

Women's centre off and running

Women's centre opens after year of planning

After almost a year of planning, the UPEI Women's Centre has finally taken off. Located at the former Planetarium behind the Alumni Gym, the Women's Centre is open from 10 until 2 Monday to Friday. The purpose of this centre is to be an informational and referral service and a place for women to voice their concerns. The Women's Centre provides a safe place for women to gather to share experiences and voice their concerns to other women. The informative role of this

centre lies in its making available to the public information on many women's issues ranging from birth control to employment to violence. This information is accessible during operating hours and may be of interest to anyone.

The Women's Centre operates under the premises that cooperation is more life-enhancing than competition; that violence perpetrates rather than solves problems; that life and its quality are more important than any other consideration.

Future plans for the Women's Centre include hiring a coordinator (which should be done by the end of this month). The Centre hopes to establish peer support groups and networking between on and off-campus groups as well as women on campus.

The Women's Centre is running on volunteers for the time being, and they need more. If you are interested in volunteering drop in or call 628-4332 during operating hours.

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Fledgling women's centre spreads feminism in Hong Kong

by Patti Flather
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Women's breasts leap from the covers of countless soft porn magazines at hawkers' newsstands, competing with Time magazine and the Asian Wall Street Journal on the streets of this city.

In the classified telephone directory there are 22 pages of prostitution ads under the escort heading, and 13 pages of massage ads. One agency is called "Young Girl Escorts" while another promises "Asian and Western young girls".

It is not surprising that it took a steering group of the Hongkong Council of Women several years of lobbying government and private groups before they had enough money to establish a resource centre for women's development.

"It took us a long time to get recognition for a need," said Fanny Cheung at the Jan. 25 opening of Hongkong's first women's centre. Cheung chairs the women's centre committee and teaches psychology at Hongkong's Chinese University.

But some funding has come through from the Hongkong government, which also arranged the location, from the American Women's Association, from a German organization called Bread for the World, and from others.

Cheung says Hongkong has a high standard of living compared with other Asian cities. The women's centre was refused funds from the United Nations because it is not considered a 'developing nation'.

Key speaker at women's centre opening tells of her fight for tenants' rights

But Cheung adds: "Resources do not reach women as such."

"Hongkong is a densely packed, heavily industrialized and urbanized city," reads a black board display at the centre opening. "It is a place where east meets west and where cultural conflicts arise. Women face a tremendous amount of pressure: on the one hand the traditional Asian family is dying, on the other, the modern Western support system is not fully established."

Cheung says it took years for the government to even admit that some women were being physically abused. There is one shelter for battered women in crowded Hongkong, which has a population of 5.5 million.

The shelter, Harmony House, opened in 1985. It was sponsored by another steering

group of the council, and is now supported with government funding.

The women's centre began a crisis telephone counselling service in 1981, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Chinese-speaking volunteers take the calls.

The centre has a full-time worker, Tai Sau Wai, a recent university graduate interested in working with women. Tai says in the three months since she started work, she has been surprised at how many telephone calls are from battered women.

There are more than 200 women's groups in Hongkong, but communication between them is poor. Among the most outspoken is the Chinese-language Association for the Advancement of Feminism, while other groups are more traditional and quiet.

The women's centre hopes to increase networking between groups. Located in a Kowloon public housing estate, the centre is easily accessible by subway. It has a fledgling resource library with titles in Chinese and English, including classics from Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and others.

There is a private counselling room and a child care room - the latter is bare because the centre lacks money to furnish it. A health clinic is also planned.

Women involved with the centre say it is necessary because Hongkong women are still disadvantaged at home and in the workplace. Many women work outside the home but they are expected to perform a dual role, doing all housework as well.

Few workers are unionised, particularly in
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