

Gerontology trainee seeks 'myth' destruction

By Scott Whitcomb

The public has a myth that getting old is synonymous with becoming decrepit, according to Dori Lambert, a trainee in the gerontology program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO).

Lambert said people are forced into retirement at 65, and therefore become increasingly idle. She said she hoped people in all areas of education will help destroy the old age myth.

"People naturally associate old people with nursing homes," Lambert said, "but actually only 5 per cent of people over 65 are in institutions. The majority of older people are living very comfortably in their own homes."

David Peterson, director of the gerontology program at UNO, said the Gerontology Dept. has expanded substantially over the last four years.

"Enrollment has continued to grow to the extent that we are reaching the point that we will soon have all we

can handle," Peterson said.

Many new federal programs are being created because of the increased interest in gerontology, he said.

Involvement boosted

The National Nutrition Program is one federal program that has boosted elderly involvement, Peterson said. He said it provides a noon meal and social services for people who live at home, but who come together at various local institutions.

There are many jobs available in the field, Peterson said. He said job openings, coupled with intellectual and personal interests, are reasons for increased enrollment.

"Eighty-five per cent of those students who specialize in gerontology will take jobs in the field," Peterson said. "Most of them will stay in the Midlands, but there are openings in other areas of the country."

The program has received \$375,000 in Areas of Excellence money from the Legislature, and \$1.2 million in federal money, Peterson said.

"This has been our cumulative amount over four years," he said. "Our expectations are that we will receive \$2 in federal grants for every \$1 in state grants."

Students in gerontology cannot get a specific degree, but can obtain a minor. In order to specialize, they must be involved full-time for one semester. They are required to take a 12-hour course in addition to six hours of field work.

at UNL

Peterson said most students who go into gerontology will major in nutrition, sociology or psychology. There is only one course offered at UNL, and it is offered through the Adult and Continuing Education Dept. More than half of the students in gerontology at NU are at UNO, according to Peterson.

Some students do their field work in institutions, Peterson said. He cited Tabitha Home and Madonna Home in Lincoln as "outstanding" institutions for field work.

Donna Amedeo, education coordinator for Madonna Home, said she was interested in the field of gerontology because "it has been one that has been long neglected."

Amedeo concentrates her studies in the area of rehabilitation of aging persons.

"We try to tell them that aging does not happen overnight, and that it is a normal process," Amedeo said.

Lambert also said she thinks gerontology is a neglected field. She said there have been social scientists working in industries for many years preparing people for retirement, "but most of them have not gone through gerontology, per se."

"The goal is to have everybody at all ages knowledgeable about themselves, so they don't drop out of society totally when they reach 65," Lambert said.

Relatively lower taxes, high income elements of Nebraska's 'Good Life'

Residents of Nebraska enjoy a lower state and local tax levy, as well as a higher per capita income, than do the citizens of most neighboring states, according to a report in the November issue of *Business in Nebraska*.

Business in Nebraska is a monthly publication of UNL's Bureau of Business Research. The tax effort report was written by Donald Pursell, director of the bureau.

Pursell describes the tax effort as being synonymous with tax levy, the amount of taxes paid annually.

Pursell wrote that Nebraska's 1973 state and local taxes were \$503 for every man, woman and child in the state. This figure is \$74 below the national average with 35 states having higher tax levies than Nebraska.

"Taxes, of course, are a relative matter," Pursell said. "The income capacity of the state's citizens to pay taxes also is important."

"Therefore, in order to put Nebraska's tax situation into perspective, it is necessary to compare Nebraskans' per capita state and local taxes, as well as per capita income, with similar data from other states."

The report compares Nebraska's state and local tax effort with those of six surrounding states: South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming.

Those states have economic and demographic bases similar to Nebraska's.

The 1973 state and local tax efforts for Nebraska and

the six surrounding states are as follows: Nebraska, \$503 (5); South Dakota, \$496 (6); Iowa, \$530 (3); Missouri, \$492 (7); Kansas, \$517 (4); Colorado, \$543 (1); and Wyoming, \$534 (2).

According to this data, Nebraska ranks fifth of the seven states. Pursell said there has been little change in the states' ranking over the past 20 years.

"In other words, Nebraska's relative tax effort was lower than all of the surrounding states, with the exception of Missouri and South Dakota," Pursell said.

The bureau director also analyzed Nebraska's tax effort in terms of available income.

