

Student fees help with child care

By Kirsten Lucas
Emerald Reporter

Many students have a hard time making it out the door in the morning, let alone making ends meet on the legendary "starving student" budget.

Imagine being responsible for making these things happen for a family of three.

While this may seem next to impossible, student parents do it everyday. However, without affordable day care for their children, this daily feat would be much closer to impossible.

The ASUO Child Care Subsidy Program provides low-income student parents with the money they need to help pay monthly child care expenses, which average about \$300 a month.

Depending on need, University students with children can receive up to 50 percent of their day care costs covered through the subsidy program, which is primarily funded with student fees.

The program was also receiving a \$100,000 grant from the Oregon State Scholarship Commission, until the grant was cut last year. EMU Child Care Coordinator Dennis Reynolds attributed the critical cut to Measure 5.

Reynolds, who works under contract with the ASUO Child Care Task Force to determine subsidy eligibility and distribution, said he thought the program could survive on the \$182,000 Incidental Fee Committee budget alone.

However, with an unprecedented number of students needing summertime assistance, Reynolds found himself faced with dwindling funds for more parents.

"There were a lot of students (needing child care) who went to summer school before the tuition increase," he said. "That's what really nailed our budget."

In response to the unexpected shortage of funds, Reynolds approached the IFC with a special request for \$19,000 last month.

Not fully expecting to get such a large sum, Reynolds proposed several back-up plans, the most likely of which he thought would mean a 10 percent decrease in each family's eligibility.

For a family of three, Reynolds said, this kind of decrease might amount to a week's groceries or a month's heat bill.

The IFC approved Reynolds' request, solidifying the support for child care Reynolds said he has found on this campus.

IFC chairwoman Lydia Lerma said IFC members who voted in favor of the additional funds recognize the need to keep student parents in school.

"The level of support for student parents on this campus is exemplary," Reynolds said.

PARENTS

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ward to that day," she said. "I've earned it."

Zevenbergen is one of many single parents in college, but student parents come in many varieties.

Julie Wayland, 26, also a senior in psychology who graduates this spring, has three children: Jerad, 4; Joshua, 3; and Joanna, 15 months. Wayland said she has gone to college off and on for nine years, but she has gone full time at the University since last summer. Her husband, John, graduated in 1988.

But managing a home, three kids and school isn't easy, even with a husband to help.

"Actually, sometimes I wonder how I do it," she said. "When I'm at school, I'm at school. When I'm at home in the afternoons, I'm a mom, and at about 8:30 when they're in bed, I hit the books again," she said, noting that she's tired at 8:30 herself.

Along with her academic schedule, Wayland works nine hours a week at the EMU day care for practicum credit. To simplify schedules, she has concentrated her classes into Tuesday and Thursday, which makes for long 9 to 5 class days. Her husband hopes to take those days off because they don't want their children in day care. When he can't watch them, the children's grandmother does.

"We have to do a lot of juggling," she said. Sometimes the stress of school interferes with the family, especially at the end of the term. The kids pick up on that quickly, she said, but they are also excited about their mother being in school. "I go to my school and mommy goes to her school," they say.

Wayland will continue full time this and next term in order to graduate. "It's a goal I've set and I'm trying hard to stick with it," she said.

The hardest task of balancing parental and student duties is finding the time for all the reading and library research necessary for classes, Wayland said.

One of the surprising benefits of having children while studying at the University is the necessity of structuring her time, Wayland said. She does this better and stays on top of things more than when she was a childless student, she said.

Wayland said it's hard at times when she looks at 18-year-old freshmen and hears about their sleeping in late and social schedules, but "I wouldn't trade my kids for the world," she said.

Other parents who don't have family support to help watch the children rely on day care to fill the gap.

Kris Esterline, a single parent and junior in secondary education has two children, Lauren, 4, and Joshua, "almost nine."

Esterline has been taking college classes for ten years at three community colleges. After she and her husband separated, she went back to school full time and earned her associate's degree at Umpqua Community College last year. She's now at the University trying to shuffle finances, classes and parenthood.

"It's tough finding study time," she said. "I try to get in as much study time as I can at school — while I'm walking and on the bus." She sometimes gets frustrated when she wants to give her children

more time, she said. She, like Zevenbergen and Wayland also studies late at night after the kids are in bed.

With no one at home to help her with child care, Esterline relies on the EMU day care center and an after school program for her son.

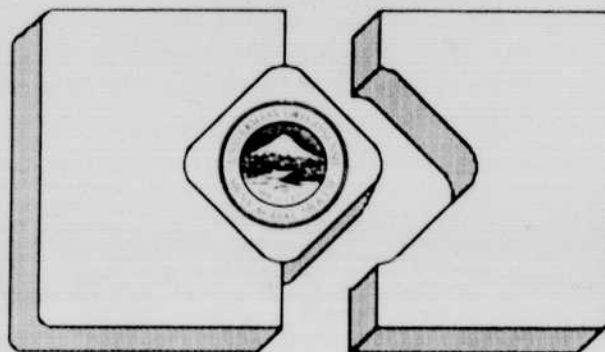
A full month of child care costs \$300 at the EMU, 50 percent of which is subsidized by ASUO incidental fees. This, added to the \$115 per month for her son, adds up, however. Juggling this, financial aid, food stamps and welfare grants are a concern for Esterline.

"At any time, all this could change," she said, referring to regulations and requirements for different sorts of aid, "but I'm just thankful to have it."

These three women are only a small sampling of student parents.

At Amazon Family Housing alone, there are 67 single parents, both male and female, and 98 couples with children, said Frank Gaddini, area director.

Mediation Program



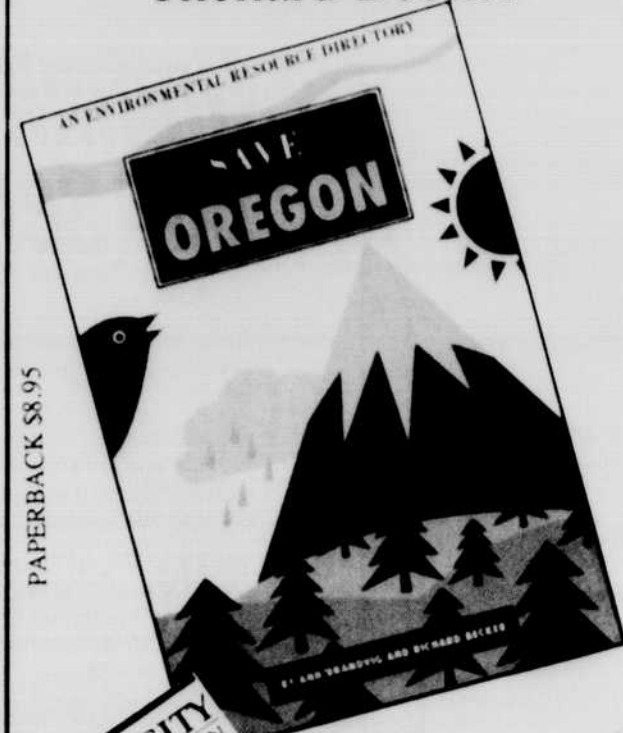
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