



## What Zelig Learned about Tools and Skills for Life

*"I still remember the moment it lit me up inside."*

Zelig still remembers the moment tools "lit her up inside." On her first day in the workshop, she discovered that toolmanship wasn't just equipment, it was a new sense of what she could do. As one of our earliest students, she helped shape what Bendix Academy would become.



She hadn't pictured herself in the trades.

"It was something I'd only seen men do." But Bendix

opened that door. She learned to handle real tools, ask questions freely, and work with machinery most teens never touch. The skills quickly showed up in her life. When rust on her first car turned into holes, she didn't pay someone to repair it — she fixed it herself. That same confidence led her to repair an industrial dishwasher at work, unclog sinks, and help friends with their own repairs. Again and again, she found herself thinking: *"I can do it."*

Zelig knows these abilities will follow her throughout life, maintaining a home, supporting a family, and passing practical confidence to others. She's grateful, she says, because Bendix made her *"a more competent person,"* something that shapes every part of her adulthood. Her advice to younger students: Use your skills often, help others, and

learn by doing. For anyone unsure of their path, she reminds them that starting in the trades is a low-risk, high-reward beginning — one you'll never regret.

Zelig's journey reflects what we see so often: when students learn they can work with tools, they pay it forward for years to come!



*Zelig learning and experiencing the power of torque*



## Meet Mat, Now a Full Service Technician!

Mat's first days in the workshop were quiet ones. He wasn't sure he belonged, and tools felt unfamiliar. But with patient mentors and simple projects to get him started, he began to see that toolmanship was something he could learn was good at. Week by week, his confidence grew as he built, tested, fixed, and tried again.

He discovered that understanding how things work changes the way you see the world. Bendix Academy gave him the room to make mistakes, ask questions, and learn by doing. Mat quickly became the kind of student who sticks with a task until it works, finding pride in the process as much as the result.

Once Mat learned he could build one thing, he realized he could build many more. That confidence now shapes how he approaches challenges at home, at school, and everywhere else his future takes him. One major project was the difficult restoration of a 1972 AMC Matador! When Mat wasn't sure what direction to take after high school, a chance encounter with a recruiter in the auto parts aisle at Meijer landing him a job at Brighton Ford as a Lube Tech. Soon he was promoted to Full Service

Technician, now taking on everything from software programming to full engine replacements. With experience restoring two classic vehicles and guidance from his father, who said, *"All knowledge is good knowledge. You won't know unless you try,"* Mat realized he wanted to work in automotive service.

Mat lends his skills to others, and he's currently helping an elderly neighbor restore a 1926 half-ton truck, keeping alive the same spirit of craftsmanship he shared with his dad. Mat's father passed away unexpectedly in December 2024, but Mat carries his legacy in every repair, every act of kindness, and every new skill learned.



*Mat at the drill press with one of his mentors looking on*