Data provided in the report shows that Nebraskans have \$10.44 of income per every tax dollar levied by state and local governments. This compares with \$9.99 in South Dakota, \$10.08 in Iowa, \$10.14 in Missouri, \$10.20 in Kansas, \$9.46 in Colorado, and \$9.26 in Wyoming.

This means that in 1973 Nebraskans paid less state and local taxes on a relative income basis than any of the surrounding six states. The year 1973 as good in terms of income for many agriculture states.

From a national perspective, there has been very little change in Nebraska's tax effort compared to the 50-state average. State and local taxes increased 341 per cent in the U.S. between 1957 and 1973, 349 per cent in Nebraska.

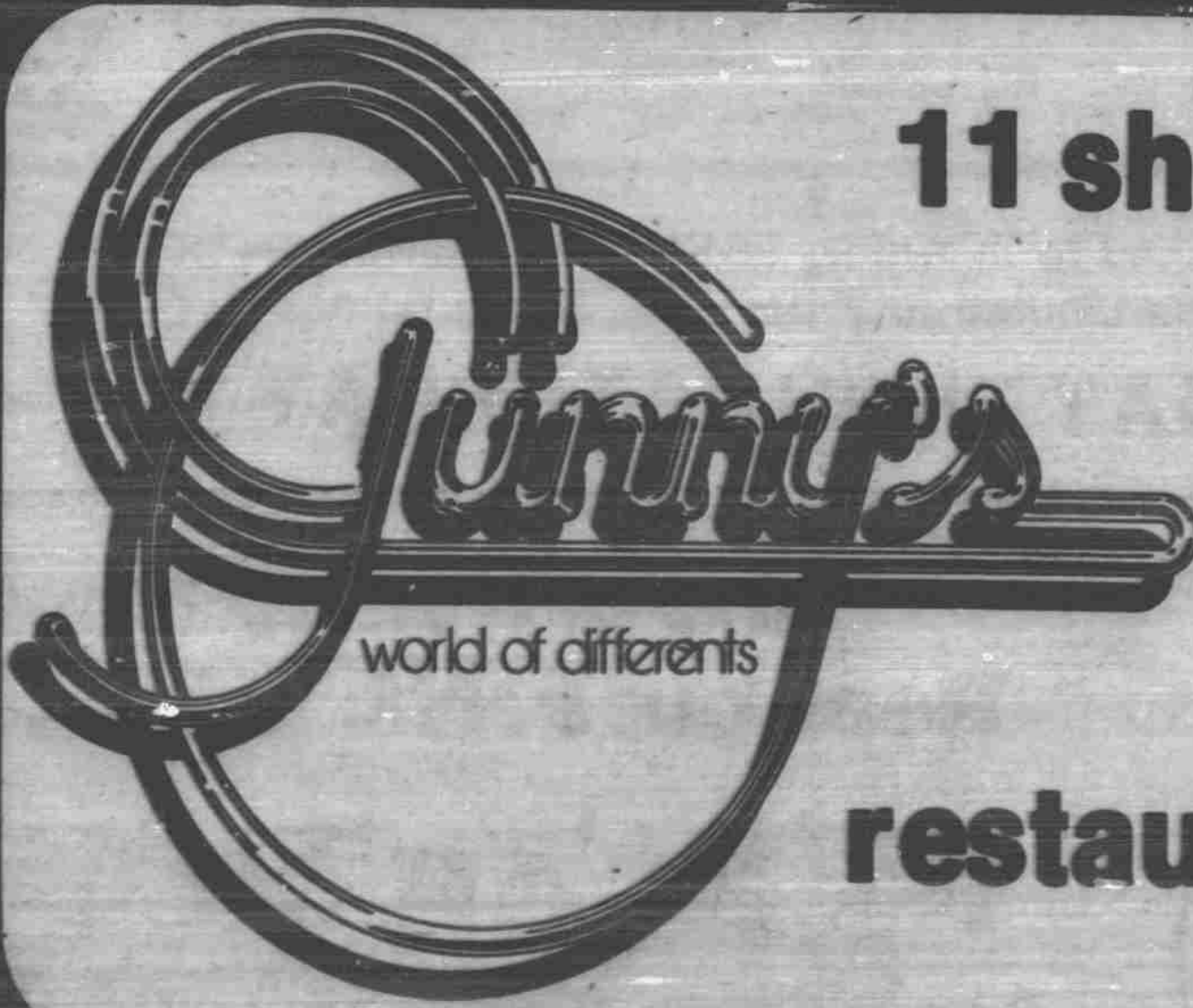
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