Workers' Exchange

a newsletter by and for childcare workers

MADISON AREA CHILDCARE WORKERS UNITED — MACWU

Issue No. 10 October 1982

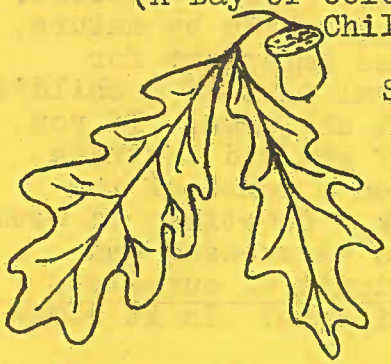
Madison Area Childcare Workers United presents:

The Fourth Annual Workers' Care Day

PROFESSIONAL PLAYERS?!:

INTEGRATING PLAY AND WORK IN THE CHILDCARE PROFESSION

(A Day of Celebrating, Learning, and Connecting with the Childcare Workers of our Community)



Saturday, November 6, 1982

9:30am till 2:30 pm

Lunch Provided

Atwood Community Center
2425 Atwood Ave.

Workers' Care Day is a special day for those of us whose professional responsibility and committment is the care and education of young children. It is first of all a day when we recognize and appreciate ourselves for the contribution we make to the lives of young children and their families. It's a time to give ourselves a pat on the back, and to enjoy the company of good people who share the special skills needed in living with and giving to children.

Secondly, it is a day for us to reflect on some aspect of our lives as workers. We know that as teachers we are a unique group: in terms of the age child we work with, the instructional and developmental goals we pursue in our programs, and the status and working conditions we have as professional early childhood educators. Workers' Care Day gives us an opportunity to look at our unique situation, to learn more about it, and to identify ways in which we can grow to be more effective in it.

This is the fourth Workers' Care Day. In 1979 MACWU, with the assistance of the 4-C Committee on the Status of Childcare Workers, organized the first event that went by that name. The day was

devoted to meeting and getting to know workers from other centers, to identifying both the positive and negative aspects of our jobs, to exploring some of the myths associated with childcare (e.g. it's only babysitting), and to explore steps we could take to improve our status and working conditions.

Workers' Care Day II took as its focus personal power and powerlessness in the professional life of the childcare worker. We examined the ways we had and did not have power in our jobs, and identified strategies aimed at maximizing our personal power.

The third Workers' Care Day took a look at the roots of professional childcare work, and traced the growth of childcare centers and workers in the Madison area. Various groupings of workers based on length of service and geographical location were identified, and discussions of the qualities necessary in a good childcare worker were held.

The theme of this year's Workers' Care Day is the integration of play and work in the childcare profession. Our title, Professional Players, points out an apparent contradiction we'd like to explore. Namely, that work and play are two separate things which by nature, like oil and water, don't mix. The topic becomes important for childcare workers because play is such an integral part of a child's life, and because our work is often to play with children. If you have ever had a parent or an acquaintance ask if you did anything else but play with children you might have gotten a sense of the dichotomy most people make between play and work. Sometimes it seems as if play were a dirty word that somehow had to be excused and balanced by the serious work of learning. And don't we ourselves sometimes feel ambivalant about playing with children? Is it something we do when we're not working?

This workshop is planned to help us identify the contributions play can make to the effectiveness of childcare workers and to the education of young children. The focus in this workshop is primarily on ourselves, about how we can infuse our work with the skills, energy and vitality we associate with play. And, how we can use that energy and creativity to address the problems we face as teachers of young children.

Professional Players. Join us for the Fourth Annual Workers' Care Day and explore with us the ways we can integrate play and work in our professional lives. It will be a day of fun, companionship and learning. This is your day! Come help make it special for all!

Workers' Care Day is funded through a grant from the City of Madison Day Care Unit. There is no charge to participants for either the workshop or the lunch. Certificates of attendance at this training event will be available. Although pre-registration is not required, it would help us a lot in planning and so it's encouraged. To pre-register or for more information call Cindy Rudd (255-6260) or Jim Morin (263-1725) or drop a note to MACWU c/o Magic Penny.

