



Lions pummeled by Saints

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Lansing's Aaron Aikman and Jerry Jodloski teamed up a year ago to re-create Ghostbusters Ecto-1. Now they'll showcase their newest collaboration, Scooby-Doo's Mystery Machine, at the How-To Halloween event at the end of the month.

PHOTOS BY RACHEL GRECO/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Mystery Machine brought back to life

Scooby-Doo's classic van on show at How-To Halloween event

RACHEL GRECO
LANSING STATE JOURNAL

LANSING - The rusted out 1970 Dodge A100 van was in rural Wisconsin, sitting in a yard next to a weathered barn, but it could be had for a steal.

Its owner hadn't driven it in years and wanted \$300 for it. Jerry Jodloski couldn't pass it up.

The vehicle's make and model was the closest he'd ever seen to the iconic Mystery Machine van driven by the members of Mystery Inc. on the cartoon he grew up watching, "Scooby-Doo."

Jodloski has spent the last 10 years bringing recognizable pop culture vehicles to life — the Batmobile, Jurassic Park's theme park SUV, and last year, with

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Decals on the rear window of Aikman and Jodloski's Mystery Machine van pay homage to the classic duo, Scooby-Doo and Shaggy. "It's something special, and this event is a huge show and tell for things just like it," Jodloski said.

New bill to reform auto insurance hits a snag

Republicans need Democrats to help move legislation to Senate

DAVID EGGERT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANSING - Legislation to reduce Michigan's high auto insurance premiums by letting drivers opt out of mandatory unlimited medical coverage is in peril, with majority Republicans lacking enough support to pass it on their own and many Democrats pushing an alternative plan.

House Speaker Tom Leonard openly says he needs 10 to 15 of the chamber's 45 Democrats to help move the bill to the Senate. That means 19 to 24 of the 63 House Republicans are opposed.

He is relying on Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, whose city residents face the highest rates in the U.S. and who is a leading proponent of the plan, to bring Democrats on board this fall. Some are open, but many remain resistant weeks after the measure was introduced, which suggests the proposal could stall like many before it have.

The legislation seeks a 40 percent cut, for five years, in personal injury protection fees for motorists choosing \$250,000 rather than unlimited PIP coverage. That could equal an estimated 20 percent reduction in the overall cost of a comprehensive policy and a nearly 50 percent discount on a basic policy.

Drivers age 62 and older who have Medicare or other retiree health insurance — whom the bill's supporters say should not be double billed for injury coverage — could opt out entirely of PIP, saving an estimated 35 percent. There also is a provision stating that pricing for \$250,000 and \$500,000 coverage levels must "reflect savings expected" from the bill.

Michigan is the only state to require unlimited lifetime coverage for medical expenses resulting from auto crashes. A \$170 annual per-vehicle fee is assessed to reimburse auto insurers for expenses surpassing \$550,000.

Rep. Sherry Day-Dagnogo, a Detroit Democrat who opposes the legislation, said she is concerned insurance companies could "wiggle out" of require-

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Scooby-Doo

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the help of car enthusiast Aaron Aikman, the Ghostbusters' Ecto-1.

Jodloski, owner of Jammin' DJs and the founder of Lansing's How-To Halloween event, said re-creating Scooby Doo's van had been in the back of his mind for years. Now, with the Craigslist find, it was possible.

That was nearly a year ago.

Today that banged up, forgotten, dark blue Dodge van with a cracked windshield and no engine has been transformed. Now the cartoon ride has been brought to life, and will be the centerpiece for this year's How-To Halloween event at the Lansing Center later this month.

Jodloski and Aikman teamed up on the project, investing \$2,000 and about 10 months of labor and creativity to make it happen.

They say it's proof nothing from your childhood has to stay there.

Re-creating a cartoon favorite

The 45-year-old van was a shell when Jodloski and Aikman hauled it to Lansing and into Aikman's garage. Its brakes, brake lines and engine were gone.

But the body? Jodloski thought they could work with that.

"It was in good shape," he said.

Aikman, the brains behind rebuilding the guts of the vehicle, stops short of agreeing.

"It was destined for the junk yard."

Today you'd never know it. The duo's creation is a light vibrant blue and lime green, accented with bright orange flowers and cartoon-inspired lettering.

Simply put, it looks exactly like the real deal.

Open the double doors on the side and you'll find a carpeted interior, a flower-shaped pillow resting on brown leather seats and a flat-screen TV — the perfect spot for Scooby and Shaggy to hang out when they're taking a break from solving spooky mysteries.

Jodloski said they re-created the Mystery Machine on a shoe-string budget.

"This project could have cost thousands," he said. "Maybe \$40,000, if you had the money, but we didn't."

So they got resourceful instead.

Aikman had the daunting task of rebuilding the van's guts and getting it to run again. The engine and transmission once belonged to an old Chevrolet truck he'd purchased. The new engine uses a fuel injector that doesn't belong in the Dodge, he said. It takes a high pressure electrical fuel pump to make it run, so Aikman worked around that. He bought a used, two-barrel carburetor and hand-fabricated an adapter plate.

"I was told by so many professional mechanics that she would never run, and yet the engine runs better than it ever did," he said.

Jodloski used spray paint to color the exterior and layered lime green and orange vinyl cut outs of his own making on top to replicate the van's well-known cartoonish-look. He duplicated the van's round headlight plates not with the real thing (those cost \$80 each, he said) but with plastic pie plates purchased at Target.

