

# Unique Exhibits Make Learning Fun At Coastal Museum

BY SUSAN USHER

All eyes, ears and questions, the third graders from Union Elementary School in Shallotte made the rounds of the Museum of Coastal Carolina at Ocean Isle Beach

It was a good group, maybe the best so far, judged the pros, the volunteers who guided their movement from one exhibit to the next. They should know, because during early spring, school groups keep the museum's volunteers hopping.

"That's what we're all about, education," Stuart Ingram, museum creator, benefactor and one of Coordinator Martha Benton's near-

ly 70 volunteers. "We don't charge school groups to come here."

"Spring seems to be far more attractive than fall for the schools."

School groups are as likely to come from outside Brunswick County as from local schools; museum volunteers say they'd like to see more county youngsters and their families discover the wonders housed here.

Their role and the museum's aim is to help bring to life for visitors the marvels of the area's natural and cultural history—from the dugout canoes that once plied the quiet, dark waters of the Green



STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

**YELLOW SCHOOL BUSES** are a familiar springtime sight at the Museum of Coastal Carolina at Ocean Isle Beach. Local school groups are admitted at no charge and school groups and other organizations can book a tour or meeting at the museum any day all year round.

Swamp and Waccamaw River to the abundant array of animal life that calls Brunswick County or its offshore waters home.

The students rotate, in small clusters, from station to station, before returning to the gift counters to shop. School groups are sent a list of what's available in advance, so students can plan with their parents

what they will buy, said Benton. Some classes use shopping as a learning experience as well, helping students develop consumer and math skills.

But the exhibits are the main thing.

From the Confederate blockade runner mementos in the front lobby to the animal room with its stuffed

and mounted alligator, black bear, cuddlesome bobcats, beaver and more. Past a wall exhibit of shallow water fish and into the deep, dark, fascinating reaches of the reef room.

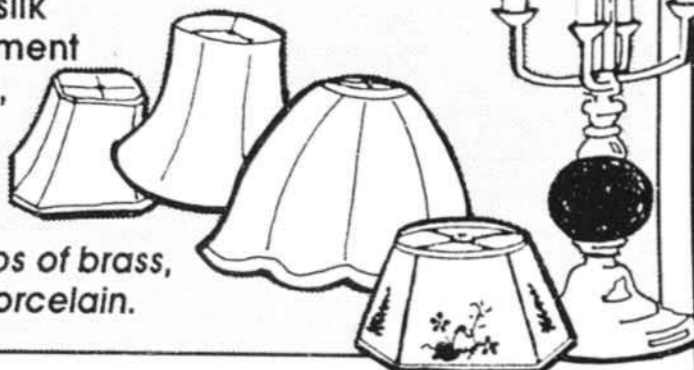
The longer youngsters stand and look in the shadows among the reef outcroppings and the remains of a (See EXHIBITS, Page 43)

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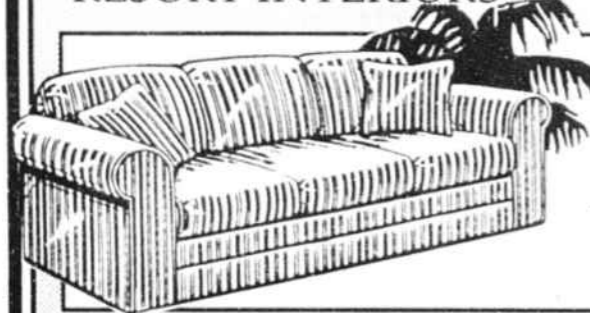
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