

Apartment-finders program aids student housing hunters

When spring buds, students leave. About 50 to 55 percent of all Lincoln tenants are students. Because of this, apartments will change hands as the semester draws to a close.

Apartments in the UNL area have about an 80 percent turnover rate each year.

The Joseph E. Kean Company, Suite 1704 First National Bank building, has an apartment-finders program that approaches housing from a tenant's point of view. The company gathers information about apartment units available in Lincoln. Kean said the company shows apartments and qualifies tenants and leases.

Kean offered advice to students moving into new apartments and those who are leaving:

- **Get something you can afford.**

Kean said many students will see an apartment and like it. However, they can't always pay for it. Rent should not exceed 30 percent of the average tenant's income, Kean said. But, he said, many students get financial help from their parents and his company considers this.

Kean said rent isn't the only cost of living in an apartment. He said cable television, telephone bills and utility bills could change a \$350-per-month rent into a \$450-per-month rent. A prospective tenant can find out costs of past utilities of a specific apartment by contacting the utility company.

- **Read your lease.**

"If there's something in the lease you don't like, the time to question it is before you sign it," Kean said.

Kean said leases have been revolutionized. While 12- and six-month leases were most common in the past, more leases now exist that fit the school year. The company also rents on a month-to-month basis in some cases and offers a "cluster" lease for the summer.

Under a cluster lease, students can rent one apartment in a complex for the regular price. If they find friends to

rent another apartment in the complex, rent drops. Rent continues to drop as more friends move into the same building.

- **Get it in writing.**

"The trouble with a verbal lease," Kean said, "is you don't know what it says."

Kean said the tenant has a hard time proving particulars of a verbal lease. He said most landlord/tenant discrepancies could be taken care of if agreements were in writing and if the tenant read the lease.

- **Beware of threesomes.**

Kean said that while three roommates can decrease apartment cost, sometimes two renters become close and the third is "the odd man out." He said threesomes should know they can get along with each other before they move in and realize that they are still responsible for meeting the terms of the lease if one tenant decides to move out.

- **Beware of sub-leasing.**

Kean said sub-leasing doesn't release the original tenant from financial obligation if the apartment is damaged. He said summer is "a little more free-wheeling time of the year than the regular school term" and that the regular tenant may come back to a torn-up apartment. A written statement between the original tenant and the sub-leaser could solve some of the problems, he said.

Tenants who are leaving should be sure to notify their landlord via the terms of the lease, Kean said. He said departing tenants also should be sure everything is clean so they get their deposit back. People who don't get their deposits back or do have problems with their landlord are likely to have problems again, he said.

While landlord/tenant problems sometimes result from the "luck of the draw," Kean said most problems crop up when tenants don't read the lease, follow the lease or have poor paying habits.

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