

Story by Bonnie Cowley

Photos by Rick Bilak

Shawn is two years old, his mother works and his father is a student. Shawn's mother must work to help support the family. The care of Shawn is of specific concern as he is too young to qualify for a Pre-school Day Care facility. The expense of a private nursery is not financially feasible and no subsidized centre is equipped to handle the care of infants. Equally discouraging is that few neighborhood babysitters are willing to cope with the demands of a child Shawn's age.

Excellent care, however, is supplied for Shawn through a Family Home Care Service provided by the City. Shawn's mother has used two homes of this type in the past year. At the end of November he will be moved to yet another family Home Care situation.

In conversation with Shirley Piedt of the Social Service Department of the City of Edmonton, it was learned that this particular service provides for infants, pre-school, and school aged children. The homes are thoroughly investigated and approved, but are short in supply and not necessarily located in the areas of greatest need. The expense of advertising and recruiting as well as the time involved concerning the investigation procedure for this type of home care service is great. Presently there are no funds or staff on hand to undertake this task on a large enough scale to expand this specific Home Care programme.

In the case of young Shawn, the homes are often of short term availability, possibly as a result of the minimum remuneration paid to the Family Home Care mother.

In the immediate university area there is one such home and it is at this time in service. The definite priority for day care in this area is for pre-school children with the majority of families being students. The pre-school day care service operating in HUB was primarily set up to meet these specific needs. The University Hospital also operates a day care centre to service the staff members and provides for pre-school aged children only.

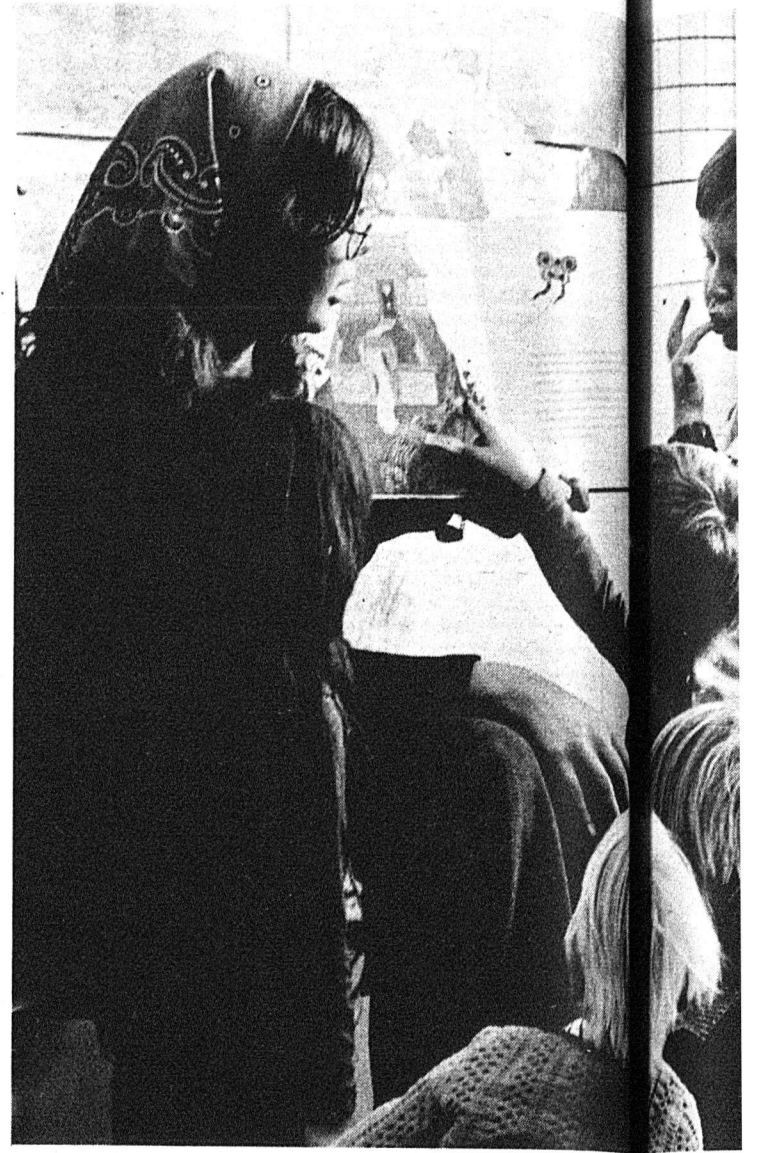
The main qualification for a pre-school service is a minimum age limit of two and a half years old. Louise Skog, mother of six children, two of whom are pre-school age, has used the facilities of two city-subsidized day care centres, the Beverly Day Care Centre and the Downtown Day Care Centre.

"Had these centres not been subsidized, and the fees scaled to my income, it would have been impossible for me to work," says Skog. "I was only able to consider working because the low rates encourage single parents to make an attempt at independence through working. The high qualifications of the staff and the individual attention given left me worry free as to the care of my children."

A baby sitting service

Skog, herself, was employed at the Bissel Child Care Centre as a parent community worker. The Bissel Child Care Centre is a babysitting service for non-working mothers in order to free "housebound" mothers for shopping,

City lacks day care fa



doctor's appointments, etc. Concerning the Bissel Centre, Skog said, "I only regret that there are not more centres of this type in every area." She further stated, "I feel there is a definite need for all types of Day Care facilities in the North East area of the City."

A desperate need for these services has been created in this location because of the high density of low-income housing attracting young families of limited incomes, as well as many single parents' families where the parent must work.

Facilities in several city schools are being utilized to establish pre-school kindergarten programs but these programs, although necessary, do not serve the needs of families where the hours of the parent and child conflict.

Benefits the child

Lynne Rennick, the mother of two boys, has used the Jasper Place Day Care Centre since July 1972. When asked her opinion on the day care programme in general, she said, "I prefer a day care centre; I appreciate the programme in general and the activities which provide learning experience for the children attending. Personally I believe it is of more benefit to the child than a private home situation where the woman with her own family cannot take the time to give the day care child attention. The conflict of two separate family situations can, I believe cause problems for the child concerning the discipline factor for example."

Warren, the youngest of the Rennick children is still attending the Jasper Place Day Care Centre and will be attending for a further two years, at which time he will begin school and possibly be enrolled at the Edmonton After School Care Association facilities.

After-school care

Stephen, now in Grade one, attends at 9009-163 street and is enrolled in a school outside his home community in order to use the facilities. Rennick feels that the ideal situation would be to have one or two