

Some people don't even know it exists

Students get credit for Brazos Museum plans

By NANCY FLOECK
Battalion Reporter

It doesn't seem like a classroom — nine students sitting around a conference table enthusiastically discussing the future of the Brazos Valley Museum of Natural Science.

"Right now, some people don't even know the Brazos Valley Museum exists," David Vela, a junior recreation and parks major tells the other students in Recreation and Parks 485 and 685.

These two classes, composed of recreation and parks and wildlife and fisheries majors, are devoting the spring semester to developing a five-year master plan for the museum.

The objective of this plan is to discover what the Bryan-College Station community needs and wants in a natural science museum and develop a coordinated plan for directing the museum's growth in those areas.

And to find out what the public wants, the students are doing a phone survey.

"We're all committed to giving a block of time to the project and getting the best possible results within that block of time," Dr. John Hanna, instructor of the classes said. "We will probably develop it this term ... and then it will be the museum's responsibility."

With the students' help, the plan will cost \$2,200 to implement. Done by professionals, it would cost over \$10,000.

Hanna said his students' interest in the plan is growing.

"It's been kind of funny," he said. "The enthusiasm has been growing — we seem to pick up momentum with each meeting."

The beauty of the plan lies not only in helping the museum, but in giving students the opportunity to work as a planning team and experience real-life situations in their fields, Hanna said.

"And that's what it is — a planning team," he said. "Yes, they're getting college credit for it,

but they're not spending time reading books and studying for exams.

"It's a very real problem in our field. How do you get programs under way? It's training in how decisions are made."

The plan will be detailed at first, to the point of describing short-run activities, like how the director should set up a certain display, Hanna said, but it will also include long-range projections and recommendations for growth, funding and other vital aspects.

The 20-year-old Brazos Valley Museum is located in the Brazos Center and concentrates on natural science.

In the museum, there's a display of stuffed aquatic birds enclosed in a glass case, a stump with a brown pelican on top and a beaver lying on the table below. There's three glass cases containing snakes, an exhibit on fossil mammals of Brazos County and, against one wall, an un-

finished display left by a graduate student whom director Dale Bode said didn't have the enthusiasm of the 485 and 685 students.

"They're doing an outstanding job," Bode said of the students. "By May, I see a master plan that I can take anywhere."

Bode said the plan will provide the recognition and direction the museum needs in order to grow and gain support. Donators like to fund something concrete and tangible, he said, and the plan will provide a blueprint for those funds.

Donations of both artifacts and money are the mainstay of the museum. Membership and program fees, gift shop and bird seed sales and grants make up the rest of the museum's budget.

Bode said one of the museum's biggest problems is that people don't take it seriously.

"People familiar with the museum feel it can operate on a shoe-string budget," he said.

Another misconception is that the county sup-

ports the museum because it is located in the Brazos Center, Bode said. The museum, which is a non-profit organization, receives no federal, state, county or city monies.

In addition to displays and exhibits, the museum also offers classes in natural science. The classes are held for one and one-half hours on three consecutive Saturdays in the spring and fall.

During the summer, the museum offers summer nature camp for children between 4 and 12.

Bode said organizing the museum around the master plan will be like starting the museum from scratch. But, he said, he is confident the results will please the community and offer it more than it has in the past.

He said he believes Bryan-College Station needs and enjoys this type of museum.

"After all, twenty years of existence says something," he said.

Parking sticker alterations illegal

By DAVID CALVERT
Battalion Reporter

Altering parking stickers to obtain a better parking spot is not a novelty at Texas A&M University. The people who do it, however, usually do not realize the seriousness of their actions.

Campus Police Chief John R. McDonald said people have been altering parking stickers for several years. He said the most common infraction is to buy a sticker for the fall semester for \$15, and cut a hole in the permit so it looks like the permit is legal after it expires.

A legal sticker will have only one shield-shaped hole along the right edge, according to how much the sticker cost. A sticker for the entire school year costs \$27.

"We have caught 15 offenders so far this semester," McDonald said. "Most of these people have altered their permits to include the spring and the summer."

McDonald said one student made his own permit in 1979. He said the student made a copy of a staff permit and placed it on the bumper of his car.

Another infraction is to steal a permit from the rear window of another car, or to place a lost permit on another car.

"Many people will tape the permit on the window of their car without removing the sticker from its plastic wrapping," McDonald said. "If they leave the car unlocked, someone can steal the sticker and use it on another car."

McDonald said altering a parking sticker constitutes theft of service, covered by sub-section 31.04 of the Texas Penal Code. The offense is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of no more than \$1,000.

Investigator William Scott said the offense could technically be tried as a Class B misdemeanor, but the charge is usually reduced if the offender cooperates.

McDonald said students aren't the only group of people guilty of altering permits.

"We get just as many cases of staff offenses as we do student offenses," he said.

McDonald said an infraction committed by staff members is to buy a duplicate permit and sell it to someone else. Duplicate staff permits are sold with the stipulation that both cars displaying the sticker not be on campus at the same time.

McDonald said a vehicle is towed when an altered permit is found on it. He said charges are usually not pressed against persons who alter their permits as long as they agree to buy the correct permit and pay their ticket. The offender is also responsible for paying the tow charge.

McDonald said, however, charges are usually pressed against those who sell duplicate staff permits and those who use a stolen or lost permit from another car.

"People don't seem to realize this is a crime," he said. "With towing charges as high as they are (A-1 Wrecker Service charges \$25), it's just not worth it."

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