

# The Oregonian

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SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1991

## Less stress on, off the job

The changing work force is a fact of modern society, but the workplace is still a bit baffled as it tries to adjust to the change.

The traditional model had the father tending to job and income and the mother tending to home and family. That has given way to more women in the work force because both parents hold jobs or households are headed by single mothers.

Yet this phenomenon is accompanied by another change. Traditionally, a willing worker could count on providing comfortable housing, adequate food, suitable clothing and necessary health care.

Today many families cannot manage both food and shelter even with two parents working. The working poor may spend more than two-thirds of their income on housing. They cannot also buy adequate nourishment. Or they go homeless while surrounded by housing they cannot afford.

The Community Action Organization of Washington County believes more can be done to bring the workplace into line with the realities of the new work force. It wants employment to deal with the total person and family, and not limit itself to a worker's eight-hour shift.

As a private, non-profit agency, it

is in a position to show what it means through a demonstration project with policies affecting its own 100 workers.

Jerralynn Ness, director of the agency, says it has experimented with allowing mothers to bring their babies to work through the first six months. The result has been less distraction and greater productivity than with mothers making other arrangements for their newborn.

An employment role in child care, either providing it at the workplace or helping to arrange it, recognizes the worth of the employee's duty as parent, which affects the job. A single employer may be able to do less about affordable housing, but can help to identify available dwellings and support community efforts to develop housing workers can afford. Housing, after all, is not a social service, but a basic need and should be available within all income ranges.

Ness expects to show not only compassion, but also better productivity when employees have less stress over the condition of their families. Hers is a pilot project that should interest other private and public employers adapting to a cultural change that has a direct bearing on the work force.



WASHINGTON  
COUNTY,  
OREGON

April 15, 1991.

Dear Geraldyn -

What a nice editorial about you and W.C.

Community Action.

For one who has been struggling to establish a job share program, it is gratifying to know someone is having more success than I.

Steve Caloure