

DRIVE  
CONTROL



# Pop-A-Lock

America's Most Trusted  
Locksmith For Your Car,  
Home & Business



J. Lenora Bresler



Wes Craven



**Julie Purdie, the owner of the Polk County franchise of Pop-A-Lock with her team.**



A female locksmith. A centuries-old industry succeeding by using cutting edge technology. Customers assured of safety in a marketplace filled with charlatans. As I chatted with Julie Purdie, the owner of the Polk County franchise of Pop-A-Lock, I was struck by how unexpected everything was that came out of her mouth.

When most of us think of a locksmith, we probably don't think instantly of an energetic, petite mother of two small children. We probably don't anticipate there is a phone app for a locksmith or that our calls for service will be answered within 20 seconds or that immediate help is available literally 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Neither do we envision that our safety concerns will be allayed through a text message containing photos of the vehicle and the specific locksmith who is enroute. And in a business where credentials are often questionable, Pop-A-Lock's locksmiths have been extensively trained.

Yet all these surprising things are true about Polk County's Pop-A-Lock franchise.

As unexpected as the many benefits of service is

the interesting route by which Pop-A-Lock's owner came to this point. In 2013, Julie Purdie was living in Atlanta, destined, she thought, to remain there. Having received an M.B.A. from Georgia State, she was the publisher of a nationally-known website for the security industry until she decided to become a stay-at-home mom to raise her two toddler-age daughters. Soon, however, she decided to explore opening a business and turned to a franchise broker who attended her church. Thus Purdie became acquainted with Pop-A-Lock.

Impressed by the company's forward-thinking use of mobile technology, commitment to customer service, and devoted support of its franchisees, Purdie expressed an interest in moving to a Florida location with strong opportunity for growth. Polk County, strategically located between Tampa & Orlando—cities with over a decade of strong Pop-A-Lock presence—was the obvious choice. After doing some quick research, the family decided to move, selling their home in two weeks and taking only half a day with a realtor to find a new home in Lakeland. Purdie remembers sitting at a table at IHOP interviewing applicants and then putting her new staff on airplanes while she and her fam-

ily drove out to meet them in Louisiana to spend an entire month together in intensive locksmith training. Upon the group's return to Lakeland, the business opened, "popping" their first lock for a paying customer on Halloween, October 31, 2013.

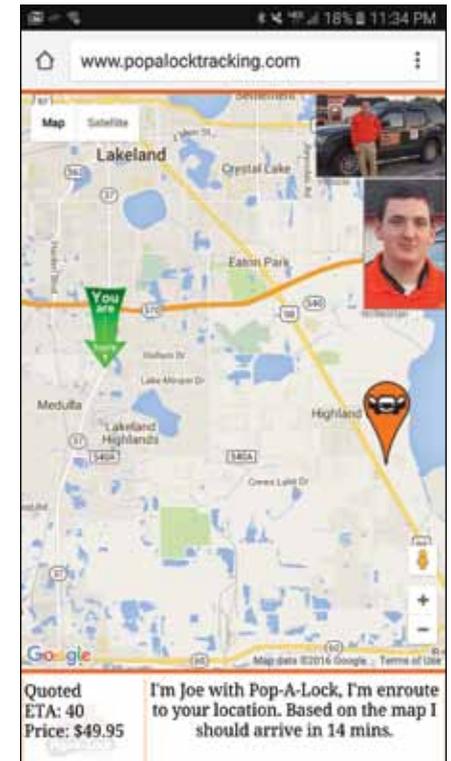
Since its opening, Pop-A-Lock has grown, increasing to seven staff members: Julie, five staff locksmiths, and Purdie's husband who does the accounting and operational behind the scenes support for the business. Pop-A-Lock's focus on quality has been recognized by major players in the area, resulting in being awarded the AAA contract for lockouts and automotive locksmith services for its members in Lakeland, Bartow and Mulberry. This designation is a mark of great distinction since AAA is known for its care of its club members and holds its service partners to meticulously high standards. GEICO has likewise recognized the superior service Pop-A-Lock provides, and Purdie's franchise is now also the locksmith of record for the insurance giant.

A majority of Pop-A-Lock's business is automotive. The franchise values partnerships with local dealerships including Regal, DriveTime, Kelley of Lake-

land and others. But they also come to the aid of individuals, getting residents back into their cars and providing emergency key generation services throughout the region. In addition, Pop-A-Lock specializes in on-site, instant replacement of keys and remotes, be they laser-cut, transponder, push-to-start, mechanical or VATS. Purdie has committed to investing in the technology and equipment that will keep Pop-A-Lock at the cutting edge of automotive & motorcycle locksmithing with a unique focus on providing these services where its customers need them—on the road.

Pop-A-Lock also offers commercial locksmith services including rekeying—necessary when an employee leaves—or crafting master key systems—one key that will unlock multiple different locks. Purdie says churches, property management companies and office buildings find these master key arrangements particularly helpful.

The only locksmith in the Lakeland Association of Realtors, Pop-A-Lock is often recommended by realtors to have homes rekeyed upon purchase and perform a security audit. In fact, many realtors hire Pop-A-Lock to rekey the new



house as a closing gift from the agent to the new owners. "As a mother of two small children, I am keenly aware of security for my family. Having a new home rekeyed is the only real way to rest assured that strangers and former tenants do not have a key to your home. It helps me sleep better at night knowing my daughters are that much more safe."

Purdie says she and her staff get a lot of satisfaction from helping people. This is especially true when they are called by 911 to rescue a child from a locked car. They perform this service for no fee, and such calls are priority one. You may be surprised to learn that in the two and a half years since the franchise opened, they have answered over 100 such calls in Polk County.

Purdie emphasizes that people need to know a locksmith before one is needed: "I'd love you to use us, of course, but at least know somebody in the field—know a locksmith before you need a locksmith. Keep our emergency number in your cell phone - 863-647-5625."

She says that scams abound in this industry. Many locksmiths are simply not qualified to do the work. She told me a story about her staff arriving on scene only to find another 'locksmith' recklessly using a hanger in a comic attempt to disengage a lock and causing damage to the customer's car. Often subpar, many are also not dependable, either not arriving quickly or not arriving at all. Purdie also said that Pop-A-Lock gives a full price quote on the phone and that such standard quotes are honored. Purdie urges people to be skeptical of low-ball estimates given by other locksmiths because they sometimes will change to exorbitant prices once the personnel have arrived.

Purdie is effusive in her pride about her team, stressing their attention to customer service and quoting glowing testimonials. The staff have diverse backgrounds—a previous military medic, a former assistant at a neurological rehabilitation center, a long-time UPS manager—but all have a commitment to serving others in some way. "That's what I wanted—to build a great team with a desire to help others." And to her own surprise,



Pop-A-Lock of Polk County

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