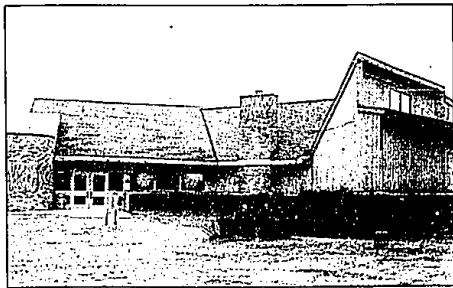


Almost a gravel pit, nature center opens



The new nature center at Independence Oaks County Park is a low, sleek building that houses exhibits of Oakland's environment, from glacial deposits to wetlands, with lots of wildlife.

Variety's the spice of summer sessions

Whether it's about precious stones, where a mastodon is buried or how a woolly bear caterpillar can predict weather, a variety of "interpretive" nature programs are on tap this summer for area families at the newly-opened Independence Oaks Nature Center in northern Oakland County.

A full line of activities is available by calling the park at 625-6473. Registration is required for all programs. Minimal costs are included in some cases. A few of the summer programs include:

- Timber crafts will be taught using recycled materials, natural dyes and

pressed flowers 1-2:30 p.m. Saturday, July 6.

- A study of Michigan's Ice Age and travel to an actual dig site where an ancient mastodon is buried will take place 1-3 p.m. Saturday, July 13.

- Precious stones, their colors and patterns will be discussed from 1 to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, July 20.

- Tall tales and other folk stories will be told 7:30-9 p.m. Friday, July 26 at the "Liar's Club."

- A look at native rattlesnakes and poisonous animals is included in "The Sting," a program planned for 1-2:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 3.

By Teri Banasz
staff writer

Under warm, sunny skies, the Independence Oaks Nature Center was opened to the public last week amidst memories of how the 184-acre addition to the county park system almost became a gravel pit.

"There were a lot of problems in acquiring this," parks commission vice chairman Jean Fox, told the center's celebration gathering, heavily attended by naturalists, parks and recreation leaders and public officials.

"We had two public hearings, all the environmentalists groups came out, and right triumphed."

THE BATTLE was six years ago.

The park system had been working to secure funding for the nature center project when a mining company came in with an option to buy the land found in the headwaters of the Clinton River in northern Oakland County.

But before a shovel touched the earth, hearings were held by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The public protested, and DNR denied the company a permit.

Fox described the park and new nature center like a natural getaway close to home.

"A WISE man in Parliament once called the parks the lungs of London," Fox said.

So what does that make this for the closely packed communities of Oakland County — the auto worker in the Mazda Plant or the secretary in a tall office building in Southfield where the windows don't open? When the world is too much with you, you need to get out and touch a tree.

Today, the new acquisition, secured only four months ago on March 5, makes Independence Oaks the largest county-operated park in the Oakland system at 1,034 acres — leading Fox to call it "the crown jewel in our system."

The park is located just a stone's throw from the Pine Knob Music Center on Sasabaw Road, north of Interstate-75.

THE ENVIRONMENTALLY sensitive, mostly wetland property was purchased by the DNR through a Michigan Land Trust fund grant and the County Parks Commission for \$435,000. The state fund paid 57 percent of the cost, the county the rest.

On Wednesday, park notables and Fox were joined by the system's chief naturalist Kathleen Doherty in dedicating the nature center.

It is a low sleek building that houses an exhibit room designed to interpret natural findings in the area for children and the young at heart.

It includes offices for the nature center staff and a projection room for public slide shows. The center is staffed by three full-time naturalists and three naturalists hired seasonally.

Gives Independence 'jewel park' label

INSIDE the main exhibit room are displays of woodlands, wetlands and wildfields.

They are complete with natural grasses and stuffed animals and designed to "heighten awareness of the park and provide information on wildlife people might find at home," said naturalist-guide Candy Garbarz.

Among the displays is a hands-on one that describes glacier formations and a detail of how the park's Crooked Lake was carved out years ago. Another display introduces visitors to rocks and fossils found in the area.

Locally found attractions are housed in a display case of color drawings and snake skins, one of which details the poisonous massasauga rattler, an inhabitant of Independence Oaks.

(One park naturalist said, while guiding a visitors tour last week, that it's not unusual to see an all-horned massasauga "sunning himself on a rock.")

They won't strike, however, if left undisturbed by humans.

THERE ARE numerous activity-producing exhibits for children, particularly a simulated "giant oak" that welcomes children to crawl inside and hear the sounds of the forest.

Those who have never petted a deer, another native of the park, can find a small piece of deer skin in a collection of animal hides.

According to naturalist Garbarz, the park is home to not only the massasauga and deer but also

muskrat, short-tail weasels, mink and more commonly found animals such as the groundhog, skunk, and red-tail and fox-tail squirrels.

THE LAND, once privately owned by the Irwin Cohen family, still offers signs of early habitation. Along some of nine miles of hiking trails are now wild lilac bushes and white cedar trees planted by the early residents.

