

'Crash tax,' other fees target out-of-towners

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Out-of-towners would be wise to drive carefully when passing through Fraser, a suburb about 15 miles northeast of Detroit.

The city this year began charging non-residents who cause wrecks for the public safety and emergency response time involved in the accident. The fee is one of many revenue-raising ideas being considered by cities nationwide dealing with budget problems.

Reluctant to raise taxes on their own residents, local governments are looking increasingly at out-of-towners. But critics complain that the fees amount to taxation without representation, or double taxation, since those people already pay for roads and public safety services in their own communities. And unsuspecting out-of-town motorists who've have faced the bills say they send a hostile message.

"You're not welcome here — outsiders not welcome," said Jay Middleton, a Mount Laurel, N.J., resident who fought a "crash tax" charged in a Philadelphia suburb. "That's what it says to me."

Middleton got caught up in the "crash tax" issue after a fender-bender while moving his daughter home from college a few years ago. Radnor Township, Pa., billed him \$276.08 for the police time. The concept of governments hitting up visitors for cash isn't new. States often charge nonresidents more than locals for hunting and fishing licenses on the theory visitors don't pay the regular taxes used to support parks and recreation systems. A number of cities impose income taxes on suburbanites who come into a city to work. Omaha, Neb., planned a commuter fee that critics called a "wheel tax" before state lawmakers moved to block it this year.

Across Michigan, cities are struggling to fund their emergency services. The state has lost more than 4,500 police officers and firefighters in the past decade, mostly because of lower tax revenues during the recession and the state's economic decline. Fraser, a town of about 15,000 in southeast

Michigan, has lost 13 public safety officer positions since 2006 — a drop of 25 percent.

"I think we are now at the point where it's push versus shove," Fraser city manager Richard Haberman said. "The intent here isn't to gouge somebody. We're not out here trying to make additional revenue. We're just trying to cover costs."

For an accident caused by an out-of-towner, the driver or the driver's insurance company is billed \$57.15 an hour for a police officer's time, \$43.75 an hour for a paramedic's services and \$41.96 an hour for time spent by a public works employee. Many of the fees charged so far have been \$100 or less. Fewer than 25 motorists have been charged since the fees began in February, city officials said.

New York City's fire department plans to impose a response fee in July, with charges ranging from \$365 to \$490 depending on whether a vehicle fire or injury is involved. The fee would apply to residents and non-residents alike.

But it isn't always easy for the cities to collect. Insurance trade associations say most companies won't cover the fees, leading to lower-than-expected revenues for local governments.

Radnor Township in Pennsylvania eventually repealed its accident response fee ordinance, so Middleton didn't have to pay it. The west Michigan city of Wyoming scrapped its fees after a year of bad publicity in 2008 and earning lower returns than expected. A handful of California cities also have abandoned at least some of their emergency response fees or are considering doing so.

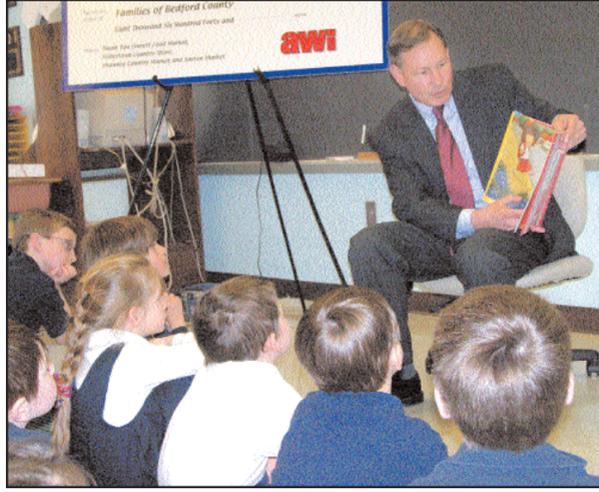
Officials in Petoskey, a northern Michigan tourist town, flirted with the fee idea last year but decided against it.