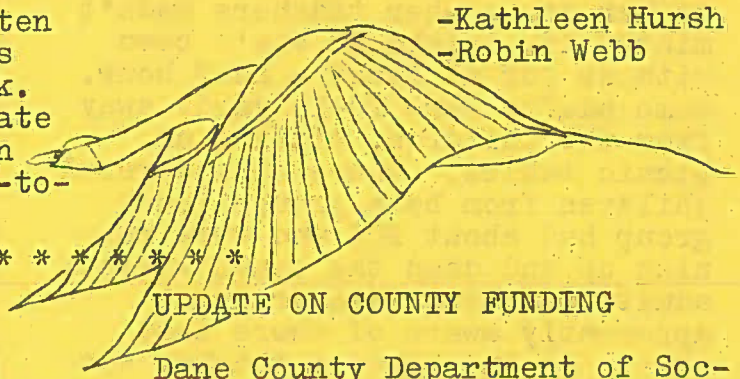
- Jim Morin, Bernie's Place

A NEWCOMER'S PERSPECTIVE

Robin and I recently moved to Madison from Kansas. I started a preschool 6 years ago and Robin taught with me for 4 of those years. In Kansas we were involved in KAEYC and a local childcare organization, but neither dealt with the issues we felt (feel) are vital to our profession--the need for the public and other professionals to recognize the vital importance of our jobs. Often I'm asked where I work. When I say I work with young children, the person's attitude toward me often changes from one of a peer to one of a subordinate with no skills or knowledge. It's at this point I begin to educate this "unfortunate" person. Most often I can raise their consciousness as to the importance of my work. We also found the need to educate parents at our former center on this same issue...but this one-to-one process is too slow.

When we moved to Madison we wanted (want) to learn as much about the childcare community as possible. Besides visiting several local centers, we contacted 4-C's who put us in touch with MACWU. Much to our delight, MACWU addresses the need for our profession to gain the respectability it deserves. We are excited about having other child care workers to talk with concerning our joys and concerns about child care. We are also excited about the upcoming Workers' Care Day for the chance to meet other workers for play and discussions.

-Kathleen Hursh
-Robin Webb



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CITY DAYCARE UNIT THREATENED!

In the Mayor's proposed 1983 budget, the city day care unit could be disbanded, sending their functions to various places in city government. What could this mean to us?

1) Technical assistance to help you solve problems and increase quality in your center could be harder to get.
2) Very likely, the grants process will be more cumbersome & lengthy.
3) Tuition assistance may be administered by people who have little knowledge of day care services.
4) Day Care loses the coordinated effort to focus and influence City government and other agencies.

A 4-C Day Care Alert sent to all programs details this proposal. If you want to join other day care people to talk to your alderperson or at the Board of Estimates on Oct. 28th, call me.

-Julie Vea, 255-8001

UPDATE ON COUNTY FUNDING

Dane County Department of Social Services is one of the largest sources of tuition assistance for families in this county. In recent public hearings on the county's 1983 Budget, it has become apparent that the total amount of money to be spent by the county on child day care will likely be reduced, perhaps by as much as 20% from the 1982 levels.

Once the budget is formally announced, it will be very important for us to work with parents at our centers, and with the larger childcare community to see that childcare is not abandoned by this County For more info, call 4-C's (238-7338) and watch for Day Care Alerts.

-Jim Morin, Bernie's Place

This letter was received by MACWU too late to be in our summer newsletter...the scenario is untimely, but the message certainly isn't.

Dear Fellow Day Care Teachers,

One Wed. we took our pre-schoolers to Tenney Park Beach. During 2 hour's time, our two full-time teachers and 2 aides were responsible for 10 children. Our morning would have been idyllic except for the very disturbing presence of two other day care centers. We observed several incidents which bothered us greatly.

There were several tiny children wandering through our area who were being neither observed nor controlled by their teachers. I had to take one 2 year old back to her group--her teachers hadn't missed her, although she'd been with us for at least a half hour. Some adults were 10-15 yards away from the children, sitting on picnic tables. There were several children from both groups (each group had about 20) who were running up and down the beach without adults watching them or even apparently aware of where they were. In the lake, a teacher was standing in water to his waist in the midst of a group of 20 children. He was facing the shore, shouting to and laughing with a woman on the shore, while 2 or 3 other adults played with a couple of children who were right next to them in the water. The bulk of the swimming children were outside the reach of any adult and not being watched steadily by anyone.

My co-teacher, aides and I were appalled at the lack of safety provisions that morning. When we are caring for children, we constantly need to ask ourselves:

HOW MANY children do I have?
WHERE are they all exactly?
WHO is responsible for reaching each one in an emergency?
WHAT COULD HAPPEN?
&CAN I GET THERE IN TIME?
HOW can I set this experience up to be the most secure and pleasant possible.

I think those teachers were acting irresponsibly and incompetently.

I know that MACWU focuses on rights and benefits for teachers, which is laudable; but its first responsibility is to encourage us to be <u>competent</u>, <u>responsible</u>, <u>careful</u> caretakers. I know that MACWU focuses on children's need for love and the the ways that teachers can provide that love in a meaningful way. Yet, as a parent, my main concern is that my child be safe in her center. That is the most loving thing you can do for her. I also know that those children were not in my care. I don't know their individual personalities, "trustableness", etc. and I have been challenged with "mind your own business". I can only say--ALL children are my business! When I see others being so unprofessional and careless, I must speak out. I want us all to be excellent care providers. I'm trying to be "with a little help from my friends". That's why this letter is going to MACWU and not to the <u>Journal</u> and the <u>Times</u>.

