



Time For Play

Lillian Crosby, director of Gonzales Gardens Day Care Center, plays with some of the children who attend her center. Mrs. Crosby said the center is li-

censed to care for 83 children ranging in age from one to five. (Staff Photo by Bruce Flashnick)

Daycare Liberates Mama From Home Confinement

Without day care centers a lot of women would be confined to the home because their children had no one else to care for them.

But in Columbia alone, more than 200 youngsters are being cared for in the city's day care centers — Hendley Homes, Saxon Homes, Broad River Terrace and Gonzales Gardens — and in two family day care centers and after school programs. The centers are operated by the South Carolina Day Care Project, Inc.

Cladia Rodgers, director of the Hendley Homes center, said many children come from one-parent homes where the mother is the sole support of the family. If the centers weren't available, Mrs. Rodgers believes many women would have a hard time finding someone to care for their children.

Lillian Crosby, director of Gonzales Gardens, said a lot of children in her center come from homes where the mother is on welfare, working or in some kind of training. Without the centers, some mothers would have to either stay home or allow their children to take care of themselves.

Although critics of day care have labeled it a simple baby-sitting service, both directors disagree. "it comes under child development more than anything else," Mrs. Crosby said. She added that there are "free structure" activities rather than just play periods and termed the environment a creative one.

Mrs. Rodgers said she doesn't want moth-

ers to look on day care as a babysitting service so she encourages them to take part in some of the center's activities. "I want the mother to become involved in the child's learning experience," she added, "and we have a lot of parent involvement here."

Although day care centers don't necessarily prepare a child for first grade, neither do they hold back a child who's ready to learn. "We don't pressure children," Mrs. Crosby said. "If they're ready for it and show an interest, it's there for them. But we feel if a child is well-adjusted he'll be able to go into first grade."

The 80 children in Gonzales Gardens are between ages one and five.

Mrs. Rodgers said she's found the children need to be taught a lot of basics which include physical as well as mental activities. Language arts, science and the development of motor skills are some of the means she uses to broaden the child's educational experience. "We hope to help him develop socially, emotionally and physically," she said.

There are indoor as well as outdoor activities plus meals and snacks for the children. While some families are able to pay for the care, others are welfare recipients and do not pay. But Mrs. Rodgers said fees are always based on the family's income.

There is a need for more day care centers Mrs. Rodgers noted, adding that she receives eight to 10 calls per week for new admissions.