

Weather: Friday, partly sunny, breezy and warmer. High around 40. South wind 15 to 25 mph. Friday night, partly cloudy with the low in the mid to upper 20s. Saturday, partly sunny with the high in the lower to mid-40s.

NDT takes Manhattan in collection of one-acts

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NSSA meeting erupts in argument, hysteria

By Michael Hooper
Senior Reporter

After last Saturday's Nebraska State Student Association meeting at Peru State College, students left feeling bitter, upset and disappointed.

One student said that the meeting included hysteria, pandemonium, crying and one student's resignation.

More than 50 students from UNL, UNO, Peru State, Wayne State and Chadron State Colleges met for NSSA's 12th Legislative Assembly to come up with a policy platform to support higher education in Nebraska, but hardly anything got done, said Deb Chapelle, executive director of NSSA.

NSSA meets once a semester to come up with platform policy to support higher education in Nebraska. Members then lobby in the state Legislature.

But because little was accomplished Saturday, Chapelle said, NSSA will meet again in January.

NSSA passed only one policy, on a 27-23 vote, with all non-UNL students voting against it. It called for NSSA to support and promote voting student members on the NU Board of Regents and the State College Board of Trustees.

The students spent much of the time arguing about parliamentary procedure and UNL's policy, said six NSSA members interviewed this week.

"It was a parliamentary disaster," said Dan Hofmeister, a UNL student and NSSA board member.

UNL's 27 delegates, who had the majority in voting power, "knew what they wanted to do and they did it," said Paul Hays, one of 14 UNO delegates and the assembly's parliamentarian.

Hays and Pat Herrick, a Peru State delegate, complained of UNL's delegates' attitudes at the meeting.

"It was kind of like, 'well this is what we want to do, and to hell with everything else.'" Hays said.

But Hofmeister said, "we played by the rules. We had the book right there and we did everything by the numbers."

Mike McMorrow, a student delegate from Wayne State, said UNL delegates used their voting power to end discussion, even though more students wanted to speak. Then they "pushed it (the policy) through," he said.

McMorrow, Hays and Herrick all said they disagreed with a student-regent vote because students lack necessary experience to vote at regents and trustees meetings.

"I don't think we've done our homework enough to have voting members," Herrick said.

McMorrow called supporting a student-regent vote "an unrealistic goal." NSSA needs realistic goals to

show other students that it can get things done, he said.

The UNL delegates' policy says that a student-regent vote will enhance communication among students, faculty, administrators and decision-makers.

Hays said he was disappointed by the way the meeting turned out.

"I really feel sorry for the two girls from Chadron State," Hays said. "They came all that way, and it was just a waste of time."

Yet all five students interviewed said they would attend the special session in January.

"We need to get out act together before we approach the Unicameral," Herrick said.

'... Meeting hell, in person'

Lies and lows: Cocaine nearly destroys Lincoln family

By Lise Olsen
Staff Reporter

Tony lent his car to a friend. A passenger idly opened the glove compartment. About two thousand dollars, mostly in fives and tens, flew out, littering the floor and front seat. The passenger stuffed it back without comment.

Tony and his wife were eating dinner. Repeatedly, he excused himself to go to the bathroom.

Many nights, Tony returned home from parties, unable to sleep. He told his wife he'd been drinking. But alcohol makes most people tired.

Tony and his wife Michele can recreate each deception, each painful moment, and project them like slides on the wall. They lived with lies three years ago, but not any more. The cocaine is gone now.

Tony, who police say was once one of the major cocaine suppliers in Lincoln, spent nearly a year in prison and 30 days in treatment to shake off the taint of the white powder.

"People still shut doors to me," he says. "People still don't realize I have changed my life." But he has changed. He has been off alcohol and drugs for three years and now works to help addicts at Lincoln General Hospital's Independence Center. From them, he hears some of his old boasts, his old lies.

Today he deals in truth. He explains the reasons behind those puzzling scenes from the past: the money in the glove compartment was payment for a drug delivery that he hid and forgot about.

The trips to the bathroom were to sniff cocaine, to prolong the high and avert the drug's devastating crash. He would make excuses or create distraction to sniff it almost anywhere, anytime.

He often couldn't sleep because he partied with cocaine that stimulated his brain and gave him a false euphoric energy.

Tony, Michele and their friend Rick talk freely about the 18 months that

cocaine ruled their lives, but they fear their honesty could hurt their families. So their names have been changed.

Taken together, their stories create a disturbing portrait of a Lincoln family and how it was nearly destroyed by cocaine.

Tony, a slender father of two, lived two lives during the 18 months he dealt cocaine.

"At the time, it was great," Tony says. "I was making a fool out of my wife, out of society, out of my neighbors. Nobody knew what I was doing but the people I dealt with. And pretty much, you know, I did get away with it."

He supplied seven people with cocaine, who resold to others on a sort of "Tupperware principle." He was a middleman who knew only his supplier and his clients. He didn't want to know any more.

When he was arrested, police dogs found eight ounces of cocaine in his house — in his dresser drawer, under the carpet on the stairs. Police said it had a street value of more than \$200,000.

