

Women being taught to fight fires

By Allen Schaben
Staff Reporter

The Lincoln YWCA has added a program to help the Fire Department recruit "a more multicultural squad," said Luann Larsen, YWCA career counselor and coordinator of the firefighter training program.

The Lincoln YWCA is offering

classes to train women and minorities to become firefighters. Larsen said the eight-week session will prepare participants for the firefighter exam, which takes place in August and September.

"We are specifically targeting women for the program, but it isn't limited to just women," Larsen said. "Anyone can come."

The sessions will include fitness training three times a week, tutoring for the firefighter exam, a weekly support and counseling group, and workshops on job stress and interview techniques. The fitness classes will focus on upper-body strength, Larsen said.

Terry Biggerstaff, administrative officer for the Lincoln Fire Department, said Lincoln has two women firefighters on the force.

"There are a lot of them across the country now, and they are able to perform their duties just like every-

body else," Biggerstaff said.

The Lincoln Fire Department also employs five minority firefighters, he said.

Larsen told Lincoln firefighters

Those interested in becoming firefighters can attend an agilities practice exercise July 22 and August 12 at the firefighter training center at Third and South streets, Biggerstaff said.

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--Larsen

that the YWCA should offer a program similar to Omaha's YWCA firefighter program, which successfully trained minorities and women.

After completing the Omaha YWCA firefighter preparation program, more than 40 women took the firefighter written exam in 1988, and five were hired, she said. Larsen said she hopes the Lincoln program will be as successful.

The practice session will give potential firefighters a chance to put on firefighting equipment and practice about 10 different functions which will be on the firefighter exam, he said.

Larsen said potential firefighters must pass a YWCA test, similar to that of the firefighter test. The test consists of a written test, agilities test and an oral interview.

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