"In a hospitality, tourism-oriented community, it's just not something you do to people," said Carlin Smith, president of the Petoskey Regional Chamber of Commerce. "They've just had an unfortunate situation. You don't make it even more of a misfortune."



Representatives from AWI, Inc. and Bridge Educational Foundation announced the donation of \$8,640 in scholarships to families of Bedford County to the first and second grade students of St. Thomas Catholic School Friday. Front row, left to right, Thomas Jeffries, Heyden Snavelly, Dane Free, Micki Deffenbaugh, Samuel Pratt and Andrew Yanoshak; second row, left to right, Elizabeth Letrent, Kelly Zuback, Wyatt Wigfield, Coby Miller, David Hinson, Milan Deffenbaugh; third row, left to right, Barb Imler of Rep. Dick Hess' office, Rep. Dick Hess, Father Donald Dusza, Peggy Wirfel of Shawnee Country Market, Michele Greenawalt of Shawnee Country Market, Joe Appleby of Everett Foodliner and Saxton Market, Bob Appleby of Everett Foodliner and Saxton Market; back row, left to right, Walt Michaels of Fishertown Country Store, Joyce Wityck, Duane Vizinski of AWI, Sen. John Eichelberger, Stephanie Holliday of Snake Spring Valley Christian Academy, Olivia Engleman of AWI, Joe Gerdes of Bridge Educational Foundation.

Donations provide tuition at St. Thomas, Snake Spring



Sen. John Eichelberger reads "Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deeds" to the first and second grades students of St. Thomas Catholic School in Bedford before they were presented with a check for scholarship money.

Local companies earn tax credits through foundation

Students at St. Thomas the Apostle School received a check for \$8,640 on Friday through local EITC donations.

Representatives from Bridge Educational Foundation and AWI, Inc., which includes Everett Foodliner, Saxton Market, Fishertown Country Store and Shawnee Country Market presented the check to the first and second grade students at St. Thomas.

Joining in the check presentation was Sen. John Eichelberger, who read a story to the students, and Rep. Dick Hess.

The EITC (Education Improvement Tax Credit) program allows companies to claim a Pennsylvania tax credit for scholarship donations made to registered non-profit organizations like Bridge Educational Foundation. The foundation then uses the donations to grant tuition scholarships to income-qualified families.

During the difficult economic times, EITC scholarships provide parents with an economic lifeline, according to the foundation. AWI's EITC donation to families of Bedford County will provide the families from St. Thomas the Apostle and Snake Spring Valley Christian with a choice for the upcoming 2011-2012 school year.



A Make-A-Wish convoy and Steelers tables are among the designs that Brian Snyder makes and they will be raffled during his annual stilt walk.

Make-A-Wish stilt walk set

Giant Steps Stilt Walk to benefit the Make-A-Wish foundation will be conducted by Brian Snyder on May 15.

He will begin his 5K trek on stilts at Juniata Crossing at 1 p.m. A raffle and bake sale also will be held as part of the walk, which will end at Junia-

ta Trading.

For more information or to make a pledge or become a sponsor, contact Brian at 735-3186 or 585-4829.

Snyder makes tables, such as the ones pictured, and will include them in the May 15 raffle.

The Chamber News Corner

Breakfast with the Easter Bunny
 Saturday, April 16th
 at Colonial Courtyard of Bedford
 9 a.m. & 10 a.m. Seatings
 Breakfast Buffet, Bunny Visits & Photo, Spring Gift
 \$4 for Children 2-12, \$5 for Adults (Children Under 2 Free)
 Space is Limited - Reservations Required
 RSVP at the Chamber Office or E-mail:
 Info@BedfordCountyChamber.org

Business After Hours
At Bedford Candies & Everything Tea
 Tuesday, April 12th, 5-7pm
 \$6 for Chamber Members
 \$16 for Not-Yet Members
 RSVP to the Chamber Office of
 E-mail: Info@BedfordCountyChamber.org

Join the Chamber during the April Membership Drive & Receive Great Rewards!

