

We must show child care value with well-paid, quality workers

Quality affordable and available child care is a long-term goal of our chapter of the National Organization for Women.

During the past two years, we have attempted to bring to the attention of our community the increasing need for child care for those on waiting lists and the need to maintain and improve the quality of existing programs.

Articles in The New York Times and an editorial in The Washington Post brought to our attention

LOCAL



startling facts about the low level of pay scales for child-care workers. For instance, people who take care of zoo animals make

an average of nearly \$2,500 a year more than most of the people who take care of children in child-care centers.

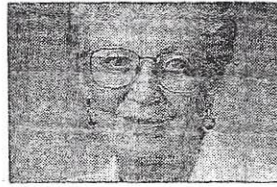
Nationally, child-care teaching assistants make about \$5 an hour, and teachers, many of whom hold early childhood degrees, make between \$6.50 and \$8.85 an hour.

In a 1991 survey in Palm Beach County, average hourly salaries for teachers were \$6.96; assistants, \$5.68; teacher-directors, \$8.38, and directors, \$11.31.

The survey illustrated that benefits were below standard. A surprising finding was that only 56 percent of teachers and 49 percent of assistants were allowed paid sick leave, even though child-care workers have increased exposure to childhood illnesses. Average vacation time offered was one week per year, with only 77 percent of teachers and 35 percent of assistants receiving this benefit.

Why such low salary and benefits? Nationally, 98 percent of child-care workers are women, and one-third are women of color. Salaries seem to reflect our attitudes to what we consider women's work and the consequent devaluation of women's work. Many of these caregivers exist on or just above the poverty level, especially if they are single parents.

Another important issue affected by low salary scales and benefits is the quality of care. Consistency is the single most important factor in the



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healthy growth and development of a child. Yet turnover in child-care centers in Palm Beach County is alarmingly high, according to that survey.

The nurturing and the teaching our children receive in their earliest years prepares them for entrance to and future success in school. Children who enter school without adequate language and other developmental skills often become dropouts. Most of Florida's prisoners

today are dropouts. (Florida leads the nation in this category.)

Look at the figures: Florida's crime rate was 1,103 per 100,000 people in 1989. Currently there are 44,387 prisoners at an average annual cost of \$22,334 each — totaling close to \$1 billion. As a result, Florida is building 3,446 new prison cells at a cost of \$66.4 million. We have to convince our legislators that cutting funds now on appropriations for child care, schools, children's health and job training just results in greater costs for all down the road.

Consistency is the single most important factor in the healthy growth and development of a child.

On Sept. 18, we will hold a meeting at Pompey Park Center in Delray Beach to salute child-care workers. The session will be 9:45

a.m. to noon. Our aim is to bring to the attention of the community the need for change in meeting child-care needs. Our nation has to face up to the fact that more and more women are working; and without adequate programs, our children will be entering school unequipped to attain reading and math skills as well as social skills.

We plan to honor a number of child-care workers from different agencies as representatives of their field. Certificates of appreciation will be presented.

We also plan to collect petitions to send to Hillary Rodham Clinton, Donna Shalala and President Clinton, calling for the creation of a commission on the economics of child care. We want them to examine new financing options which can ensure high quality child care for families of all incomes, without reliance on the child-care workers' low wages as a subsidy. □

■ Jean Poleshuck of Delray Beach is child care chair for the South Palm Beach County Chapter of the National Organization for Women. Additional information about the Sept. 18 program can be obtained by calling her at 498-5594

N.O.W. SALUTES CHILD CARE WORKERS

YOU ARE INVITED to join us as we pay tribute to the Child Care Workers of Palm Beach County in recognition of the significant role they play in children's lives. Child care workers dedicate themselves to teaching and nurturing our hope for the future, our children. . . .in spite of salary levels and benefits far lower than workers in other fields with comparable education.

Join us in our discussion, NOW.

PANEL MEMBERS

Elizabeth Wesley

Manager of Child Care Services
School Board of Palm Beach County

K. Lee Tirpak

Director

Child Care Resource and Referral, Inc.

Shirley Walker

Executive Director

Head Start and Children's Services

Mary Espinoza

Center Director

R.C.M.A. Farmworker Child Development Center

Barbara Smith

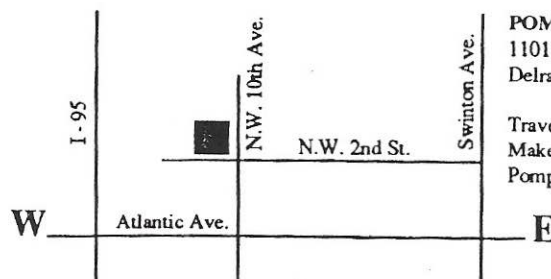
Delray Beach City Commissioner

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1993 — 9:45 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M.

**PLACE: POMPEY PARK CENTER
1101 N.W. 2ND STREET
DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA**

REFRESHMENTS SERVED AT 9:45 A.M.

SUPERVISED PLAY AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN OF ATTENDEES



POMPEY PARK
1101 N.W. 2nd St.
Delray Beach

Traveling North on N.W. 10th Ave.
Make left onto N.W. 2nd St.
Pompey Park Center is on the right.

SOUTH PALM BEACH COUNTY CHAPTER

CHAREN'S WRONG!

Stop scapegoating, and lend a hand

An open letter to syndicated columnist Mona Charen:

What makes you think that cutting Aid to Families with Dependent Children is going to reduce the suffering of children?

1. You assume that every welfare family — most often a one-parent family — is an abusive family. The vast majority of women and men receiving welfare are good, loving parents. Being impoverished does not mean that you are a bad mother or father. In the early 1900s, the Chil-



dren's Aid Society removed children from their jobless and poor families and sent them by train throughout the West — separated not only from parents but also siblings. This



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plan was promulgated by an agency that thought it was doing the best for these children — removing them from poor and needy homes. Is this what we want as we enter the 21st century?

2. You assume that severely abused children are routinely returned to their families. As a volunteer on the Foster Care Citizen Review Committee, I know severely abused and neglected children are *not* routinely returned to their biological parents. Termination of parental rights does occur when appropriate.

3. You also assume that ev-

erybody on welfare does not want to work. Have you considered the lack of decent-paying jobs for both men and women? Have you ever wondered about what happened to factory jobs that were once union-organized and in which workers earned a living wage? Can one raise a family on minimum wages of \$4.25 an hour or even \$5 an hour?

4. Have you thought that we can reform welfare in a positive way? Yes, let's train those on welfare for better jobs. Yes, let's think about restoring our infrastructure, our bridges, our schools, provide decent wages for child-care workers, spend less on bombers and more on decent-paying jobs.

Let's stop making welfare mothers the scapegoats for our national problems. Instead of punishing welfare mothers who are responsible for their children, let's help with education, child care, training and good jobs. □

■ Jean Poleshuck is a resident of Delray Beach.