

Monday, September 29, 2008

Student moms find support among campus community

By **Eric Reikowski**, media relations assistant

Student Moms Integrating Lives and Education (SMILE) is a new organization on campus offering support to women who have taken on the challenge of pursuing higher education while raising a family.

"There is a growing trend of 30- to 40-year-olds going back to school, single and married, trying to juggle education, family life, kids and work," said Jean Plescow, president of SMILE. "There was no group on our campus that fit our profile and we saw an opportunity to create a support system."

Plescow said the group began to materialize after she contacted the Center for Student Activities and looked into the policies and procedures governing student organizations. The group had its inaugural meeting back in May and continues to expand in membership and mission. Plescow hopes that her organization can make a positive impact and has been working with the Environmental Coalition at OU to bring recycling services to campus residents. The organization also plans to raise money for a new playground made from eco-friendly materials.

"Since I am going into Occupational Safety and Health, the environment has become a passion of mine," she said. "We can set a great example for our children and show them how the little things we do can make a difference in the world."

SMILE is also considering partnering with community organizations such as the Clinton River Watershed Council to help protect the environment.

In addition to its green initiatives, the organization hopes to create a baby-sitting network, as well as provide fun, low-cost activities for moms and their families. A Halloween party is being planned, along with a National Day of Play intended to give moms and their families a break from the stresses of everyday life. A fun-filled winter festival is also in the works for the upcoming holiday season.

Plescow is optimistic about the organization's future and invites others to get involved with SMILE.

"I anticipate continual growth as word spreads of our organization," she said. "We need volunteers, so I would like to get the word out to our brother and sister organizations here and in the community that anyone who enjoys working with kids is welcome."

SMILE meetings are held twice a month in the Clubhouse at the University Student Apartment complex. The next meeting will be on Thursday, Oct. 2, at 5 p.m. For more information, contact Jean Plescow at (248) 370-2927 or plescow@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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