

MDOT names new manager



Mike Eustice

State Transportation Director James DeSana announced four new transportation service center managers for the metro region.

These new managers will be located in Detroit, Oakland, Macomb and St. Clair counties and are part of an overall restructuring to improve customer service and provide support for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) \$1.2 billion road and bridge program.

This is the final step in the identification of new operation centers statewide. The new transportation service centers

will streamline operations, increase efficiency and improve service. Currently, 25 transportation service centers are in operation across the state.

Much experience

Oakland county's office will be managed by Mike Eustice. Eustice is an engineer with more than 15 years MDOT experience.

He has supervised the reconstruction of the Davison Freeway, and portions of I-696. Most recently, he's responsible for the reconstruction of I-275 and US-24 (Telegraph) between 10 and 12 Mile roads.



Opossums are solitary wanderers adapting to various habitats

Q: Hi, I am 11 years old and have always wondered about the opossums. Do opossums come from the United States? How old are the babies before they leave the mother, and can you tell me more about the babies? Like how many babies can a mother opossum have and how small are they when they are born? What do opossums eat? Have you ever had opossums that were orphans?

A: The opossums are the only native marsupial in North America. The mother opossum can have as many as 20 babies in each litter. Each baby is smaller than a honeybee. An entire litter could fit in a teaspoon. Immediately after birth, the tiny, naked babies make their way to the mother's pouch. The successful babies attach themselves to a nipple and remain attached for about 60 days.

At about two months of age, the babies are furred and spend some time outside the pouch. At about 70 days, the baby opossums will leave the mother and crawl short distances before returning to the pouch.

At about 87 days, weaning begins. The babies will show an interest in solid food but are still nursing. At this point, the babies follow the mother when she forages for food. They may be running along beside their mother or riding on her back. Riding on the back sounds like fun! By the time they are 104 days old the babies are weaned and are pretty much independent of

their mother.

Opossums prefer to live in deciduous woodlands near small streams. However, they seem to be able to adapt to various habitats, such as marshlands, agricultural areas and suburban habitats.

Opossums are generally solitary wanderers and are not territorial. Opossums rarely remain in any one area for long periods of time.

Opossums are omnivorous (eating both animals and plants) and they even eat pizza. They will eat quantities of grass and other green vegetation. They really like birds and mammals, crayfish, bird and duck eggs, frogs, worms, corn, and wild grapes.

To me they are a very interesting critter. Sometimes I think they are cute and at other times not so cute.

I have raised three orphaned opossums. A car hit their mother and three were orphaned. This happened at our local golf course in which the mother and babies were foraging for food. These three little baby opossums were not happy I brought them into captivity. So understandably they were aggressive with me when it came time for me to handle them. I rehabilitated them for two weeks and was able to release them back into the wild where they belonged.

Bev Cornell is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator and former veterinary aide. You can send her questions on pet and wildlife to her e-mail address: bristol_dog@msn.com

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love notes, pictures of us together, snapshots of animals discovered in the wild or his pets. A special rock or 20 from a vacation spot. Stuffed under socks I find a poem I gave him years ago and a small frog pin, rarely worn but treasured nonetheless. True kids things: candy wrappers saved despite parental protests. Mom! If you save 600, you got free candy for life! Cards from birthdays past, award ribbons, small toys.

Material matters less

I have come to realize it's not the Nintendo or computers or CDs or zillion other things we buy them that captivate the hearts of our children. It is us, our essence, in whatever form we choose to share with them.

An acquaintance working on a "memory book" for her children remarked that she tried to use pre-printed quotes whenever possible as she felt her handwriting left something to be desired. What a pity, I thought. How much I cherish my handwritten notes I might have received and kept from my Mom or Dad over the years, no matter the condition of the scrawl. Our writing makes us uniquely human, not perfect, but capable of conveying that which is heartfelt and sometimes becoming a treasure on its own merit.

Most precious mementos are frequently unremarkable, ordinary. Five years ago when I returned home from the hospital with my new baby daughter, one of my sons asked if he could have a small pillow I had used while away. He cherished that pillow, for reasons I'm not certain of, possibly reminding him of a special time. It likely bore his Mommy's scent for at least awhile, and that he found comforting. When it was lost in hotel linens several years later, he cried deeply tears of loss. I cried along with him, for I understood it was not the pillow that meant so much to him but rather the significant moment in his life it represented. That small pillow held feelings, memories, complicated inner struggles, perhaps associated with the addition of yet another sibling.

Kisses and hugs

Kisses and hugs are treasured, too. I recall a recent night when my husband and I were involved in a heated discussion with one of the older boys. I viewed my son, angry, frustrated and rather helpless, and something compelled me to step back for a moment. At that instant, I saw a not quite identifiable need in my son's eyes. Reaching over the invisible yet thoroughly perceptible boundary between us, I

hugged him. Tears spilled from his eyes, tears spilled during the heated intensity of a moment which will likely be forgotten, yet coupled with a sense of connecting and security even in the midst of disagreement that I only hope will long remain with him.

Pocket treasures

Pockets have ceased to arouse disgust since I found a gritty, worn picture I gave to my little son, Matthew, when he started first grade. His voice trembled one fall afternoon as he explained that the relatively long school day he was adjusting to marked too long a separation from Mom, for we had enjoyed tremendously our daily routine of reading and playing together for years. The next morning, I handed him a small family snapshot, telling him to stash it in his desk and sneak a peek as needed. His smile and twinkling eyes said it all, and the picture seemed to solve the loneliness problem.

Sometime later I found the forgotten treasure taped up and well handled in one of his pockets. Used and loved... like small pockets of time in the fabric of our hurried lives...

Kathie O'Donohue is a mother of five children in Farmington Hills.

Helpers needed

Forgotten Harvest, metro Detroit's mobile food rescue program, needs volunteers to help Monday to Friday during normal business hours for various food

rescue, special event and office projects. Offices are located at 21711 W. 10 Mile, Suite 200, in Southfield. Call 248-350-FOOD.

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For information: Southfield Community Relations Department, 248/354-4854

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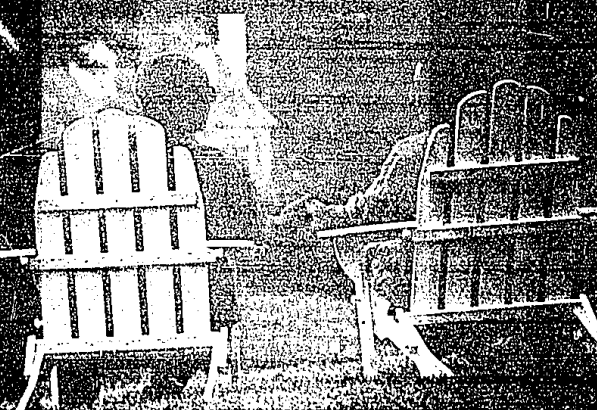
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