



News from the Ohio Turnpike

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Turnpike Greet Travelers at Portage Service Plaza

The Ohio Turnpike, Highway Patrol and Portage County Safe Communities promote motorist safety. BGSU raises awareness about human trafficking.

MANTUA, Ohio (July 15, 2022) – Lynette Jackson was one of thousands of motorists traveling today on the Ohio Turnpike. She was traveling back home to Detroit after attending an antique show in Brimfield, Mass.

“I was feeling tired and needed to rest my mind and get some coffee or tea to give me a lift to make it back to Detroit,” said Jackson, who was quickly greeted by Ohio Turnpike staff at a customer appreciation event at Portage Service Plaza at milepost 197 on the Ohio Turnpike. Moments later she won a \$25 gas card.

This year the Ohio Turnpike has resumed its customer appreciation events at various service plazas after a two-year hiatus caused by the pandemic. There are 14 state-of-the-art [service plazas](#) along the 241-mile turnpike across 13 counties in northern Ohio.

“Our customer appreciation events create a fun and interactive experience to meet with travelers and their families to promote safety initiatives and answer questions about *E-Z Pass* and the future of open road tolling and more,” said Ferzan Ahmed, executive director of the Ohio Turnpike.

The turnpike’s service plaza partner, AVI Foodsystems, provided \$1 hot dogs for lunch. Kona Ice provided flavored ice cones, courtesy of the Ohio Turnpike.

Inside the service plaza, visitors could spin an electronic wheel to win numerous prizes from the Ohio Turnpike. The Ohio State Highway Patrol displayed a cruiser, met with guests, and promoted safety and career opportunities in law enforcement.

“We encourage those utilizing the Ohio Turnpike to make traffic safety a priority every day, but especially during this time of year when fatal crashes are at their highest,” said Staff Lt. Rick Reeder, the patrol’s turnpike liaison. “Collaborations and these events are important because they help make traffic safety relevant through raised awareness and education rather than through tragedy.”

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Portage County Safe Communities set up an interactive prize wheel at the event to inform attendees about traffic safety.

“It’s a fun event with great partners and other agencies working together to promote safety while people are traveling on the Ohio Turnpike,” said Ali Mitchell, project director with Portage County Safe Communities, whose goal is to reduce preventable crashes caused by distracted and impaired driving as well as increase seat belt usage and raise awareness of motorcycle safety.

Faculty from Bowling Green State University – Firelands College also participated in the event to raise awareness about human trafficking and the victims who are transported on the state’s highway system.

“Human trafficking takes place everywhere,” said Tracy McGinley, a criminal justice professor at BGSU. “It is important for all of us to know the red flags and the facts about human trafficking to protect ourselves and others.”

Red flags that can be observed, include:

- An individual’s verbal communication is controlled;
- A conversation about someone making their quota is overheard;
- Young women walking from truck to truck in a parking lot; and
- Someone who is unaware of their location.

“Another fact to consider is that not all victims will seek help,” added McGinley. “Even if it appears that they are alone, the trafficker is most likely still watching. Therefore, you should not approach someone on your own.”

If you suspect someone is a victim of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888.3737.888 or if you believe you are witnessing a crime dial #677.

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