**Living Word church makes oil change a ministry, too**

Several dozen people turned out Saturday at a York auto dealer for a free oil change and inspection.

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Brad Shilke of Living Word Community Church gives a car an oil change. Shilke was among several volunteers from the church who offered free services to people on Saturday. (Daily Record/Sunday News -- Bill Landauer)

York, PA - Dozens of cars pulled into the York Volkswagen dealership on East Market Street Saturday morning for church.

Well, not exactly. But to the 50 or so volunteers from Living Word Community Church in Red Lion, an oil pan, a wrench and some dirty rags can be about religious duty just as much as a hymnal and a pew.

"I can't give a sermon," said owner Chris Bernlohr, who is also a member of the church. "But we have the ability to work on cars and give back and show God's love that way."

Pulling into the lot, drivers were greeted with a cardboard sign that said Car Care. They made a left past some brand new Passats and Jettas and pulled up to tables littered with oil filters, service checklists and church promotional cards.

The drivers turned over their keys to a volunteer. It might have been Vicki Brown, a gray-haired lady who bustled from job site to job site Saturday, offering hugs and high-pitched "Hi theres!"

"I get to see the whole thing," she said. "I love it."

Then the customers -- mostly women -- walked into the dealership to wait. Volunteers took their cars around the corner and into a garage. Technicians put them on lifts and gave them an oil change, replaced some fluids and did a safety inspection.

It was kind of like quick-lube business. Only someone was cooking hamburgers and hot dogs on a grill and teenagers washed the cars.

Oh, and nobody had to reach for their credit cards. It was all free.

Living Word has offered the service for the past 11 or 12 years. Church members got the idea from a church in Illinois -- make cars safe for people who can't afford it themselves. For Living Word, it started with 10 or so cars in the church's parking lot on Cape Horn Road in Red Lion, said Frank Bloom.

"Luckily, it's a very flat parking lot," Brown said.

Then it grew. On Saturday, about 65 cars rolled into the dealership for the service.

The church hosts a car care event two or three times a year. This was the first time it offered it at the dealership.

Car care is one of several ministries at Living Word. The church "sees a need and then they plug it," Brown said. Other ministries include a moving business -- when someone needs help moving, the church lines up the muscle and the truck.

The car care customers are mostly single women -- often widows or single kids just starting out. Six men brought their cars in on Saturday. One customer was a married woman, but her husband is suffering from cancer and she is having trouble making ends meet.

Customers submitted information about their cars in advance, so the church could procure the proper oil filters.

Nine technicians and several volunteers from the church who know cars did the work. Some of the cars were in rough shape. One had more than 200,000 miles on it. Another leaked oil badly.

Bernlohr didn't schedule other service jobs Saturday morning to keep the service bays clear.

Volunteers ran between the cars jotting down numbers on clip boards, such as oil filter grades and mileage. They entered that into a computer, so if someone brings the car in again the information is handy.

Fluids are donated from L&L Ford of East Berlin. The oil came from a NAPA store in Timonium.

At around 10:30 a.m., several women sat in a waiting room in the service center, munching on donuts and other donated snacks.

"It's an absolute blessing," said Deanna Eberly. She's been bringing her maroon PT Cruiser in for service at Living Word for the past five years.

She lives alone with her cat and is part of the church's singles club for people over 50 years old. "Another blessing," she said. She is a member of Pleasantview United Brethren Church.

Once, a worker from the church found that she needed a tire replacement. The worker told her exactly which garage to go to get the best deal. Eberly said she felt she could trust the information, since it was coming from a reliable source.

Jane Overall said she brings her tan Toyota all the way up from Stewartstown for the event.

After the cars received their service, volunteers drive them to the car wash station, where several more volunteers spent the morning cleaning every car. Most of them are children.

"That's the fun job," Brown said.