

# Stepparents from page 1C

said. However, the relationship with her two stepsons has "improved 100 percent" since she joined the group.

"I was trying to make it like it was a nuclear family. It's not," she said. "I learned not to have such high expectations and go with the flow — and to keep a good sense of humor."

Other issues discussed by the group include how a stepparent should discipline a child, how to adjust to joint custody and financial obligations.

"It takes a long time to resolve

that there's room for everybody (in a stepfamily)," said Kus.

Dillon left the group recently, believing that she has gained a wealth of information in the last year to apply to her everyday living arrangement. She recommends the group to all stepparents.

"It was a ball, a wonderful awakening," she said. "Lucille Kus as a stepparent was able to direct the discussion to cover our fears, concerns and questions and put them all in a positive light."

# Friends' day trips come with a plus

**PRIME TIME**

It's as comfortable as taking a trip with two old friends, but these friends never take the wrong road, forget the name of the best restaurant or lose the sense of fun that a holiday should have.

"We want to provide the kind of first class hospitality we think they deserve and treat them as if they were guests in our own home," said Laura Standhardt.

The "them" are travelers with Day Trippers Plus Tours and the four planner/escorts are Birminghamites Laura Standhardt and Linda Pandzhich. The two women began talking about starting a tour/travel business three years ago. They compiled a list of friends and relatives, put together some day trips and the business was born. Now they also offer overnight trips. On their first flyers they thought it would make travelers feel more comfortable if they knew a nurse was available. Since Standhardt is a registered nurse, they included the line "Nurse on Board."

"We have a nice mix of passengers. Some are elderly because they have more leisure to travel during the week. Some are younger, but they have health problems such as difficulty walking. Some have to bring a wheelchair along

but that presents no problem for us," Pandzhich said. They thoroughly research in person every trip before offering it and they use a first class coach with reliable drivers.

"We do things the way we would want them done for us — a little fun, a little humor, some good food and lots of ideas for their free time," said Standhardt.

They have had several Prime Timers as passengers who needed a little special attention. "One of them was hesitant to take a trip because of extreme difficulty in walking. But they sat in the front of the coach, and because we pay extra to have our coach parked close to the facility, there is a minimum of walking required," Standhardt said.

"We found them a close restaurant with good seats and Laura stayed to hold the places and I went back to escort them to the restaurant," Pandzhich added.

But most of all they want the day trippers to have fun. Some of them have special circumstances that make getting away difficult, such as an ill husband at home, or limited vacation time.

The two have firm beliefs in dealing with travelers with health concerns. They do not consider them a nuisance or see coping with the disability, whatever it is, as a problem. "As long as they can get on and off the coach we'll manage it," Pandzhich said. Standhardt, who keeps her CPR training current, said:

See PRIME TIME, 5C

Members pay \$1. Planetarium admission is an additional \$1. Also on exhibit at the Institute of Science is "Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats," featuring a life-size realistic bat cave, rain forest and Gothic castle.

For information on the art museum, call 645-3312. For information on the Institute of Science, call 645-3230.

# Kids from page 1C

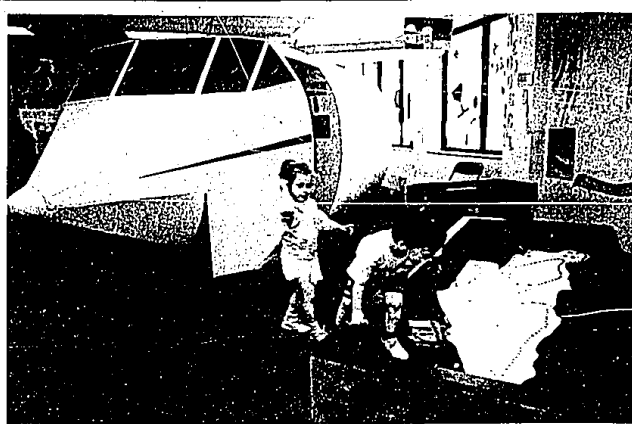
art, music, drama and dance. The camp is held 9 a.m. to noon July 19-23, three days a week.

Some indoor fun in West Bloomfield features a mini-museum for children at the Jewish Community Center. Children ages 3 to 7 can learn about Israel with the Sesame Street characters by watching a video.

The kids also can go on an archeological dig for Israeli artifacts in the museum's sandbox, dress Barbie to go to the Barbie synagogue and make Shabbat placemats.

The hands-on museum, on the second level of the JCC at Maple and Drake roads, is open 1-3 p.m. Tuesdays and 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 4:30-7:30 p.m. Thursdays. It's free of charge and membership at the JCC isn't required. For more information, call Gilda Polsson at 661-1000, Ext. 345 or 252.

Other area museums include Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, open 1-5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sunday, and Cranbrook Institute of Science, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$6 for adults and \$5 for children.



Discovery Room: Lydia Paterni and Aaron Gunsberg have fun in JCC's mini-museum on Jewish history, for 3- to 7-year-olds.

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# First wife inquires about ex-husband

**ON AGING**

Q. My husband and I were divorced many years ago. He remarried a woman 23 years younger than himself. He died a couple of years ago. I consider myself a divorced widow and thought I could collect more on my Social Security. We have been married six years and I was told that you must be married at least 10 years in order to collect the extra benefits. His second wife is too young to get the money and I am the one who had and raised his children. I don't understand why there must be a 10-year limit.

