

TRAILBLAZER

Auto Correct

▶▶ Patrice Banks is revved up about educating female drivers.



CABIN AIR FILTERS, clutch hoses, exhaust manifolds—do you feel lost? Patrice Banks did, too. Just a few years ago, the onetime “auto airhead” dreaded bringing her car in for an oil change. “I always felt taken advantage of,” says the 35-year-old former engineer. In 2011, after searching in vain for female mechanics in the Philadelphia area, she threw up her hands and decided to go to automotive school herself.

By day, Banks worked as a failure analyst at DuPont, determining how equipment at chemical processing plants, like centrifuges, broke down. By night, she poked under car hoods at a community college, learning how to do everything from checking oil to replacing a brake rotor. “I couldn’t believe so many women don’t know how to do some of

this stuff,” she says. “I was in school with 18-year-old boys, not rocket scientists!” But she loved it. A month after graduating, Banks gave up her six-figure salary and took a job at an auto repair shop making \$600 per week.

The pay cut paid off. This summer Banks moves into her own space to begin construction on Girls Auto Clinic, a full-service shop that she hopes will be a clubhouse for female drivers. She’ll run workshops for sororities, Girl Scout troops, and other groups of girls and women—whom she calls “sheCANics”—teaching them the nuts and bolts of vehicle upkeep. “I once got a text from a woman I’d taught whose car battery had died,” she says. “When a guy pulled over to help, he didn’t know how to jump the car—but she did.” (girlsautoclinic.com) —JENNIFER CHEN

Above: Banks at Delaware Technical Community College in 2013.