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## TCC Regional Automotive Center Holds Dedication Ceremony

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**HAMPTON ROADS, Va.** – In a special event held April 20, **Tidewater Community College** dedicated its new high-tech, 30,600- square-foot Regional Automotive Center (RAC) with a gathering of officials, guests and impressive vehicles, including a sampling of its 50-plus fleet – all under three years old – contributed by automotive manufacturers.



Hundreds of guests witnessed technology demonstrations in the high-tech shops and state-of-the-art classrooms – as well as a prototype Toyota plug-in car displayed in the showroom area – after strolling by dozens of auto club cars, a monster truck and National Hot Rod Association driver **Bobby Martin's** Top Alcohol Funny Car (Chrysler CAP Charger) parked outside.

In partnership with the city of Chesapeake, TCC located the facility, complete with an automotive “showroom” area, at 600 Innovation Drive in the city’s Oakbrooke Business & Technology Center, one of the city’s newest business developments.

“The new TCC Regional Automotive Center embodies the college’s commitment to developing smart partnerships and strategic alliances that help our region’s economy grow and prosper,” says TCC President **Deborah M. DiCroce**.



TCC’s cutting-edge center – one of few such high-tech educational facilities for today’s automotive industry – cost \$10.1 million. The project was included in the state of Virginia’s 2002 bond referendum for higher education.

The RAC boasts nine classrooms and 15 instructional garage bays – including one that accommodates a tractor-trailer rig. High-tech instructional equipment includes ceiling-mounted video cameras to project hands-on demonstrations to everyone in the class.

With classes that include electronics and today's high-tech diagnostics, TCC's automotive program offers numerous certification and degree tracks as well as career-studies credits that allow employees to remain current with technological advances.

It offers students and employers affordable and convenient training at the forefront of industry trends and standards, while providing automotive businesses across Hampton Roads with a stream of well-trained, technology-savvy employees.

First-year student **Robyn Lowe** said she was delighted with the new facility, where she has nearly completed the conversion of a **Mercedes 380 SL** to diesel that will run on 100% biodiesel fuel.

"I found – on Craig's List – two 1983 cars that fit what I wanted to do; I took the diesel engine out of a 300 SD and put it into the convertible," she said.

Lowe plans to make her own fuel from restaurant oil, filtered and treated with methanol and lye.

TCC's comprehensive Automotive Technology program also features three specialized manufacturer programs: **Chrysler CAP** (College Automotive Program), **Toyota T-TEN** (Toyota Technical Education Network), and **Honda PACT** (Professional Automotive Career Training). TCC is one of only four colleges in the nation to offer all three manufacturers' programs.

A well-established model for industry partnerships, TCC's Automotive Technology and Diesel Technology programs also benefit from an award-winning advisory board with 32 members from all areas of the industry, including regional dealerships.

During the event, the college announced a substantial new gift for scholarships from the region's dealership association. The **Hampton Roads Automobile Dealers Association** (HRADA) provided \$100,000 to continue to support automotive-workforce education through TCC's Automotive Technology and Diesel Technology programs.

"This substantial support for our students speaks to HRADA's long-range vision in providing first-class education and training for the automotive industry's future workforce," said DiCroce.

"Its increased investment in TCC, added to the generous support of major automotive manufacturers, illustrates the strength of public-private partnerships to prepare Hampton Roads' workforce for success."

For more information about TCC's Automotive Technology and Diesel Technology programs, call the Information Center at 757-822-1122 or visit TCC's web site, [www.tcc.edu](http://www.tcc.edu).