If you were the "guilty" staff, can you recognize yourself? Can you take criticism and act to improve your techniques? Please ask yourself if you are not at fault sometimes...I sure am. We all must try to be our best if we expect to be treated as the best.

- Lyn Noeldner, University Avenue Day Care

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: As editor and member of the MACWU Planning Committee, I would like to clarify to all readers that MACWU's focus is on the issues and concerns of the childcare employee. Our direct focus is not to ensure that caretakers are competent, responsible & careful with children as this is the domain of our training institutions. We work towards this end, however, as we build our self-esteem, question our professional status, explore our public image, and deal with our relatively low pay, high turnover, and poor working conditions. We believe that quality care for children begins with a "quality" childcare provider and that our training must be analyzed and evaluated by us as to its merits and shortcomings. I hope readers will respond to this article with their reactions and comments. They will be published in the next issue...we want this newsletter to be a forum for our thoughts. Thanks, Lyn.

-Peggy Haack

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NEWS,NEWS,NEWS...

Nov. 2nd is Voting Day and a reminder that we elect our legislators and they must be responsive to our ideas and our needs if we share them. We can learn how to be effective advocates for childcare issues; there are and will be many opportunities to practice our skills. As a starting place, you can read the 4-C Information Memo and Day Care Alerts (if you're not on their mailing list, you can be by calling 238-7338), come to MACWU meetings where we share information, and/or join the 4-C Advocacy Committee. Hand-outs on how to advocate (e.g. letter-writing, etc.) can be made available to you through us or 4-C's.

Congratulations to all of us who voted and worked for the Nuclear Freeze Referendum. As people with a vision of the future seen thru the eyes of the children, we know our efforts have just begun. There are many ways that we as individuals and through affiliations with groups can help. One such group is Wisconsin Educators for Social Responsibility. P.O. Box 55029, Madison 53705 for more info.

At the National AEYC conference in Washington, D.C., Nov. 12-14, 3 MACWU members along with some folks from the Childcare Workers Alliance in Minneapolis are presenting a workshop, "Organizing Child Care Workers: Non-Union Models". This is one of a group of workshops focused on our issues. We will have a report in the next newsletter.

"Who Cares for the Children" is a slide-tape show owned by MACWU that can be used free of charge by an interested individual, group or program. Call Magic Penny, 255-6260.

Mark November 6th on your calendar today--see you at Workers' Care Day!

Magic Penny Day Care
203 Wisconsin Ave.
Madison, WI 53703

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MADISON AREA CHILDCARE WORKERS UNITED — MACWU

Issue 11 December 1982

Yes, it's December already and Holiday time again! Is it ironic that we send out our newsiest of newsletters at this very busy time of the year when it may be hard to find time for anything, including reading newsletters? Besides, children seem to get a little crazier each day, which makes our lives a little crazier, too. Plus, we wonder if the holiday spirit will be with us or stay with us; and can we afford it if it does?

I know many childcare workers and they are as a whole a group of "giving" people who don't need a holiday season to prove it! That's a quality to be admired for sure, but this season, let's practice a little being the "takers", too. With this newsletter come wishes that you will "take" during this season the love and support of people around you, and time and space to do some things you like to do for you. Happy Holidays and wishes for peace and strength to cope and change and grow in the New Year.

Peggy Haack, Editor

MACWU MEETING - PLEASE JOIN US!

On Tuesday, December 14th at 7:00 pm, we are meeting in Room 105, the 4-C's Resource Room in Dudgeon School, 3200 Monroe Street. Our agenda:

* Information sharing among us and a report on D.C.
* Personnel Issues - a follow-up to Workers' Care Day. Bring a copy of your personnel policies if you can. We'll be comparing, talking about acceptable standards for policies, and discussing strategies for improvement.
* Our Public Image! If time and energy allows, we may do some brainstorming on this topic.

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In this newsletter:

graphics by Jacque Kunis

WORKERS' CARE DAY 1982 - A Follow-up

This is an effort to share the energy of that day for those who didn't participate and to re-capture it for those who did:

Professional Players?! (a synopsis of the opening address):

...In my search for an accurate job description of what I really do, I would be less than honest if I did not include that I play as part of my job. Can this mesh with the heading "professional"--a word for which I also seek an accurate definition...

