

Relating to the community

by Lucinda Chodan

University Biology exam: Create life. Estimate the differences in subsequent human culture if this form of life had developed 50 million years earlier, with special attention to its probable effect on the English parliamentary system.

Pretty unrealistic. But unfortunately, it's not far from the ideas that a lot of people have about the university. Often the university is charged with an "ivory tower" mentality that keeps it separate from the surrounding community. At the University of Alberta, though, "ivory tower" thinking seems to be on the decline.

"I've created a monster," says Community Relations' Theresa Papirnik of the U of A's Farm Tour program, which involves at least 6500 school children and 1500 adults per year.

The farm tours, offered from late April until the end of June, provide an opportunity for school-aged Edmonton children to see dairy cattle, poultry, swine and sheep in a farm setting.

"It's an educational, fun experience," says Papirnik. "A lot of the children have no idea that milk comes from cows, for instance."

Community Relations has also offered special farm tours for university exchange students, new Canadians, Vietnamese refugees and handicapped children — all completely free of charge.

Community Relations also coordinates the U of A's Speakers' Bureau, a register of more than 300 university resource people available to speak to community groups.

"To my knowledge, there has never been a problem supplying a speaker for a topic," says Papirnik. "We have even filled emergency requests in less than 24 hours — that's how helpful the university community is."

University speakers have appeared as far away as Jasper and Edson at a variety of functions. Papirnik says the

only money involved is travel expenses for outlying areas.

"Every year we place 200 to 300 speakers ... A reliance on the university community is the only thing that keeps the program alive," she says.

Group tours of campus are also offered by Community Relations, including summer walking tours and visits to specific university areas.

More than 400 Edmontonians participated in the twice-weekly walking tours last August, and Papirnik says Community Relations also provides about 12 tours per month to groups like school children, girl guides, scouts and senior citizens from as far away as British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

"We want people to know what's here," Papirnik says.

The Physical Education faculty at the U of A is also actively engaged in letting the community know what's here — and helping them use it. "We probably do more for the community than any other faculty," says Associate Phys. Ed. Dean Dr. R. Macnab. One of the foremost of these community projects is the PREP program designed to help young children with learning disabilities. The children are brought into the faculty, and through play, are taught to adapt to regular learning situations.

The Phys. Ed. faculty also provides a Saturday morning dance program for pre-school children, weekly basic skills workshops for young hockey players, summer sports camps for school-age children and a swimming program that teaches various levels of swimming to the community.

The community also benefits indirectly from the expertise of the Phys. Ed. faculty, Macnab says. When provincial or national competitions in various sports are held in Alberta, the Phys. Ed. faculty provides world-standard facilities and world-class officials.

