

Nebraska's police now enforcing laws banning drug paraphernalia

By Chris Hodges

Police in Nebraska have been given the go-ahead to arrest people for violating anti-drug paraphernalia laws. Under "ban the bong" legislation, it is illegal to possess, sell, manufacture, deliver or advertise items intended for use with controlled substances.

"The statutes are now enforceable," according to Lancaster County Attorney Mike Heavican. Although the state law was passed in 1980, it had not been enforceable for the past two years because its constitutionality was being challenged in court.

Items have to be identified as paraphernalia for drug use before an arrest can be made, Heavican said. Shops that sell pipes and other items for smoking tobacco still can operate legally, he said.

According to Capt. Ron Flansburg of the Lincoln Police Department, police can use their own observations as a basis for making an arrest. Citizens also can file a complaint with the county attorney if they suspect a violation. The county attorney's office will see that an investigation is made, he said.

Flansburg said the following items are among those that constitute cause for arrest or citation if police believe they are

intended for drug use: pipes, water bongs, joint clips, cocaine spoons, small vials, syringes and needles, sifters for cleaning marijuana, and substances such as quinine, lactose and mannitol for cutting drugs.

The following circumstances are hypothetical cases in which police may make an arrest or citation. They do not constitute a full listing.

1. Item in car. Police identify the item as intended for drug use. If the item is lying in the car, the person in control of the car is held responsible, Flansburg said. If the item is on a person in the car, that particular person is held responsible.

2. Item in close proximity to other drug-use items or controlled substances. A baggie on a supermarket shelf is legal, but a baggie next to a stash of marijuana is illegal paraphernalia, Flansburg said.

Anti-drug paraphernalia laws carry penalties for misdemeanors ranging from class one to class five. A class one misdemeanor carries a penalty of not more than one year imprisonment, or a \$1,000 fine or both. For a class five misdemeanor, a person may be fined up to \$100. Flansburg said most penalties for violation of the "ban the bong" laws will fall between these two extremes.

Health Center plans program on alcoholism

Alcohol Awareness programs were the main topic of discussion Wednesday at the Health Center Student Advisory Board meeting.

Board member James Buckley attended a meeting last week with the Inter-Fraternity Council on forming an alcohol awareness program on campus. Buckley said IFC would be setting up the program, and the health center would act as a referral service by directing the problem drinkers to independent community organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous or the Drug Crisis Center.

Because the IFC program would focus primarily on fraternity members, board member Andrea Marinkovich suggested that the health center board form a separate program to reach out to the other students on campus.

A committee of board members was formed to research and write letters to schools that already have successful alcohol awareness programs. From this information, the board will decide what course of action would be taken on a separate program and what the role of the health aides will be in the program.

Administrator Steve Blom reported on last week's National Meeting of College Health Centers in Seattle, Wash., which he attended.

"We are one of the leading health centers in the nation," Blom said.

Blom also said that Marinkovich, who also attended the conference, was elected secretary/treasurer of the organization.

Richard Armstrong, vice chancellor of Student Affairs, and Chancellor Martin Massengale approved a proposal to hire a wellness coordinator with the existing health center funds.

The board supported Blom's suggestion that a Wellness Week be planned for next fall. The project will be financed by a \$500 grant from Lancaster county which is to be used to coordinate the health center with the city health centers.

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