

Detox aids holiday homeless

By Dionne Searcey
Staff Reporter

Instead of waking to scents of homemade goodies and holiday cheer, some homeless wake to a throbbing headache, the stench of vomit, and two aspirin waiting to be swallowed.

Rex Thompson, executive director of Cornhusker Place Detoxification Center, said the facility is filled on Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The center has 39 beds to accommodate intoxicated individuals, he said.

But Christmas Eve and Christmas day are slow, he said.

He said the decrease in numbers of patients on Christmas is because some homeless people have relatives that will accept them on this holiday.

"They'll be sober with their family. Their family will tolerate them over Christmas," he said.

But police still find intoxicated homeless people in need of care.

Police take intoxicated individuals to Cornhusker Place if they are believed to be endangering others or themselves, according to Sgt. John Lustrea, evening supervisor at the UNL Police Department.

"We pick up the same characters night after night," Lustrea said.

Thompson refers to these persons as "revolving door" patients. They are admitted to detox and released countless times.

He said a majority of these patients are homeless.

Lustrea said these individuals are transients who have given up on life. The alcohol provides a temporary escape from their troubles, he said.

"They're slowly trying to commit suicide — bottle by bottle," Lustrea said.

The center refers patients to 32 different rehabilitation programs that can help them overcome their drinking problem.

Students also can be of help to these individuals, Thompson said.

Thompson said students can donate clothes that are "just hanging around in their closets, never being worn."

The center sometimes needs to provide clothing for patients who don't have winter clothes or who have urinated in their clothing while passed out.

David Traster, chaplain for the men's shelter at the Lincoln City Mission, said some detox patients need to be steered into an Alcoholics Anonymous program.

He said students could follow-up on detox patients after they leave the shelter and provide them transportation to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Thompson also said students should look at their own social life and how much it is centered on drinking.



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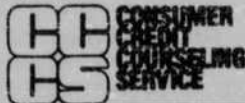
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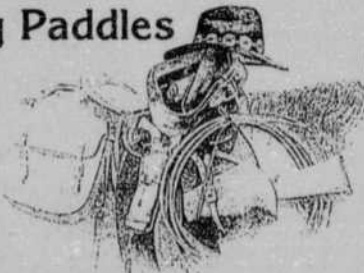
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