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Panel examines child care costs

Jamie Pope

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Issues concerning child care such as affordability, accessibility, compensation for child care providers and current legislative bills affecting child care were discussed during a public forum titled "Child Care: The Quiet Crisis," Monday night at the Central Presbyterian Church in Eugene.

A panel of child care experts and members of the state Legislature discussed child care issues and answered questions from the public. Members of the panel included Kerin Hoag, director of the Child Care Resource Connection; Carol Mason, liaison of the Oregon Association of Child Care Directors; John Radich, assistant director of the Adult and Family Services, Rep. Kitty Piercy, Rep. Jim Welsh and Sen. Peter Sorenson.

Hoag said there are three interconnected issues of child care: parents who pay to have their children enrolled in a child facility, child care providers who care for the children and the children themselves.

"The average cost to have one preschool child in a child care facility is \$288 per month," Hoag said. "This is roughly about one-tenth of a parent's income."

According to 1994 statistics from the Child Care Resource Connection at Lane Community College, an organization that helps parents find providers, this is a problem for many parents who have more than one child.

"Seventy-nine percent of the parents who used our office made less than \$35,000 per year," Hoag said, "while 44 percent made less than \$15,000 per year."

Because of this, providers often charge what Hoag referred to as

"artificial charges." These are charges below a

provider's normal cost. The average annual salary for a child care provider is about \$10,000. This means that many providers are unable to stay in the child care market unless they are sustained by other employment. Hoag said that this causes high turnover in the child care market.

"The high turnover hurts the children because many of the them are in child care during their formative years," Hoag said. "This is a time when children need to have stable relationships in their lives. The large turnover causes a break in these relationships and have negative effects on children when they get older."

All of the panelists agreed Monday night that child care providers need to have an incentive to remain in the field despite low wages. Sen. Sorenson said that the Senate is proposing a tax credit to help compensate providers.

"The tax credit would pay \$500 to \$1,500 per provider per year," Sorenson said. "The amount that a provider would receive would depend upon his or her educational background."

Many of the people who attended Monday night's forum were child care providers who said they felt hopeless. The forum addressed the problems of child care, but no concrete solutions were provided. The members of the panel encouraged the people in the crowd to write letters to their district representatives, state senators and Sens. Bob Packwood and Mark Hatfield to let them know that child care is an important issue.

Monday night's forum was sponsored by the following organizations: Child Care Resource Connection at Lane Community College, the Lane County Association of Child Care Directors, the Lane County Association of Education of Young Children, the Provider Resource Organization, Children's First of Lane County, the League of Women Voters and the legislative offices of Sen. Sorenson, Rep. Piercy and Rep. Welsh.

Conference to cover women's issues

Jennifer Carr

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

The Women's Law Forum at the University is sponsoring a free conference on women's legal issues today and tomorrow at the School of Law.

The conference will concentrate on current legal topics of importance to women and will celebrate the progress women have made as legal professionals and in getting their concerns heard.

Panel discussions will focus on domestic violence, current legislation affecting women and free speech and security at abortion clinics. Another discussion planned is one on whether the legal field requires women to become men in order to succeed. Organizers of the conference hope to promote interaction between practitioners, professors and students.

Keynote speaker for the conference is Kathryn Kolbert, a lawyer and vice-president of the Center for Reproductive Law & Policy in New York. Kolbert, who has worked all over the country helping women bring cases to trial and helping to uphold the legal right to abor-

tion, will speak on the future of reproductive choice.

The Center for Reproductive Law & Policy is currently helping with litigation against Sacred Heart General Hospital whose proposed merger with local medical facilities may prevent women from obtaining medically safe abortions in the Eugene area.

Anne Nichol, a second-year law student and conference director, said she hopes the conference will encourage women to consider law careers and to stand up for issues that are important to them.

"This is the first year the law school student body has been half female; this is incredible," Nichol said. "This shows how far women have come in the legal field and we want to celebrate this."

Although women are making progress, they still have a long way to go in order to achieve equality with men in legal professions.

"Law firms may be filled with women associates, but there are very few women partners or judges," Nichol said. "Women

aren't in charge half the time and there is no reason for this."

Nichol said women need more role models and she hopes the conference will show different ways women can be successful in law professions. Women panelists, professors and practitioners who participate in the conference will show that women can make a difference and be successful.

"Sometimes women don't feel they are making progress, so we want to show women leaders, and the more leaders we have, the more our concerns will be heard," Nichol said.

Nichol encourages people from outside the School of Law to attend the conference since law is a part of everyone's lives and something with which we all deal. She hopes the broader interest of the conference will attract more than just lawyers and law students.

Kolbert's speech at 5:30 p.m. on Friday in Room 129 of the School of Law will start the conference. The panel discussions begin on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. in Room 221. The School of Law is wheelchair accessible and children are welcome to attend.

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