A. If you are 60 years of age or older and not married, you are eligible to collect additional monies on your Social Security. In fact, if succeeding wives are also over 60 they are entitled to collect the same additional amount also.

While I can understand your point concerning the amount of years you must have been married, the law, at this time, clearly states that the marriage had to have lasted for at least 10 years. Until recently the law required that the marriage lasted 20 years. I honestly do not know how the lawmakers arrived at the 10-year figure but it has been changed once, and perhaps if enough peo-

■ It is perfectly legal to ask for a pet deposit in a subsidized apartment building. That, of course, is to cover any damage that the pet may cause. The government has stated that the required deposit may be up to \$300, so the amount of the deposit can be determined by the managers of the apartment units as long as it does not exceed \$300.

ple contact their congressman and political representatives they will rethink this limitation too.

If anyone believes they are eligible for additional Social Security funding they should contact their local Social Security office. The number is in your telephone book.

Q. I have my application into several subsidized housing apartments. I have a cat and have been told that I would have to make a security deposit if I brought my cat with me. One apartment asked for \$100 and another wanted \$300. My question is, if it is subsidized housing, do I have to leave a pet security deposit, and why is there such a difference in the amount asked for?

A. It is perfectly legal to ask for a pet deposit in a subsidized apartment building. That, of course, is to cover any damage that the pet may cause.

The government has stated that the required deposit may be up to \$300, so the amount of the deposit

can be determined by the managers of the apartment units as long as it does not exceed \$300. Should the pet die or you move, the deposit is to be returned, provided that the animal has not caused any damage to the building.

Q. My father is coming to visit for the summer. He is very active at his senior center in Florida and I would like to find one in my area for him to go to while he is here. I live in Birmingham.

A. Mature Minglers is a very active senior center in the Birmingham area.

Located on Wing Lake Road between 34 and 15 Mile roads, the center offers a variety of programs daily. There is a Men's Club Current Events, with guest speakers is held weekly; sports include bowling, golf, swimming and walking; shopping and other day trips, and travel and theater events.

You need not be a member to participate in these activities.

However, members do receive the monthly newsletter and get a discount on most activities. For additional information call 932-6295 weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Q. You frequently write about women collecting on their husband's Social Security. Are you aware that men can collect on their wives' benefits as well? I am still working but my wife is not and I got part of her Social Security.

A. I stand corrected. You are absolutely right. Men can collect on their wives' Social Security. Social Security looks at all records, regardless of gender, and will pay a full, unreduced rate if the husband is more than 70 years of age and still working, regardless of the amount of money the male spouse earns. If the husband is under 70 there are earning limitations. When the male spouse retires, Social Security will pay on the highest earned income but it will pay on both spouses' earnings at the same time.

Renee Mahler is a gerontologist and the director of communications and admission at a Rochester Hills nursing facility. She is a former member of the Michigan State Commission on Services to the Aging.

To leave a message for Mahler, from a touch-tone phone, call 955-2047, Ext. 1869. Send your questions to her at the Observer & Eclectic, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

# Helpful agencies: toll-free numbers

A number of agencies and government departments offer free information or advice on a wide variety of subjects of interest and service to older adults and their families. Following is a list of toll-free numbers. Operators will be happy to answer your questions or direct you to other proper information sources.

- Energy Assistance 800-292-5650
- Hospice 800-331-1620
- Housing Discrimination, HUD 800-424-8590
- Lawyer Referral 800-968-0738
- Legal Hotline for Seniors 800-347-LAWS
- Medicaid Information (Social Security) 800-832-8245
- Medicare Appeals 800-365-5899
- Medicare Inquiry (Part B) 800-482-4046
- Medicare Inquiry/Part A (Hospital) 800-872-2566
- Michigan Bell Special Needs Center 800-482-8254
- Nursing Home/Long Term Care 800-292-7852
- Physically Impaired Association of Michigan 800-274-7426
- Prescription Drug Credit (form) 800-367-6263
- Social Security 800-772-1213
- Taxpayers Assistance (State) 800-487-7000
- Taxpayers Information (Federal) 800-829-1040
- Utilities (Public Service Companies) 800-292-9555
- Veterans Information and Assistance 800-482-0740

- AT&T Special Needs Center 800-233-1222
- Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Center 800-621-0379
- American Cancer Society 800-ACS-2345
- The American Council for the Blind 800-424-8666
- American Diabetes Association 800-232-4372
- American Parkinson's Disease Association 800-223-2732
- Arthritis Foundation 800-283-7800
- Auto Repairs Complaints 800-292-4204
- Cancer Information Center 800-422-6237
- Center for Independent Living 800-492-0222

# Hotlines to phone for helping seniors

Here's a list of toll-free numbers that may be of help and interest to older adults and their families. These toll-free hotlines may be able to assist the callers in finding the information they require.

- 1-800-829-1040
- Taxpayers Assistance (State) 1-800-487-7000
- American Council for the Blind 1-800-424-8666
- American Diabetes Association 1-800-232-3472
- American Paralysis Association 1-800-225-0292
- American Parkinson's Disease Association 1-800-223-2732
- Auto Repair Complaints 1-800-202-4204
- Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Center 1-800-272-3900
- Citizens for Better Care 1-800-292-7852

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1 Block N. of 12 Mile  
597-7165

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For more information call 661-1000, ext. 254

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