



Jail house religion

by Sara Hinds

People in jail need to know most that others still care. "This is the missing element that we are trying to provide" said JoAnne Kurisu.

Jerry Dunn, superintendent of the People's City Mission and Kurisu of the Mental Health Association both operate similar religious services on Sunday for men and women in the Lancaster County Jail.

One year ago, through the efforts of Pat Wall of the Mental Health Association and Dunn, money was raised and a new jail chapel was built.

There are separate services for men and women. Kurisu leads the women's service while Dunn, who has been in the ministry for 17 years, organizes services for the men.

Every Sunday from 1 to 2:30 p.m., Kurisu and other women volunteers read psalms, passages from *Twenty-Four Hours A Day*, the Alcoholic's Anonymous meditative readings and scripture from the Bible to women in jail.

The chapel service is attended most often by the first time offender with some religious training, Kurisu noted.

Everyone gets into a semi-circle, introduces himself and they discuss their problems. Kurisu also has three or more women portray a "mini psych-drama", where they can each act out situations involving themselves.

Playing cards, scrabble or even flower arranging is sometimes scheduled into the Sunday program.

Kurisu and other volunteers also provide materials such as robes and slippers. Similar to the help for men, assistance is given in seeking employment after release and contacting relatives.

Kurisu sees her role as a good listener, a vehicle to communication and an outlet to spiritual guidance.

Kurisu commented: "Getting arrested and being put into jail can be a very traumatic event. Women become frightened and feel rejected. Their relatives are upset and discouraged. What we try to do is work with the whole person. We know they violated the law, but that is only part of their personality."

Dunn, an alcoholic himself for 15 years who formerly worked with the Douglas County Jail, volunteers his services to men in jail with the hope of "stimulating a change of thought."

Every Sunday an informal service is also offered to those men who wish to attend. About 100 volunteer in the program catering to about 25 to 30 men each Sunday.

Counseling and contacting the family is also provided on the request of the person in jail.

"The average person in jail feels jail is a set pattern. He continues to be in and out and feels society and the police are against him. I know, I was an alcoholic for 15 years. Then I found God and the way out through Him. I try to tell men in jail that by the power of God, they too, can set a new life pattern," Dunn said.

Dunn went on to say that conditions in a jail were not always very good. "But the situations are not the fault of the jail staff or police department, they are doing the very best they can."

Both Kurisu and Dunn felt that the Sunday services were a success and beneficial to those incarcerated in the Lancaster County Jail.

Unicameral probes bribe

A special legislative investigation was ordered Thursday into the alleged attempt to bribe Neligh Sen. John DeCamp to change his vote on overriding Gov. J.J. Exon's veto of LB 1101. That bill would have started a scaled 90 per cent personal property tax exemption for Nebraskans.

DeCamp reported he was given a note Wednesday to telephone a certain number. Checking Thursday revealed the number was that of the Citizens State Bank of Bancroft.

When placing the call, DeCamp had Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers and several other witnesses listen to the conversation.

The other party, DeCamp said,

"immediately launched into what some people would call a bribe."

Chambers said, "I heard an offer of \$500 cash right now if he switched his vote."

A second figure mentioned was 5,000 which Chambers said he first thought referred to votes but later believed was dollars.

DeCamp is a candidate on the May primary ballot for Democratic nomination to the U.S. Senate.

Although DeCamp was not sure who the individual was who made the telephone offer, he said he believed it could have been the same person who threatened him at an open meeting in South Sioux City several weeks ago.

Oakland Sen. C.W. Holmquist said Thursday the South Sioux City individual was Perry Meyer, vice president of the Bancroft bank.

State senators passed a resolution introduced by Sen. Jerome Warner of

Waverly calling for a special investigating committee of seven members.

Warner cited state statutes prohibiting any person from "attempting by menace or other corrupt means, to control or influence a member (of the Legislature) in giving his vote or to prevent his giving it."

It was further learned Thursday that Perry Meyer has admitted speaking with DeCamp. He has denied offering any money to DeCamp if he would vote to override Exon's veto.

Meyer, it was reported, is the nephew of Nebraska Atty. Gen. Clarence Meyer.

In other action in Thursday's legislative session, a resolution was introduced principally by Lincoln Sen. Wally Barnett urging state colleges and universities "provide all feasible special facilities to assure access to educational opportunities for the physically handicapped."

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