

MoTech to open charter school for auto technicians in Livonia

BY MARIE CHRISTY STAFF WRITER

This September, high school juniors can enroll in the first trade charter school in the Detroit area. The students will graduate two years later with high-wage skills critically needed in the automotive repair industry.

For more than 20 years, Livonia's MoTech Education Center has taken high school graduates and molded them into expert auto mechanics. But the trade has become immensely more technical and computerized at the same time fewer and fewer young adults are choosing this as a career field.

In fact, auto mechanics is now so complex that even the name has changed to automotive technician. And the shortage of certified technicians has become so acute that auto-related businesses beat the bushes to hire a certified technician.

To ease this shortage, MoTech has taken advantage of an educational trend being pushed by Gov. John Engler — charter schools. It has asked Central Michigan University to establish the Michigan Automotive Academy at its school at 35155 Industrial Road, Livonia. The academy, open to any Michigan junior, expects to receive its charter from CMU in July and open its doors to its first group of students Sept. 5.

tween their junior and senior year, students also must take a mandatory auto-related summer job.

"Our core-curriculum subjects are technology-based," said Marshall Piller, MoTech admissions representative. "In English, they won't be learning about Shakespeare, but how to interact in the technological world."

To unveil Livonia's new charter school, more than 75 Michigan automotive businesses and industries, the Automotive Service Association of Michigan, MoTech and the Michigan Automotive Academy will host an open house for high school students and their parents 6-9 p.m. Thursday, July 13, at MoTech.

The auto repair industry has taken on a new, sophisticated look, said James Davis, ASAM board chairman. "An automotive technician needs advanced technical training and computer literacy."

According to the AAA, the nation faces an immediate shortage of more than 60,000 automotive technicians to work on vehicles which have evolved into highly computerized machines.

In addition to mechanical service and repair needs, today's technicians must be able to perform a growing number of accurate diagnostic procedures on automotive computers and components, as well as read and interpret extensive wiring diagrams.

repair technicians in the field," Davis said.

When Livonia's charter academy opens in September, MoTech will become a two-tier school: the publicly funded academy and the privately funded MoTech Education Center.

The academy will get at least \$5,500 from the state for each junior, and in subsequent years, each senior, enrolled. High school graduates who attend the education center will continue to pay \$9,100 for a 45-week course, Piller said.

Students who plan to go to college to study engineering, auto design or other auto-related fields can use the two-year program as a stepping stone, and be able to get a well-paying job to put themselves through college, Piller said.

The program is designed to prepare students to pass four state motor vehicle certifications, a prerequisite for independent repair work in the state.

The ideal candidate for the charter school, Wells said, is a junior, male or female, who might not want to go to college for four years, who doesn't want a fast-food-type job, and who likes to tinker with cars. "They must have a desire to work in the auto field. We can teach them the rest from ground zero."

The students will use all the training equipment owned by MoTech and now used by the young adults attending the school. For further information, call MoTech at (313) 522-9510 or (800) 852-8405.

Three cut-ups open pool



At Beechview SC: A "Grand Reopening" was held recently at Beechview Swim Club of Farmington Hills. The day started with Bill Robertson (left) of Robertson Brothers, the West Bloomfield firm that did the renovations, Shelly Robertson, daughter of John and Kathy Robertson, and Farmington Hills Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi snipping the ribbon. A pancake breakfast for the membership followed. The Beechview pool was renovated to add a new vacuum sand filter, stainless steel gutters, new steps into the pool, 7-foot-deep competition lanes and a 12-foot diving well.

Tri-divided
School days are divided into three parts: mornings spent on such core curriculum subjects as English, math, social studies and science; afternoons spent on such auto-related subjects as chassis, electrical systems and engine technology; and after-school hours spent on a mandatory, part-time job at a local business. Be-

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