

Women's Economic Opportunity Program

W. E. O. P.

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and
Burlington Women's Council

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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

The Community and Economic Development Office, in cooperation with the Burlington Women's Council, has recently created the Women's Economic Opportunity Program (WEOP). On November 4, WEOP hired Martha Whitney, Program Coordinator, to develop a non-traditional vocational training program for women in Burlington. The program will be specifically designed to meet the comprehensive needs of single mothers and underemployed women.

WEOP is analyzing the Burlington area's existing vocational training programs and support services. Where are the gaps and what is needed? WEOP recognizes that a successful training program must address women's needs including child care, stereotyping and physical training. WEOP's goal is to train women in trades where jobs exist which pay wages that adequately cover their living costs. To target these trades, Whitney is reviewing the Industrial Cooperative Association Jobs and People study, and is obtaining input from the Vermont Job Service and local businesses. There are successful, non-traditional training programs in Vermont and in other States. Whitney will explore these potential models to assist in the design of a comprehensive training program for the women of Burlington.

Concurrently, Whitney is exploring program funding sources, to include private foundation and public monies. WEOP is presently funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for \$5,000, covering the Coordinator's position and expenses through January, 1986.

In discussing the program, Whitney said:

"Women need to be self-supporting because of economic conditions, costs of childrearing, separation from spouses and for personal goals. Women work because they have to. And they need to become electricians, printers or heavy equipment operators because these jobs pay well. It's a matter of economics.

Women haven't been brought up to consider the trades as an option. Consequently, many women work in low paying clerical and service jobs. It is important to provide women an opportunity to enter the trades where they can make enough money to support themselves and their families. To do this, we need a program that addresses women's needs, such as child care - physical conditioning, self-esteem - and, of course, what it's like to be the only woman in an all male crew. It is an exciting project and already has been highly supported by those in Burlington's area vocational centers and support service programs."

For further information contact Martha Whitney, Room 32, City Hall.