

Keystone Automotive honors customers with food and fun

In May, Keystone Automotive expressed appreciation to about 500 Iowa customers by holding open houses across the state. These events have been a tradition for the last ten years and the number of attendees shows that the Iowa collision industry certainly anticipates the evening.

“We have been having these open houses every other year since 1995,” explained Jim Houselog, manager of the Dubuque Keystone store, “and everybody has a good time.”

Houselog’s store in Dubuque served a catered dinner to around 280 customers on May 23 and Keystone Cedar Falls hosted another 150 customers on May 24. Festivities began at 5:00 p.m., lasting until 9:00 p.m.

No delivery vans were in sight as guests arrived to a parking lot full of hot rods and classic cars to pique their interest. Vendor booths filled the Keystone warehouses – giving people an opportunity to touch and feel new products and to meet with old friends.

The highlight of both evenings was the VirtualPaint demonstration, a virtual reality paint training system. An innovative way to teach painting techniques, this cutting edge technology is managed by the Iowa Waste Reduction Center at the University of Northern Iowa. Traditional spray application training methods are time consuming, expensive, and wasteful, but imagine being able to train technicians without ever using a drop of paint or stepping into a paint booth.

Combining practical technology with top notch research and design, the VirtualPaint takes teaching technology to a whole new level by eliminating the need for a paint booth, compressed air, safety equipment, preparation work, operational hazards, Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions, hazardous waste and clean-up work. This virtual spraying will train refinish technicians to spray more efficiently and reduce product waste.

VirtualPaint can be used to evaluate and improve spray technicians at all skill levels. Every feature is based on research and testing of actual application equipment and coatings. Hundreds of people tested their expertise in this virtual booth. Prizes were given to the top six “virtual” sprayers at each event.

After an evening of eating and education, door prizes were given to lucky winners at dinner. And the quality of the program sent each participant home a winner as well.

Keystone Automotive has six locations that serve Iowa: Dubuque, Davenport, Cedar Falls, Des Moines, Omaha, Nebraska and Peoria, Illinois.