

Welfare, business keep many on dole — Ross

Project Self-Reliance helped many welfare recipients find private sector jobs, said director Doug Ross, but changes in the welfare system and the private sector will be necessary to reduce long-term welfare dependence.

"Though final figures will not be available for several weeks, we estimate that more than 30 percent of all Self-Reliance participants have left welfare for permanent full-time jobs in the private sector," said the former state senator from southern Oakland County.

At a Lansing news conference marking the end of the experimental program, Ross said he would forward recommendations to Gov. James Blanchard and the Legislature for a succeeding phase in the Project Self-Reliance effort.

"Our initial experiment clearly showed that when private sector jobs are available, many welfare recipients are willing and able to take those jobs and become economically self-sufficient," Ross reported.

AN ADDITIONAL one-third with strong motivation to work but who lacked marketable skills are enrolled in job training programs. These programs

are designed to result in permanent jobs over the next six months, he said.

The recent business trend of transforming many entry-level jobs in the retail and service trades into part-time jobs without benefits is making it harder for many welfare recipients who must support families to find a starting place in the private economy, he said.

"We estimate nearly two-thirds of the 7,000 Self-Reliance participants are either in private jobs or on a training track that should lead to a job outside the welfare system in the coming months," Ross said.

"We learned a number of important facts about the welfare system and the plight of those on welfare that will be of use in the development of a long-term strategy to reduce welfare dependence in Michigan," said Ross, who currently holds the post of Michigan Department of Commerce director.

THESE LESSONS include:

• Large numbers of those on welfare prefer work to a welfare check. Nearly 20,000 people volunteered to trade their welfare checks for 7,000 temporary, minimum-wage jobs in the community

and the hope of finding a permanent job in the private sector.

• Those who employed former welfare recipients in their temporary community jobs said "real constructive work was accomplished — not 'make work.'" Ross commented, "The program not only put welfare recipients to work; the taxpayers also got their money's worth."

• A state program that focuses all its resources on helping welfare recipients find private sector jobs is effective for many, though some recipients require additional job training to secure private employment.

• The welfare system itself is an obstacle that prevents many recipients from entering the private

sector and achieving economic independence.

ACCORDING TO Ross, "The existing set of incentives and disincentives a recipient encounters within the current welfare system discourages many from accepting private jobs."

"In addition, many who have been on welfare for more than a few years begin to lose self-confidence and are increasingly afraid to give up the security of welfare for the uncertainty of the private economy."

Ross' recommendation for a second phase of Project Self-Reliance will be based on these findings and will seek to develop an approach that prevents welfare dependence for those seeking public assistance.



Doug Ross

Dog license now Fido's ticket home

By Lem Meese outdoors writer

A license used to mean your dog has been vaccinated against rabies. Now it's almost a sure ticket home if he becomes lost.

When you buy your 1985 tag, the dog's vital statistics are fed into a central Oakland County computer.

"If your dog gets out of the house or yard by mistake and he's licensed and found by a police officer, he'll be returned to your front door," Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy said.

Dee Heinzelring, chairwoman of Murphy's advisory board on humane matters, did some checking for us and found that, last year, the county had to destroy nearly 12,000 unlicensed animals.

That meant 12,000 sad owners. It also meant a drain on the county treasury of something like \$50 apiece, the cost of impounding and "putting to sleep" each dog.

When you buy a license (\$5 for neutered dogs, \$7.50 for others), your name, address and telephone number are fed into the central computer. A wandering dog will be returned to your home rather than being impounded.

You will have to pay a ticket, but that beats the two alternatives — paying the pound \$20 for the pick-up and \$7.50 a day for room and board, or losing the dog forever.

outdoors

METROPARKS' nature centers are busier than ever in winter with indoor and outdoor programs. Remember, in each case you should register by calling the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority's toll free number, 1 (800) 552-6272. There is a vehicle admission charge at the gate, but all programs but one are free. The lineup:

• "Pancake Walk" — 9 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, at Stony Creek Metropark, northeast of Rochester. It's a combination nature walk and pancake breakfast. Chow is \$2 per adult, \$1 per child.

• "Surviving a Wilderness Emergency" — 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, at Indian Springs Metropark near Clarkston. You'll learn such basic survival skills as building a fire, constructing a shelter, signalling and finding warm. Dress warmly and plan to lend a hand in this two-hour program.

• "Wild Foods of Winter Wildlife" — 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, at Kensington Metropark on I-96 in western Oakland County. Find out how wildlife find food in winter.

• "Winter Wildlife" — 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, at Kensington. A combination evening slide program and walk.

New library wing good news to OU

Declaring "this is the best news we have had in a long time," Oakland University President Joseph Champagne praised Gov. James J. Blanchard's budget message for including \$225,000 to complete plans to double OU's library.

"The governor is to be commended. He did a good job," Champagne said of the 11 percent increase Blanchard is seeking from the Michigan Legislature. Overall, Blanchard is seeking \$87.4 million in new higher education money.

If approved, the addition to OU's Kresge Library will cost a total of \$8 million — half from the state, half

from university funds. The project was first approved in 1975.

Champagne praised four elements of the governor's budget: funds for deferred maintenance at colleges and universities; general operating increases; \$18 million in new financial aid for students; and a \$25 million research fund.

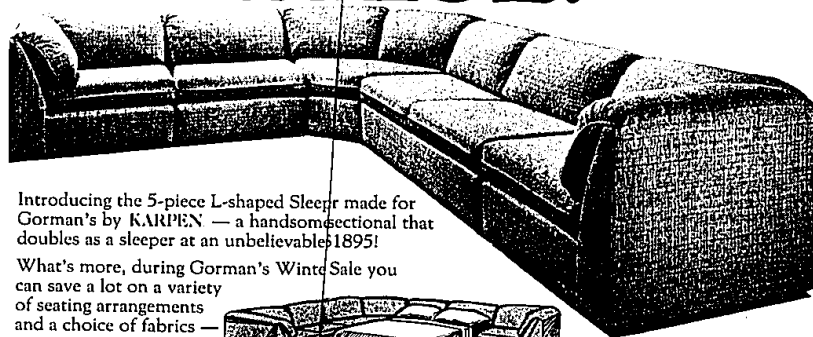
The president said OU's share of the increased higher education budget would be \$1.9 million, a 7.6 percent increase from the current year, for a total appropriation of \$26.8 million. He was confident OU would benefit from the research fund, too.

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