

The Lift Garage: Staff Roster

January 26, 2022



Cathy Heying, Executive Director and Founder. Although Cathy was working on the idea of The Lift well before officially being hired, she received her first paycheck from The Lift in the summer of 2014. She has a BA in Social Work (1992), an MA in Pastoral Ministry (2001), and an AS in Auto Technology from Dunwoody (2010). She worked at Sears Automotive while gaining the practical skills she needed to start The Lift. She has done most of the jobs at The Lift throughout the years, as the staff grew her role fixing cars grew to be less and she has become more administrative, although she still wrenches from time to time! She has many years of experience working in housing and homelessness, that work and those stories are what prompted her vision of starting The Lift Garage.

JoHanna Smrcina, Operations Director. JoHanna started at The Lift in February of 2018. Previous to taking her role at The Lift she worked for 7 years in Nonprofit Management and 5 years in Emergency Shelters for both housing and domestic violence. She has both a BSW and an MSW (2012).

Becca Tumm, Development Director. After graduating college Becca worked in the service department of a Ford Dealership for 3 years before going back to school for her MA in Social Work. After receiving her MSW she briefly worked in housing and homelessness before taking on a fundraising role for an international development nonprofit. She was in fundraising for 10 years before she started at The Lift in August of 2020.

Joel Epstein, Facilities Director. Joel started at The Lift in 2015. Before starting at The Lift he attended Dunwoody's Auto Tech Program. He has a cumulative 10 years of experience in welding, inventory and warehouse management, and has worked as a shift manager. Joel also manages the IT at The Lift and has been doing that as a lifelong hobby before taking on the role professionally.

Mark Gerold, Lead Automotive Service Technician. Mark is a graduate of Dunwoody (2016) and came to The Lift shortly after graduating from Automotive school. The automotive world is a second career for Mark. He started at The Lift in 2017 and has 5 years of experience as a technician.

Steve Heimsness, Automotive Service Technician. Steve started at The Lift as an intern in the spring of 2017 while he was in automotive school and transitioned to staff in July 2017. Steve has 7 years of experience, all with The Lift! He has a Bachelors in Sociology and graduated from Hennepin Technical College with an Automotive Technician Certificate. He has multiple ASE Certifications and continues to pursue more.

Nicholas Geyette, Automotive Service Technician. Nicholas started at The Lift in November of 2021, but has been a technician since 2017. He is also in school currently and will graduate from Saint Paul College in May of 2022.

John Mann, Automotive Service Technician. John started at The Lift in 2019 and came to us with 14 years of experience at dealerships and independent shops already under his belt. He is a graduate of Dunwoody and holds multiple ASE Certifications.

Nathaniel Kaar, Automotive Service Technician. Nathaniel started at The Lift in February 2021. Nate came to us with 14 years of experience in auto repair at dealerships and also 2 years of experience as a service advisor at dealerships. He is a graduate of Dunwoody (2007) with an associate degree with Auto

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Certification. He also has had Master Tech and VW ASE Certifications and plans to get more. He has a lifelong passion for working on cars, and has been working on them since he was 16 years old!

Aster Hinz, Automotive Service Technician Mobile Van. Aster started at The Lift in December of 2021. They have been in the field for 3 years before joining the team. They graduated from Dunwoody College of Technology in 2019. Aster has ASE certifications and came to The Lift after working as a Fleet Ops Manager.

Layla Mongeon, Lead Service Writer. Layla started at The Lift in August of 2018. She has a degree in Pre-Law/Human Rights from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities. She has quickly worked her way up to be the lead service writer at The Lift and has her ASE Certification in Service Writing.

Lillia Smyers, Service Writer. Lillia started at The Lift as a full-time volunteer through a social justice volunteer program. She learned quickly and was passionate about the work and when a position became available in July of 2021 she was hired on as a full-time service writer. She graduated in May of 2020 with a degree in Business Administration and came to The Lift shortly after in August of 2020.

Oliver Brunson, Service Writer. Oliver started at The Lift in June of 2021. They graduated from the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities with a degree in Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature. They've held positions in - and are passionate about – disability access and election outreach. Oliver has also been a direct support professional.

Laura Young, Finance and Fundraising Assistant. Laura has been on staff since June 2019. She has a background in social work (since 1992) and clinical social work (since 2001). She has her BSW, MSW, and LICSW. She works part time at The Lift as she continues to work in other social work related roles as well.