

Safety goal: More auto seat belt usage

By Warren M. Hoyt
special writer

A coalition of 11 public and private agencies next month will begin a program designed to increase use of vehicle safety belts to 70 percent from 47 percent.

And two state leaders who are strong advocates of the mandatory belt law said they are considering a proposal to make failure to use the belt a primary offense.

The community safety belt challenge will be conducted beginning April 30. Participating communities will report their results to the Michigan Coalition for Safety Belt Use by Oct. 31. Robert Cullen, director of the challenge and traffic safety manager for the American Automobile Association, said.

Throughout summer and fall, communities will conduct pre-program surveys and educational activities. Awards will be given in five

population categories for most effective programs.

BEFORE THE mandatory seat belt law was enacted in 1980, he said, usage was about 20 percent.

In the first six months after the law went into effect, usage was up to between 58.4 percent and 61 percent. 7,300 injuries and 98 deaths were prevented, and Cullen said that with 70 percent usage, 300 lives could be saved annually.

Rep. David Hollister, D-Lansing, said although it is discouraging that the usage rate has dropped to 47 percent, it is not surprising because "it is difficult to change behavior."

Hollister also said he would favor making a violation of Michigan's seat belt law a primary offense, with points given to those in violation. Currently it is a secondary offense — that is, law enforcement person-

nel are not allowed to stop vehicles for seat belt violations only. Therefore the law is difficult to enforce, he said.

About 3,000 tickets a month are issued for safety belt violations.

MARVIN TABLEMAN, director of the Office of Program Analysis of the Secretary of State's office, added that if the speed limit in Michigan is raised to 65 miles per hour, as is currently being considered, Secretary of State Richard Austin will strongly advocate making failure to use seat belts a primary offense.

Communities are being invited to participate by the coalition and Gov. James Blanchard, who is sending a letter regarding the challenge to all mayors and township supervisors in the state.

Some techniques which have been effective in other areas of the coun-

try in similar challenges range from strict enforcement of the seat belt law by law enforcement agencies to people standing on corners and offering cash or gift certificates to people they see wearing seat belts.

EMPLOYERS ARE being urged to make better use of a job bank by the Michigan Employment Security Commission. MESC is launching an advertising and direct mail campaign to increase business awareness of the program.

MESC Director Richard Simmons

Jr. said the goal of the new effort is to get more employers to list their job openings through the agency's Job Service.

Simmons noted businesses already pay for the job service through their federal unemployment tax, and Job Service access is offered without a fee.

He said the MESC has joined with five adjacent Midwest states in a computerized Job Service Resume System, providing a single source for a wide range of professional, technical, managerial and sales skilled-employees looking for work.

Seminars cover finances, budgets

Seminars on financial planning and budgeting will be presented in the Birmingham and Southfield public libraries by Manufacturers Bank. There is no charge for these seminars, whose topics, dates and places are:

• "Planning for the Future" — April 29, 7-9 p.m., Birmingham Public Library, Rotary Room, 300 W. Merrill.

• "Planning a Budget" — April 30, 7-9 p.m., Southfield Public Library, Marcotte Lecture Room, 26000 Evergreen.

The April 29 seminar will cover a goal-oriented perspective to financial planning. Financial and estate planning specialists from the bank will help define financial goals and priorities, design an effective investment plan and help plan for a secure retirement.

Dr. Barbara MacDonald, director of consumer education and research for Credit Counseling Centers, will be the featured speaker at the April 30 seminar on developing a budget and record-keeping system. Topics will include creating a savings plan and maintaining financial records.

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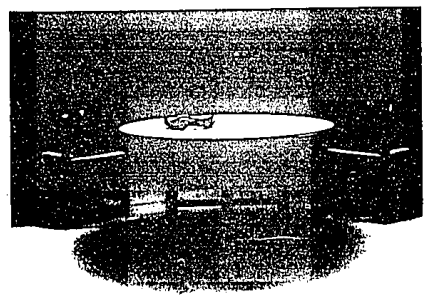
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