

# Feminist group response to changing status of women

By **NANCY SPOHN**  
Times special writer

Women in Washington County can now answer "yes" to the newcomer's question, "Is there a feminist group in this area?"

Turie Funkhouser, co-founder of the recently incorporated Women Together, sees the group as a response to the changing status of women, from having few choices to having many.

In the minds of some, the word "feminist" evokes an image of women angrily denouncing men and society, striving to smash it all down and change everything overnight. Such is not the case with Women Together.

"We feel that all women do have something in common," states Ms. Funkhouser. "There are certain things, like equal pay for equal work, that benefit all of us."

She feels that women have much to gain not only by trying to effect some positive changes, but also by sharing ideas and examining their personal values and attitudes. "Women working together can get it together," she says, smiling.

Women Together functions primarily as an umbrella organization under which women can form groups, or take action, or provide services for each other in areas of special interest to them. Activities are as varied as the women themselves.

Several consciousness-raising groups are currently in progress, as are reading and discussion groups. Last fall, member Barbara Foster led a very successful assertiveness training

course. Several women are working on a rape victim assistance project in Washington County, and several others have been gathering information on midwifery.

The position of Women Together is not to tell women what they should be doing, but to coordinate existing efforts and provide an agency where a woman with an interest can contact others who might share that interest.

"It's basically a self-help idea," explains Ms. Funkhouser. "Women traditionally have looked to other people to provide leadership, and this ought to be one organization where women do things themselves."

A monthly newsletter keeps members informed on current and future projects, and upcoming events.

An original goal of Women Together was to open a resource center which would be both a drop-in center and a referral agency, armed with lists of available resources for women in Washington County.

There was much enthusiasm when the center opened last fall, in a room furnished by Pacific University in Forest Grove. It closed four months later, from lack of use. "That was discouraging," Ms. Funkhouser says, "but I still think that a resource center is needed in this area. We need a more accessible location, and a method for getting information out to people who could use it." The resource center is now being reconsidered.

Members of Women Together range in age from college students to grandmothers and represent a variety of interests and lifestyles. Ms. Funkhouser

feels that the group is enriched by the differing ideas and concerns that this diversity generates. There are no dues or requirements for membership. The group is open to any woman interested in learning more about herself, and about issues that affect women's lives.

Some of these issues are explored at meetings of Women Together, held the last Thursday of every month at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 205 S. Second Ave., Hillsboro. Either speakers, panels or films present various concerns for discussion by the group. Past programs have included the topics, personal awareness and human relationships, sexism in children's textbooks, women in religion, credit and financing.

The next meeting, on April 29, will be an open discussion of ideas for possible projects and directions for the coming year. All meetings are open to the public and newcomers are welcome. Ms. Funkhouser feels that the organi-

zation's greatest need right now is to reach out and make contact with more women. She says, "It's not so much that we have something to offer them, as that they have a lot to offer each other by coming together as women in an organized way."

Anyone interested in more information about Women Together may call 648-4301, days or 646-4653, evenings.

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