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The Amazon Cooperative Child Care Center allows parents to reduce their child care bill by teaching, cleaning, assisting with planning or performing other tasks at the center.

Co-op saves money for parents; gives them more time with kids

By Alice Thornton
Emerald Reporter

In the middle of Amazon housing complex on Patterson Street, a building bustles with the patter of little feet and the chatter of happy voices.

The Amazon Cooperative Child Care Center may appear to be a chaotic haven for children between the ages of two and six, but for University students who are also parents, the co-op provides a low-cost alter-

native to other child care programs.

By working at the co-op, parents may reduce their child's tuition by \$25 per month for every hour of work during a week. Parents may cook, clean, serve on the board of directors, help plan the curriculum or teach at the co-op.

Not only does this help reduce administrative costs, but it also benefits both child and parent, said Suzy Blanchard, director of the co-op.

"Financially, it's the best bet," said Blanchard, who has worked at the co-op for seven years. "But it also offers so much for parents and children. Parents get to be part of the center's everyday life."

The co-op at Amazon began in 1979 when a group of University students from a kibbutz in Israel started a nursery school. Ten children initially enrolled in the school, which became a co-op in 1981.

Currently, there are 32 children enrolled and three full-time teachers. Additional help is provided by work study and parental involvement.

Teacher salaries are paid by children's tuition and incidental fees, but the costs may be lower than other child care alternatives, Blanchard said. A lot of positions that cost other day care centers money are held by parents at the Amazon co-op.

"Parents are proud of the work they do here," Blanchard said. "If the co-op is clean, it's because they made it clean. If the food tastes good, it's because they cooked it. A co-op takes a lot of energy, and it needs a core group of parents

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