Where are we childcare workers left in an adult world that makes a dichotomy of the words "work" and "play"? We are in the unpleasant bind of knowing our work as important, skillful, challenging and playful! And all the while much of the adult world defines play with words like silly, foolish, giddy, pizazz, happy, sparkle, zing, crazy, fun, funny...and worthless. I wouldn't disagree with any of those words except the worthless, of course. But because I'm a childcare worker and because of my interactions and observations of children, I can expand on that definition of play. We childcare workers see play as activity that smaller people engage in all the time that is building some very important skills in their lives. Play helps them discriminate and make choices and plan and carry out plans, it builds a spirit of cooperation and community, it helps them approach problem-solving with openness and honesty, it teaches flexibility and coping skills in a complex and changing world, it enhances their creative energies and more. I look at that expanded definition of play and I think that that is very important and serious work that they are involved in and I want to bring those skills to my own life and to my work, too!

And my work is first of all the obvious work of helping children learn and grow; but there is more. Teachers by nature interact with a complex social network and some of the skills demanded of us go far beyond the usual assumptions made about our jobs. Added to this, we in early childhood education have the equally important and challenging work of reaffirming our value and contribution to this society which defines us as "just babysitters" and people who "just play with cute little kids all day". Add to that work, that of educating the general public about our jobs and working towards a change in attitudes and a change in the practices that keep us in a position of being under-compensated for our work, under-rated as to our professional status, and undervalued as to the skills we bring to our jobs.

Throughout this day, we are trying to integrate work and play. We are focusing first on playfulness as serious business to give our energies to; and then bringing to our work a sense of community building among us as we address our concerns with openness, cooperation, creativity, flexibility and problem-solving skills--in essence, as we bring to it the spirit of play!

Peggy Haack

Morning Session: "free play" followed by "large grouptime" for games and sharing. Some of the choices and their outcomes:

A Soap Opera Drama: "All My Children ...and Then Some". A script was written and then performed, props and all. It was great!

Humor: Some days it carries us through! So we:

- Shared the funny things that happen...like the day the mittens were roasted in the oven at ABC for Kids in Eagle Heights;

- Created some satirical one-liners and comebacks to often-asked questions like,

"Why do you work in day care?"
* For the free lunch.
* I love peanut butter and jelly!
* Paid naptime
* I do it for the money!
* Isn't it easier to work with little people than with big? You can tell them what to do!

"When are you going to get a real job?"
* When I learn to sit still on a job.
* When I save enough for a new wardrobe.
* Oh, I'm planning to be promoted to director!

"Do you like your job?"
* I love my job. Kids are soooooooo cute!
* especially on Fridays
* off and on--like a lite switch

- Offered advice from Dear Childcare Worker Abbey: "What can I do about the purple stains?? Please help! Signed, In distress.

"You have several options: 1) Throw it away, 2) Dye the whole darn thing purple, 3) Donate it to the daycare, they always need new smocks, or 4) stop serving grape juice or using purple paints!

- And told jokes: "How many day care workers does it take to clean a guinea pig cage?? See p. 7

Graphics, doodling, cartooning. A chance for us to create, to display our art and to express our lives and how they're shared with children.

Song-Writing & Musical Instruments: B.J. Obermeyer from Magic Penny shared a wonderful song she wrote in the hour's time and we accompanied her during our sharing time.

Story-Writing: This group explored the stereotypes we are faced with in children's story In an effort to revise and update an old classic fairytale, they ended up writing a new one:

In a large city lived two children, Robin and Chris. They were on a school field trip one day when they became separated from the group, and were starting to admit that they were lost. As they walked along a one-way street, Chris tripped on a manhole cover, which gave way!! Chris fell into the deep, dark hole, grasping for Robin's hand and pulling her in, too.

Down they sailed, holding all the while to the manhole cover. They landed...SPLASH!! onto a dark stream. After discovering that neither of them was hurt, the kids floated freely down the stream a long time, singing, chanting and playing spooky games. Then both at once, they realized that they didn't know where they were headed or how long it would take to get there...

To Be Continued...

(next page)

Eventually, Robin and Chris end up on an island in the sea, where they discover the only inhabitants are a spider, a porcupine and an old surly caterpillar. The spider tries to help them feel more at home by weaving them a story. The porcupine tries to help by building them a house. But the kids still miss their own home, so the surly caterpillar tells them that he can spin a cocoon around each of them. As he does they fall into a deep sleep. When they awake, they have wings and can fly back to their homes!!

The end.

Of course, this is just the basic skeleton of our "new" fairytale, and it can be embellished in many ways. Keep an eye out for the Walt Disney versions of the other tales that our Workers' Care Day group came up with: "Jackie and the Mung Bean Sprout", and "The Liberation of Cinderella and Her Stepsisters"! Coming soon to a theatre near you!

--tale written by the "Could We Make More $ in the Book Business?" group of W. C. Day - 1982.

