



Shawn F. Linenberger/Staff

ABOVE PHOTO: S&S Body Shop in on East Fourth Street in Tonganoxie. **BELOW PHOTO:** S&S Automotive is just west of the business' body shop on East Fourth Street.

S&S Body Shop, Automotive nears 50 years in Tonganoxie

By Shawn F. Linenberger
slingenberger@
tonganoxiemirror.com



S&S Automotive and Body Shop has been a Tonganoxie fixture since 1972.

Brothers Jerry and Ronnie Starcher started the family business in what then became the city maintenance shop near Fifth and Main streets before the city built a new shop at its water treatment facility.

S&S moved to what is now the company's automotive shop on East Fourth Street in 1976 and then the business expanded to the east where the body shop now stands.

Jerad Starcher, Jerry's son, has worked at the business since he was 14. A 2002 Tonganoxie High School graduate, the 35-year-old said the interaction with people has been the most rewarding part of the job.

"I would say the customer service end of it," Starcher said when asked about the best part of the job. "Taking care of people."

He went to trade school for two years after high

school before returning to the family business full-time.

His mother, Melanie, became sole owner in 2010.

The company has been part of the Kansas Auto Body Association for the past two years and has been a Certified Spies Hecker Refinish Shop since 1993. Jerad said, noting that in the "collision world that's not very common."

He said companies often change paint companies for financial reasons.

S&S continues to take elevated sanitation precautions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees use disinfectant wipes on keys and steering wheels. Vehicles in the body shop also get a full detail when finished with repairs.

And, the body shop has a partnership with Enterprise. The Leavenworth Enterprise can deliver cars to S&S for those who bring their vehicles in for collision repair.

The business campus, at 900 E. Fourth St. (mechanics shop) and 922 E. Fourth St. (body shop) continues on the legacy of its founders. Ronnie died in 2008 and Jerry in 2010.

"We appreciate the loyalty that our customers had for us," Melanie said. "Tonganoxie has been very good to us."

Read more about the business at sandsautoandbody.com or visit the business' Facebook page.

For auto body or collision repairs, call 913-369-3193 and for mechanical repairs 816-769-7041.

Dentist continues to build relationships, 33 years and counting in community

By Shawn F. Linenberger
slingenberger@
tonganoxiemirror.com

Grant Ritchey was practicing dentistry one day a week in Tonganoxie back in 1987.

At the time, he also had his own practice in Lawrence, but worked once a week for longtime Tonganoxie dentist George Hartshorn as an associate.

The next year, Hartshorn decided to sell the practice and left the country to become a missionary dentist.

In April 1988, Ritchey bought the Tonganoxie practice while splitting time at his Lawrence office. In 1998, he sold the Lawrence practice.

So, for nearly 35 years, Ritchey has been practicing dentistry in downtown Tonganoxie at 504 E. Fourth St.

"I fell in love with the town," Ritchey said.

The Tonganoxie dentist is back seeing patients as many businesses continue to slowly reopen amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We took seven weeks off during the shutdown from mid-March to the first week of May," Ritchey said.

The business is gradually opening back up while continuing its heightened regimen of disinfecting and sterilization.

"We just physically



Contributed photo

GRANT RITCHEY HAS BEEN PRACTICING DENTISTRY since 1987 at Tonganoxie Dental in downtown Tonganoxie.

can't be as busy as we were," Ritchey noted, with the various limitations and regulations during the pandemic.

Tonganoxie Dental, however, is staying busy with a backlog of patients that built up during the shutdown.

And, the office continues to extend its office hours to be more accessible to patients. A patient can be seen as early as 7 a.m. and the office is open until 6 p.m. weekdays.

The office has five full-time staff and a few part-time staffers, including Diane Flewelling, who has been receptionist at Tonganoxie Dental for 27 years.

"We've cultivated these wonderful long-term relationships, so that's what we miss the most about being shutdown," Ritchey said. "We couldn't wait to get back to see everyone."

The longtime local dentist also has built an audience internationally, becoming a bit of a go-to dentist on social media globally. He writes for the wildly popular blog "Science-Based Medicine," and has his own podcast called "The Prism Podcast."

He also has been interviewed by "Scientific American" and "The New York Times" and has done some dental outreach as part of mission work in Guatemala.

He also continues to provide dental care for three decades and counting here in Tonganoxie.

"Good, high-quality general dentistry in a relaxed caring environment," Ritchey said, describing his practice.

For more about the business, visit tonganoxiedental.com or the office's Facebook page.

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