



November 2009 Newsletter Coupons





Our Solar Journey- A long story with a tragic ending

This is the story of our attempt to install solar power here at the shop. It was a complex process that had our hopes up high but seems to have ended with disappointment. Still, it was an interesting adventure and might be useful news for other businesses out there that have toyed with the idea of solar themselves.

Like many of our best ideas, this one came from a client suggestion. One of our clients works for Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO). Haven't heard of it? It's an organization whose sole purpose is to hand out money to improve the efficiency of our power system in Oregon. It's all paid for by a monthly fee on your power bill, which if you're anything like us you've never even noticed. Anyway, during a shuttle ride to his office our client was talking with the shuttle driver about the credits, offsets, incentives, and other assorted packages available to businesses and residences who wanted to go solar. Although Tom has thought about solar in the past, no one was ever able to come by and give us a simple answer about how much it would cost or when it would pay back. "Not a problem," the client said. "That's exactly what we do."

Three days later, there was an engineer on-site (paid for by the ETO!) to evaluate our energy use, insulation, equipment, and building to see what we could do to reduce consumption or implement greener power. The engineer's first recommendation was changing out our lighting systems from our current dinosaur-age shop lights to high-efficiency fluorescent. (We're pursuing this as well and we'll keep you posted, but it's not nearly as interesting as the solar.) "So what about solar?" we asked. Turns out that we are prime candidates. Our shop has a huge roof with very little shading and a clear southern exposure. Not only that, but the ETO engineer told us about the incentives from the ETO, state, and federal sources that could make the system almost FREE. Perfect.

The next step was to have a solar specialist check us out. The ETO gave us names of several solar companies in their trade partner network. ETO trade partners are vetted for qualifications, licenses, insurance, and other issues, so we had confidence that we were getting the right people for the job. Four companies came out to the shop, looked us over, and submitted bids that would cover 40% to 60% of our electric consumption. These proposals were extremely thorough, covering in-depth technical, logistic, and economic details. We were all set to take our time and make the in-depth evaluations these proposals deserved when things suddenly changed. The ETO incentive program had been so successful that their part of the incentive package was being cut by about 25%, which would make a \$40,000 difference in our project. We were suddenly under a crushing deadline, so we picked the best two proposals and sent them to our accountant to make sure that the numbers actually worked out.

The accountant crunched the numbers and came back with the answer we wanted to hear. "The figures look good for both proposals. With the incentives, the system will pay for itself in 5 years and pay for most of your power needs for the next 25 years minimum. You'd be crazy to pass this up." Whoo Hoo! Clean power for FREE! We made our final contractor decision and excitedly made the call, but we were still under the gun to get our final submission to the ETO before the incentives expired. Knowing this, our contractor called in an engineering firm the next day to confirm that our roof would actually hold the weight of the system we were considering. This is where everything blew up, and blew up quickly. The engineer looked at our 60-year-old building structure and determined that one half was already overloaded, and the other half wouldn't carry the added load of the equipment. Both sides of the roof would need structural upgrades if we were going to move forward, and it was going to cost big bucks. Way bigger bucks than we were able to spend. That was it... just like that, solar was dead.

Aside from just telling you a sad but interesting story about what's been happening around the shop, there's a point to this article. The incentives for residential solar systems aren't as generous as those for business, but even with reduced incentives solar can be almost free for business use. If you are a business owner interested in going solar, or know someone who is, you may not have realized how easy it can be. The Energy Trust and their trade partner network make the process painless, and even enjoyable. They tell you everything you need to know and put you in touch with people you can trust. In fact, all four of the companies they recommended to us were professional, friendly, and eager to help us in every way. So, to close this article, we would like to pass along the contact information for all the excellent companies and organizations that worked with us. Even if solar is a dead end for us (for now, at least) it may be just the thing for you and your business. Get in touch with one of these guys; you'll be glad you did!

