

# Shifting into third gear



[Troy Bridgeman](#)

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Jaime Hamilton is the new owner of College Auto Tech on Waterloo Avenue and the third generation in her family to go into the automotive repair business. Troy Bridgeman for GuelphToday

When Jaime Hamilton offered to help her father at his garage in the spring of 2012 she didn't expect to be taking the wheel for a new generation.

"The lady that was working with Dad for quite a while fell ill and left and he was doing it all on his own for about a year," said Hamilton. "It was clear he needed some help so I said I will come and put in a year or whatever and see how it goes. Here we are six years later."

Hamilton had studied physical education and business at Brock University and after graduating took a job at a sports medicine business in Cambridge.

"I started out in reception and ended up managing the office," she said. "I was there for nine years and got to the point where I couldn't really move up anymore. I knew I was ready for a change."

That change ended up being very familiar.

"My husband said it's not that big of a difference," said Hamilton. "You've gone from managing fixing people to managing fixing cars."

It wasn't the first time she worked for her father.

"I worked for him for a summer way back when, during high school," she said. "It was much different back then. He got pretty stressed at times but he also had a shop and a gas bar at the same time and it was just busy, busy, busy. Now, I say he has gotten soft since the grandchildren or maybe I just got wiser."

Her father, Dave White, has been in the automotive repair business for more than 50 years. He faced a similar career decision in 1967 when he was 19 years old. A year earlier his father Ross White had opened White's Esso, a garage and gas bar in Fergus.

After high school White was accepted to Ryerson College for a three-year business program but he started apprenticing with his father in the summer of 1967 and eventually took the business over in 1975.

In 1982 he expanded the business and opened College Avenue Esso at the corner of College Avenue and Edinburgh Road. He also managed gas bars for Esso at the corners of Gordon and Wellington Streets and Speedvale Avenue and Woolwich Street for 10 years.

He sold White's Esso in 1996 and opened College Auto Tech at 79 Waterloo Avenue in 2002. Hamilton joined the team in March 2012.

"It has been fun," said Hamilton. "When I first came I wasn't sure how it was going to go but we work pretty well together and there has been no reason to leave. I like learning new things every day and there are lots of new things happening all the time. The staff is learning too."

White has been inching into retirement slowly.

"He did take the bulk of the summer off last year as he gets used to retiring," she said. "He plans to do that again this summer but ideally he wants to be technically fulltime until his 71st birthday, which is next summer."

Hamilton officially took over the business on April 30.

“We switched roles,” she said. “Technically he is working for me now but we haven’t advertised it that way.”

She has plans to rebrand the shop to attract a new generation of clients but intends to maintain the same level of quality and personal service her grandfather and father were known for over the last half century.

“We have some clients that are generational, which is pretty cool,” said Hamilton. “What I would like to convey is that I am going to continue with what dad taught me and carry on with what he has offered over the last 40 years.”

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### ***About the Author:* Troy Bridgeman**

Troy Bridgeman is a multi-media journalist that has lived and worked in the Guelph community his whole life. He has covered news and events in the city for more than two decades.

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