



Ann Mconel



Jan Eisenbeisz

Photo by Dennis Hickok

Women plan crusade

Two seek awareness of disabled

By KENT PATTERSON
For the Emerald

Two Eugene women plan to start a liberation movement within the women's liberation movement.

Both women, Ann Mconel and Jan Eisenbeisz, use wheelchairs, and each says the women's movement has paid too little attention to the needs of disabled women.

"The National Organization for Women(NOW) has task forces for elderly women, minority women and for gay women," Mconel says. "I think they should have a task force for women with disabilities."

Mconel and Eisenbeisz have been elected to represent the Eugene chapter of NOW at the issues conference scheduled for Friday in Washington, D.C.

Like other delegates, they will help plan strategy for getting the time extension for the Equal Rights Amendment through Congress. But they also hope to make NOW more aware of the needs of handicapped women.

Mary Simon, chairer of the local chapter agrees. "NOW has not been more insensitive of the handicapped than other organizations," she says, "but it is high time that NOW does become aware of women with disabilities. We think Ann and Jan will help enormously."

Simon says the national organization has concentrated on passing ERA, and has no money for delegates.

"The local chapter is small and very new, and it has no money either," she says. "But they are supporting us morally, psychologically, and emotionally. We're asking for donations from NOW members and from the general public."

Once in Washington, Mconel and Eisenbeisz will meet with

Sandra Jenkins, a lawyer who has worked both with NOW and with the movement for the rights of the disabled.

They plan to search organizational bylaws of NOW to see if there is any provision for women with disabilities.

They expect to find none, but hope to introduce resolutions at the October convention, which will make NOW fully accessible to all women, regardless of disabilities.

"Jan and I have been first-hand observers of how architectural barriers like stairs and narrow doorways, and procedural barriers like having to stand-up to vote have prevented women with disabilities from participating in the important events of our communities," Mconel says.

If all goes well, and the local chapter can raise the \$1,200 for expenses, the trip to Washington will be the climax of a long campaign.

Mconel and Eisenbeisz have worked for years to improve the lot of people with disabilities.

They are co-founders of an organization called the "Iron Duchess." One of only three such groups on the entire West Coast, a primary goal of the organization is to make the women's movement open its doors to the disabled.

Eisenbeisz sees the trip to Washington as a logical extension of her work in the Iron Duchess.

"Basically, we are interested in educating the women's movement to be aware of our existence," she says.

To help raise money for their trips, the local chapter has mailed an appeal to all members and is sponsoring a table at the Eugene Saturday Market.

Anyone desiring to help should contact either Simon, at 1355 West 13th St., or phone Mconel at 689-0837.

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