

# Mental disorders increase for young adults

BY LARRY SPARKS

Chronic mental disorders among Nebraska's young adults are increasing, coinciding with what appears to be a national trend toward increasing mental illnesses in the 18-to-34-year-old age group, according to representatives of two local mental health services.

Institutions across the country have reported a sharp rise in such illnesses as schizophrenia, severe depression and behavioral disorders, according to a recent survey by the National Institute of Mental Health.

According to the survey, mental hospitals are admitting about 162,000 patients a year. About 42 percent of these are estimated to fall in the 18 to 34 age group.

Statistics were not available from local agencies, but Dr. Karen Kelly, director of the Mental Health Clinic at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Larry Reznicek, a clinical social worker for the Community Mental Health Center of Lancaster County,

both reported seeing more of the cases listed in the national report.

Ms. Kelly said she has not seen a major increase in the total number of patients treated at the university center, but she said she has seen more students with serious depression and suicidal feelings over the past two years.

At least part of this, she said, can be attributed to the recent economic slump in the United States.

In the past, having a college degree usually meant a getting a good job, she said. That no longer is the case, she said. Many students are having a difficult time adjusting to the possibility of decreased economic status.

"These people grew up thinking that they had a secure future ahead of them if they worked hard," she said. "Now, many of them feel cheated."

In addition to new economic pressures, Ms. Kelly said, students still face many of the same school-related pressures that their predecessors had.

Reznicek, who does emergency counseling for the county, said American society is changing gradually, and this probably is causing some of today's mental problems. Much of the change, he said, has been in the economic structure of the country.

The American economy once grew steadily, but now it is in a "holding zone," Reznicek said.

That, he said, means a diminished lifestyle for many and an impact that could remain long after the recession.

"For the first time, we are seeing people, even white-collar workers, who realize that they won't be able to meet their parents' economic level," he said.

Although statistics broken down by age group were not available, Dr. Klaus Hartman, superintendent of the Lincoln Regional Center, said total admissions at the institution have declined. But those admitted stay longer than they used to, he said, because they seem to have more serious disorders.

Reznicek attributed the nationwide increase in mental health problems to the large number of people in the high-risk category. The 18 to 34 age group traditionally suffers most from mental health disorders, he said, and the 64 million babies born in the 1946 to 1961 baby boom years are now reaching that age level.

Hartman said the national trend of more admissions to state institutions does not necessarily mean mental health problems are increasing. It may mean that more cases are being diagnosed, he said.

Hartman said the nationwide increase, which began in 1980, might be caused, in part, by federal budget cuts that have forced many communities to curtail local mental health services. That, he said, means more people have to turn to state-supported services for help.

Poor economic conditions also have forced more people to seek state help because many cannot afford private practitioners, he said.

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## UN-L economists: recovery held back by two factors

BY MEILING LIU

The economy in the United States is getting better, but two problems lie ahead for Americans, according to a University of Nebraska-Lincoln economist.

Craig R. MacPhee, chairman of the UN-L economics department, said one problem is that the unemployment rate is not falling as fast as the gross national product or the total output of goods and services is rising.

According to MacPhee, the reasons for that are:

First, companies are slow to hire new workers, or rehire the laid-off people, because of costs. The companies would rather ask the present employees to work longer and pay them more.

Second, the discouraged who quit looking for jobs during the recession were not counted as unemployed. Now they have come back to hunt for jobs and fall into the category of the unemployed. Consequently, the unemployment rate won't go down as fast as the production rate increases.

Third and most serious, "a lot of people out there don't have skills needed for jobs," MacPhee said, since the number of illiterate Americans is surprisingly high and a lot of people lack technical skills.

Another problem is that government spending is increasing faster than tax revenue, MacPhee said, and the nation cannot afford to continue such spending without causing higher inflation. As a result, inflation may cause another recession, he said.

It's difficult for leaders in this country to decide which part of government spending should be cut, he said. And yet, raising taxes to help government revenues is politically unpopular, he said.

At the same time, the size of the deficit causes the Federal Reserve System to expand the money supply, he said, and too much money flow will result in inflation.

