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## Recycling 'obsession' of auto shop owner

*By Kelly Fraser  
For the Journal*

CUSTER -- Pat Wanserski, owner of Pat's Auto Body Shop in Custer, gets a genuine thrill when he discovers a new way to use something in his shop -- from fenders to salvaged cars parked out front or the plastic bag his lunch comes in.

"This is such a win-win because you can do something good and make money," he said. "But it takes planning like any other good thing."

When it comes to recycling, Wanserski's philosophy is, "Why not try?"

Wanserski said while he always has recycled, it wasn't until a few years ago that it grew into somewhat of an obsession. The change in attitude was spurred when he looked in the Dumpster behind his shop and realized everything in it cost something to make and that anything he could keep out of it was one less piece of trash in a landfill.

Every little bit counts toward conserving resources, he said.

"Some place, somewhere, is going to have another tree growing in the yard," he said.

Wanserski said that although there always has been money in salvage, interest has grown in recent years as the price for scrap metal rises and recycling centers expand what they will take.

"Boy, if it's usable, you're foolish not to look at it," he said.

Recently, Wanserski has been researching installing a waste-oil heater that would burn used motor oil in the shop. A waste-oil heater, he said, would be a way to safely use the excess oil that he can't recycle in large quantities.

Wanserski has been a one-man operation since he opened shop in 1984. At any given time, Wanserski estimates he has between 20 and 25 cars on his lot to be salvaged.

In addition to his duties at the shop, Wanserski also is in his second year as chairman for the town of Sharon.

Wanserski has worked closely with Portage County solid waste officials to teach residents about what can be recycled. He also helped host a clean-up event with grant money from the Portage County Solid Waste department so Sharon residents could recycle tires and metals.

For his efforts, the department gave Wanserski a Remarkable Recycler of the Month award in March.

Kathy Powell, a program and education specialist with Recycling Connections, a non-profit organization that contracts with the department to coordinate recycling programs in the area, said Wanserski is an example for other small business owners because of his commitment and follow

through for recycling.

"He's the whole show," she said.

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