

ADVERTISEMENT

THE NEW Power Suit

TO SUPPORT WOMEN MAKING MOVES IN TRADITIONALLY MALE-DOMINATED FIELDS, FORD IS SPOTLIGHTING TRAILBLAZERS LIKE **PATRICE BANKS**, FOUNDER AND OWNER OF THE FIRST AUTO SERVICE CENTER FOR FEMALE DRIVERS. LEARN HOW SHE SUITS UP AND TAKES THE WHEEL.

Patrice Banks enjoys standing out. In fact, ever since 2017 when she opened the Girls Auto Clinic (GAC) in Upper Darby, Penn., she has shown up to work in a signature uniform that's as bold as her personality: a mechanic's jumpsuit, which Banks accessorizes with red stilettos. Her take on a "power suit" perfectly reflects the shop's unique atmosphere and offerings.

In addition to managing a largely female staff of mechanics, Banks presides over the adjacent Clutch Beauty Bar, where clients can indulge in manis and pedis. Her monthly car care workshops fill up quickly, and women come from all corners of the country to learn car-care basics that long left them on the side of the road.

Ironically, Banks' family didn't own an automobile when she was growing up outside of Philadelphia. "We took the bus," she recalls. But as a teen, the freedom of four wheels became a priority for her. She worked several part-time jobs to save for a car, and was the first in her family to buy one.

While working as a materials engineer after college, Banks often heard from other women that they felt taken advantage of at their local auto shops. Searching for a female mechanic in her area yielded zero results. (Today, less than 10 percent of mechanics are women.) "And yet, women are the number-one customers in the industry," she says. "I asked myself, How are [men] going to create good experiences for female customers when they don't look or talk like us?"

Wanting to learn all she could about the business, Banks enrolled in auto tech classes at night while maintaining a full-time job. Eventually, she quit her job, crafted a catchy hashtag (#sheCANic) and launched GAC. With plans to expand her empire beyond Philadelphia, Banks has never looked back. And when she peeps at her pumps, she loves what she sees. "I get flack from those who think my red shoes are a marketing ploy," she says with a shrug. "I'm a woman. I like to wear heels."



Banks teaches women how to check tire pressure on a new 2020 Ford Explorer ST (optional features shown).



"I want women to have a better relationship with their cars."



Scan the code to hear from Banks what drives her to succeed.*

*Data rates may apply.