* *

Afternoon Session: MACWU panel to discuss our organization-building efforts from past to present to future; and work groups:

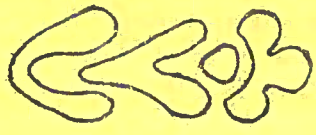
We grouped ourselves by length of time in the field of childcare and engaged in the initial stages of problem-solving: identifying a problem, clarifying it as best we can to look at it wholely, & brainstorming solutions that may range anywhere from possible, possible with help, idealistic but great ideas, impossible...the rest of this process (i.e. trying out ideas, evaluating, and perhaps trying again are left to our future work. But what happened was a great "meeting of minds" and the realization that our concerns cross over timelines- people new to the field as well as old are concerned with our public image and our need to project ourselves and talk about our work with more confidence, the high turnover of staff, our low pay, and our concern for real quality in the care we provide to children and families

Evaluations: With rankings of poor, fair, good and excellent for all parts of the day, we received overwhelmingly positive ratings. Lunch received the best, and it was indeed excellent! As an overall rating we received all goods and excellents, with thanks. What people enjoyed most: the laughs, meeting new people, sharing common interests the feeling of solidarity, comradry, the relaxing atmosphere, the planning, the energy of playing, everything!

Our Thanks: To the City Day Care Unit for making it possible with funds and for their contribution of refreshments, to 4-C's for all their on-going moral support and also our morning snack, and to all of us who worked hard and participated to make it happen.

Conclusion: "Jobs working with children are exhausting; we are asked to give so much, to care so much, to keep things working all the time. We need to find ways to unwind. One way is to join the children in their silliness and to discover our own. Children find humor in the unexpected, the incongruous, the novel. So do we, unless we get stuck in our dignity. Laughter can help us relax and care for each other!" Elizabeth Jones, Teacher, Pacific Oaks, Calif.

That's really what this day was all about...about keeping play alive about learning, relaxing, losing our dignity, laughing and caring for each other.



CHILDCARE WORKERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Last month the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) held its national conference in Washington, D.C. NAEYC is the major professional organization available to those who work in the childcare field. Three of us from MACWU (Peggy Haack, Cindy Rudd and me, Jim Morin) had been invited to present a workshop on our involvement in organizing childcare workers.

In response to prior requests from workers, NAEYC had scheduled a series of workshops having to do with worker issues. There were work shops on the formation of day care unions, on the enhancement of the image of childcare workers, and, as in the workshop we presented, on non-union models of organizing childcare workers. These workshops were all held in the same room and, not surprisingly, were attended by roughly the same group of people. The atmosphere of these meetings was electric! They were the only workshops I attended in my four days at the conference where people wouldn't leave when the session was over. There was so much energy, interest and excitement among those attending that it was clear these workshops were responding to a major unmet need.

What was so attractive about these workshops was that they encouraged the development of a sense of hope and accomplishment in efforts to improve the wages and working conditions of childcare workers. It was easy to be convinced that you weren't alone in your interest and conviction that childcare workers have a major role to play in bringing about improvements in their field. For me it was very encouraging to hear of childcare workers in New York, Chicago, Boston, D.C., and Minneapolis who through unionizing or other organizing activity have achieved gains in their salary, working conditions and status in the community.

Throughout the conference I had the sense I was part of a small but vocal minority. Childcare workers are distinctive. There is just something very different between people who are on their feet, knees and backs all day with kids, and those who spend their days at desks, lunches and meetings. We quickly got to know one another if not by appearance (although some of us did wear our work clothes) then by hearing each other in workshops. If someone commented on the skills, responsibilities or working conditions of the staff, it was usually a childcare worker. If someone made the point that teachers are the most important element in early childhood education programs and that improvement in their status and working conditions is essential to the provision of quality childcare, it was usually a childcare worker.

I enjoyed the conference. I felt we made our needs known to the NAEYC Board, and that they were receptive and supportive of trying to meet those needs. We left having made many contacts with workers across the country, and we will continue to share information and ideas with them. I left feeling I was part of a movement that is growing continually stronger. I shared the hope and excitement of people who know that children deserve more than the minimal resources our society now commits to them. And I share their committment to organizing ourselves as workers to help make that change possible.

Jim Morin
Bernie's Place

LETTERS IN RESPONSE - Lyn Noeldner, from University Avenue Day Care Center wrote last time about an incident that impressed upon her concerns of safety for children and competency of staff. 2 Responses;

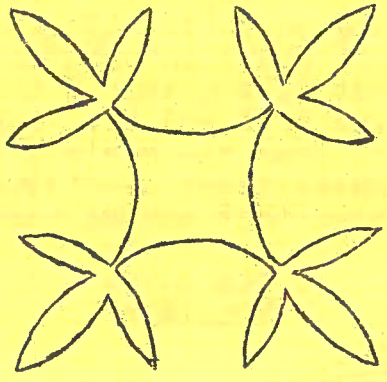
I have to admit that my first reaction to your description of children at the beach was not one of horror at irresponsibility but one that questioned your ability to see a style of control different from your own.

