

Suburban Life

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Thursday, August 22, 1991 O&E

(F1C)

Stretch and the gang

Resident wows youngsters with live animal show at Boblo

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

STRETCH ONLY eats once a week. Mickey loves cheese. And Hoover eats all the time. "He only eats once a week. But when he eats, he really eats," said Farmington resident Steve Yauch.

As the group of adults and children eyed Stretch, the nine-foot, 40-pound python, they squirmed when they found out what he has for dinner — rats.

"Isn't he pretty though? He's not wet or slimy," Yauch told the 30-40 people gathered around the stage at the new "Back to Bones" live animal show on Boblo Island.

Yauch is the host. But he's more than a host. In real life, he's a traveling biology teacher.

"Instead of teaching at just one school, I travel to a lot of schools throughout the year," Yauch said.

An animal lover from day one, Yauch majored in biology and business. "I worked in business a couple of years and I didn't like it. I didn't like sitting at a desk."

That did it. He went back to school five years ago and got a teaching certificate. But there were few jobs, especially for biology teachers. That's when he and his wife, Judy, a former early childhood teacher, put their heads together and formed Science Discovery, Inc.

"IT'S INFORMATION through entertainment," Yauch said. "Together we've been able to combine knowledge to give entertaining shows."

And what better way to teach about animals than with the real thing. Stretch is only one of the animals Yauch uses to teach particularly children — but adults, too, while at Boblo — about the animal kingdom.

There's Hoover the pig, Mickey the macaw, Skywalker the cockatoo, Sticker the hedgehog and Jabba the horned frog. And these aren't the only animals Yauch has as a traveling biology teacher.

"It's the best way to learn — a multi-sensory approach to education," said Yauch who has traveled to Alameda, Fairview and Flanders schools in the Farmington district.

His "Back to Bones" show at Boblo is new. Not too long ago, Yauch was working in a classroom and one of the students was the son of Boblo's manager. "They were planning to have a petting farm at Boblo," said Yauch who got a call from the boy's father.

"They decided something like this is better than a petting farm," he said. "Actually I think the adults enjoy it more than the kids."

WHILE KIDS and adults have the thrill of seeing Hoover, the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, or Sticker the hedgehog from Europe, they also learn about the animals — almost without realizing they are being taught.



photos by SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer

Sometimes being a traveling biology teacher and host of "Back to Bones" on Boblo Island isn't an easy job. Mickey the macaw thought he'd get in a friendly tweak on Steve Yauch's nose before the show begins.

"You're being a dud today Mickey. I guess she's not in the mood for somersaults," Yauch tells the audience as he shows Mickey's feathered tail.

"Knock it off," he reprimands the macaw. "Now, when she gets loud and obnoxious, she tells herself to knock it off."

"Back to Bones" is about animals with bones, he tells the audience. That includes mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and birds.

"No two shows are quite the same. You just never know what the birds are going to do. I try to sit back and just have fun with the animals and the people," said Yauch who does about 1,000 shows and programs a

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Hoover, the Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, can't resist using his snout to see just who is this little girl paying more attention to Stretch the python.

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—Steve Yauch

Dedicated doctor treats leukemia patients

By Ethel Glimmons
staff writer

BIRMINGHAM RESIDENT Dr. Maria Sawdyk knows how to manage the important things in her life. "I take one thing at a time. I don't think about another thing than what I have to do for the moment," she said. "You set your priorities."

Sawdyk works with leukemia patients three days a week at a clinic at the Henry Ford Medical Center in Dearborn. Other days, she sees hospitalized leukemia patients at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. "You can't work with these patients and not value the gift of life," she said.

She devotes other working hours to her teaching responsibilities. Sawdyk also is involved in research studies as clinical director at the Hemostasis/Thrombosis Center of Henry Ford Hospital.

Anything connected with her work has a high priority, as does her family life. "You prioritize your family, clearly," she said. Family time spent together takes precedence over other social activities.

SAWDYK IS the mother of son Michael, 8, who is in the third grade at Quorton School. Her husband, Don Ormeo (she uses her maiden name professionally), is a financial analyst in the Bloomfield Hills office of Pru-

denial Securities.

Arranging over the phone for an interview in her office, Sawdyk promised, "I'll wear my smile."

Meeting the doctor for the first time at the clinic, it was easy to see that she wears her smile as often as possible, because she has a positive attitude and because it is encouraging to her patients.

Sawdyk's patients range in age from "15, 16 up through 101," she said with a laugh. "I have a gentleman who is 91, whom we've been nursing along. He's doing remarkably well for a 91-year-old."

Wearing a flowered dress under her doctor's coat, and with her cheerful manner, Sawdyk appeared

anything but solemn as she greeted a young patient.

He's Dean Allen, 25, of Farmington Hills, who was diagnosed five months ago with lymphocytic leukemia, one of two kinds of acute leukemia. Sawdyk, who is presently treating an infection, checked the catheter in his chest. "It's looking very good today," she said.

A GRUSHON CATHETER had been surgically inserted, tunneled under the skin and inserted into the large vein that goes to the heart. The patient receives medication through it.

When the patient is treated with chemotherapy, the white blood cell

count goes down. "We can access the site to the circulatory system without having to use veins in his arms," she said. "It saves a lot of poking."

Allen described how he first became aware he had a medical problem. "I had a wisdom tooth extracted and it never healed properly," he said. At the hospital, "They drew blood. My counts were low. I was diagnosed within the next few days."

Allen spent a month in the hospital. He has completed induction chemotherapy — the first phase of treatment. "Now, he goes through the consolidation phase," Sawdyk said.

In the first phase of treating the cancer, "You need to eradicate it

from the bone marrow," she explained. In the consolidation phase, you get "further suppression of the disease and further control of it — further cleansing."

ALLEN JOKED, "It's like spraying for bugs, although you don't see them." He is receiving several medications over a four-month period and visits the clinic about twice a week.

Recalling the hospital stay, he said, "It was hectic at first. They ran the first 10 days were pretty overwhelming." The heaviest Allen declared, "Ninety percent of the time I

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