



Story and Photographs
by Mary Anne Golon

Crisis center stretches funds to help addicts

UNL student Topher Hansen is an example of a man who can get more out of a dollar than most.

Hansen, coordinator of the Drug Crisis Center, stretches the center's \$12,000 annual budget to cover a 24-hour drug crisis line and outreach service, a walk-in center and public education programs.

The center, at 140 S. 27th St., is part of the Open Door Health Center, but is supported entirely by United Way funds. Hansen is the only paid employee of the 21 staff members. As coordinator, Hansen earns \$8,100 a year for a job that demands more than the traditional 40-hour work week.

Hansen, 23, in addition to working at the center with the 20 volunteers, lectures church and civic groups; gives in-service training to public servants (police and firemen); gives Red Cross emergency training in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation and drug overdose aid, and provides 8-hour workshops for local schools.

All of this is done in association with other community agencies.

The center's main purpose, Hansen said, is to "provide a 24-hour information referral and crisis intervention center with an emphasis on drugs."

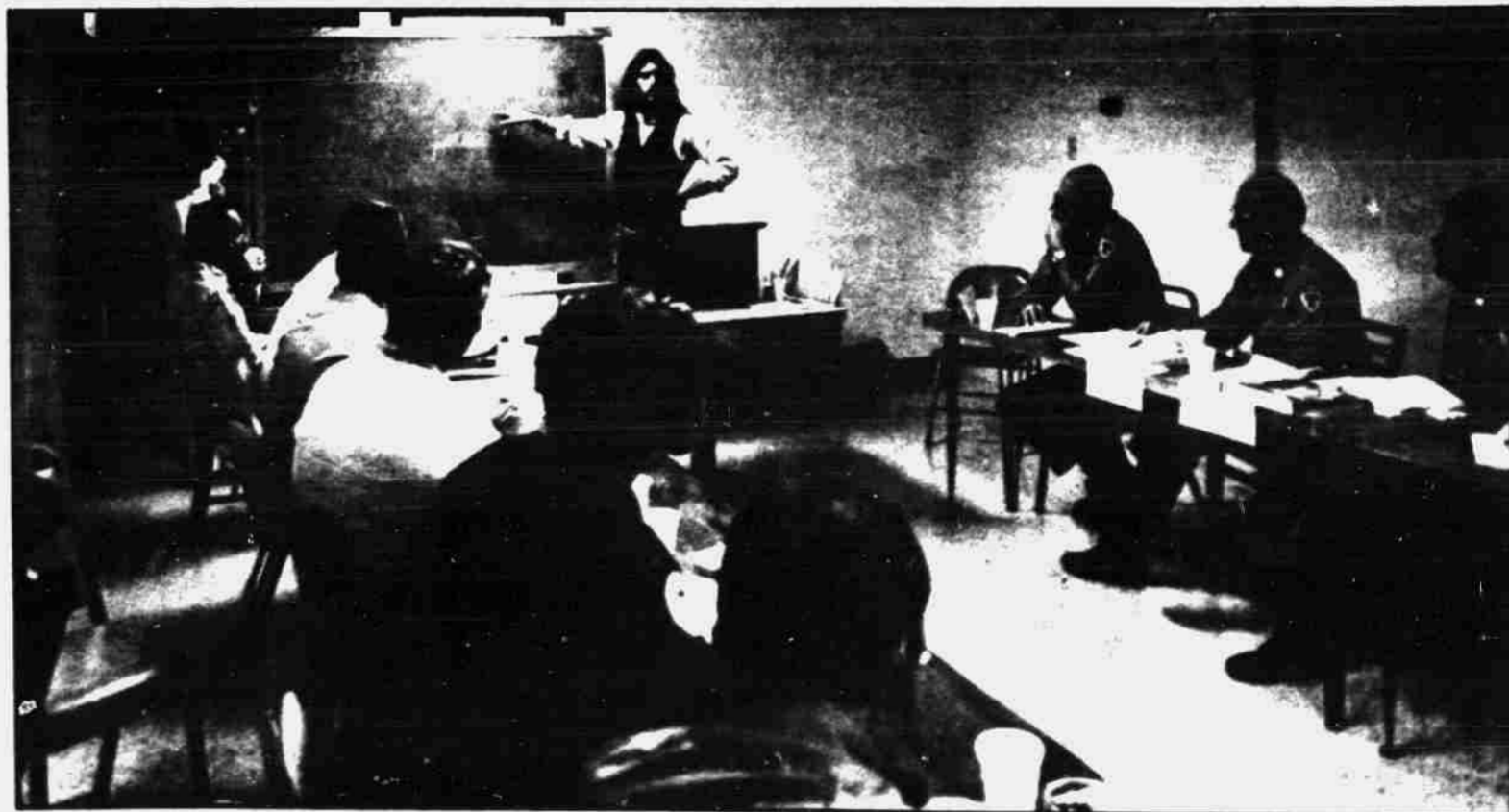
"Caring and genuine concern are the basic components to dealing with people's drug problems."

Hansen has high praise for the center's volunteers, without whom, he says, "the work couldn't be done."

The volunteers receive on-the-job and classroom training, Hansen said, including how to handle calls, emergency medical skills and crisis intervention.

The center averages about 80 to 85 calls a month which include about four emergency calls, he said.

It is considered an emergency call when "somebody requests that we come out to where they are to deal with the problem at hand personally, instead of over the phone," he explained.



Coordinator Topher Hansen says caring and genuine concern are basic to his work.

Volunteers Brian Vanderzee (left) and Jeff Meier handle a call on the 24-hour crisis line.

Hansen and Vanderzee handle an emergency outreach call.

Fire Dept. members receive in-service training on drugs and alcohol from coordinator Hansen and Peg Brown from the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs.