

CHUCK GREEN

Holiday struggle for homeless

Throughout the country, people already are shopping for their Thanksgiving meals.

Some even will take a more old-fashioned approach and will hunt for wild turkey to fill their tables next week.

But some of those hunting for Thanksgiving dinner won't be using shotguns or bows and arrows, and they won't be traveling to central Nebraska's wilderness to find their game.

They'll be using their hands to dig through trash dumpsters. Chances are, they won't even eat with the benefit of a roof over their heads.

To America's homeless, Thanksgiving is just another day of searching for acceptance — and a warm, dry place to stay.

Here in Lincoln, according to a spokesperson at the People's City Mission, there are a "dozens" of homeless citizens, although the numbers fluctuate from month to month because some of the homeless are transients just passing through town.

Whatever the number, many spend their time the same way. One can see them wandering the streets checking for loose change at the stems of parking meters or in coin-return slots of pay telephones and vending machines. Some collect aluminum cans, while others just ask passers-by for anything they can spare. Many of them want to work and do look for jobs, contrary to popular belief, said Steve Janovec, executive director of the People's City Mission.

National statistics indicate that many homeless, including those in Lincoln, are alcoholics, and some even suffer from mental illness. Many others probably are regular abusers of various types of illegal drugs, according to the same statistics.

In contrast to vast media attention paid to the issue a few years ago, little recent coverage has been given to national programs and non-profit organizations established to help America's homeless. The homeless epidemic seems to have been swept into the curb to make way for discussion of other problems that are arguably less pressing.

After all, racism, sexism and other



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forms of bigotry are vitally meaningful issues, but rarely do they involve a daily struggle for survival.

Estimates of the numbers of America's homeless range from 2 million to 10 million, depending on whose counts are being discussed. The smallest estimates are the result of the Reagan and Bush administrations' ignorance of life outside country club walls.

Sadly, that perception, or lack thereof, isn't likely to change in the next four years.

But a common public misconception of the homeless epidemic seems to be that it is a problem for bigger cities and "can't happen here," wherever "here" may be.

In Lincoln — one of the 10 best American cities in which to live, according to Money Magazine — the problem exists, though few people take time to notice it enough to take action. It's one of those problems that people think will go away if they just turn their heads and keep walking.

But it won't. Like the bitter cold Lincoln receives every winter, the existence of people without homes, and sometimes without blankets, is a fact of life.

Lincoln's vagrancy laws ensure a few arrests of homeless persons every

week. Those arrested are the lucky ones because they'll spend the night in jail or at the detoxification center.

Those who successfully sidestep police officers' flashlights are probably the ones who have been on the streets the longest and who know how to avoid hassles through experience.

Janovec said it costs about \$12 for the mission to provide services for one person for 24 hours.

Those services include three meals, clothing, personal counseling and job referrals.

For \$25,000 — about \$1 per student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln — the mission could help 2,083 less-fortunate men, women and children.

One dollar. There's something to think about before crawling under the covers tonight.

Thanksgiving is a time to be thankful and gracious for what we here in America have been given. But, like Christmas, it also is a time to reflect on what we as a society have become, and a time to find ways to make things better for those who aren't so fortunate.

Many people have had first-hand experience with the homeless, either by a direct request for spare change or just seeing them wander the streets. But few people are ever affected enough actually to think about what it must be like not to have a place to live.

Three years ago, on Thanksgiving morning, I was returning home from out of town when I stopped at a convenience store to fill my car's gas tank. As I entered the store to pay, I noticed an elderly man digging through a trash dumpster on the side of the building.

When I left the store, he was walking across the parking lot empty-handed. I asked him if he needed anything, or even a ride somewhere. He asked me if I could spare a dollar.

I gave him a \$5 bill. He insisted on giving me \$4 change.

I only wish everyone could experience what I felt for the rest of that day.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan's assistant sports editor and a columnist.