And the "spare tire" fixed to the front of the van? That's actually a metal barrel Jodloski cut to fit the space, and spray painted to match the vehicle.

The finished product?

"It's as Frankensteined-together as it could possibly be."

Celebrating Halloween creativity

The Mystery Machine debuted for the first time this summer, during Lansing's Fourth of July parade, and Jodloski and Aikman's mad-scientist approach to the project didn't temper people's re-



Lansing's Aaron Aikman and Jerry Jodloski will showcase their newest creation, Scooby-Doo's Mystery Machine, at Lansing's How-To Halloween event end of October. Jodloski used spray paint to color the exterior and layered lime green and orange vinyl cut outs on top to replicate the van's cartoonish-look. PHOTOS BY RACHEL GRECO/LANSING STATE JOURNAL



The interior of Scooby-Doo's Mystery Machine was re-created on a shoe-string budget. "This project could have cost thousands," Jodloski said. "Maybe \$40,000, if you had the money, but we didn't."

How-To Halloween

Lansing's fourth-annual How-To Halloween event is scheduled for 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 28-29 at the Lansing Center. It will feature various Halloween displays, props, costumes and decorations, along with "make and take" decoration and prop sessions, and trick-or-treating for children. The Lansing Zombie Walk, during which an estimated 200 to 300 participants in zombie costumes will make their way to Lansing's Capitol, will start at the event at 4 p.m. Oct. 28.

» Tickets to the event are \$7. Children, age 2 and under, enter for free. For more information visit "How-To Halloween" on Facebook.

actions to it.

"The kids who saw it got a grin from ear to ear," Aikman said.

Adults were just as smitten, he said.

"It's a generational thing," Jodloski said. "People see this going down the road and lose themselves in that moment. They raise their arms and say, 'Yes.' Everyone has a connection to it."

During How-To Halloween, a celebration of creative and homemade Halloween costumes, props, decorations and creations, the Mystery Machine will be center stage.

Jodloski said those who pay the \$7 entrance fee to the two-day event Oct. 28-29, sponsored by Celebration Cinema, can walk right up and have a look.

They'll also get the chance to enjoy the 50 different groups displaying or showcasing their creations at the Lansing Center.

Participants can try their hand at the creation of a Captain America shield or play a life-sized game of Operation. They'll also get the chance to experience a "Star ship Enterprise bridge simulator," walk through haunted house displays and take a photo with a costumed Ghostbuster or Storm Trooper.

The event pays homage to homemade creations, Jodloski said.

"It's the building of things that are the most memorable moments of Halloween," he said. "This encourages people to roll up their sleeves, get their hands dirty and just do something fun."

The duo's Mystery Machine is a prime example of what you can end up with if you do, Jodloski said.

"It's something special, and this event is a huge show and tell for things just like it."

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Insurance

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ments to lower rates and that the discounted rates would not last. She also worries Detroiters who pick less injury coverage and who are seriously hurt would be put in a "vulnerable state" after leaving the hospital. Day-Dagnono is backing alternative measures that would, among other things, prevent the use of non-driving factors to set rates — a practice that critics say unfairly discriminates against lower-income motorists.

The \$250,000 PIP option would include \$225,000 for emergency care and \$25,000 for other care and benefits such as wage loss replacement, which detractors say is inadequate. Backers counter that any medical costs exceeding the caps would then be covered by people's private or government health insurance.

One Democrat opposing the bill, Rep. Tim Greimel of Auburn Hills, said it would "gut benefits," shift costs to Medicaid and "only provide a rate reduction to some Michigan drivers and only then for a five-year period, after which insurers could jack up rates willy-nilly." Everyone, not just those picking less expensive coverage, should benefit from other cost-saving provisions that would reduce reimbursements for health providers' treatment of people injured in crashes and create a fraud authority, he said.

The measure's supporters contend that auto insurers could not simply pocket those savings if they want to stay competitive.

The entire House GOP caucus discussed the legislation for two hours behind closed doors this past week. Another meeting is expected this coming week, after which the House Insurance Committee could send the bill to the floor. Leonard said he may ultimately have the full House vote, even if the measure would go down in defeat.

"I'm not taking that off the table," he said. "This is an issue that many folks have campaigned on. This is an issue that many folks are passionate on. But most importantly, this is an issue that I believe is one of, if not the biggest, one facing the citizens of this state. Ultimately, I think each legislator ... within this chamber needs to let the residents that they represent know where they stand."

The panel's chairwoman, Republican Rep. Lana Theis of Brighton, said Michigan has the highest car premiums in the country because auto insurers are paying medical bills that mainly instead go to health insurance companies in the 49 other states.

Some of the state's biggest political spenders and lobbyists — hospitals, business groups, plaintiffs' attorneys, health providers, insurance companies and insurance agents — are lining up for and against Theis' bill. Political action committees and executives tied to organizations or businesses that have taken past stances on auto insurance legislation have given more than \$700,000 to accounts tied to members of the House and Senate insurance committees over the past five years, according to the Michigan Campaign Finance Network.

Rep. Leslie Love, a Detroit Democrat, said her constituents "need a break" and should be able to buy less PIP benefits because some savings are better than nothing. She said it costs her \$4,200 a year to insure her 2009 Saturn Aura that has logged more than 100,000 miles.

She called the Theis-Leonard-Dugan bill a "good beginning" and said a separate bipartisan package of bills — backed by hospitals, brain injury rehabilitation centers and trial lawyers — has "really good elements."