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NASCAR fans bring big boost to local economy

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DAN BROWN of Rochester agonizes over which collectable race car to take home with him from New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon Friday. BENJAMIN C. KLEIN/CITIZEN

LOUDON — The NASCAR race this Sunday doesn't just bring race cars and ESPN to Loudon, it also brings thousands of people and their money.

Food, gas, water and souvenirs are just a small list of the things that the more than 100,000 NASCAR fans in Loudon this weekend will need to buy.

Hotels and camper rentals all see a major spike in business when NASCAR comes to New Hampshire in July and September every year.

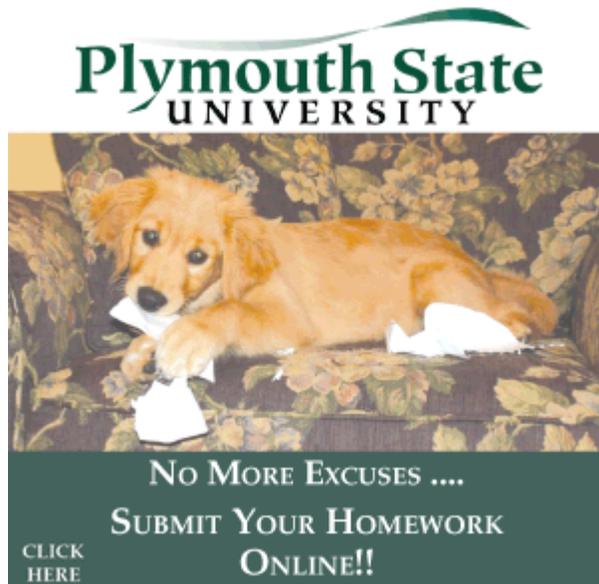
John Rymes, owner of Speedway Convenience in Loudon, said that 10 percent of his business is dependent on the short amount of time that NASCAR is across the street.

"We have a great location and the New Hampshire Motor Speedway is a good neighbor," said Rymes. "The new owners of the track bring us a lot of business and I look forward to working with them more in the future."

Rymes also noted that while the race is a huge boost to business, local business is still the lifeblood that keeps him open.

"We always get a boost during the race," said Charles Bouyounes, owner of the 106 Beanstalk store. "It's a big help with business."

Lin Chiu, of Kings Chinese Restaurant, located across from the track property in Loudon, agreed, saying that more people are coming in and eating at the restaurant. She also remarked that more people are coming in for this race week than back in July.



Jayson Leonard only opened the Broken Yolk in Belmont one month ago, but already business is busier than it has ever been.

"We went down to the track to let people know that we are here right down the road," Leonard said.

Obviously Leonard's efforts worked as five men from New Brunswick, Canada, were eating at the new restaurant. Asked how they liked the area and the food, Scott Trevors said politely, "It's very nice, it's clean with nice people. The food is really good."

As the five drove down the road, very slowly, they

then pulled into the Lakes Region Casino.

Canadians in New Hampshire for the race is not a rare occurrence, Rymes said, who explained that he believes Canadians account for 25 percent of the money he earns from when NASCAR is in town.

Christine Randolph of Brookside Pizza II in Belmont said, "We are much busier than a normal week. We look forward to it every year. It is a big help to business."

Randolph went on to say that she has had ESPN crews eat at her pizzeria, and that she has a customer who has come in every year for the last 10 years when NASCAR is in town and has never ordered a different dish.

Race fan Brian Moulton of Winchendon, Mass., said, "the race brings a wicked lot of money to this area. I bring money to spend on souvenirs, food and fuel."

Mary Ellen and Stephen Corro of Auburn, Maine, said they always bring money for souvenirs, especially since Stephen collects diecast cars.

"We've been coming here since before NASCAR was even at the track."

To make the surrounding area even more appealing to NASCAR fans from afar, or even just 20 miles away, was how cheap the gas was at the surrounding gas stations on Route 106. Throughout

the week, gas has been as cheap as the low \$3.50's, something anyone would be thrilled to take advantage of in this era of high priced oil and gas.

Not all businesses in the area during race week are local, however. Rose Harrison of Talladega, Ala., said that she travels to all the NASCAR races around the country to set up a tent where she can sell souvenirs and NASCAR clothing.

"I love New Hampshire. It is so beautiful," she said in her thick Southern accent, "I am not used to the cold, but this is still one of my favorite places to come to."

Rose added that she loves New Englander accents, while many find hers to be fun to listen to as well.

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