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OCTOBER 5, 2006
All cars go to Heaven

BY [STACY SHEETS](#)

It seems like everywhere you turn these days you're hearing about environmental concerns—global warming, recycling, hybrid vehicles, alternative energy, and so forth. Even though these issues are major concerns for many consumers, many businesses choose not to change their current work culture. However, I recently visited a company that has managed to create a successful, rewarding business that benefits both the environment and offers huge savings for their customers.



Make your way down Henrico Road, past the Drive-In-Movie Theatre on Moreland Avenue, and you'll find such a company. Although it may appear to be your usual used auto parts lot, Pull-A-Part provides an environmentally responsible method of disposing end-of-life vehicles.

With the simple use of an onsite touch screen or a search on their website, customers can find out what vehicles are available on Pull-a-Part's lots and can go pull any parts they need off the vehicles. On average, there are over 2,000 vehicles on the lot and there is a constant turnover of cars every 75 days.

Since my idea of working with cars is pumping gasoline or getting an oil change, my presence at Pull-A-Part was unfamiliar territory. My first thought when driving into the lot and parking my car was that people might start stripping my car apart. Luckily, all stripping cars are in the back of the building. By simply walking around their lot, the area was visibly cleaner than some grocery stores I've been in.

The process of Pull-A-Part is simple and rewarding to everyone involved. Anyone may sell their end-of-life car, because the company does not turn away any vehicle. For those in need of inexpensive used car parts, you can search and pull parts off of available vehicles. Cars on the lot expire after 75 days, and are then stripped of any non-metal materials and sent to the crusher, which can smash up to four vehicles at a time into metal pancakes. Once the cars have been flattened, they are sent off to a metal scrapper and then finally to the shredder.

Co-owner Ross Kogon explained how quiet the crusher is and that the owners are conscious of noise for the sake of the surrounding community. In addition, Pull-A-Part is able to reduce the amount of waste generated in the recycling process by 120 pounds for each net ton of cars. With locations

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in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, and North Carolina, the company as a whole has processed over 5,500 tons of automobiles and prevented 8.64 million pounds of waste per year from entering landfills.

Pull-A-Part also drains all fluids from the vehicles when they enter the lot, and recycles approximately 300,000 gallons of oil, gasoline, brake fluid, transmission fluid and antifreeze each year. A third of this comes directly from the two Georgia locations in Conley and Norcross.

In 2004, Pull-A-Part was the recipient of the Air & Waste Management Association's Environmental Award. This award is presented annually to industrial, commercial and governmental organizations that go beyond regulatory compliance to achieve environmental improvements. In the past, the award has been given to Home Depot, Lockheed Martin, Delta Air Lines, and Duracell.

Pull-a-Part has been family owned and operated since its start in 1997. In addition to its two Georgia facilities, a third location will soon open in Augusta.

Cousins and co-owners Ross Kogon and Gregg Cohen described how proud they are to be a part of their family's legacy. Ross told me, "It's wonderful to be in a green, family business." Both cousins had professional careers before taking over the family business. Their great-grandfather started Central Metals Recycling Company, once located in Marietta, GA back in 1908. He recycled scrap metal until the company was sold in 1998.

Ross described the typical Pull-A-Part customer as, "anybody who has the know-how to work on cars." Mechanics, classical car hobbyists, car clubs, and e-bay resellers are present daily on their lot. Some of the most popular parts customers come looking for are batteries, tires, side-mirrors, radiators, starters, bumpers, and the occasional interior parts. On my way out, I saw a customer carrying out an entire driver's seat.

Since the lot is do-it-yourself style, I thought it might not attract someone like me, who would not typically visit a used car parts lot. I do, however, understand savings and money. When it comes to buying my next car battery, my wallet will definitely feel the difference. For more information on Pull-A-Part, please visit www.pullapart.com or contact them at 770-242-8844.

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