My next reaction was to share your concern for irresponsible caregivers and to think about how to set standards of care and of training that insures responsible care without endangering the rich variety of styles and creative day care engendered by individual centers.

Finally, I thought about how to face squarely the judgements we all make about each other and go beyond the "my center is better than yours" approach to working together to set standards that are effective for all.

I don't think there is a simple, one-way-is-right solution, but I think it is time we began to make some judgements about what is and is not acceptable caregiving. And that is something we can only do by talking with each other and putting the issues on the table for all to see. Thanks for writing.

Julie Vea
Children's House



As a trainer of childcare workers, I want to respond to the letter and editor's note concerning competent and responsible workers.

I agree wholeheartedly that trainers are responsible to do all they can to train workers to be aware of safety hazards and who are able and willing to provide careful supervision.

I don't, however, think that training institutions can bear the entire burden. The kind of care we hope for is only reliable when a person truly internalizes it's value and importance. For some, it takes a long time to internalize these values and to build skill in judging dangerous situations, especially when it means limiting a child's freedom. It is difficult to assess how deeply values are internalized, and impossible to force someone to accept another's values and judgements. Once in the field, the trainer loses access to the worker and is no longer able to provide feedback and is therefore even less able to ensure careful supervision.

During training, students live in a somewhat unreal world They often have high and lofty ideals, and they may become "socialized" to accept the standard operating procedures of a particular center. For these reasons, I feel that center staff and administration share the burden of ensuring competence among co-workers.

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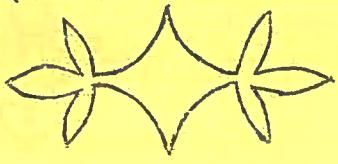
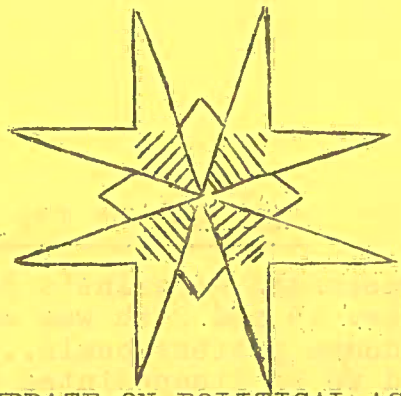


It begins with hiring. The most careful screener is hopefully the employer. I also believe staff and administration set a tone for professional standards, and newcomers adjust accordingly. Therefore, I believe staff members have a responsibility to families and to each other to keep each other accountable for a high level of professional and competent care. I applaud Lyn for having the courage to do just that.

Sometimes a person's professional growth cannot be supported by peer feedback alone, but requires ongoing supervision and training on a 1:1 basis. Therefore, I believe the person who is ultimately responsible for the teaching staff must see that the necessary on-site or supplementary training is provided.

On the one hand, I wish that trainers and training institutions had a magic wand that would guarantee lifelong competence and excellence among it's trainees. On the other hand, I'm glad that people learn so well from each other on an on-going basis--if we take the risks involved in giving feedback. It makes each one of us more important.

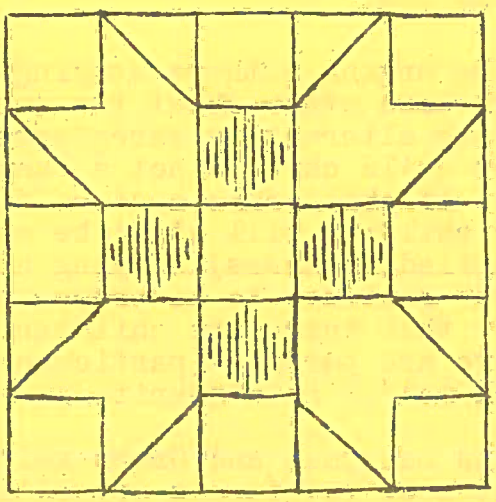
Kathy Raschke, MATC

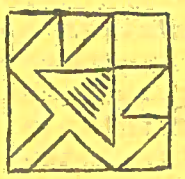


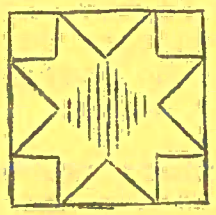
UPDATE ON POLITICAL ACTION

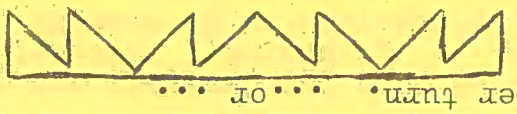
City: Not only has the City Day Care Unit been preserved, but the Council voted an additional $55,000 for tuition assistance for 1983. This success was due to the determined effort of alderwoman Kathy Kuester, backed up by the Advisory Board and those of us who contacted our alderpersons.

