



October 13, 2007

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August 2, 2007

A weekly publication from Times Media, Inc. [Click here](#) for advertising information.

Commitment to excellence

Akins Collision Center provides convenience for auto repair estimates

By Jeanne Carbone Lewis
Staff Writer

Americans love driving their cars. And Bill and Ann Rupp, the husband and wife team at Akins Collision Center in the Almaden Oaks Plaza, wish to keep it that way by offering fast, reliable service when autos are out of commission.

The Akins Collision Center offers vehicle estimates, drop-off and pick-ups at their Meridian and Redmond Avenue location combined with convenience, guaranteed workmanship, commitment to excellence and service with a smile, say the owners.

"The best thing about the business is when you make a customer really happy and they appreciate what you do," said owner Bill Rupp, who is related to the original owners, the Akins. "The second thing is that our employees are a combination team and a family."

Though Akins Collision Center opened its doors at the Almaden satellite location in December of 2003, they have been in business since 1971. Rupp joined his uncle, Bill Akins, the same year as manager. In 1976, he became the owner. He expanded the company in Santa Clara in 1990 with the 24,000-square-foot repair shop offering a state-of-the-art facility including metalwork, mechanical repairs, parts and painting, stripes and decals.



Bill Rupp opened the Almaden satellite location of Akins Collision Center in 2003. Photo by Jeanne Carbone Lewis

When a customer calls or is referred to the Akins Collision Center by an insurance company, everything is completed at the location but the production.

"We do everything here," said Rupp. "We get assignments through insurance [or walk-ins], we write the estimates, the rental car agencies come and pick them up and drop them off and we deliver their vehicles from here. We chose this location specifically for the benefit of our customers. They can visit the local merchants at the Albertson's shopping plaza or just relax in our office during the estimate and scheduling process."

The Rupps fell in love with the Almaden Valley and moved here seven years ago. The couple has five children. Five years ago a storefront became vacant at the Almaden Oaks Center and the next year the satellite location was opened.

"If knowledge is indeed power... then Akins Collision Center is an all-powerful collision repair shop," wrote Bob Yearick in Automotive Body Repair News in 2003. "Rupp doesn't just pay lip service to education; he actually pays for it, to the tune of

50 percent of job-related courses completed by his employees.”

When an employee receives a certificate it's added to the “Wall of Education” at the Santa Clara location. The facility is staffed with Automotive Service Association [ASE]- and I-CAR-trained technicians. And the shop has earned the DuPont Assurance of Quality designation.

But continuing education is not only for employees of Akins Collision Center. During Rupp's 36 years in the business, he has been involved in local, state and national organizations; I-CAR Gold Class Professional, ASE certified and as president of the California Auto Body Association. He is a member of the National Auto Body Council and the Collision Industry Electronic Commerce Association. He's a member of Santa Clara, Cupertino and Sunnyvale Chambers of Commerce. He has managed and sponsored Little League teams in the past and would like to continue the tradition in Almaden.

The Rupps are serious when they say their employees are family. Birthdays are celebrated with cakes and gift cards and there are annual summer picnics, Christmas parties and monthly barbecues. And staff members who stay with the company receive a gold ring for five years of service, with a diamond added every fifth year for continued employment.

Some of their employees are family. Daughter Amanda works at the Cupertino location and Ann's father takes before and after photographs and fills in where he is needed.

With Akins Collision Center satellite locations, many customers never see the building where their vehicle is repaired, but those who do enjoy the experience. The Santa Clara location waiting room is stocked with puzzles, juke boxes and an impressive collection of antiques; Coca-Cola collectables, phone booths, gas pumps, old signs and other artifacts from the past.



Ann and Bill Rupp are the husband and wife team who own Akins Collision Center in Almaden offering service “right in your own backyard.” Photo by Jeanne Carbone Lewis

After opening the Almaden location, which displays memorabilia as well as a photo gallery of customer vehicle, a jukebox and even a chalkboard for the kids, Akins opened up a third location in Cupertino at 1151 S. DeAnza Blvd. in 2005.

“Our satellite offices allow us to offer something to our customers that they need—our great services close to home,” said owner and operations manager Ann Rupp. “That saves them time, a precious commodity in this day and age. Good old-fashioned service and caring for our customers, that's what we're all about. If it's easier for you, it's good for us.”

The Rupps are committed to quality workmanship as well as customer satisfaction. That satisfaction has people traveling from San Jose, Los Gatos, Santa Cruz as well as Almaden Valley to Akins “right in your own backyard” estimating, drop-off and pick-up location.

“Bill's a peach of a nice guy,” said Almaden resident Jack Keys. “My son was rear ended and he took excellent care of us. You don't find that kind of service anymore. I consider him a good friend. I even went to the Santa Clara location—it's like a museum—just great.”

Almaden resident Caroline Taylor agrees.

“I really respect Bill and got great service,” said Taylor. “It's really nice to be able to drop the car off so close and they return it to you repaired and clean. I would definitely use them again and have recommended them to friends, who have been happy with them too.

“The other thing is ever since Bill opened the shop in Almaden, he has been a wonderful supporter of Simonds Elementary School's annual auction. He not only donates generous detail packages, but he has even donated car and sports memorabilia that we could auction. His company really is part of our community and supports the Almaden area families,” added Taylor.

Akins Collision Center of Almaden Valley is located at 1342 Redmond Ave. at the Almaden Oaks Plaza. Call (408) 268-3814 or visit www.callakins.com. Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

