

## NKY Car Care Clinic expands its reach: 'Help us help the next single mom'

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There are plenty of services in Northern Kentucky that give people help with childcare, job training and housing.

But there's only one that helps you fix your car.

The Samaritan Care Care Clinic repairs vehicles for hundreds of families in need. After about 16 years of working in borrowed space from auto repair shops, it's getting its own garage in Covington to scale up its operation.

The program helps women like Jamie Harrison, 29, who has four kids between 1 and 6 years old. When her kids got sick back-to-back at the end of February, she couldn't work for about a month and the brakes on her van were going out. Without transportation, she once had to haul all four children around on a wagon and the roads by her Southgate home don't have sidewalks.



"I have no other way to get them around because there's four of them and all four of them are in a car seat, so no one can fit them in their car," she said.

Harrison was referred to the Samaritan Car Care Clinic, which replaced her brakes, installed new spark plugs and gave her car a tuneup. Now, Harrison can safely get to work, drop her daughter off at school and her other kids at daycare. Soon, she'll be working as a medical assistant at a local hospital and making more money for her family.

### **Clients pay back over time**

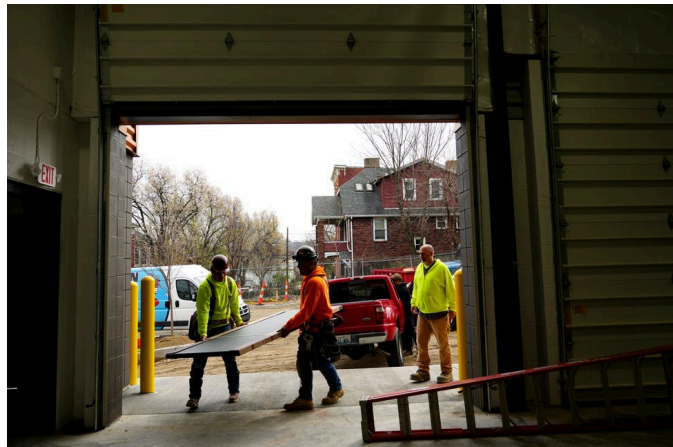
Director and founder Bruce Kintner says that's the kind of "hand up" they want people to have with the expectation that they pay back the program with monthly payments over time.

"So even if they can only pay \$100 toward \$1,000 repair upfront, then the idea is, 'Okay, 50 bucks a month, you help us help the next single mom that gets referred to us,'" he said.

Most of the people the clinic serves are like Harrison. Kintner said 70% of who the clinic helps are single moms.

"There is no other outlet [in Northern Kentucky] to address transportation barriers. So, there's no one else trying to do this on a nonprofit basis," Kintner said.

He works with roughly a dozen organizations who refer people to him for help. The whole operation is almost entirely run on volunteers. He's the only full-time employee, though he will be bringing on a full-time mechanic soon.



### **Clinic hasn't been able to help everyone**

The new garage is the result of donations and loans from The Catalytic Fund of Northern Kentucky and the Butler Foundation. The groups funded roughly \$750,000 needed for the new facility.

The clinic now has four service bays and a bike repair station. But despite the new facility, the future of the program can only be successful with more volunteers and donations from the community or other organizations.



The clinic hasn't been able to help everyone who needed it. In 2021, the clinic got 315 referrals but was able to help 227 families.

Limited funding means the clinic only invests in vehicles that will run well with a few repairs, like a new radiator or new tires. It can't sink money into a vehicle with major problems.

Sheba Shorter's 2013 Chevrolet Cruze needed major repairs, about \$4,000 worth. It didn't make sense for the clinic to invest in the "lemon," so Kintner put her on a waiting list for a donated vehicle back in December.

### **'I'm just so grateful'**

Shorter, 39, has two children, a 12-year-old and a 19-year-old college student who she drives to Northern Kentucky University. She works doing community outreach for the Brighton Center and needs to take materials to events and expos where she can tell people about the services and job training programs at the center.



By February, a family donated a van and insisted it go to a family in need. Shorter was able to get a microloan through the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and help pay for the repairs the van needed. The clinic helps the Society repair donated cars, like Shorter's case, and directly accepts car donations as well.

"So, I pay roughly \$150 per month for the microloan that's only \$2,500. So I'll be done paying it off by the end of the year," she said.

The payment costs less than the money she had to spend on Ubers, bus rides and DoorDash. It also saves her time. For instance, taking the bus from her Newport home to the Walmart in Florence took her an hour round trip and limited the amount of groceries she could get.

"Basically, the van has improved my life – in more ways than one – which is crazy, which I'm just so grateful for, so grateful for," she said.



The Samaritan Car Care Clinic is hosting a ribbon cutting and open house from 2-6 p.m. Wednesday at its new garage at 1428 Madison Ave. in Covington.

For those in need or those who want to make a donation, the clinic can be reached through [samaritancarcare.org](http://samaritancarcare.org).

Clients primarily go through a vetting process from referral agencies and may have to provide income-related information if contacting the clinic directly.