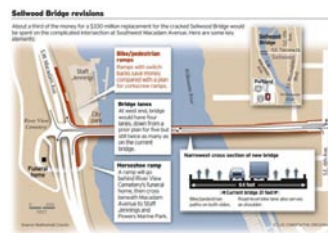
Energy Trust of Oregon- 866-368-7878

Stapleton Solar and Electric- Douglas Van Zandt, 541-490-9572

Solar Nation- Bruce Robinson- 509-879-7899

REC Solar- Alex Aldrich, 503-477-2419

National Solar- John Harley, 253-226-7052



Sellwood Bridge Update

It seems that every time our Client Shuttle starts across the Sellwood Bridge, a nervous voice will come from the back, asking "so... are they any closer to fixing this thing?"

This month there's a little more to tell you. The design is still changing on the West side interchange, with features being added to reduce cost and improve functionality. (See the diagram above for the current design.) Major engineering hasn't started yet, but the latest rumor was that they are planning to be crunching numbers in 2010, with construction to begin in 2012.

The most reassuring step involves funding for the project. The current cost is estimated at \$330 million, up from \$320 million in February. The largest stumbling block at the time was the question of money, which is getting clearer now. Multnomah County, which is responsible for the bridge, has implemented a \$19 fee on vehicle registrations that will raise \$127 million of the total. Clackamas County, which supplies the vast bulk of traffic across the bridge, is considering an addition to their own vehicle registration of \$5-\$8, which will contribute about \$22 million. \$149 million down, \$181 million to go.

Here's a couple links to Oregonian stories about the bridge if you'd like to dig a little deeper...

http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/10/west_side_complexity_keeps_sel.html

http://www.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty/index.ssf/2009/10/clackamas_county_considers_sel.html

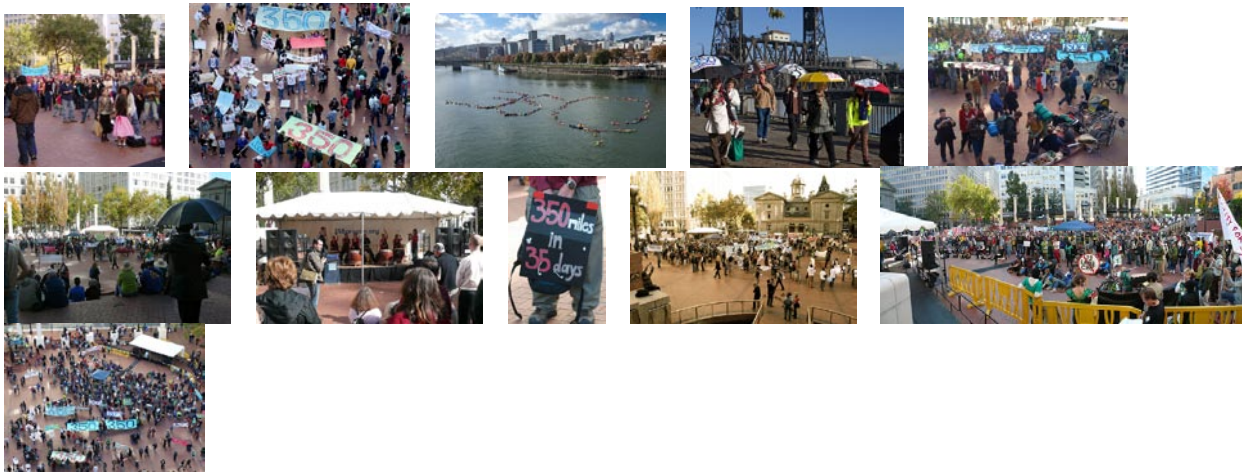


Making A Difference In Our Climate- Tom Dwyer Automotive at Portland's 350.org rally

You might have heard about 350.org. It's a global organization raising awareness about carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. 350 parts per million (ppm) is the cap for a stable climate, but right now we're over 385. On October 24, 350.org coordinated a global event to draw attention to the 350ppm goal in advance of the Copenhagen Environmental Conference coming up in December. Tom Dwyer Automotive Services was proud to be one of the sponsors and to help emcee the Portland event.

