

# The Dent Pro: A real “hit” in Hampton Roads

By Brian J. DePrinzio

Have you ever parked your car in a crowded parking lot only to find, upon your return, that a carelessly abandoned shopping cart or someone else’s car door has struck your beautiful chariot, or worse yet, a barrage of golf-ball-sized hailstones has wreaked havoc on your vehicle? Of course you have! Well, there’s no reason to roll around town “all banged up” when there is a more inexpensive alternative to the costly fees of auto-body and collision shops. Tom Wilburn, a self-motivated graduate of Christopher Newport University (CNU) and owner and operator of The Dent Pro, solves those problems daily. Wilburn offers expert, painless, cosmetic dent repair with satisfaction confidently guaranteed.

Most of Wilburn’s business days begin with an estimate request for repairs. “I typically ask the customer to provide a photograph of the damage, via phone picture message, as well as some specific information about the car and its location. I explain the process and attempt to visually translate the end result when I provide my estimate,” Wilburn explains of his business model. His customer satisfaction has been markedly consistent from his hometown of Gloucester to Chesapeake and Suffolk on the Southside and as far as Richmond.

Wilburn, now 48 years old, was commissioned into the U.S. Army after graduating from CNU’s Army ROTC program. From 1996 until 2000, Wilburn applied his craft of skillfully

removing dents while working for a franchised company. “Over time, I have realized that not everyone in the world is working toward the same goal. Me—I’m motivated to succeed,” Wilburn says.

In 2006, Wilburn decided to start his own company. The Dent Pro uses Wilburn’s specific skillset and passion for customer satisfaction and personal service to life. “I want to provide professional service with a personal touch. I want to earn the trust of my customers by being honest and fair,” he says. “In other words, customers might call The Dent Pro the first time, but afterwards, they are calling Tom,” Wilburn continues. “I pride myself on customer satisfaction. Dents don’t just pop out, they have to be massaged,” Wilburn says. If a customer is not satisfied, they do not pay for the repair.

An amateur dent remover can cause more damage than there was to begin with, Wilburn assures. “Metal can stretch when there’s a dent. My goal is to make it look like it is unstretched, but every time the metal is manipulated it can dent more, leaving an ugly, wrinkled spot where the dent was. It is definitely a tradecraft,” Wilburn says about his art.

The constantly changing designs of vehicles provide an interesting challenge for Wilburn as various designs call for different and sometimes very involved and complicated techniques. The Dent Pro is a member of the Gloucester County Chamber of

rapidly, gaining additional larger clients in the area. Banwart joined the sales team 14 years ago and helped secure its first large client, and it continues to grow with the demand of more convenient, healthy options for vending.

In addition to the fresh food options, many of the Fresh-Fit Markets provide a variety of coffees, recognized



Tom Wilburn demonstrates his professional technique of removing dents using specialized tools.

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Commerce and has been accredited by the Better Business Bureau.

Wilburn says his company is about giving back to the community and sharing expertise. “I offer discounts to senior citizens, military personnel, educators, shipyard workers, law enforcement, firefighters and EMTs. These are folks who are sacrificing for the community, and I think the community should reciprocate that sacrifice in ways that it can,” he says.

Wilburn is happily married to Gina, a former teacher who is currently furthering her education in the medical field. They enjoy their two favorite hobbies of camping and ballroom dancing.

“Dancing is all about trust,” Wilburn says. “It is communication without talking and the best part is that I get to lead,” he adds with a hearty laugh. Wilburn admits that his favorite material possession is his Seeburg SPS 160, an antique jukebox for which he has collected more than 400 vinyl 45s, with music ranging from the 1950s through the early 1990s.

“I’m not arrogant, I’m confident,” explains Wilburn candidly. “I am humble enough to realize the extent of my ability and know my limitations as far as what I can and cannot repair. It makes me happy knowing that I can provide a service that people appreciate.” Removing dents from automobiles is a satisfying and rewarding profession for this problem solver. ◀

▶ TO THE POINT

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Many of the items in these markets have a shelf life of five to seven days. Many items are freshly made, never frozen, so deliveries occur once or twice weekly to maintain optimal freshness.

Locally owned and operated, Peninsula Vending Services began in 1993 in Oyster Point and has grown

blends, smoothies, muscle juices and a variety of milks.

“We’ve been able to evolve to meet the demands of our customers,” says Banwart. “I like to think we’re setting the standard in vending, to give people what they want and not to limit their choices on the basis of what has the longest shelf life.” ◀