For more information on this & other Chamber events & programs, call 814-623-2233
 Or Visit Our Website: www.BedfordCountyChamber.com

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Everett Bulletin Board

"SEUSSICAL" will be staged by Everett Area High School students at 7 p.m. April 8, 9 and 10, and at 2 p.m. on April 10. Tickets are \$7 and are available in the school office or at the door. Seussical is based on the beloved characters and stories of Dr. Seuss, and "Seussical the Musical" follows the adventures of Horton, an elephant who one day hears voices coming from a speck of dust. He soon discovers that within this tiny speck exists the smallest planet in the universe! And upon this tiny planet, live a tiny race of creatures known as Whos!

Everett Free LIBRARY special events for April include a teen Wii archery tournament from 6 to 8 p.m. April 12; "The Passion of the Christ" will be presented as the adult movie matinee from 1 to 3 p.m. April 16; "The Chronicles of Narnia: the Lion, the Witch and the

Wardrobe" will be featured from 6 to 8 p.m. April 19; and the teen craft trickery "no-sew scarf" will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. April 22. All special activities cost just \$1 which goes towards the snack.

Everett SENIOR CITIZENS activities for April include meal at Outback Steakhouse, Altoona, leaving center at 5 p.m. April 7; funnel cake making from 8:30 to 11 a.m. April 8, donations appreciated; shopping trip to Johnstown, leaving center at 9 a.m., April 12; crafts, origami with sachiko, at 10 a.m. on April 13; art class at 9:30 a.m. and birthday celebration on April 14; visit to the Hustontown center, leaving at 9 a.m., April 15; Bible study at 11 a.m. April 18; bagels, lox and creamed cheese, donations appreciated, for the first day of Passover, 8:30 to 11 a.m. April 19; Easter dinner and raffle at 12:45 p.m. April 20; Northern

Bedford County Covered Bridges Tour, trip to Gravity Hill and lunch at New Frontier, leave center at 9 a.m., April 21; center closed for Good Friday on April 22; shopping trip to Altoona, leave center at 9 a.m., April 26; art class at 9:30 a.m. April 28; and blood pressure screening and presentation on MRSA at 10:45 a.m. April 29.

Bloody Run CANOE Classic will be held May 7 in Everett. There are a variety of canoe and kayak races from beginner to competitive racers. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Raystown Canoe and Kayak Club hosting the race. For more information, visit www.RaystownCanoeClub.com.

BASKETWEAVERS Guild of Bedford County meets the second Saturday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Everett Church of the Brethren, 119 E. Second St., Everett. Membership dues, \$15 each, for 2011 should be paid by mailing a renewal or new membership to Judy Rush, membership chairperson, 184 Good Neighbor Lane, Everett, Pa. 15537 or by calling 652-9059. The May 14, attendees will learn how to put a twill pattern into weaving in a lesson instructed by Myrna Shaw. For more information, visit the website www.bedfordbasketweavers.com. For information about the group, call Myrna Shaw, president, at 784-5327 or

Rush at 652-9059.

TAX assistance will be provided by AARP according to the following schedule: April 13, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Breezewood Senior Center, back of fire hall; April 11 and 12, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Everett Senior Center, Main Street.

BLOODMOBILE schedule for April includes the following visitations: April 25, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Everett, from 12:30 to 6 p.m.

FREE blood pressure screenings will be offered by Conemaugh Home Health 11 to 11:30 a.m. April 7 at Shaffer Apartments, Everett; 11 a.m. to noon April 13 at Breezewood Fire Hall; 3 to 3:30 p.m. April 18 at Everett Rexall Pharmacy; 11 a.m. to noon April 19 at Everett Senior Center; 11 a.m. to noon April 20 at Chaneyville Senior Center.

Bedford County READING Group will meet at the Everett Free Library at 7 p.m. on the second Friday of the month. The group is participating in the Facts In Fiction Civil War program, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and plans to discuss "The March" by E. L. Doctorow on April 8 and "Song Yet Sung" by James McBride on May 13.

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