

Car-care ministries growing in midsize cities

by [Madeleine Buckley](#) in the [October 10, 2017](#) issue

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(RNS) When David McCoy founded the car-care ministry at McEachern Memorial United Methodist Church 15 years ago, he knew he was filling a need in his community. What he didn't know was how big a need that was.

Car-care ministries like McCoy's, where church members repair cars for those in need, transcend state borders and religious groups. But, McCoy said, there still aren't enough of them. After news outlets recently profiled his church's work in Powder Springs, Georgia, he saw calls jump from about 25 per month to over 300.

"The cry for help has just been tremendous," he said. "We feel that here in this area, and in many areas, transportation is as vital as food and clothing and housing. It's crazy how dependent we are on transportation and how quickly our lives fall apart when we don't have it."

While each ministry is a bit different, they usually ask clients to buy the parts while providing the labor, typically the most expensive part of a car repair, for free.

Finding people to fix cars can be the hardest part of running a successful car-care ministry, McCoy said. At least some volunteers need basic knowledge of mechanics. Those without experience can help by running errands, interacting with the clients, or holding a flashlight.

"I tell people, if you can drive a car, you can help at car care," he said.

The car-care ministry at Houston's First Baptist Church in Texas is taking that concept further. Eric Reed, a minister to men at the church, said the ministry plans to host introductory mechanics courses for men of the millennial generation "in hopes of giving them some confidence." They also expect the men to give back to the car-care ministry with their new skills.

Wheels4Hope, a faith-based ministry in Raleigh, North Carolina, gets weekly calls from people interested in starting a similar program, said director Elaine Pleasants.

The need is especially high in midsize cities lacking good public transportation systems, she said. "We have a bus line here, and it's a decent bus line, unless you work second or third shift."

In Powder Springs, a 30-minute drive west of Atlanta, McEachern Memorial and Powder Springs First United Methodist now share a shop space.

Tony Pucci, who runs the Powder Springs car-care ministry, said he often gets calls from people out of state. He thinks creating a network of similar ministries across the country would be helpful.

His shop partner McCoy is trying to make car-care ministries an official United Methodist campaign. Houston's Reed agreed. "Knowing you're not alone when you feel like sometimes not many people are doing this is encouraging."

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