

# EPALS reach non-traditional students

By Ann Greene

UNL is an institution of people, not just buildings and parking lots, the director of Evening Programs and Adult Learning Services said. Deanna Baxter Eversoll said EPALS tries to reach a population not served by the university: non-traditional students.

Although non-traditional students are hard to categorize, Eversoll said, more females than males, ages 25-35, are going back to college to finish up uncompleted degrees at night, while continuing to work full time. Many of today's non-traditional students are ones who originally "stopped out" of college, she said. Some just were not ready for college, she said. Some of today's adult students are family heads who often need more education to get a better job. Eversoll said that some

One study, begun in 1981, is the adult graduate follow-up study. In this, adult students are surveyed when they receive undergraduate degrees. A follow-up contact is made one year later. Results from the follow-up survey show that 94 percent of the students questioned would do it again, based on their experiences since graduation.

Many of the anonymous comments from the study indicate that the students gained self-confidence and improved self-esteem as a result of college. They said they felt they could take better control of their careers and could be more assertive at their jobs. Many said they wished they had gone back to college sooner because of the sense of pride and accomplishment they felt when they received their degrees. Few said they felt as if they didn't belong — many said faculty members and younger students were

ested adults. Representatives from every college provide counseling, and former adult students share their experiences about going back to college. The workshops are held twice a year.

EPALS provides a number of services to help new students get started. Feedback from the workshops and their research helps determine which courses would be best for adult students. EPALS then works with the appropriate colleges and departments to provide both credited and noncredited courses.

EPALS mails a schedule of evening programs (credit courses) and community courses (noncredit courses) to every boxholder in Lancaster County. This way students can take the required classes when they need to, Eversoll said.

EPALS then provides the administrative services necessary to register and counsel adult students. Registration and information booths are set up at Gateway Mall, the State Office Building, and at some downtown banks at the beginning of each semester.

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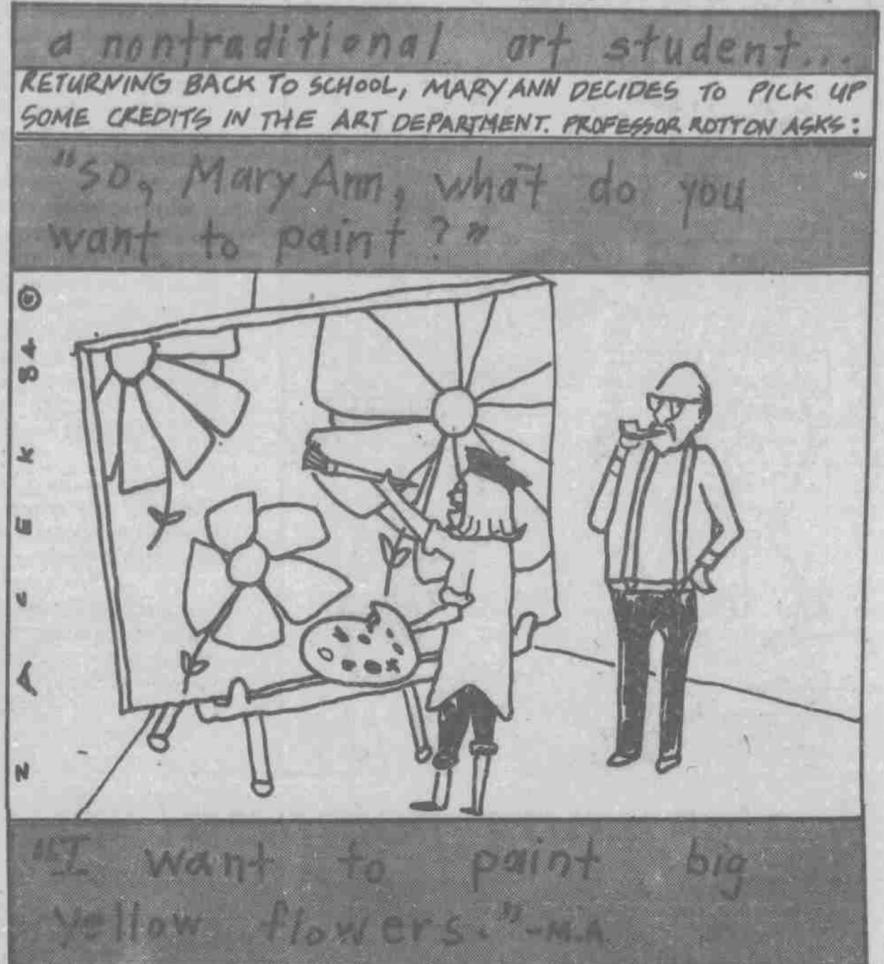
separation and divorce agreements even say that ex-spouses must provide financial support while the other attends classes.

One large obstacle for a prospective adult student is the fear of not fitting into the university community. Eversoll said many adults believe the university caters to 18- to 25-year-old students while ignoring older students. Adult students often are afraid of being shunned by younger students and professors, she said. EPALS has done extensive research involving the attitudes of adult students, 30-years-old and older.

very supportive and understanding.

However, problems did exist. Some adult students surveyed said working full time and going to school at night left little time for families and hobbies. Others said their co-workers were jealous of their resulting increase in salary and status. But, most students said that despite these problems, attending college was worth the effort. Some even convinced spouses and friends to go back to college.

Because going back to college is a big step, Eversoll said, the decision is not an easy one to make. EPALS sponsors a back-to-school workshop for inter-



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