

County traffic deaths decrease 22 percent

There were 89 traffic crash fatalities reported in Oakland County in 1996, according to the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County. These fatalities represent a 21.9 percent decrease over the 114 fatalities in 1995.

The State of Michigan reports there were 1,494 fatalities in 1996, a decrease of 2.8 percent. Fatalities for 1995 were 1,537.

Frank Cardimen, president of TIA, reported that 1996 fatality statistics are more in line with the 1992-94 data. "In 1996, there were 14 pedestrian fatalities, down from 27 pedestrian fatalities in 1995. There were 13 pedestrian fatalities in 1994 and 14 in 1993," Cardimen said. "Five of the 14

pedestrians killed in 1996 were age 61-80. The same age group represented 25 of all the 89 fatalities in 1996 (28 percent). Fourteen were drivers, 6 were passengers and 5 were pedestrians."

"Six drivers were not wearing safety belts," Cardimen said.

TIA plans to address the issue of elder drivers in 1997 through education and evaluation programs for interested citizens. The focus will be on a review of driver laws, self-evaluation of physical abilities needed to drive safely and on-the-road evaluation tests.

Alcohol-related fatalities dropped from 45 in 1995 to 33 fatalities in 1996, or 37 percent of all

fatalities.

"Twenty of the 89 fatalities in 1996 were pedestrians, motorists and bicyclists. There were 69 involved in vehicle crashes where safety belts could have been used. Of the 69 killed, 36 were not wearing safety belts (52.1 percent). In 1995, 50.5 percent were not wearing safety belts," Cardimen said.

"Although Oakland County's fatality rate (fatalities divided by 100 million vehicle miles traveled) of 0.8 remains the lowest in the state and the U.S., there is much to do to achieve zero fatalities in our county resulting from lack of safety belts and drunk driving. The continued growth in our county

means that educators, medical community, the courts and traffic law enforcement must continue to work together to achieve this noble goal."

All of the fatal traffic crash data for Oakland County and Michigan are provisional, with a slight increase expected due to the delay in investigating deaths from crashes that occurred in late 1996.

National traffic fatality figures for 1996 are not available at this time.

TIA is a 30-year-old, non-profit, public/private traffic safety organization representing 61 communities, 45 enforcement agencies, 14 judicial courts and traffic safety education in Oakland County.

Casino money sought for schools

State Capitol capsules:

Senate bills

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, will introduce two initiatives this week:

- Two bills to assure that \$40 million in taxes from Detroit casinos go to school technology grants rather than the general fund. "We don't need another state lottery shell game that promises more than it delivers to our schools," the first term senator said. Grants could be used for computers, modems, printers, distance learning systems, software and training; local districts would have to match the amounts.

- A resolution asking the Department of Education to make an inventory of computers and software now available in public schools. Peters cited a federal report that ranks Michigan 41st in printers and 44th in computers.

Sen. Loren Bennett, R-Canton, introduced two anti-pollution bills that will be referred to his

Natural Resources Committee:

- SB 4 to prohibit transportation and disposal of any solid waste in Michigan that is not generated in this state. "Michigan shouldn't be a dumping ground for other states' refuse," he said.

- SB 5 to increase penalties for illegal dumping of certain toxins.

House bills

Rep. Thomas Kelly, D-Wayne, will re-introduce a bill to reserve \$108 million in the Michigan Transportation Fund for road and bridge repairs. Currently, the Secretary of State receives \$86 million from the transportation fund, and others receive more than \$14 million more.

Kelly won adoption of the measure as an amendment to another bill last year, but the bill died in December's lame-duck session.

Freshman Rep. Nancy Quarles, D-Southfield, is sponsor of part of a Democratic package allowing income taxpayers to deduct private health insurance

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premiums from the taxable income base.

"As we move people off the welfare rolls and into jobs, we must find ways to substitute private health insurance for taxpayer-funded Medicaid," said Quarles.

House Speaker Curtis Hertel, D-Detroit, said the Quarles bill is part of a package that includes:

- Raising the minimum wage from \$3.36 an hour to \$4.75 immediately and \$5.15 on Sept. 1.
- Adding an earned income

credit to the income tax for the "working poor."

- Adult dependent and child care tax deductions.

Appointments

Gov. John Engler has appointed two Oakland County residents to the Mental Health Advisory Council. The panel advises the director of community health in developing mental health programs, and terms expire Dec. 31, 1998. Appointees include:

- Theodore Lewis Jr., Farmington Hills, chief executive of The Children's Center in Detroit.

- Carlos Ruiz, Novi, executive director of the Fairlane Community Mental Health Center and adjunct professor of psychology at Madonna University, Livonia.

Gift of on-line service offered at OU library

Each time Oakland University graduate students access free on-line databases in the university's Krege Library, they will have the Oakland University Branch of the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union to thank.

Through support of the credit union's \$50,000 gift over the next five years, students have access to the latest in research through UNCOVER and FirstSearch. UNCOVER allows users to view more than 17,000 journals not currently available in the library collection and provides faxes.

FirstSearch is a rich resource of more than 60 general and specialized databases with subject matters ranging from the arts and the humanities to music.

Typical costs are about \$10 per article and 55 cents per search. The free on-line research will immeasurably enrich the lives and education of Oakland students, OU President Gary D. Russi said.

"Gifts such as this increase the university's ability to attract and educate quality students," Russi said.

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