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Marthin Shikongo

Auto Mechanic

From Wire Car Builder to Qualified Auto Mechanic

Cars are important machines for modern society, but to some people, they are moving wonders that hold compelling mysteries, waiting to be solved. Meet 26 year-old Marthin Shikongo, a young man who has turned his boyhood passion for cars into a rewarding and fulfilling career. He is an Auto Mechanic. This is his story.

Village Boy

Marthin grew up at Ondonga village in the Olukonda Constituency in Oshikoto. After completing his Grade 10 at the Ontananga Junior Secondary School, he proceeded to the Ekulo Senior Secondary School where he completed Grade 12 in 2008.

He vividly recalls his carefree village life and the fun he had with friends driving their wire cars around, pretending they were the latest models. "Village life was all about having fun, and fun was having a wire car. It wasn't easy to make them, because my dad didn't want me to use his pliers. He caught me with the pliers a few times and I would get a thorough hiding", he recalls.

Marthin is convinced that his early fascination with wire cars and his tendency to disassemble things, is what prepared him for a career in Auto mechanics in later life. "I've always enjoyed taking things apart to see how they work. I'd take apart anything I could get my hands on. As I grew older, I gained more skill in the art of disassembly, and it wasn't long before I didn't have anything left to dismantle. Worse yet, I didn't have



any toys to play with”, he shares.

Disciplined Training

Our Auto mechanic passed Grade 12 with excellent grades, good enough to secure entry to technikon, or university. However, despite encouragement from some family members and friends to pursue tertiary studies, Martin remained resolute in following his boyhood dream to become an Auto mechanic. He eventually ended up registering at the Namibia Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT). “There wasn’t really anything of interest at either university or technikon. After a lot of introspection, I realised that my desire to work with my hands was just too strong. And when I found out that NIMT offered an Auto mechanic course at its Arandis campus, I applied, and was accepted”, Marthin explains.

Marthin excelled in the theoretical campus-bound sessions, but found the going tough during his first job attachment at Busy Trucks at Ondangwa. “Sometimes, I felt like just giving up. My foreman would send me for a tool I couldn’t identify. When I took too long he would say that I do not know what I am doing”, he recalls. A strong fighting spirit kept him from giving up. “I soon settled in and my foreman soon changed his stance. The compliments started rolling in. I improved on finishing tasks ahead of schedule. I organised the tools and lubricants and I kept the quality of my work up to standard. My foreman taught me the importance of keeping my tools clean, after working on a car. That is housekeeping. When your tools are clean, then your job is also clean”, he shares.

Fulfilling Work

Further attachment opportunities followed at Rhino Trucks and Repair in the capital, where Marthin was afforded the opportunity to work under supervision on smaller passenger vehicles. Soon after graduation in 2012, he landed a job as an Automechanic at Reho Auto Repairs, at Rehoboth. “It was my first time to work without a foreman’s supervision and it was very exciting. Working independently made me realise that I made the right career decision. Fixing a car and making it work, is so self-fulfilling. It’s what makes me happy”, he notes.

Today, Marthin is employed by prominent local tourism company, Wilderness Safaris, in its automechanics workshop. Colleagues consider him an asset to the company and value the important work he does in ensuring that operations run smoothly. “The

company relies on its about 100 vehicles to conduct countrywide tours and has a fully-fledged workshop to service and repair its fleet. Often, it’s required that we visit lodges where we do emergency repairs, but most of the time, I work from here where I fix engines, gearboxes, differentials, brake and suspension systems and clutches. We also do our own fabrication and we have our own team of Panelbeaters and Electricians”, he explains.

Big Dreams

Proud of his steady progress at Wilderness Safaris, and how he is appreciated by his supervisors as a key member of the team, Marthin appreciates that he still needs to grow and gain more experience. “Some people choose to start into the automotive industry by jumping in with no schooling and only on-the-job training. Those that do are at a

disadvantage these days. Computers and electronics in today's vehicles require mechanics to diagnose and repair these complex non-mechanical systems, as well as perform the work of a mechanic. A lack of education in these areas can therefore be very detrimental. That is why I chose to seek out training, from the onset", he emphasises.

Marthin is not only a skilled Automechanic, this young man also harbours a dream to one day take the lead in assembling a team of skilled artisans to produce a locally-made Namibian automobile. "I don't think it is far-fetched at all. Yes, it will require significant capital investment, but we have the skills here. We have Fitters and Turners, Boilermakers, Diesel Mechanics and Auto-Electricians. We can manufacture a car in Namibia. It is my dream and I am going to make it happen. All I need is the funds and a strong team", Marthin shares.

Support System

For now, Martin remains focused on doing his best. And, he enjoys the full support of his family, employer and friends. They recognise him as an individual who takes pride in his work, and as someone who is passionate about what he does.

"My family has been very supportive. They appreciate that this is what makes me happy. They have my back, at all times. And I have theirs, because I am now the family mechanic. Whenever their vehicles

have problems, I'm their man to fix them", he shares. "I am encouraged, not only by their support, but my the support from my employer, as well. Them giving me work to do is a sign that they have trust in my skills and ability. It is very reassuring", he adds.

Skills Champion

Marthin is passionate about technical and vocational training and embraces the fact that he is a rolemodel for his peers, and others, wishing to enter the stream. "I'm not bragging, but I'm doing well. I can support myself and I am on a solid career track with a bright future ahead of me. Those who continue to think that there is no future in technical and vocational careers should reconsider their stance. Technical and vocational options are the future", he says.

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