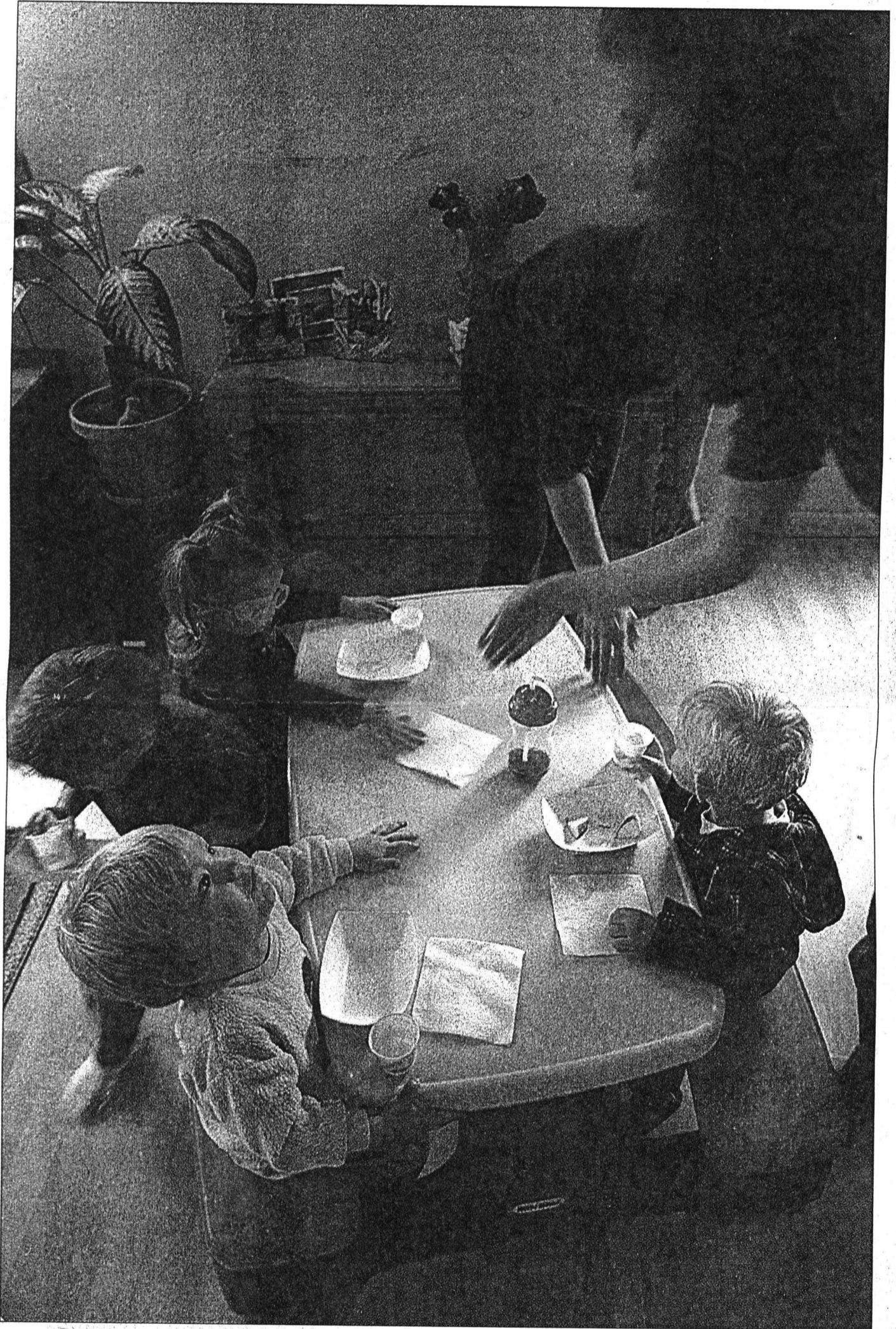


Child-care crusade

With many 2-income families, parents need more help with kids



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Child care
By **MICHAEL DE GIVE**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Drop off the kids, go to work. Pick up the kids, go home.

The routine is played out by thousands of Santa Cruz County parents every day. In one of the most expensive housing markets in the country, child care isn't a luxury for most local parents — it's one of the basics for economic survival.

"We would have to move some-

where else without it," said Erica Dawson, a mother of two in Boulder Creek.

One study found that 60 percent of parents in the county couldn't earn a living if they didn't have a place to leave their children.

The lesson, say child-care advocates, is that the \$35.5 million child-care industry is an indispensable piece of the county's economic machine — and that it should have more clout with government decision makers.

"If we don't have a good-quality child-care system, then we can't get people to work," said Bayla Greenspoon, a child-care development analyst with the county Office of Education.

At a forum in June, Greenspoon and David Foster, her associate at the county Office of Education's Child Development Resource Center, hope to persuade community planners to include child care along with transportation, housing and

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Marla Nix tends to her charges at the La Madrona Day Care Center.

