

Anniversary marks decade of local AA growth

By Mary Jo Fitzl

This month's 31st anniversary of the Lincoln Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) chapter marks a decade of "tremendous growth" within the Lincoln community, a local AA member said.

Ten years ago, there were only three or four AA meetings a week in Lincoln, according to Pat, an AA member for seven years. Weekly meetings now number 23, she said.

Pat's last name is withheld from the public in compliance with an AA standard of anonymity for all members.

Besides the 23 regular AA meetings, nine Alanon groups for the spouses of alcoholics, two Alateen groups for children of alcoholics, and a youth group for AA members less than 25 years old meet weekly in Lincoln.

Pat attributes the recent increase in the Lincoln AA chapter to several reasons.

"We're not so ashamed of our feelings. We don't see drinking as having the moral connotation (that it had in the past)," she said.

Pat explained that alcoholism is now treated as a mental, spiritual and physical disease.

Danger realized

Another reason for the growth of AA membership is that young people are realizing the dangers of alcohol.

"People are doing something about themselves when they're younger," Pat said, adding that the average age of AA members is much younger than it was 10 years ago.

The young people's group draws about 100 members. Many of these members are high school drop outs, Pat said, who have had trouble with drinking and school. AA tries to help them in many cases by giving them incentive to return to school, according to Pat.

Barbara, a local Alanon member, said she thinks there are not "near as many UNL students in AA as there should be." She said this is because many students don't want to be associated with the stereotype of a drunk.

Speakers from outside AA do not go to the meetings because "we can't identify with them," Pat said.

Fellowship stressed

Fellowship is stressed among AA members, Barbara said. "People talk and share their experiences, strengths and hopes with each other," AA members who have reached sobriety often act as sponsors for newly joined alcoholics, lending them moral support, Pat said.

"Once you're an alcoholic, you're always an alcoholic," she said, explaining that AA progresses members through various levels to sobriety.

To increase public awareness of AA in Lincoln, three

weekly meetings are opened to the public, Barbara said. "Nobody comes out of curiosity to these meetings—they all have a concern," she said.

The meetings are Sunday at 8 p.m. in the Lincoln General Hospital cafeteria, and Sunday at 9 a.m. and Wednesday at 8 p.m. at 2015 S. 16 St.

AA also helps its members and the public through its Central Service Office, 620 N. 48th St., room 105. The office, which opened Oct. 1, provides public information and literature, serves as home base for AA and sponsors an answering service, ranging from a reference center to an alcoholic hotline. The office phone number is 464-8851.

Aid given

Persons who call for help have their name and phone

Weight-loss, smoking clinics to return

By Betsie Ammons

Two clinics designed to help students lose weight and stop smoking have been started again this year at University Health Center (UHC).

The clinics originated last autumn in response to student requests for help with weight loss and smoking problems, according to Dr. Garland Bare, UHC physician.

This semester's weight loss clinic began Sept. 23 and will run for ten weeks, he said. A 20-person limit was set for this clinic, he said, adding that there is a waiting list for next semester's clinic.

An organizational meeting for the smoking prevention clinic is scheduled for Friday at 11:30 a.m. at UHC, Bare said. That clinic also has 20-student limit, he said, but another may be formed if enough students are interested.

Bare said both clinics are structured so students can help each other with their problems. However, he said, each clinic operates differently.

The weight-loss clinic meetings begin with a weigh-in, followed by speakers discussing psychological, medical and dietary aspects of losing weight.

Participants are given preliminary checkups to determine how much weight they should lose, he said, and are also checked for thyroid conditions or diabetes.

Bare said participants are given specific individual diets to follow.

The ultimate weight-loss clinic goal is to help students

change their lifestyles and retain weight loss throughout their lives, Bare said. Participants are encouraged to return to UHC for periodic checkups, he added.

Concentrated format

The smoking prevention clinic will meet once a day for one week, Bare said. Previously, it met once a week for six weeks. Bare said he hopes the new concentrated format will be "more encouraging" to participants.

Bare said a "three point program" of information, cooperation, and motivation will be followed to help students "kick the habit."

Participants will be provided with information about the dangers of smoking, he said, and students cooperate and encourage each other to stop smoking.

In addition, he said a psychological profile will be done on each participant so they can understand why they smoke and be motivated to quit, he said.

Bare said participants also undergo heart and blood pressure checks.

The clinic is designed for chronic, rather than occasional smokers, Bare said, adding that occasional smokers "can handle the problem themselves."

Bare said most students don't stop smoking entirely during the clinic, but that they are "provided with the ammunition to convince them they should."

Smoking clinic participants also are encouraged to return to UHC if they need additional help or want to report they've quit, he said.

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