County: County Supervisors returned $70,000 to the Dane Co. tuition assistance program for 1983. While the total funding is still $13,000 less than funding for the current year, registrants and speakers at the hearing did much to insist that the program be maintained at a more adequate funding level.

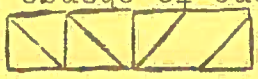








Answer: The whole staff--one to change the papers and the rest to catch the guinea pig. ...or Only one if she's still in diapers. ...or It doesn't matter as long as you remind the next person it's her turn. ...or ...



DAY CARE ON TV: A Childcare Worker's Perspective

Wisconsin Magazine's Focus on Day Care, shown on WHA Channel 21 on Nov. 19 and 20th was watched with baited breath by a number of childcare professionals...Would we like/agree with issues presented? Would we be disappointed with biases the program writers had? Would we be angered by misrepresentation of facts?

I think most of us would answer "yes" to all the above questions. Admittedly, day care is a controversial issue surrounded by many myths. The program staff must be commended for bringing the issue up and attempting to educate the public about it.

I appreciate the fact that daily activities in day care centers were generally presented in a positive light. There were many scenes shown that emphasized quality interactions between children and adults. Parents interviewed spoke of benefits their children received by interacting with a variety of different children. From the scenes shot in the day care centers, one was given the impression that a child's day was filled with stimulating activities, loving and caring interactions in a safe environment.

However, I believe, that overall the persons planning the program showed a lack of knowledge of the "day care issues" that we in the profession are dealing with. Granted, the show never promised to present facts from a day care worker's point of view (in fact, theirs was obviously excluded) but rather that of parents'. But I think this was a disservice to those parents currently involved in advocating quality day care. In the long run, it's a larger disservice to those people thinking seriously about day care services for the first time.

By urging mothers staying at home and working parents to "argue" with each other about the positive/negative effects of children having alternative caregivers, the program presented the illusion that child care is not a fundamental necessity in this country, i.e. that if child care centers/family day care homes are not available, our children will still be cared for during working hours by parents (implied: mothers) staying at home or with relatives. Why does this issue continue to be presented in this light? It's an irrefutable fact that there are children who do need care outside of the home--there are parents (particularly women) who have no choice but to work and/or need respite outside of the home.

As Lazerson and Grubb point out in their new book, Broken Promises, "the most vociferous opposition to childcare has always come from those espousing domestic ideals about women's roles. If the traditional notion of domesticity continues unrevised, then child care will continue to be seen as a 'Mother Substitute'--inevitably inferior to 'Mothering', suggesting that children in child care are apt to be both pathological and deprived."

WHA's program was indeed guilty of espousing domestic ideals about women's roles, not only by the "pitting" of working and at-home mothers against each other, but they also managed to present child care as a "mothersubstitute" rather than a "parental supplement".

By having a psychologist on the panel of "experts" and by allowing him a large amount of "air time", one might have been left with the impression that children in day care centers deal with terrible separation anxieties and their parents are constantly guilt-ridden about ruining bonds between themselves and their children. This view was not balanced by the viewpoint (a viewpoint that would have been verified by a child care worker, had one been represented on that panel) that most children, if well-prepared, have very little anxiety and in fact see the time spent in their day care center or family day care as something to look forward to. It was also not pointed out that those parents/children having a difficult transition into a center are generally supported/helped by competent, caring staff trained to deal with these and other difficulties.

It disturbed me greatly that on the panel of experts there were no child care workers represented. Why did the programmers not see fit to allow the experts directly providing the child care service to answer the parents' questions? This seems a grave discredit to child care professionals in the community and to the public who didn't get their questions answered.

One final observation about the show's biases concerned the filming; we noticed the majority of the children filmed were black. In one center in which filming took place there are only 2 black children yet those 2 children were shown often. We know that this is not a cross-section of the day care population in Madison. We worry that what could be represented is the myth that only poor, black people need day care, i.e. that it is a welfare institution.

The only conclusion I can come to after viewing this program is that WHA-Wisconsin Magazine needs as much education on child care issues as the general public. Maybe if they had spent more time interviewing child care professionals they could have presented issues more propitious to day care services as they stand today: issues such as making high quality child care available to all parents and children needing it; educating parents to be more vocal advocates for quality child care; how/where/when public funds will be made available to centers and parents; etc. etc.

Robin Webb
Childcare Worker

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Our Message . . .

Now that you've heard from us, we welcome the prospect of hearing from you. Let us be your sounding board; we invite your involvement. Have you questions? Suggestions? Help us to remain open and responsive to the needs of our community—keep in touch!

Contact: **MACWU**
c/o Magic Penny Day Care
203 Wisconsin Ave.
Madison, Wis. 53703
Ph: (608) 255-6260.

