

5th-graders have a close encounter of touching kind

By Dulcie Shoener

Accompanied by "oohs" and "ahs," wide-open eyes, pointing fingers and a seemingly endless stream of questions, 21 fifth-graders from Saratoga Grade School, 2215 S. 13th St., recently visited the Encounter Center at Morrill Hall.

As the children filed into the center, the first reaction of several students was to point at various exhibits, such as the mounted birds perched around the room.

The exhibits are not called stuffed animals, they are called "mounts" or "mounted specimens," Margot Gates, a Junior League volunteer at the center, told the children. And all the mounts were alive once, she said, except the dodo bird.

Giggles followed the pronunciation of the funny sounding name.

The children were gathered at the back of the room from the beginning and to the end of their visit to the center. They asked question after question.

Gates told the children about the live exhibit of hissing cockroaches. Several shuddered when she mentioned picking one up.

As soon as the children were allowed to move around



Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

A group of fifth-graders from Saratoga Grade School cluster in the Morrill Hall Encounter Center. Behind them are Kay Young, left, Encounter Center coordinator, and Margot Gates, a volunteer of the Lincoln Junior League.

the room, Dewey Miller, 10, went straight to the cockroaches and Gates put one in his hands. He petted it. Eventually, the children's teacher, Sue Kirby, had to tell him to look at something besides the cockroaches. He did for a while, but he soon was back with them.

Dewey said he liked the cockroaches because "they were pretty fun, and I liked the way they hissed. And they weren't like any other but that would crawl up your arm - they just sat."

Kirby explained that the children have a terrarium of hissing cockroaches in their classroom but that the students were not allowed to pick them up. The students' cockroaches, since they are not handled, seem to hiss more than the tamer ones in the center, she said.

The other children were moving around the room touching, looking and petting mounts such as an Albino Norway rat and a grizzly bear. And they asked questions and more questions.

One of the girls, Susie Ironrope, said she liked the weasel and the owl the best, "because they both feel soft."

DeMon Wines said he enjoyed looking for a fossil in the sandbox. When each child found a fossil, he identified its type with the help of Kay Young, Encounter

Center coordinator, who gave the child a certificate to tape his fossil on.

The smells box also kept several children fascinated. The little canisters contained cotton balls, saturated with such scents as cinnamon, liquid smoke and bananas. The cloves scent gave Ironrope a headache, she said.

Soon it was time to go. After they gathered at the back of the room for a few final questions, they filed out of the center.

A few quiet minutes followed while Young and Gates got ready for the next group. Young said that the children, by experiencing "hands-on" encounters with the room's contents, "develop positive attitudes toward natural science."

The center is open during the school year from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. In addition, six to nine groups a week visit the center during hours when the center is not open to the public.

Another group of students from Saratoga School filed into the room. Their first question was, "Can we touch it?"

Gates answered smiling, "Yes, that's what this room is for."



Staff Photo by Dave Bentz

Dewey Miller, a fifth-grader at Saratoga Grade School, touches a hissing cockroach held by classmate DeMon Wines at the Encounter Center.

Police Report

The following calls and complaints were received by UNL police from 7 a.m. Sunday to 7 a.m. Monday.

8:01 a.m. - Rear window of a car reported smashed. The car was parked in the metered lot north of Abel Hall.

1:14 p.m. - False report to UNL police called in on the emergency phone at 19th and Vine streets.

2:20 p.m. - Follow-up on previous case resulted in recovery of some stolen car parts.

2:44 p.m. - Follow-up investigation resulted in recovery of a lost wallet.

3:52 p.m. - Electrical malfunction caused alarm at Agriculture Hall to be set off.

10:49 p.m. - Disturbance involving fireworks reported at 1548 Vine St., settled by officers.

Volleyball tournament, swing dance planned

"Homecoming activities have been greatly extended," said J.L. Spray, publicity chairman of the All-University Homecoming Committee.

A volleyball tournament and a swing dance have been planned for today's activities. This is the first year for both events.

Fraternity and faculty members and members of other organizations will comprise the 23 volleyball teams. After elimination games, 18 teams will compete on Thursday. Trophies will be awarded for the first three places. Both tournaments will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Coliseum, said Doug Netz, committee chairman.

A swing dance will be in the East Union at 8 p.m., with Shiloh, a country band, performing. The free dance is sponsored by the East University Program Council and the Block and Bridle Club.

Netz said that he estimates that about 50 people will come to the volleyball game and 300 will attend the dance.

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