In cities around the world, people came together to take a stand for a safe climate future. At over 5200 events, people found creative ways to portray the number "350" in photographs which were then assembled for presentation at the Copenhagen conference. Our event in Pioneer Courthouse Square included the arrival of a group of people who had walked 350 miles up the Oregon Coast, a photo of kayakers creating the number "350" in the Willamette River, speakers from various local environmental groups, a women's spirit-drum circle, Tibetan singing bowls, gospel singing, musicians, comedians, and more. The afternoon ended with the crowd facing each side of the square for our photos, which were taken from the surrounding buildings. To see photos of events from Bangladesh to Denmark, check out <http://www.flickr.com/photos/350org/sets/>. You'll find all the photos from our own humble Portland at <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=portland&w=25654955%40N03>

We are very proud that our own Tom Dwyer Automotive Carbon Neutral Program (CNP) has already offset over one and a quarter million pounds of carbon. This has helped more than just the environment, it's helped our clients who join the CNP for \$100 and get discounts for automotive services totaling \$350. The CNP is really great, but real change takes more than just that... it takes all of us working together. If you think climate change is important, please consider adding YOUR help, YOUR time, and YOUR voice to the fight. It really does make a difference.



(Follow-up- Just after we finished this article, the people at 350.org dropped off a beautiful, framed picture from the event to thank us for our support. It was absolutely spectacular, and will soon be in an appropriate place of honor in our office. The thanks should really go to Kathy Peper, Munro Sickafoose, Karol Collymore, and all the great people at 350.org who do such wonderful work for letting us contribute some small part.)



"Right-To-Repair" Law Affects Your Choice of Auto Shops

Unnoticed amidst the hubbub of Health Insurance Reform, there's another bill that you should know about. HR#2057, the "Right To Repair Act", affects the ability of independent shops (like Tom Dwyer Automotive) to work on your car. Since the automobile industry received \$17.4 billion in taxpayer bailout money, you might expect a "fair play" attitude on HR2057. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Manufacturers currently sell required software and hardware at a much lower rate for their dealerships than they do for independent shops, creating a virtual monopoly for the dealerships. By requiring the manufacturers to sell the required equipment at a reasonable price to all sources, the bill allows independents to stay competitive with dealerships and protects your freedom to choose where you get your vehicle serviced.

HR2057 requires manufacturers of vehicles sold, leased, or otherwise introduced into U.S. commerce to:

- provide all information necessary to diagnose, service, maintain, or repair the vehicle,
- offer for sale any related tool or equipment, and
- provide information so that aftermarket tool companies can manufacture tools with the same functional characteristics

There are protections for trade secrets, and the bill would be enforced through FTC (Federal Trade Commission) action or suits from state or local jurisdictions.

Vehicle manufacturers have a strong reason to support the status quo: dealer parts and service departments make up just 11.8% of a typical dealership's total sales, but 48% of total operating profit. On the other hand, the aftermarket tools and parts industry employs over five million workers in 495,000 business and accounts for a total of \$200 billion in annual sales, all of which would suffer if this bill is defeated.

The 20,000 members of the National Independent Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), in expressing their support for the bill, responded to a poll about what how their shops would function if the bill did not pass.

- 90% would lose production time
- 80% would use "back door" channels to access repair information
- 78% would tell car owners to go to a new car dealership for repairs
- 72% would turn away work because of lack of needed information or tools
- 69% would have problems with getting access to needed information or equipment
- 59% would take at least one car per month to the dealership for repairs

If you'd like to support David against Goliath, please call your representatives and tell them you support HR2057, the "Right to Repair" Act!



Drew's Spinach Florentine

We're coming up on the big Thanksgiving feast, where the turkey will be the star of the show. However, we all know the star is nothing without the supporting cast, and it's the trimmings that really make the feast great. Special to your Thanksgiving table this year is this excellent side dish that may be a candidate for the best supporting actor...

1 lb. fresh mushrooms- sliced
 ¼ cup chopped onion
 ¼ cup margarine
 ¼ tsp garlic salt

½ to 1 tbsp salt
 (2) 10oz packages of frozen spinach (thawed and drained)
 1 cup finely grated cheddar cheese

- Sauté mushrooms and onions in butter until clear
- Stir in salt and garlic salt
- Place 1 package of spinach in bottom of casserole dish
- Pour half of the mushroom mixture on top of spinach and sprinkle with cheese
- Use the other package of spinach to create another layer on top of the cheese
- Pour the other half of the mushroom mixture on top of the spinach and top with cheese
- Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes



The New Look Of Public Service Announcements

You may think of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) as dry and boring, but that's changing. In a world where people TIVO past commercials or get their video from disc or computer, PSAs have to be attention-grabbers to be seen at all. They're changing to adapt, and the results "aren't your daddy's PSAs." Many of them are evolving into gripping 30-second vignettes that stay with you long after the show is back on. Here are two to get you started, or go to YouTube and search "powerful public service announcements."