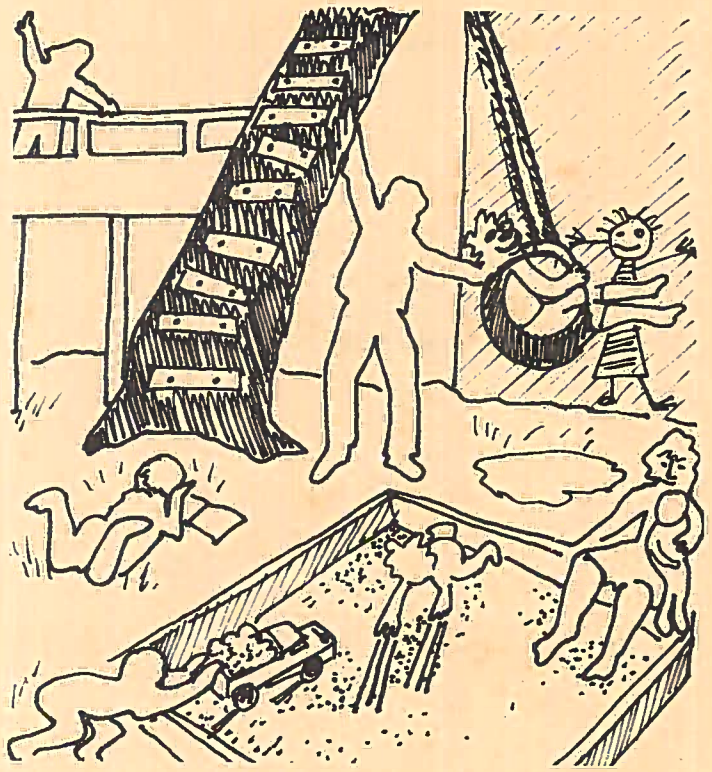
MACWU
c/o Magic Penny Day Care
203 Wisconsin Ave.
Madison, Wisc. 53703

MADISON AREA CHILDCARE WORKERS UNITED

. . . united to better serve the children of our community

Who We Are . . .

Madison Area Childcare Workers United (MACWU) is a group of women and men dedicated to improving the quality of childcare for workers and families. Organized in 1976, we picked up momentum and support through the 1979 Committee on the Status of Childcare Workers established by 4-C's (Community Coordinated Childcare in Dane County). The committee surveyed working conditions in child care centers and sponsored "Worker's Care Day"—a workshop for childcare workers. We realize that childcare workers need to be united in order to support each other in our common struggle for better working conditions, quality programs, and continued strength in our profession.



Why We Are Committed To Childcare

Childcare outside of a child's home is an important service for children, for parents, and for our communities.

. . . for children, because they have the opportunity to grow in environments geared to meet their needs, and they have the opportunity to learn how to live with other people, how to respect and understand others' needs, and how to cope in our complex and changing world.

. . . for parents, because they need or want to work; because child-rearing is a difficult and isolating job in a society where family structures are varied; and because by sharing the responsibility of childcare with others, parents can support, comfort, nurture and cooperate with their children in mutually satisfying ways.

. . . for communities, because a community *is* children, and women and men . . . and childcare workers. Children not only have a right to a healthy, happy life in the present, but they are our vision for the future. Women are, and will continue to be, not only mothers, but "bread-winners" as well—sometimes by choice, sometimes not, but always an important segment of the workforce. Men, too, are redefining their roles as they learn that they can play a valuable role in caring for children. As childcare workers, we have valuable skills to share with our community—skills in creating environments that facilitate the intellectual and emotional growth of children, in behavior management and value clarification, and in understanding group dynamics among children. We also see every day the importance of our jobs through the eyes of the children. Childcare programs can be the basis for building new communities based on cooperation, self-determination and respect for each other and for ourselves.

Principles of Unity

1. Childcare is a right of all people who need or want it.
2. We are committed to quality childcare programs that meet the physical, education, and social-emotional needs of children.
3. All childcare workers must be respected for their indispensable contribution to the community. Positions must be filled on the basis of demonstrated competency, without regard to sex, educational level, race, or sexual preference. Workers must receive adequate wages and fringe benefits, and opportunities must be provided for on-the-job training and support. All childcare workers have the right to organize.
4. We recognize and respect the rights of parents to affordable quality childcare. We're committed to working with them to determine childcare programs, policies and budgets.
5. We are dedicated to fighting racial, sexual, class and age prejudices that prevent children from achieving their full potential.
6. We are committed to link our struggles in daycare, based on our principles of unity, with all other struggles for democratic rights, including peoples' rights to vital services and a decent standard of living.

Our Goals . . .

- To support each other in our profession.
- To educate ourselves on childcare issues and exchange ideas and feedback.
- To educate our community about our work and the impact of childcare on the community.
- To change the status of our working conditions and improve the quality of childcare.