

Returning women students travel rough road

By HEATHER McCLENAGHAN
Of the Emerald

As a single parent and full-time student there are nights in Joanne Lawson's life when she can't begin studying until well after midnight. Some of those nights have turned into dawn and Joanne has walked sleepless to her first morning class.

The problems confronting women who enter the University after a divorce, the death of a husband — the difficulties facing any woman who suddenly finds herself strapped with supporting a family — can be overwhelming.

Lawson and eight other students in her situation have formed a support group at the University to reach out and to help other women who share their situation. University Women in Transition was founded last term by two older women students who discovered their frustrations as non-traditional students were not unique. The group will hold its first open meeting April 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the EMU.

The "catastrophic occurrences" that the group says can plunge a woman back into the University life range from the burdens of single parenthood to the desire to create a new self-image and identity. Regardless of why a woman finds herself back in school or checking out higher

education for the first time, group members say preparation for re-entry into society can be hard work.

"Many of us who have been married for any length of time are not used to acting autonomously but we've experienced something so painful we've had to make a move," Lawson said.

Lawson described the struggle of nontraditional women students as "a long, lonely isolated battle."

Group member Lei Chapman said the difference between members of her group and women coming to college right out of high school runs deeper than the age gap.

"We're older women at another stage of development. An 18-year-old can go home if she fails, but we know that we are home and there is no place we can turn to if we don't make it."

The terrible feeling of loneliness a woman can feel after divorce or widowhood is reinforced by the isolated atmosphere of the University, Lawson said.

Members of Women in Transition are keenly aware of the serious problems these feelings can entail.

"The tendency for suicidal feelings among women in our situation is no joke," Chapman said. "We really want to let women know we understand those feelings and are ready to help."

The group's motto, "We know. We've been there. We care," is the group's most basic statement of purpose, member Alva Scherich said. One of the group's functions will be to assist transitional students who require registration help.

"So many women just turn around and leave after they go inside Mac Court for the first time," Chapman said. "We don't know how many women we must lose between the parking lot and Oregon Hall."

Frustration with academic advisors who do not understand their special position plagues women in transition, Chapman said.

"Our education is a real investment for us and many staff people don't realize that we're not here to fool around. If we get some bad advice about classes or professors who end up wasting our time we need to talk about it."

Scherich said some of the advice she has received "was geared toward pushing me right out of college. What they're saying is you're too old to be here, what are you doing here or you shouldn't go for an advanced degree."

The women hope to reach out to women of all ages at the University and to educate younger women about personal alternatives to marriage and families.

are myths that must be challenged, Scherich said.

Group members said the structure of University Women in Transition has been left up in the air on purpose until after the first organizational meeting. This will allow future members to determine the group's activities according to their own needs. Women interested in learning more about the organization should call Alva Scherich at 345-7876.

Music, panels, workshops fill Women's Symposium's wrap up

Today and Saturday mark the end of the ASUO Women's Symposium. Here's the rundown on the days' events.

Friday

9:30 to 11 a.m. "Liberating the Language/Demystifying Publishing: A Feminist Challenge" workshop, Room 112, EMU.

9:30 to 11 a.m. "Women, Justice and the Corrections System" panel, Forum, EMU.

10:30 a.m. to noon. Rape prevention workshop, Dad's Room, EMU.

10:30 a.m. to noon. "Postural Integration" workshop, Century Room A, EMU.

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. "Women and the Mental Health System" panel, Room 108, EMU.

Noon to 1 p.m. Open poetry reading, Room 167, EMU.

1 to 2 p.m. "How to File A Sex Discrimination Complaint" workshop, Room 214, EMU.

1 to 2 p.m. "Joanna: Liking Your Own Voice" workshop, Forum, EMU.

2 to 3 p.m. Blue Skye, musician, Room 167, EMU.

1:30 to 3 p.m. "Battered Women" workshop, Dad's Room, EMU.

2:30 to 4 p.m. "Death and Dying" workshop, Forum, EMU.

2:30 to 4 p.m. "Men's Consciousness Raising" discussion, Century Room A, EMU.

3:30 to 5 p.m. "Feminist Criticism" panel, Dad's Room, EMU.

4 to 5 p.m. "Music for Children," Room 167, EMU.

4 p.m. Beer garden party featuring "Gila," Patio, EMU.

8 p.m. Malvina Reynolds concert, Ballroom, EMU, \$2.50.

Saturday

9:30 a.m. "Growing Up Female" film, Dad's Room, EMU.

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Small group discussions: Growing Up Female, Dad's Room, EMU; Feminism in the High School, Room 213, EMU; Sexism in Elementary Texts, Room 214, EMU; Women in Public School Administration, Room 215, EMU.

Noon to 1:30 p.m. "The Older Woman" lecture, Room 167, EMU.

1:30 p.m. "Janie's Janie" film, Room 108, EMU.

2 to 3:30 p.m. Small group discussions: The Decision of Parent, Room 101, EMU; Changing Sex Roles in the Family, Forum, EMU; Alternative Life Styles I — The Commune, Room 108, EMU; Alternative Life Styles II — The Lesbian Experience, Room 167, EMU.

3 to 4:30 p.m. Belly Dancing, Room 167, EMU.

3:30 to 5 p.m. "Tell Me Where It Hurts" film, Room 108, EMU.

5 to 6 p.m. Small group discussions: Change in the Middle Years, Room 108, EMU; Living Alone, Room 101, EMU; Returning Students, Forum, EMU.

5:30 to 7 p.m. Women's Music with "Night Dancer" and "The All Night Diners," Room 167, EMU.

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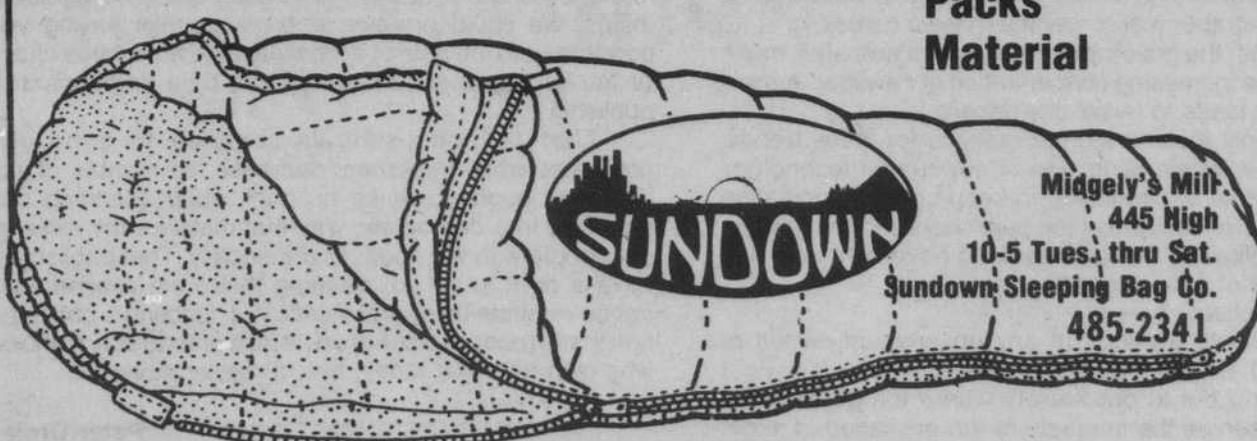


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