Tony, now 32, calls that figure "bullshit." He says he could have sold the cocaine for \$27,000 (\$3,400 an ounce) at most.

Tony says that when he first started dealing, he thought it would be an easy way to make money. But his profits were next to nothing, because he says he kept more and more cocaine for himself. And his clients — mostly addicts — couldn't always pay. When he was arrested, he owed his supplier \$4,500. His clients owed him about \$20,000.

Michele had been living with Tony for more than a year when he started dealing cocaine. The dark-eyed 30-year-old was in love and thought she knew Tony very well.

But she didn't know about the cocaine.

She did know about the money. Sometimes, a hundred-dollar bill might be just lying on a table. She had her questions. She thought maybe her husband was dealing marijuana, which she knew he smoked occasionally. But he denied it.

"He knew what my feelings were about it. I just didn't approve. I didn't like the idea of him making money like that and enjoying the money that way. If he told me the truth, he knew I would leave," she said.

So Tony told Michele he worked for a moneylender, collecting cash payments from borrowers.

But he offered no explanation for other bizarre behavior, like the times he couldn't sleep and the times he showed up hours late for dates or family events.

"I would notice a strange kind of behavior, but I didn't put it together. When you love that person, you only see what you want to see," Michele says.

Tony's lies were his way of hiding an increasing obsession. An addiction that he didn't admit existed — even to himself.

"All this time I thought I was pretty much in control. I would be very, very careful how much I used. But as soon as I was going down, I would use it. I was high pretty much. There were days I would leave it, but it was better with (cocaine)."

Everything had started like a game, but the drug's hold on him kept tightening until, he says, "It was priority number one, (I) could not let it go."

He skipped work to go pick up cocaine deliveries. He would sniff almost anywhere to get high or stay high.

The guilt became a burden that led to a self-destructive cycle.

"You felt like kicking yourself, but you could only kick so hard," he says. "So you would go home and do it again."

Tony introduced his friend Rick to the drug. The two would go to parties on nights when Michele was at work. Tony had a lot of friends to party with — friends who liked him just because he had cocaine, he now realizes.

Rick, who also was arrested and later went through treatment, says those parties consisted of "doing lines" and talking about philosophy, religion or politics.

"I remember everybody would be so high and there we were talking like geniuses. Everybody felt like geniuses. . . But if we would have taped some of

our conversations it would have been ridiculous. It probably didn't make any sense at all."

Three or four people would gather in a house and do about four grams in seven or eight hours. Other times Tony and Rick would go on 48-hour binges.

Cocaine triggers the release of dopamine and other neurochemicals in the brain, which convey signals of pleasure. Someone who's high on cocaine will have every muscle tensed, his eyes will be wide and staring. Sleep, food and sometimes sex have little appeal.

"It becomes your girlfriend, your lover, your best friend, your god. It becomes your god and later it becomes your hell," Rick said.

The cocaine crash produces bouts of depression, fatigue and muscle soreness. Many regular users drink alcohol to counterbalance the high.

Coming down from cocaine, Rick says, is like "meeting hell, in person."

Michele met her own kind of hell one afternoon in 1983 when Tony was giving her a ride to her class at UNL.

"I see him looking in the (rear-view) mirror, kind of nervous. And I asked, 'What's happening?' And he said, 'The police are going to stop us.' I thought it was maybe a speeding ticket.

"And then all these cars pull around and people came and asked us to get out."

The policemen, mostly plainclothesmen, searched the van and went through Michele's purse.

"I was surprised and scared," she says, "and I think at that moment everything kind of fit together."

But as the pieces fit together in her mind, her world seemed to fall apart.

She had to go to jail for a few hours and was questioned about everything from Tony's behavior to the reasons for a recent family vacation in Colorado.

See COCAINE on 3

Cocaine use rising

Cocaine is the only drug that seems to consistently gain popularity in Lincoln, and its users are mostly in their 20s and 30s, says Duke Engel, assistant director of the Independence Center at Lincoln General Hospital.

The Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that 26 million Americans have tried the drug.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, about 30 percent of all college students will use cocaine at least once before graduation.

In May 1985, UNL police arrested three students in their dorm on drug-related charges, including cocaine trafficking.

In April 1985, two UNL fraternity members and a sorority member were arrested on cocaine-related activities.

In October of 1985, a massive police effort ended in the arrest of 68 people, mostly Lincolniters.

Some may be busted, but cocaine use seems to keep growing, police and counselors say.

Cocaine affects each user differently and its effect can depend on whether it's snorted, smoked (through freebasing) or injected. In Lincoln, it sells for about \$120 a gram and it's about 50 to 80 percent pure, police estimate.

In Lincoln, no one knows exactly how many people may have died from cocaine. One Lincoln man, in his early 20s, was found with traces of the drug still in his nose.

Between 1981 and 1985, cocaine deaths in 25 major metropolitan areas more than doubled, says the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Counselors don't keep exact records, but they say they're seeing more and more patients with cocaine-related problems. Three places in Lincoln offer help — the Independence Center, the Lincoln-Lancaster Drug Project and Valley Hope.