'Unpersonals' disgusting, disheartening

After reading the first group of "unpersonals" Tuesday, I'm really disgusted and disheartened. These threats of violence, oppressive attacks and simple meanness are gratuitous and unfortunate. "You freaks — get back in the closet" seems blatantly homophobic and anyone who freely dreams of "hurling a poison-laden spear through your quivering body" is probably psychotic and needs help.

Come on, guys. College is supposed to make us more tolerant, right? We have plenty of negativity on campus without the Daily Nebraskan actively soliciting it.

Victoria Kovar
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A University-wide canned goods drive will take place on Nov. 18 - 22. CAN-IT boxes for donations will be located at the front desk of each Residence Hall, Greek houses, and at CORNERSTONE (640 North 16). Contributions will be given to the Malone Community Center Thanksgiving Basket Project. Sponsored by UMHE-CORNERSTONE. Please help us help others.



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There is no charge for the program.
UNL does not discriminate in its academic, or employment programs and abides by all federal and state regulations pertaining to same.

Critical student evaluations not motivated by racism

This letter is in response to an article by Tom Kunz ("Professor targets racism," DN, Nov. 13).

We would like to make a few things clear about this situation. First of all, we are not saying that Colin Ramsay of the actuarial department science is a poor professor. In fact, we would be the first to say that we learned a great deal from his classes. We just want to set the record straight about the attitudes of the actuarial science students and tell the other side of the story.

The subject of the article was the use of teacher evaluations to vent racial hostilities. We have Ramsay as a teacher and feel his assessment of the evaluations is incorrect. We can see where Ramsay might get poor evaluations from some of his students, but the reason for this is not racially motivated. Ramsay teaches very difficult subjects and purposely tries to make the classes

very difficult for the students. He is trying to challenge the students to work harder than they are used to working for other classes. This causes many students to become upset and this is reflected in the evaluations.

To say that poor evaluations are caused by students' racial attitudes is an unwarranted accusation. We doubt very much if there were any racially motivated evaluations from

his classes. In fact, in most of the actuarial classes that we have had including the classes we had with Ramsay, about half of the class was made up of minority students.

The article quotes Ramsay as saying, "The excuse is that, 'We're not used to that color of human being.'" We know most of the actuarial science students and we have never heard any such comment nor have we heard any racial comments even close to that about Ramsay or any minority. The actuarial science students are not

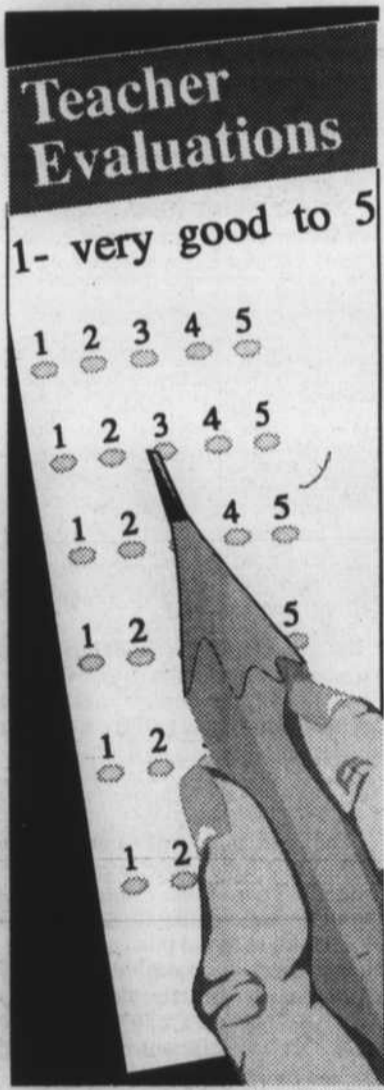
racially biased and are not deserving of these accusations. We hope this letter helps to relate the other side of the story and promote better communication between the students and Ramsay in the future.

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Brian Shellito/DN