

# M-COG offers abandoned car incentive

By JIM DINO

jimdino@standardspeaker.com

Anyone who has an uninsured or unregistered motor vehicle has a chance to get rid of it and make money, too.

Eight members of the Mountain Council of Governments (M-COG) are participating in the organization's new abandoned vehicle program.

Dan Guydish, the M-COG's executive director, said seven area municipalities – the City of Hazleton; the boroughs of West Hazleton, Freeport and McAdoo, and Hazle, Butler and Sugarloaf townships, as well as the Hazleton Area School District – have agreed to participate in the program.

Participating means each municipality will honor the others' abandoned vehicle laws, thus preventing the owner of such an auto from moving it from one municipality to another and avoiding obeying the law.

In most municipalities, Guydish explained there is a 10-day period in which the municipality gives the owner to get the car registered and inspected, or moved.

Until now, municipalities didn't honor each other's laws, which meant the owner of an auto could move it from one municipality to the other to turn the clock back.

The seven municipalities and the school district will not enforce the new law immediately.

Owners of such autos will be given until May 30 – about two and a half weeks – to move their autos.

As an incentive to move the autos, Guydish said he has set up a program in which Kress Auto Recyclers/Harry's U-Pull It will accept autos – and pay owners for them – or will tow the autos.

"If they drive the autos to Kress, they will get \$125 for a car and \$300 for a truck," Guydish said. "Kress will even tow the auto if it is inoperable – and still give the owner \$100 for it."

But Guydish emphasized that the offer is good only until May 30, and auto owners must cut out this story from the newspaper and present it to Kress when turning the auto in, along with the vehicle's title and proper personal identification, such as a picture driver's license.

Guydish said that after May 30, municipalities will tag such autos and owners will then have 10 days to remove them. If they don't, they will be towed to Kress, which has agreed to be the salvor and storage facility for the program.

"Kress will take out towing and storage fees first, and then if there is any money left (from the sale of the car or its parts) the municipality will get its fees. Anything left after that will go back to the owner."

But making money on the auto is not the object of the effort, Guydish pointed out.

"The whole idea behind this is to get these autos off the streets," he said. "Anyone who has had one near their home knows what a pain it can be."

Robert Dougherty, the City of Hazleton's public works director, said that each year, the city tags and tows about 300 abandoned autos per year, about the same as Hazle Township, according to Supervisor Anthony Matz.

"Last week, we tagged 12 autos on one property," Dougherty said.

Guydish said any auto already tagged cannot be included in the Kress offer, and stressed participation in the program does not pass any financial responsibility for the autos to the municipalities.

Guydish also said the abandoned auto law in each municipality differs on whether autos on private property can be tagged and towed.

Robert Krizansky of the Hazleton Area School District said the district does not have such a problem now, but has in the past. Krizansky said the district is participating in the event the problem crops up again.