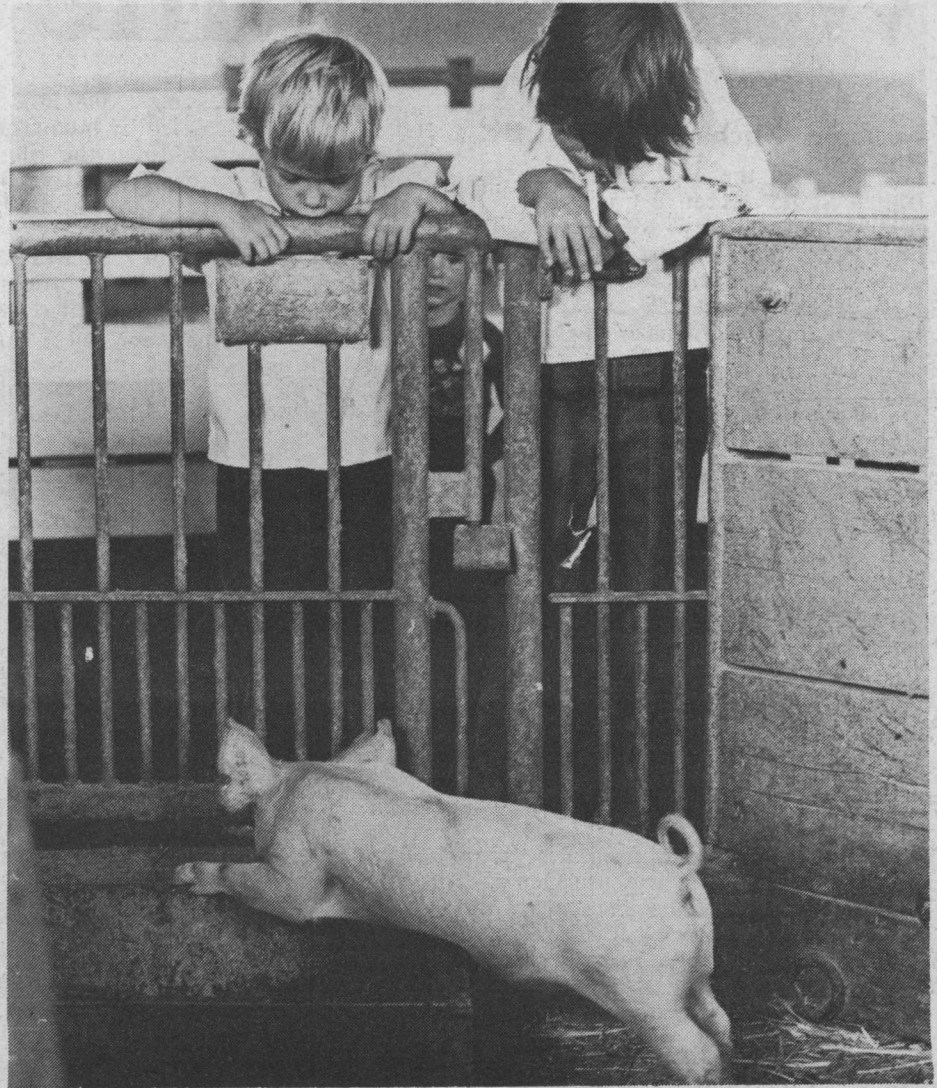


Photo courtesy of the Office of Community Relations

"Lunch is never like this at home," say these kids as they study pork at an early stage of development.

"The community benefits from having us around," says Macnab. "For example, during the Commonwealth Games, hardly a staff member wasn't involved in some way or another, mostly on a voluntary basis."

The U of A's Phys. Ed. faculty also set up the training program for the Canadian Olympic Hockey Team and provides an on-going training center for Alberta's disabled athletes.

"Involvement with flair" could be the motto of the U of A's drama department. Almost every department member is involved in the community in degrees ranging from deep to total.

Take Kevin Burns — if you can catch him. Burns is a founding member of Catalyst Theatre Society, a professional company which explores social issues. Catalyst members research, write, act and direct productions about topics which involve the community — like alcoholism, vandalism and decision-making for teenagers.

"It's not propaganda theatre — it's simply to get people talking about issues," says Burns. Catalyst has worked with the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission, the Edmonton

Public School Board and various groups in "every major urban and a lot of rural centers" in the province, according to Burns.

In addition to his work with Catalyst, Burns has prepared a role-playing program to help new social workers, devised a slide-tape presentation on sexuality and dialysis, redesigned the Edmonton Art Gallery's children's tours to create a more positive interaction between the children and the displays, produced a 40-minute videotape on drama and the learning disabled child, and planned a joint senior citizen-drama student program.

Kevin Burns is only one member of the drama department. Northern Alberta also benefits from the expertise of individuals like choreographer Jacqueline Ogg, designer David Loyett and children's theater experts Brian Way and Stephen Heatley.

Expertise. Probably the biggest benefit of having a university in your community is the ready pool of expertise to draw in any number of fields.

As Kevin Burns says: "We're not some kind of isolationist ivory tower. We're a special kind of community which affects the larger community directly just by being here."



Photo courtesy of the Office of Community Relations

This tete a tete seems to have the calf bewildered and his partner amused.

If Good Home-Cooking
Isn't Your Specialty...

TRY

MY SECOND HOME

8215-112 Street
439-0048

IT IS OURS!

Underground Parking Available.
Informal Dress Appropriate

**EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY**

TOWN OF HIGH PRAIRIE

The Town of High Prairie has the following employment openings in regard to swimming pool operation.

Program supervisors - 2 required
Life Guards - 2 senior & 3 junior required

Employment will be from May until August, 1980.

Applications, to include qualifications and experience, will be received at the Town Office, Box No. 179, High Prairie, Alberta

TOWN MANAGER
TOWN OF HIGH PRAIRIE

- 10% Off Upon Presentation of ID Card
- Edmonton's Largest Selection of Quality Luggage
- Leather Attaches' & Totes
- Travel Accessories & Specialty Items

"Brand name luggage at low prices"

LUGGAGE WAREHOUSE

Parkway Village
8170 - 50 Street
469-6508