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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT:

Returning home: Seal invests in Long Beach

All photos Special to The Pass Post



By Cara Pridemore

Eddie Seal's Auto Service Center has been a part of the Long Beach community since 2020, providing both high-quality service and strong local support. As a small, veteran-owned business, the Auto Service Center is centered on honesty and communication.

"A lot of it is just being upfront and honest with the customer," Eddie Seal said. "Letting them know, 'This is going to take us a few days' and managing their expectations right up front."

He credits his long-term employees for being able to provide that high-quality and trustworthy work. Seal's emphasis on trust also comes from his own experience as a young sailor seeking reliable auto service. With multiple training schools in Gulfport today, he has sought to provide a safe and dependable place for young sailors in a similar position.

With a shop foreman and four full-time technicians, the team handles nearly all mechanical repairs, from small cars to diesel trucks. The only exception is rebuilding automatic transmissions. The service center can also do near-dealer-level repairs with their high-level software communication systems.

Seal's mechanical expertise began with his love for cars as a child. In the '60s and '70s, his great uncle owned a mechanic shop in downtown Long Beach, sparking his initial interest. After returning from the Navy, where he learned the systems of aviation electronics, Seal worked for a car dealer in Gulfport for twenty-five years as a service advisor, working up to service director with his skills in managing electronic systems.

In 2020, Seal eventually returned to his hometown and opened his own service center, emphasizing his love for the community as a fourth generation Long Beach resident.

"I really wanted to be here in Long Beach with my community, my friends and family, businesspeople that I knew," he said. "I wanted to be able to service my home community more than being over in Gulfport."

Since the move, Seal has leaned into the community aspect of his business. His service center sponsors the local high school's ball teams and band. He has also provided internship and mentorship opportunities for high school juniors and seniors interested in auto mechanics through the school's Career and Technical Education Center.

"We see if they're interested in doing it long-term versus just as a hobby and help them try to see if it's something they're really interested in," Seal said.

This supportive atmosphere has defined Seal's business and the Long Beach community as a whole. Seal says that many customers have become friends who help to spread recognition by word of mouth, reducing need for advertising.

"These are people that I did not already know that I now have really good friendships with here in the local community... and some of the military personnel," he said. "I've stayed in touch with some even after they moved away from here."

In addition, Seal also says that the other nearby service centers all support one another, sending over business and recommending each other for certain types of repairs. For example, Seal's Auto Service Center can work with more high-level computer programming repairs, while his brother's shop in Gulfport focuses on tire repairs.

"It's funny, because we're all competitors, technically, but we also support each other," he said. "There's enough business to go around, doing honest work."

Seal says his Auto Service Center has thrived in the small, comforting atmosphere that Long Beach provides.

"I'm going to the grocery store or going out to a restaurant, and somebody recognizes me and says, 'Hey, I need to get my car in, when can you get to it?'" Seal said. "We'll talk about it, and it's just a very hometown, old-school kind of feel."



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