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Meet the Mentor Driving Petra Cares Students Toward Success



At Petra Cares, our instructor is the heartbeat of our mission—and Mr. Rodney Schield is no exception. With a steady hand, a wealth of knowledge, and a big heart Rodney brings more than technical instruction to the classroom. He brings purpose.

About Rodney

Born and raised in Houston, Texas, Rodney's path to the automotive industry started early. "I was fascinated by how things worked. My dad taught me how to use tools, and we couldn't afford to pay people to fix things—so I had to learn myself," he shared. His first job in the field came at 17, thanks to a friend leaving a porter position at Hillcroft Automotive. It was the beginning of a lifelong career that combined hard work, natural curiosity, and a drive to master his craft.

Though he may come across as tough, Rodney is quick to admit his softer side: "People might be surprised to know I like cats and love being out in nature. I like to get along with the world."

A Career Built on Grit and Growth

After graduating from Universal Technical Institute in 1986, Rodney's career took off. He worked for Andy Granatelli's Tune-Up Masters, Houston Auto Service, Adams Automotive, and River Oaks Chrysler—where he became shop foreman and specialized in AC and electrical systems.

But even while working in industry, Rodney was always mentoring younger techs. “I was always training someone at River Oaks,” he said. That natural inclination toward teaching led him to Lone Star College as an adjunct instructor. When a full-time opportunity opened up at Petra Cares, he didn’t hesitate.

Making an Impact at Petra Cares

“There’s no such thing as a typical day,” Rodney laughs. “We start off with some theory, then hit the lab. I try not to lecture too much—we learn best by doing.”

What motivates him most is watching students transform. “I love seeing them succeed. From day one to the end of the program, the growth is amazing—confidence, teamwork, the way they support each other. It’s powerful to witness.”

One of his proudest moments came during Petra Cares’ reunion event. “There was one student from the first class—he didn’t have much self-esteem when he started. Now he’s training others. That was Dylan. I saw the change firsthand.”

Rodney emphasizes that the learning goes both ways. “These students have faced a lot in life. They’ve taught me how important hope really is. Every day, I’m reminded to never stop learning.”

Why Petra Cares Matters

“The mission of Petra Cares truly matters because we provide hope, direction, and the tools students need to be successful,” he said. “I remember one graduation—an aunt came up to me and said, ‘You saved that boy.’ I started crying. You don’t always realize how deeply this work affects entire families.”

Words of Wisdom

To any young person considering a career in automotive, Rodney offers this advice: “This is a rewarding career. There’s a lot to learn, and you’ll never stop learning. Go in with the attitude that you’re going to be the best. Don’t just do the minimum—do your best. The industry will take care of you. There’s always a need for qualified techs.”

Thank you, Rodney, for your dedication to our students and for showing them—and all of us—that learning, growth, and second chances can come with a wrench in hand and purpose in the heart.



Reynolds & Reynolds Team Brings Lunch and Wisdom to Petra Cares

We were thrilled to welcome the team from Reynolds and Reynolds for a special lunch visit with our Cohort 11 students. They generously brought Whataburger and spent time connecting with students—sharing career advice, words of encouragement, and stories from their own journeys. It was a meaningful afternoon of mentorship, laughter, and inspiration. We're grateful for their support and the time they took to invest in our future technicians!



Cohort #11

Cohort #11 is heading into Week 5 on Monday, July 7th, and we couldn't be prouder of the progress these students are making! If you'd like to see the class in action, we invite you to come take a tour—just reach out to Kimberly Elliott at kelliott@petra-cares.org to schedule your visit.

We're also gearing up for Life Skills Week in Week 7, where we'll welcome several community partners to our campus to share valuable insights and tools for success beyond the classroom.

A heartfelt thank-you to those who have helped keep our students fueled and feeling cared for: our friends at the Joshua Project, Suzanne Young, Elaine Shaffer, Bonnie Roberts, Jennifer Fails, and local businesses like Freddy's Hot Dogs (12407 FM 1960) and Taco Bell (12235 Jones Road) for providing weekly meals. And of course, a big shoutout to The MET Church - your continued support means the world to us.

If you'd like to join this amazing meal team by providing a home-cooked lunch, we'd

love to have you! We typically need meals on Mondays—please contact Kimberly Elliott to get involved.



**Your Impact in
Action**

Total Students Served:
106

Graduation Rate:
79%

Placement Rate:
71%



Petra Cares Staff

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