Texting while driving- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JlqO2IBR8aY> (WARNING: NOT FOR KIDS)

Global Warming- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdTPyKsGTQ>

What Will Health Care Cost You? Actual Data on Federal Subsidies for Health Insurance

They say the devil is in the details, and nowhere is that more true than the Health Care debate. Here's something to give you some real-world numbers to put with the rhetoric. Charles Rangel has put together a very simple chart showing how much money you'd get to help with mandated health insurance based on your income. Very interesting reading!



News To Make You Furious- Bonuses and Bailouts

The recession continues, although you wouldn't know it from the behavior of the folks who are living on the billions of dollars of preemptive unemployment we sent them. One 29-year-old man who works for a large investment management firm was at an afternoon party with \$1000-a-bottle champagne, and was asked how he could afford to be there. "If you'd asked me in October, I'd say it'd be a different situation, and I don't think I'd be here. Then the government gave us \$10 billion." Thank god our elected representatives are implementing the strong and effective reforms we demanded and they promised. Or not. Here's a couple choice articles on the bailout, where you money's going, and what it's doing. Be warned, your money is probably having a better time than you are.

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/oct2009/aig1-o17.shtml> Brief on the bailouts

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dave-johnson/this-will-make-you-furiou_b_175362.html Huffington Post

http://www.toomuchonline.org/articlenew_2009/june15a.html Geithner's new rules, maybe

http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x4166429 Execs party in style

http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x4439863 Bailouts used to pay bonuses

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/oct2009/aig1-o17.shtml> AIG Plans \$198 million in new bonuses

http://www.seeingtheforest.com/archives/2009/03/aig_accountable.htm- Bob Reich says AIG accountable to no one

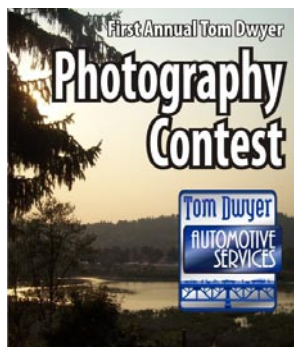


Photo Contest Winners

October 1 marked the end of our 1st Annual Tom Dwyer Automotive Services Sellwood Photo Contest. We were looking for something that summed up the feel and attitude of our Sellwood neighborhood and as you can imagine we had several strong entries. But of course we had to make our decisions, so without further ado, we proudly announce the winners...



First place, and a fabulous showcase prize of \$100 cash, a free interval service with oil change, and a \$50 certificate for Commercial Frame and Art to frame her photograph goes to Lauren Johnson for her untitled photo during last year's Christmas snowstorm.



Second place, and an only slightly less fabulous prize package of \$75 cash and a free interval service with oil change goes to Kimberli Ransom for her picture of the changing autumn leaves over the Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge.



Third place, and the still fabulous package of \$50 cash and a free interval service with oil change goes to Kelli Fritsche for her "Serene Sellwood" picture, a springtime image showing a different side of Oaks Bottom.

Congratulations to our winners, and thank you to everyone who entered. Start planning your pictures now, because we'll be doing this again next year!



Client Profile- Rebecca Turner

Rebecca Turner, Commercial Frame and Art, 1610 SE 10th Ave, Portland, OR, 97214, 503-234-4269

If you saw the Photography Contest winners in the previous article you noticed that our First Place winner will be receiving a certificate for free framing from Commercial Frame and Art. For our Client Profile this month we thought we would tell you a little more about Rebecca Turner, the lady behind the company. Rebecca has been a client of Tom's for well over 20 years, going back to the days when he was working out of a Tigard garage in 1981. "I was referred to Tom by a friend", Rebecca said, "but there was one particular time that really locked me in to being a client. I was on the road to Santa Fe when I lost the brakes on my RV. Before I even took it to a shop, I called Tom. I described the problem to him and he not only gave me repair advice, he gave me a range of what price to expect and found the ID number for the parts I'd be needing." That wasn't the only time Tom came through for her, though. "My Subaru gave out on a trip over Mount Hood. I had it towed to a shop, where they looked it over and told me that the engine block was blown. Amazingly, they had a spare engine block for just my model of Subaru that they were willing to put in right away. It sounded a little fishy to me, so I called Tom and he told me to get it out of that shop as soon as it would move. I loaded it onto a U-Haul and took it to another shop where they immediately diagnosed and fixed the blown hoses. That quick call saved me hundreds or even thousands of dollars."

