



News Advisory

Blue Water Area Transportation Commission

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Four Blue Water Area Transit Heroes Receive Spirit of Port Huron Award

Port Huron, Mich. – The City of Port Huron recognized four Blue Water Area Transit workers for their heroism. The four received a Spirit of Port Huron Award on June 11 at McMorran Auditorium. The city gives the heroism award to individuals who risk personal injury or their own life in a spontaneous act to save others.

Honored were John Baxter, mechanic, and Douglas Gougeon, afternoon lead mechanic. The city also honored Larry Lautner, assistant manager and shop foreman, and Steven Markel, master mechanic. All four were nominated for the award by Lee-Perry Belleau.

Ken Harris, Port Huron City Council member, presented the award for what he described as their “moment of courage, altruism and sacrifice.”

While risking their own safety, they “stepped in and came to the rescue” on November 16 in the BWAT bus garage, according to Harris.

All four men jumped into action to save a Preferred Towing operator who was pinned under a bus. The tow truck operator had towed a disabled bus to the BWAT garage. He became pinned beneath the bus while lowering it with the tow truck. The four men secured the tow lifting hooks and operated the hydraulic controls of the tow truck. In doing so, they were able to remove the operator from underneath the bus.

“If it were not for the quick actions of these four men, the victim could have sustained life-threatening injuries,” Harris explained.

“We are proud of the way our employees acted during this unfortunate accident,” said Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “They responded quickly and correctly to a dangerous situation. They may have saved a man’s life in the process.”

“I couldn’t be more impressed by the way these brave men responded,” said Linda Bruckner, Blue Water Area Transportation Commission Board chair and Fort Gratiot Township trustee.

The Spirit of Port Huron Award program was established in 1986. The city uses the award to recognize Port Huron’s outstanding citizens who make Port Huron an “even better place to live.” Nominations are accepted for awards in eight categories: brotherhood, civic, cultural, economic progress, good neighbor, heroism, lifetime achievement and youth service.

Blue Water Area Transit recently celebrated its 40th anniversary, as well as the sesquicentennial of public transportation service in the Blue Water Area.

William Pitt Edison (older brother of the celebrated inventor Thomas Edison) started the local tradition of innovation 150 years ago. He operated horse-drawn trolleys on several routes as the Port Huron & Gratiot Street Railway Company.

The Blue Water Area became one of the nation's first communities to operate electrified trolleys in the 1880s and then motor coaches in the late 1920s. Bus service started in 1927 and continued until an eight-year hiatus from 1968 to 1976. Since BWAT started publicly funded bus service in 1976, the transit agency has carried more than 31 million riders.

BWAT is Michigan's leading producer of Compressed Natural Gas, with the largest fleet of CNG buses in the state. The agency started producing the alternative fuel in 1996 and now operates four public CNG fueling stations. The station located at its headquarters at 2021 Lapeer Avenue in Port Huron is open Monday-Saturday, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Three more stations are open 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week: in Marine City (516 S. Parker), in Capac (15041 Downey Road) and in Port Huron (1529 Hancock Street). The agency accepts Discover, Master Card and VISA at all four stations, which are certified by the State of Michigan.

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BLUE WATER AREA TRANSIT HEROES RECOGNIZED: Before a “standing room only” audience in McMorrان Auditorium on June 11, Port Huron City Council member Ken Harris presented a Spirit of Port Huron Award for heroism to Blue Water Area Transit employees Larry Lautner and Doug Gougeon (pictured, L to R) and John Baxter and Steven Markel (not pictured). Photo by Lee-Perry Belleau.



FOUR HEROES – Pictured (L to R): Doug Gougeon, Larry Lautner, Steven Markel and John Baxter in the Blue Water Area Transit garage. Photo by Rose Norton.



FOUR HEROES -- Pictured (L to R): Doug Gougeon, Larry Lautner, Steven Markel and John Baxter in front of a Blue Water Area Transit bus in the agency's garage. Photo by Rose Norton.

Media Strategies for a Social Generation



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