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Museum adding to local education

By FLOYD WILTZ
Battalion Reporter

Since 1961, elementary school teachers have known where to go to get rabbits, insects or even snakes to show school children — the Brazos Valley Museum.

Now in its eighteenth year, the museum still provides animals and demonstrations to local elementary schools, but it is also moving to involve adults in its programming.

Director Heidi Wittenborn said the museum has operated for the past 18 years entirely on funds from

private sources.

"We are supported entirely by membership dues, grants from private charities and foundations," she said.

Last year the total budget for the museum was about \$18,000, Wittenborn says, and expenses for this year are expected to be around \$20,000. Wittenborn is the only paid employee. Her five-man staff is manned by volunteers.

Most of the volunteers are Texas A&M University students enrolled in Wildlife and Fisheries Science

courses, Wittenborn said.

Wittenborn says she is pleased with what the museum is doing.

"We try to augment whatever the teacher happens to be doing at the school," she said. "We provide a service they aren't familiar with and try to give some expertise in that area."

In the past the museum has given demonstrations and lectures on birds, reptiles, insects and plants.

"The school would call the museum and say 'We need a snake, and we would grab a snake and go to

the school," Wittenborn said.

Wittenborn estimates she and her staff give demonstrations to 700 to 800 school children a month. Last spring they gave demonstrations to 7,050 children.

The museum also has started a series of six-week workshops for children on Saturday mornings dealing with different aspects of natural science. There is also a loan program for school teachers which allows them to borrow materials from the museum for use in their classes.

Wittenborn says she would like to have more sources of money.

"We receive no federal, state, county or city funding," she said.

She also hopes the museum will become a regional natural science center for this portion of Texas.

The nearest museum is about 100 miles away in Houston.

The Brazos Valley Museum is located at 3232 Bryan Dr., in Bryan.

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A&M, industry keep unemployment low

By EILEEN WALL
Battalion Reporter

New industry and Texas A&M University are helping Bryan and College Station keep unemployment rates down, according to area employment services.

A Texas Employment Commission

publication said that while the civilian labor force increased 3 percent from August 1978 to August 1979, the unemployment rate rose 0.1 of a percentage point, to 2.8 percent in August 1979.

The 2.8 percent unemployment rate for Bryan-College Station is

about half the national rate of 5.9, and is also lower than the state figure of 4.6.

The reason for this low unemployment rate in the Bryan-College Station area is that there are more jobs than there are people to fill them, said Mike Miller, of Snelling and Snelling Employment Service in Bryan.

He said the source of these jobs is the new industry moving into the

area.

Industry is attracted to Bryan and College Station, he said, because the people here have money and are willing to invest.

He added that larger cities like Houston are beginning to have problems and industry is backing out and moving to smaller cities like Bryan and College Station.

Walt Baker, manager of the Texas

Employment Commission for Bryan-College Station, said even though new industry is moving into the area with jobs, the source of work in the area is still Texas A&M University.

Wittenborn said she has enjoyed the 1979, the University employment people. The University says it will continue to be an employer in town as far as the can forecast.

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Prof says prime rate rise will slow building of houses

Recent fluctuations in the prime interest rate, the rate banks charge their best customers, will send shock waves through the Texas home mortgage rates, predicts a Texas A&M University real estate expert.

Dr. Jack Friedman, head of the

Research Division of the Texas Real Estate Research Center at Texas A&M, said mortgage funds in Texas will no doubt become scarce and that could cause a slowdown in both new home construction and the resale of existing homes statewide.

"In Texas, the situation will be

aggravated by the state raising the prime rate," said Friedman.

Texas' floating prime rate will rise 11 percent and will increase to 11 percent Nov. 1. Actually the prime home mortgage rate is in the range of 11 1/2 to 12 percent, according to Friedman.

"If recent boosts in the prime rate cause a decline in the rate of home building as intended, then even mortgage mortgage interest rates will drop," said Friedman.

"However, if high inflation persists, then the rate of home mortgages will continue to rise. Well, I higher, and prevent many people from realizing a dream of home ownership," he said.

Currently, the prime rate is a record 14 1/2 percent. The Federal Reserve Board's action, intended to pace inflation, might throw the United States into a real recession.

The current prime rate with an already tight money market will surely cause a scarcity of mortgage money from supply and demand standpoints, added the expert.

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