MacPhee suggested two solutions for these problems. He said the government should divert spending away from defense into education and training of workers. And the Federal Reserve System should allow the money supply to grow only moderately, he said.

According to an article in the Wall Street Journal, the target range of annual growth rates in the money supply set by the Federal Reserve System is 4 to 8 percent, but this year the rate has been 13.5 percent, MacPhee said.

In Nebraska, the unemployment rate is lower than the national average. However, that doesn't mean job opportunities in Nebraska are better, he said.

As people got laid off from jobs in Nebraska, they went to work on their farms, their houses, or went to school, he said. They were not counted in the labor force, and their return to look for jobs tightens the job market, he said.

Nebraskans could benefit from a declining dollar, he said. If this nation buys more foreign goods, the value of the dollar may go down, he said. When this happens, foreign countries will find U.S. exports cheaper and will buy more from this country, he said. As a state exporting agricultural products, Nebraska could gain from this trend.

## Agriculture task forces set hearings on Friday

The Agriculture 2001 Committee task forces on crops and natural resources will hold public hearings on the East Campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on July 22.

University of Nebraska Regents established the Agriculture 2001 committee in January to study the impact of present agricultural trends in Nebraska to the year 2001.

The committee will then make recommendations to the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UN-L.

The Natural Resources task force sees water resource development as a top priority in the state, as well as methods and techniques to preserve water quality.

The hearings will be held in the East Campus Student Union at 9:30 a.m. Room numbers will be posted in the Union lobby.



Photo by Dave Wesely

Followers of the self-ordained Rev. Sun Myung Moon sing at Centennial Mall Tuesday. Members were instructed by police not to create a disturbance or solicit their views without personal consent. The Unification Church has an office at 13 and O streets.

## New \$'s for ag program

BY DAVID TROUBA

A new \$1.4 million agricultural conservation program, designed to help educate farmers and save energy, has been announced by Gov. Bob Kerrey.

The five year program centers on three concerns to Nebraska farmers and ranchers: irrigation and water management, conservation tillage and ecofallow methods.

According to Elbert Dickey, extension agriculture engineer for the University of Nebraska, the program is "not a research, but an educational project," offering improvements farmers can make on their own land.

Dickey was named co-leader of the project along with Gail Wicks, N.U. extension weed specialist, and Paul Fischbach, an N.U. extension irrigation expert.

The program will concentrate on six areas across the state with Wicks in-charge of two areas in western Nebraska.

The other four will be in eastern and central Nebraska, two focusing on irrigation and water conservation and two concerned with tillage.

Dickey said selection of target areas will depend on an area's need. For example, if an area has a particular problem with tillage, it will be looked at closely. A second prerequisite will be finding an extension specialist who is willing to make the change in the direction of his or her current program.

That will mean giving 15 to 20 percent of a person's time toward the program, Dickey said.

Six extension technologists, one for each area, will be chosen to help the extension specialists in each area.

Dickey said one of his goals is to accurately document the program's progress in the beginning and then return and compare changes which have taken place.

The program's goals are to expand by 20 percent the amount of tillage and ecofallow taking place now, and reducing the energy used for irrigation by 20 percent and water consumption by 10 percent.

Conservation is important according to Gov. Kerrey. While energy costs have moderated, Nebraska is still heavily dependent on sources outside the state for supplies.

Total project funding is \$1,467,815. Half a million is coming from the governor's Energy Overcharge Fund. The N.U. Foundation is matching that amount with the \$387,000 balance coming from the N.U. Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Roy Arnold, vice chancellor for the IANR, said the first year budget will be about one-fifth or \$100,000.

"The foundation has some unrestricted funds and we will also be seeking some additional funds from other sources," Arnold said.

If successful, program sponsors foresee potential savings in labor, energy, water and soil erosion.

## INSIDE

Tops in Pops: Def Leppard tops Lincoln record sales.....

..... page 7

Procasinators should seek help, now.....

..... page 3

The Zoo Bar: Still Lincoln's blues hangout.....

..... page 6

AIDS: Nebraskans have little to fear.....

..... page 6