

Catherine Simpson '85

When it comes to service, Catherine Simpson knows what she's doing. Owning an auto repair shop may seem an unlikely choice for a young college-educated woman, but Catherine revels in her career choice. "At the end of the day, I know that something has been fixed and I feel a sense of accomplishment," says Catherine from her tiny paper-piled office where her constant companion, Maggie (a large black Lab), sleeps. "I have a real passion for running this business."



What drove Catherine to the auto repair business? After her work with troubled children in Seattle became too draining, she happened onto a program that taught basic trade skills to women. "I had always enjoyed my work on Habitat houses, so I liked this." At the end of the program, Catherine decided she wanted to learn more about cars, with the ultimate goal of opening her own shop. With that in mind, she apprenticed at a transmission shop for a couple of years, eventually becoming the manager. "It was difficult supervising an all-male staff at first," she admits, "but by the time I left I had earned their respect."

Catherine returned to Atlanta to be closer to her family, and continued her automotive education and worked in the industry before taking a hiatus to help her mother open an art gallery and then work as a nanny for her sister's twins. "I never lost sight of my goal to open the shop, though," says Catherine. "My work with my mother turned out to be great experience and my father taught me about the business world. I took a few classes, developed a business plan, scouted the city for a good location (that took longer than I expected) and finally found this location and hired my first employees." Catherine's first two employees are still with her as her business continues to expand. She plans to open more shops in the future but for now she says "I'm so happy – I love this work!" You can reach Catherine at www.catherinesautorepair.com.