the industry that keeps Americans on the road, spreading the word about the significant contribution vehicle service and repair makes to the economy, safety, performance, energy use, the environment and society overall.

Central to celebrating National Car Care Month are the hundreds of community car care events hosted by repair shops, parts stores and other aftermarket organizations around the country that include free vehicle check up events or inspections. These types of community events are extremely popular with consumers. After all, the auto service and repair experience for the consumer is a local one and the car care events are a powerful local program.

Q: How can a shop get involved and what are the advantages of doing so?

A: The Car Care Council has created a variety of resources and marketing and promotional materials to help repair shops and other aftermarket organizations celebrate National Car Care Month. There is no one-size-fits-all template for participating.

For example, a repair shop could get a banner from the Council to celebrate Car Care Month, hang it over a bay and then invite current and prospective customers to come by for a free inspection and pick up a free Car Care Guide from the Council. Or, a shop could partner with other shops or retailers to host a larger event with free vehicle inspections.

Community car care events can become more elaborate by including such features as a local radio station remote, a custom/race/antique car show, police safety seat demonstrations, and tables displaying educational materials such as worn out wiper blades and hoses, dirty engine oil and fluids, dirty filters, and worn tires. Some businesses may even add refreshments from a local restaurant, a moon bounce and face painting for the kids. Businesses that get involved in National Car Care Month at any level can expect to have a leg up on the competition by making their organization more visible to the vehicle owners in their community.

Q: What does the Car Care Council do to get the word out to consumers?

A: The Council really pulls out all the stops to promote National Car Care Month. Of course, we believe that every month is car care month, and April is the rallying point each year. For many weeks prior to April, we crank up intense media outreach to ensure National Car Care Month is on the consumer media's radar screen. We also work with the trade media to publicize and encourage industry involvement and leverage the widespread public attention to vehicle care being driven by the Council.

Q: You describe the recently updated the www.carcare.org website as the “go to” place for car care information. Can you tell us about some of the site's features?

A: Our new website is designed to fuel confidence in vehicle owners by providing them with a “go to” place for auto maintenance and repair information. By personalizing the site through such features as a customized service interval schedule and an e-mail reminder service, we have developed a one-stop site to help motorists drive smart, save money and make informed decisions.

A frequently-updated blog shares the latest tips and advice, and the site features a comprehensive repair shop locator and a vehicle systems overview. The council's popular Car Care Guide and the new “Ask a Tech” and “Go Green” sections offer insight and guidance for motorists, and among the many instructional videos housed on the site, a new video entitled “Auto Service and Repair: What to Expect” takes the guesswork out of auto service by giving consumers a behind-the-scenes look at the repair shop experience. With National Car Care Month upon us, the site's Car Care Event Finder has a new map feature to make it easier for motorists to find a vehicle check-up event in their area.

Q: I understand you introduced new online industry “tool box” to help shops and other industry organizations “be car care aware” year round. Can you give us a preview of what this entails?

A: The Car Care Council's new Industry Tool Box is a one-stop site for ideas and tools to help shops, stores and other industry organizations reach out to customers in their communities. One popular feature of the Tool Box is the council's video entitled “Drive Customers to Your Shop,” which highlights the benefits of participating in Car Care Month.

The site also features Car Care Clip videos, “how to host” a community car care event instructions, printable materials and downloadable images, and ordering information to obtain “Be Car Care Aware” point-of-sale kits, brochures, merchandise and the popular Car Care Guides in English or Spanish. The new Industry Tool Box will be available in advance of National Car Care Month at www.carcareindustry.com and makes it quick and easy to get involved.