



THE LETTERED OLIVE is one of our most beautiful shells and the animal living within in an interesting one.

## Olive Shells Prize For Many Crafters

Last summer we found several live olive shells in the low tide sand on the beach and brought them in for a few days observation.

A shallow pan was filled with sand and seawater and the olives moved about with ease through the sand somewhat like a mole moves through the soil. The shallow depth of the pan meant they could not get very far under the sand and we could find them easily by the hump they formed. Their syphon was extended up out of the sand and this was another clue as to their whereabouts. We changed their water daily and placed small crabs in the sand for them to eat. Though we failed to see them eat, the open shells indicated they were feeding.

The books tell us there are hundreds of olive shells, all highly polished like our cylindrical Lettered Olive with the hieroglyphic markings. The sharp pointed spine at the tip is formed by the four to five body whorls concealed within the shell. The opening is oval-shaped and notched at the base and it is from this notch that the syphon is extended. The large foot and mantle of the live animals extends to practically cover the entire shell, keeping it polished to a high degree. The foot is rounded in front and pointed behind.

Coloration is usually cream to grayish with brown tent-like markings. This coloration and patterns of dark markings suggest characters or letters and give the name. Most



Bill Faver

olives are carnivorous and eat other sand dwellers who share the shallow sandy bottoms with them. The Lettered Olive is found along the southeastern United States and is the largest of the two species found in North Carolina. Size may get up to 2½ to 3 inches. Individuals group together in colonial fashion in shallow water. When moving about, the expanded mantle and foot exhibit the same color markings as the shell. The animals are usually nocturnal but if they are burrowing underground I'm not sure what difference this makes!

We are told the coastal Indians made necklaces from these glossy shells long before the white man set foot on these shores. Today, shellcrafters prize them for key chains, necklaces and other projects.

After several weeks, we took "Oliver" and "Olivia" back to the beach at low tide and buried them in the shallow sand at the water's edge. They had helped us discover some of the life and living along the edge of the sea and made us more appreciative of the forces at work all around us in the natural world.

## Emergency Funds Can Help Pay Local Heating Bills

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County's Department of Social Services wants to help people who need immediate assistance in heating their homes by paying their fuel bill or even buying them a kerosene space heater.

But many of the households that qualify apparently don't know help—up to \$200 per crisis—is available.

Social Worker Supervisor Evelyn Johnson said Monday night that the county has received an additional \$7,670 from the state in crisis intervention program funds. But demand for the funds hasn't been that high, although the state considers the southeastern counties like Brunswick among those with the greatest need.

The money is part of \$1 million in federal block grant funds distributed statewide last week by the N.C. Department of Human Resources when record-breaking cold pushed demand for heating help beyond the resources of several counties. Ms. Johnson said the added funds bring the county's total crisis fund to

\$47,554, of which \$22,000 has been spent "as of today," she said.

Following state and area publicity about the program last Friday, 20 persons applied for assistance Monday, she indicated, which will effect the amount of funds remaining.

Ms. Johnson said the agency will help families with an immediate need for heat by paying for fuel oil, kerosene, firewood or electricity. The payments go directly to fuel dealers or utility companies. The money cannot be used to pay rent except in situations where utility payments are included in the rent, but it can be used to obtain a more long-range solution to a heating crisis.

"We can do more than just buy fuel," she said. "We can buy kerosene heaters if it will help the family with its heating problem. We want to spend all this money. We don't want to send any back."

The state has asked counties that are not using their full allocation to return money for redistribution to counties where demand is higher. Allocations are limited to \$200 per

crisis. People who have already gotten help with fuel costs this winter may apply for more crisis fuel assistance.

The crisis program is the not to be confused with the state's low-income energy income assistance program offered each fall. Eligibility for that program is based on the household's October income, while crisis assistance is based on the family's immediate need.

"We especially want to reach the elderly and households with small children," said Ms. Johnson.

Application is best made at the social services office by the person in need or someone representing them, she said, so that vendors are contacted immediately to arrange fuel delivery.

Applications taken by telephone or out in the field, she added, can delay this process.

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## Nursing Students Post Top Scores

Brunswick Technical College nursing students have posted a 91% passing rate on the State Board of Nursing Licensure Examination. The practical nurse education program has been in existence at BTC for two years.

Students are accepted in the nursing program at tech at the beginning

of the school year in September. Classroom work is performed at the Southport Annex campus. Clinical practice is held in Doshier Memorial, Brunswick and Grand Strand General hospitals.

Space in the program is limited to 20 students per year, but applications for admission are accepted at any time during the year.

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