

## volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau has weekly listings of volunteer opportunities. Further information about these and other volunteer needs at more than 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau at 642-7272. Any non-profit organization needing volunteer assistance may call the bureau.

**CASELOAD WORKERS** - Mature persons are needed by the 4th District Court in Birmingham for Tuesday or Wednesday evenings. Caseload involves seeing probationers on a monthly basis and checking references and paperwork. Training begins immediately in preparation for September caseload.

**NURSES** - The Michigan High Blood Pressure Council in Troy wants volunteer nurses or nursing students to take blood pressure readings, obtain medical backgrounds and provide educational materials. Clerical volunteers can assist in counseling and follow-up services for clients. Morning or afternoon commitments available.

**ACTIVITIES INSTRUCTORS** - Do you like sports and working with young people? The Oakland County Juvenile Court in Pontiac is looking for men to help with recreational activities and crafts at a summer camp Aug. 31 to Sept. 3.

# Learning all about animals

Chip and Dale might be cute little animals, but our urbanized wild creatures are barely tolerated by most people. Of course, raiding garbage cans, getting stuck in chimneys, or digging up grass are not endearing habits. But, chipmunks, raccoons, opossums, and skunks are rarely appreciated and most often completely ignored.

This indifference feeds right into the ever present egocentricity of the child who already believes his presence is the only important one. Children are unable to see the larger world picture and, so, cannot grasp the importance wild creatures have.

Children believe their influence alone prevails and are not even aware of the delicate balance that exists between our animal friends and ourselves. Children see the world only from their point of view and if something does not directly touch them, it is of no consequence.

Since wild creatures make no apparent or direct contribution like milk from a cow, or eggs from a chicken, or a car from an auto plant the critter's life may seem superfluous to a child.

AND WHILE these animals surround us, their place is not extolled. Even zoos highlight exotic animals from foreign lands, and ignore our local beasts. Children as a result go about their daily routine without ever



Pat Bordman

realizing the importance these animals have.

Animals do play an important role in our children's environment. A close inspection of them can reveal to our kids how similar all living things are. It can demonstrate how responsive these animals are to our presence. It can show the vast impact we have on their surroundings. It can bring the vast world down to an understandable dimension. But, most of all, it can take the focus away from self.

At the Drayton Plains Nature Center, squirrels come right up to you, chipmunks scamper through the rooms, and you can pet a duck, cuddle a skunk, or crawl through a giant log.

The center is right in the middle of a subdivision, so it feels like home. It's 137 acres include rivers, ponds, marshes, and fields to walk through. The center itself houses displays and a hands-on science table.

BEST OF ALL are the animals living there. Two owls, injured and unable to fly, make the center their home. So do two skunks, some duck-

lings, and a newborn opossum. Unlike other nature study areas, this one is informally run and the children are encouraged to pet or hold these wild animals. Farrah the Ferret, another permanent resident is waiting to be admired as well.

The Drayton Plains Nature Center is nestled in a residential area on Denby Road in Drayton Plains. Follow Dixie Highway west from Telegraph Road to Hatchery. Turn left onto Hatchery Road to Edmor and stay to the right to Denby. Admission for all ages is by donation. Hours are 9-5 Tuesday through Saturday. Phone 674-2119 for more information.

Patricia Bordman, a freelance writer and photographer, has a master's degree in early childhood education. She has taught elementary school and conducted workshops and lectures.

Mrs. Bordman welcomes suggestions and comments. Please write her c/o the Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

PATRICIA BORDMAN

## Bell charging for info calls

Michigan Bell is unveiling a longer directory assistance telephone number — and a higher price for the service — starting July 19.

The number will be 1-555-1212 for any directory call, even in your own area code.

Customers will be allowed to make 20 calls for assistance within their own area codes each month without added cost. Each call above 20 will cost 29 cents.

Only calls within your own area code will count against the 20-monthly limit,

and callers are allowed three phone number inquiries per call.

Michigan Bell says the new rates will affect 6 percent of its customers who make 50 percent of all calls for directory assistance.

People with visual impairments or other handicaps that make it difficult to use phone books will not see the new charges, provided they call or visit a Bell office to get an exemption form.

The new system was approved last year. It's technically a three-year trial and will be evaluated annually.

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