

So far, seat belt law clicking with motorists

BY JONI HUBERD
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The signs flashing across overpasses throughout the Detroit metro area delivered the stern message for weeks: "Click it or ticket."

They warned motorists of a new state law that allows police to issue a ticket for not using a seat belt as a stand-alone offense. Prior to March 10, offi-

cers could only write a ticket for seat belt use if a driver had already been stopped for another traffic offense.

While it may encourage more motorists to buckle up, nothing much has changed for local law enforcement officers.

"It's very close to business as normal," said Hills Lt. Gary Hawald.

Supervisors talked about the new law during roll call at the beginning of each shift, as is

standard practice. The only real difference, Hawald said, is the ability to stop someone just for not wearing a seat belt.

He said officers have written only a handful of seat belt tickets just about a week into enforcement. The majority still piggy back onto other citations. Hawald stressed that Hills officers aren't going to be running out onto the streets waving a new law and writing tickets.

"Officers have the discretion to

issue warnings," he said. "A lot of times, all you have to do when you pull up next to someone is snap your belt a few times. They get the message."

Even if it doesn't make a big difference, Hawald firmly believes in the law — and in seat belts. He has been wearing one for years because of his experience as a police officer.

"I believe in seat belts. I've seen enough people bounced against windshields," he said.

Walled Lake district reviewing student discipline

BY STACY JENKINS
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The Walled Lake school district's Board of Education is getting tough on student discipline.

During recent expulsion hearings, due to violent acts, board members expressed frustration over students, parents and their attorneys expecting these students to be sent to the L.A.T.E. program for uninterrupted educational instruction.

The program, Levels for Assisting Transitions in Education, is supposed to be a privilege, not an automatic option for

expelled students, said board members.

"The precedent has been that you get expelled, but don't worry, you'll go into the L.A.T.E. program," said trustee Michael Karson. "It's become such an automatic. They're coming to the board with the expectation that they're going into the L.A.T.E. program."

The award-winning program started in 1995 in the Walled Lake school district. It allows expelled students to continue their education outside of the regular school day.

"The L.A.T.E. program was designed to address the needs

of students demonstrating severe behavioral misconduct, while maintaining the educational progress," as stated in a program description on the district's web site.

Assistant Superintendent Mick Beauchamp said the program is successful, and most of the students complete the 16-week program.

Board members said they have no problem with the program, but they need to be more selective about who gets to enter it upon expulsion.

Two students were recently expelled for violent acts and both ended up in the L.A.T.E. program. Trustee Amy Peterman said the board was frustrated because there was an expecta-

tion for this to be a part of the disciplinary action.

"We got to the point where we had two in one week. It was almost more than we could stand," Peterman said. "We were sort of frustrated with what was going on."

With pre-meditated violence on the rise, Peterman said the board needs to address program eligibility.

"We want the word out on the street that we're getting tough," she said.

Superintendent James Geisler said the board can implement a policy that spells out criteria for sending expelled students to the program. It was created under the philosophy that "there are no throw away kids."

Police seek help in solving armed robbery

BY TIM SMITH
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Farmington police are investigating an apparent armed robbery which took place Thursday at the Clark gas station, located at Nine Mile and Farmington roads.

Maria Putt, commander for the Farmington Public Safety Department, Friday said the suspect "implied" to a female station clerk that he had a weapon in his waistband. The clerk was not injured in the 1:35 p.m. Thursday incident.

About \$350 in cash was stolen, according to Putt. The suspect was described as a black male, in his mid-20s to mid-30s, wearing a dark baseball cap and flannel shirt. A composite sketch of the man was released Friday by Farmington police.

Putt said the clerk wasn't hurt but was "visibly shaken," and that the gas station manager was in a back room at the time of the incident but did see the suspect leave the scene.

Police reports indicated that the suspect walked into the



Suspect:
Police released this composite sketch of the suspect.

station and demanded cash from the register, and that he implied having a weapon tucked into his waistband.

After receiving a grocery bag filled with money, he exited the station and drove away in a vehicle described by Putt as a red pick-up truck, "very new with a yellow snow plow in front."

The vehicle was spotted headed east on Nine Mile, toward the M6 expressway, police said.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Farmington police Detective Frank Demers at (248) 474-4700, ext. 239.

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Festival town hall meeting Wednesday

A town meeting about the Farmington Area Family Fest is scheduled from 7-8 p.m. Wednesday at the Farmington Training Center.

The meeting is being hosted by the Farmington Area Founders Festival Inc., the board of which manages and oversees the event, to be held this year June 22-24.

"We've invited downtown merchants and any resident who wants to come out," said FAFF board member Carleigh Flaherty,

who also is president of the chamber of commerce. "It's for them to hear the new things about this year's festival" and have any questions answered.

Also during the meeting, background about the festival will be detailed and festival manager Mike Watts of Watts-UP! will be introduced, Flaherty said.

The Farmington Training Center is at 33000 Thomas, about two blocks east of Farmington Road and one block north of Grand River.

Arthritis Today

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ODD PAINS THAT WILL NOT GO AWAY

By odd pains I mean aching that occurs at one side of the back or near the hip. The pain may be in the foot or the side of the neck, another common site is behind the knee or ankle. These pains are present every day, are worse in the morning so that arising from bed and starting the day is difficult.

Another aspect of odd pains is that the doctors you see about the matter encounter difficulties in determining if you have a neurologic problem, or a defect in your blood circulation, or if you suffer from some arthritis, but not rheumatoid or osteoarthritis.

If you live with an odd pain, you should prepare yourself for a round of appointments for MRI and/or CT scans. You will undergo nerve conduction and electromyographic (EMG) tests, possibly more than one.

My experience with odd pains is that they are muscular in origin, and represent a repetitive strain on a set of fibers within the whole muscle. The cause of the strain is obscure, but once occurring, the ache becomes hard to stop.

If your doctor has undertaken the above studies once, and found nothing, then the next strategy is to treat the pain with acupuncture or hypnosis and observe what happens. If the pain resolves, and it may take 6 months, that ends the problem. If the pain remains the same, then you and the doctor have official decisions to make. Should you continue to watch and wait, or change to stronger pain medication and repeat the testing again?

In my experience, if the pain worsens, its true cause emerges, and rational treatment for a definite disorder can begin.

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