

Legal handbook offers apartment-renting tips

By Shelley Stall

Student Legal Services Lawyer

Question: I live in a residence hall this semester, but my roommate and I want to rent an apartment for this summer and next year. Do you have any information on how to go about finding an apartment, signing a lease, etc?

Signed W.M.B.

Answer: You should pick up the Student Legal Services Handbook in our office, Nebraska Union 335. The Landlord-Tenant section offers tips on renting an apartment. Here are some things to consider:

● **Decide what you are looking for.** You and your roommate should come to an agreement on how much rent you can afford and how much room you need. Are you looking for an older place close to campus so you can walk or bike to school or do you want a place in a modern complex with a swimming pool?

Ask Your Attorney

● **Methods to use in finding the right apartment.** Start early. May is a great time to find a place in Lincoln. The preferred method is by recommendations of friends. Moving into a friend's former apartment or moving into a building where you know the people insures that you will know what you are getting into if you bother to find out.

Many people use the want ads for finding an apartment. You can save time by eliminating those apartments that are not right for you by finding out as much information as you can on the telephone. You have a cat. Does the landlord accept small pets? Once you narrow you list to apartments you want to look at, set up an appointment with the landlord. Never rent an apartment without taking the time to thoroughly examine it first.

Some of the best apartments are not advertised. Try walking around in the neighborhood where you want to live and look for "apartment for rent" signs.

Apartment rental agencies are listed in the yellow pages of the phone book. If you are pressed for time or have to be out of town, this may be a good alternative.

● **Examine the apartment carefully.** Use an apartment inventory as you walk through the apart-

ment. (You can find one on page 11 of the handbook.) The inventory helps you remember some of the things you should notice about the place. Does the oven work? Does the air conditioner work? How is the apartment heated and does the tenant have to pay for the heat? (Call the utility company later to find out heating costs. All you have to do is give them the address.) What are the arrangements for parking and storage? Are laundry facilities made available to tenants? Is there a bug problem? Are there secure locks on the doors? Think about how the place will look at night. Is there enough lighting in the parking lot or entryway for safety?

● **Talk to former tenants or people currently living in the building.** Does the landlord have a reputation for not returning damage deposits? Are repairs made promptly? Are the heat bills high? Even though the place looks good, it usually is best not to rent from a landlord with a bad reputation.

● **Negotiate with the landlord and write verbal promises into the lease.** If the landlord wants a one year lease but you and your roommate are graduating in 10 months, ask him to change the length of the term and initial it. If the landlord offers to paint the bathroom before you move in, politely ask him to write the promise in the lease and initial it.

● **Read the lease before you sign it.** Better yet, have a lawyer read it. If the landlord says the heat is paid, look for the clause in the lease that spells it out. Some leases will have clauses that conflict with the Nebraska Residential Landlord Tenant Act and are not enforceable. Outdated, illegal clauses may not be enough reason to pass on an otherwise good apartment, but you should be aware of them. Not all landlords will require you to sign a lease, but if you do sign one, it constitutes your agreement and verbal promises generally don't count.

● **Consider signing a Roommate Contract.** This agreement is between the roommates and has nothing to do with the landlord. (A sample contract is on page 10 of the handbook.) A roommate contract lets everyone know from the start what their obligations are regarding the apartment.

If you have a legal problem or question for this column, send a letter to Ask Your Attorney, c/o Shelley Stall, Nebraska Union 335, City Campus.

Clinic helps smokers by reshaping attitudes

The University Health Center clinicians won't just teach smokers how to quit cold turkey — they will teach smokers how to change their lives to they can quit more easily.

Joseph Anderson, teacher of the health center's Stop Smoking Clinic, tries to help people change their behavior so they can "manage the problem of not smoking."

Anderson is a medical assistant at the health center. The clinic runs twice a semester. The next clinic will start Sunday and end April 25. The classes are from 7 to 9 p.m. at the health center.

Whether the program actually helps people quit smoking depends on the individual.

The clinic tries to show people the problem and how to manage it. After that it is up to the individual, Anderson said.

Smokers must want to participate in the program themselves, not because their wife or girlfriend wants them to, he said.

Call the health center at 472-5050 to register. People should register by Friday, but if they don't they can still register at the first session Sunday, Anderson said.

Shorts

Activities for "Women's Week '85" continue through Saturday. Today's activities follow:

10 to 11:30 a.m.: "Images of Women in Children's Literature" by Dee Storey; Nebraska Union, Georgian A, free.

1 to 2:30 p.m.: "Is Feminist Therapy a Sufficient Response to Psychiatric Abuse?" by Melissa Farley; Nebraska Union, room posted, donations accepted.

3 to 5 p.m.: Poetry reading by Pat Parker, Nebraska Union, Georgian A, free.

7:30 to 11 p.m.: Midwest Region National Women's Studies Association conference coffeehouse, music/artisans/

crafts/books; Nebraska Union Crib, free to MRNWSA Conference participants.

The YMCA, 1432 N St., is offering "Conversational English," a seven-week class for women who are learning English as a second language. The class will begin today and continue through May 30, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. The cost is \$15 for YWCA members and \$20 for non-members.

The class is designed to improve English speaking skills and to teach students about public transportation, shopping and where to go for other needs in Lincoln.

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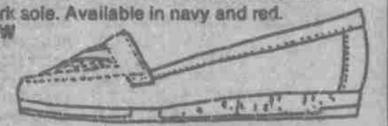
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