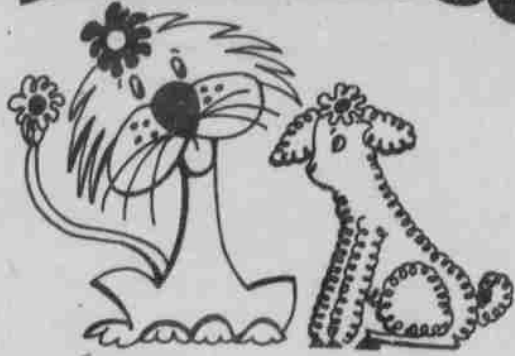


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UNL child-care facilities 'overloaded, but effective'

By Susie Reitz

"We get at least two to three calls a week from parents who desperately want day care services, but we just don't have facilities to provide for all the people who need them," said Mary Jo Ryan, director of the University Child Care program for low income student parents.

"To be eligible for our service, the parents must be approved by the Financial Aids office and then we try to work their class schedules into a child care schedule," she said.

Seventeen people are on the waiting list now, she said, compared with 35 at the beginning of this semester.

"All 17 on the waiting list are parents who have been approved by financial aids. They are waiting for openings," Ryan said. "Many give up before they get through financial aids and either make other arrangements or just don't go to school."

The child care program, begun in 1970 has three centers.

The Child Care Center at UMHE-Commonplace, 333 N. 14th St., is licensed for 25 preschool children. Ryan said 77 children are in the program, but schedules are arranged so only 25 are at the center at one time. Children average four to five hours a day at the center, she said.

Kinderschool offshoot

The Infant Care center, located in the First Plymouth Congregational Church at 20th and D Sts., is licensed for 12 children under age 2 and eight children from 2 to 3. The infant program was an offshoot of the original child care program and opened in 1972. It is the only licensed infant care center in Lincoln. Ryan said.

Last summer a program called Kinderschool opened for elementary school children at Mark's on the Campus, 13th and R streets. During the school year the program operates after school and in the summer during the day, Ryan said.

Churches where the centers are located provide space rent-free, according to Ryan.

Parents are involved in most of the fund-raising, programming, budget planning, staff hiring and other decisions affecting center operation, Ryan said.

"To get our license we have to meet requirements set by the federal, state, and local governments," Ryan said.

Regulations met

To qualify for vender payments from the state Department of Welfare, the center must meet Federal Interagency Day Care requirements. Vender payment is welfare payment directly to the center for child care, Ryan explained.

Parents must meet state welfare department regulations to qualify for vender payments, and not all program parents are on welfare, she said.

"The FICC requirements are strict and are costly for the center because of some of the regulations, particularly sanitation," Ryan said. "But they provide for the best care for the children, and that is important."

The requirement of a five to one ratio of students to staff, is stricter than the state ratio of seven to one, but benefits the children, Ryan said.

The 38 work-study students on the staff this year are "more interested and effective" than in other years, Ryan said. "The staff is going through training sessions and most of the students involved are planning careers working with children," she noted.

In addition to the work-study staff, volunteer students from the graduate school of social work and undergraduate departments of Human Development and the Family, Speech and Hearing, Child Psychology, Education Psychology, and Elementary Education spend several hours a week at the center working on various projects, according to Ryan.

Most academic programs are for classroom enrichment she said.

"Professors give students credit for doing volunteer work or projects in the center. Requirements vary with the teacher," she said.

The full-time Child Care Center supervisor is Kim Sullivan and Infant Care supervisor is Moni Usasz. Usasz also has a full-time assistant, Ryan said.

"The philosophy of the center is to design unstructured, stimulating activities which provide the students with a choice of activities," Ryan said.

"Our location is good," she said, "we can take the children to the libraries, museums, Sheldon Art Gallery, and downtown. In the spring and summer we take them on longer trips—to zoos, parks, lakes—sometimes swimming."

Ryan said she became involved in the project as an undergraduate and a parent. She was supervisor before becoming program director in 1972.

"Our main goal is to provide beneficial day care for student parents. Some are not able to take classes because they can't afford day care," Ryan said. "There is a definite need for expansion."

"One proposal is that any married student housing built should include a day care center," Ryan noted. "But meanwhile we'll just do all we can for the children who are here now."

short stuff

Student Volunteer Services is offering free tax assistance on Monday and Tuesday until April 15 from 6 to 10 p.m. in the Nebraska Union, Room 225 G.

Elliott Elementary School is looking for volunteers to design and teach mini-courses

in April. For further information contact the Student Volunteer Services Office in Nebraska Union Rm. 200.

Delta Sigma Pi actives and pledges are selling coupon booklets for \$1 in cooperation with the Nebraska Easter Seal Society.

Beginning today the Lincoln Computing Facility is offering a five session mini-course on the KRONOS timesharing system. Contact Jeff Rehn,

LCF Academic Services for further information.

Fran Fiala, in cooperation with the American Home Economics Association, will give a presentation of spring fashions in room 31 in the Home Economics Building at 6:30 p.m., Thursday.

The Recreation and Parks Society will hear a speaker on career development and planning, Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the Majors Lounge of the Women's Physical Education Building.

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