Paul W. Thompson, a research-ecologist from Cranbrook Institute visiting for the day, said it was "encouraging" to see such land saved from development.

"There are so few areas where sections along a river are preserved," he said. "This not only benefits the park but the people downstream. (Left undeveloped) it holds up the water to prevent flooding. A lot of the Clarkson people are interested in this."

IN ADDITION to the nature center, the commission dedicated a roughly one-mile trail through a 50-acre parcel on the southwest side of the park.

The trail is named for Ted Gray, a former Detroit Tiger pitcher who once owned it. Although it was acquired several years ago, the parks commission recently completed a 500-foot boardwalk across the wetlands portion of the trail. The trail continues through a rolling wooded area of the park.

OU tuition increase averages 5.25 percent

Oakland University has increased Michigan resident tuition an average of 5.25 percent effective with the summer semester now underway.

New tuition levels and a fee increase were part of a \$45.3-million general fund operating budget approved by the OU Board of Trustees. Spending for 1985-86 will increase 6.3 percent.

Tuition for resident undergraduates is up \$2.50 a credit hour (\$8 total for freshmen and sophomores and \$55 for juniors and seniors).

Resident graduate students will pay an extra \$4.50 a credit hour for a total of \$88.50.

RATES FOR non-resident students were set at \$129 a credit hour for freshmen and sophomores and \$140 for juniors and seniors. Both amounts are up \$7.

The increase for non-resident graduate students is \$9 to a total of \$173 per credit hour.

University officials said the increases

are in line with Gov. James J. Blanchard's recommendations. Tuition had been unchanged since the 1983-84 fiscal year.

In addition, if a legislative proposal for an increase in tuition stabilization funds to Michigan colleges and universities beyond the governor's recommendation is approved, the differential will be used to lower resident tuition rates.

In all, the higher tuition rates will increase revenue to the university by approximately \$754,000.

However, when the effect of the tuition loss due to the expected decrease enrollment of 100 fiscal year equated students is netted against this increase, total tuition revenue will increase by approximately \$257 percent over 1984-85. The FYES for 1984-85 was 9,100 and is expected to be 9,000 for 1985-86.

The general fund budget also provides for an additional \$35,087 in student financial aid to cushion the effect of the tuition increase, officials said.

TIUITION AND required fees paid by full-time Michigan resident undergraduates at OU in 1984-85 ranked sixth in comparison to 14 other public state colleges and universities.

A Michigan freshman or sophomore taking 31 credits a year will pay \$1,673.50 in tuition and fees, up 5.35 percent. A junior or senior will pay \$1,890.50, up 4.88 percent. In both instances the total increase is \$88.

A graduate student taking 24 credits will pay \$2,241, an increase of \$123, or 5.81 percent.

University officials said the \$45.3 million budget will come from state appropriations \$26.4 million, an increase of 8.7 percent; tuition, \$18.1 million; student fees, \$11.3 million; indirect cost recovery, \$725,000; miscellaneous revenue, \$900,000; and the 1984-85 year end balance of \$1 million.

Journalists elect officer lineup

Larry Laurain, city editor of the Oakland Press in Pontiac, has been elected president of the 230-member Detroit Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists.

Other officers are Ben Burns, executive editor of the Detroit News, first vice president; Ben Johnson, assistant to the managing editors/development at the Detroit Free Press, second vice president.

Bill Semion of Auto Club of Michigan was re-elected secretary and Jim Ritz of the Observer & Eccentric copy desk was re-elected treasurer.

Executive Recliner with Ottoman
PVC PIPE FURNITURE
Marked Down To
\$169.00 Reg. \$185.00
Fri., Sat. & Sun. Only
While Quantity Lasts
Take With Price

WILSON PATIO FURNITURE
349-8121
At the Red Barn - 10489 West 7 Mile
NORTHVILLE • 8 1/2 Miles West of Haggerty

What You've Been Waiting For... The

ECCLESTONE
THE CLASSIC WOMAN

SUMMER SALE

30% to 40% Savings
on all summer merchandise
Shoes for all seasons—Starting at 40% off

SOMERSET, TROY (313) 649-1640
MOUNT PLEASANT (313) 772-4078

Do You Need HELP - CARING FOR A NEWBORN?
Call Oakland Nursing Unlimited today and discover how you can get the help you need to regain your strength and enjoy life as a new mother!

540-2360
OAKLAND NURSING UNLIMITED

SOMERSET MALL WILL BE CLOSED JULY 4th
ENJOY THE CELEBRATION!!

Want to know about sex and your teenager?
Think back...

To high school. Then you know what your teenager knows about sex. And one thing hasn't changed: sexual awareness increases during the teenage years. Help them deal with the feelings, the pressure, the fear. Invite them to talk with you. Listen to their plans and goals. Talk about their curiosity about sex and love.

Do Yourself a Favor. Talk With Your Teen Today.

Produced through a grant from the Michigan Department of Social Services by **Child and Family Services of Michigan, Inc.**
P.O. Box 548, Brighton, MI 48116

In the Detroit and In-county area, call Community Information Service, a cooperating agency, (313) 833-3430.