Rebecca started her business about the same time as Tom and has been through many of the same ups and downs. She feels a sort of kinship with Tom and the way he runs this business. "We've both worked very hard to build our business around integrity, client service, and long-term relationships. We want our clients to feel at ease when they come to us." (Matty, Rebecca's 12-year-old Labrador who hangs out at the office, helps out with that.) "We're good listeners, so we spend a lot of time talking with our clients to find out their goals and then work within their budget to give them a result they'll be proud of. Good framing is a high-end product. It's an investment they'll have to live with for a long time and we want them to be excited about it." Rebecca's efforts are apparently paying off because, again like Tom, she still has some clients that go back to when her business first started. "I'd wanted to own my own business since I was a little girl, no matter what kind it was. Since I'd worked at both commercial and retail frame shops, it was natural to pursue that path when I went out on my own."

Commercial Frame and Art is not normally open to the public at large. They only have a couple employees and do no formal advertising. The vast majority of their business comes from the word-of-mouth of satisfied customers. They work with businesses, artists, and designers to create framing solutions that will tie together the disparate elements in a home or office. "People should look at the art, not the frame or the wall," says Rebecca. "Framing accents and spotlights the art, and can combine color or texture from the art and the rest of the room to tie pieces together and complete an interior. Framing is the glue that brings everything together." Sometimes it can even glue things that, well... maybe shouldn't be glued together. "Many times we're asked to frame a certificate, diploma, or something of special importance to the client. But one time, a client came in asking for us to frame a dead bird. Not a picture of a dead bird... a dead bird. Not even a dead bird in good shape, but a fossilized and crusty dead bird that they'd found in their chimney. I guess it's hard to say we did a 'good' job on it, but we really 'macabred it up' for them, and they went away very happy." If you ever find yourself in need of top-of-the-line framing services for your home or business, why not give Rebecca a call?



Report Us To The Authorities...Please?

The internet is mutating beyond a tangle of web pages to become "Web 2.0". This change relies heavily on information sharing, video-sharing sites, wikis, and social-networking sites. Of particular interest to businesses of all sizes are the "review" sites, where people can post reviews about a businesses' products or services and potential customers can get the straight scoop on a company before plunking down their hard earned money.

These sites offer unbiased reviews, or at least a broad selection of biased ones. Wouldn't you like to know beforehand if a plumber was reviewed as 'sloppy, shoddy, and left before the work was done' or 'clean, professional, and did all the work for the price he quoted?' Sometimes the choice isn't that black-and-white. For any particular purchase you may be more interested in price or quality, and these sites can help you decide. Style may be an issue in work like architecture or landscaping and the reviews can help guide you to a professional whose style matches your own.

Two of our favorites are "Angie's List" (www.angieslist.com) and "Yelp" (www.yelp.com). Angie's List is a member-only site that requires a paid subscription to read (or post) reviews, and Yelp is a free site that accepts any input. Both can easily save you massive amounts of time, money, and heartache when you're considering any type of product or service. Companies can live or die based on their ratings on these sites. When people search for a particular category (like restaurants) the results are frequently ranked by the number of reviews and by their average grade. Companies with lots of good reviews rise to the top, while companies with few reviews or bad reviews drop to the bottom. We're very proud of our ratings on both of these sites (Overall "A" grade on Angie's List with 20 reports, "5 stars out of 5" on each of our 7 Yelp reports) but we'd always like to do better and we'd like to ask for your help. If you are a member of Angie's List or can take the time to go to Yelp, you can share your opinion online with the rest of the outside world. **Please take a few minutes to write up a report or review for us!** People searching for a reliable mechanic will certainly appreciate the feedback, and so will we. Thanks!