

LISA PYTLIK

# Volunteerism threatens lifestyle

A menacing new group is forming, today, on our very own campus. This group threatens to change the college experience as we know it.

College is a special time in a person's life. It is full of stresses and pressures that help the average student experience life in a unique way. For example, it has been the privilege of many busy students to savor feelings of burnout, depression, purposelessness and lowered self-esteem.

And, to the extent that students devote their time to their studies at the expense of their social life, they also have been able to experience loneliness and a disintegration of adequate support systems.

But now a certain group, if successfully established, could change all this through very sly and covert means.

The group would be known as UNL Habitat for Humanity (UNL-HFH). It would end the familiar misery of our college existence, using three methods: It would aid the already established Lincoln chapter of HFH in constructing houses for the poor and homeless; it would raise funds to support its work and the work of other HFH chapters; and it would educate us, the larger campus community, about housing needs in Lincoln.

These activities sound harmless until one considers their far-reaching implications.

A campus chapter of HFH would impose on the consciences of students and possibly influence many to join and work with others of various backgrounds, races and social classes. This might break down social barriers that took years of hard work to build.

Furthermore, as they work together, these students might form relationships that would dissipate loneliness and depression. In addition, seeing the results of their work might create feelings of purposefulness and self-esteem that would ruin hundreds of perfectly good pity parties.

Finally, if a group such as this were allowed to form, it might encourage the establishment of other such humanitarian groups with similar effects. In the end, college chaos as we know it could be utterly destroyed.

Because this is a relatively free country and campus, there is no way to stop groups such as these from forming. Those who value the wretchedness of their college life must, therefore, carefully guard their consciences to avoid becoming involved in this movement towards cooperation and compassion.

To aid those who wish to do this, I have comprised lists of arguments that one should NOT use when debating with her or his conscience concerning the matter of charitable or-



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are aware of the dynamics that keep people in poverty and take these into account in their day-to-day operations.

The Lincoln City Mission, for example, requires that the people who stay there be sober. It also employs counselors for the residents, has a GED program in which the residents may participate and hires some of the residents to work various jobs within the organization.

HFH also has considered underlying factors in its operations. HFH does not "give away" free housing. Through the use of 20-year mortgages and interest-free loans, the families who receive the houses pay the principal cost of the house plus insurance and taxes.

Furthermore, the families are expected to put in 400 hours of "sweat equity" for their home. These hours may be fulfilled by helping to build their home or doing other work for HFH.

"I'm a college student. I don't have time to help, and I don't have money to donate."

Many charitable organizations do not mandate strict commitments of time and money. The main purpose of the campus chapter of HFH, for instance, is to act as a resource pool for the larger Lincoln HFH chapter. Students can sign up to be on the HFH mailing list and attend meetings and projects whenever they have time.

Likewise, organizations such as the Mission, the Gathering Place and even the YWCA often will take one-time-only donations of time, especially when they are planning special events which conveniently may fall during student breaks or on weekends.

Actually, no logical argument will work to convince one's conscience against joining charitable organizations such as the proposed UNL-HFH, which meets today.

In this case, the most effective defense to employ is apathy. Students who truly value their right to a wretched college existence should carefully avoid the sections of the DN that might advertise the meetings of humanitarian-type groups.

They also should scan headlines before reading articles to ensure they don't take in any information that might induce feelings of compassion, responsibility or guilt.

Finally, if, by some unfortunate accident, one does read something that creates a compelling feeling to take action, one should immediately turn to his or her neighbor and begin to discuss something more important, such as football, until the feeling passes.

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ganizations:

"There is really no need for (fill in the name of the charitable organization you are trying to avoid here)."

This argument does not work because most organizations will flood your conscience with thousands of statistics that say just the opposite—that there IS a need. HFH, for example, claims Lincoln contains more than 6,000 substandard housing units and 800 families are on the waiting list for subsidized housing.

"Most charitable donations go toward administrative costs, not to those who really need it."

This argument often is true for money donated to larger organizations that employ large numbers of paid workers. Smaller community-based charities, however, often are run mostly by volunteers and take donations that can go directly towards those they help.

The City Mission, for example, takes donations of food and time. The Gathering Place, located near the Capitol, often uses volunteers to serve free soup suppers to the hungry. And HFH accepts donations of housing materials and hard work to reduce the price of the houses it builds.

"Charity does not teach the poor the skills they need to rise up from poverty. Instead, it promotes a 'something-for-nothing' attitude."

Many humanitarian organizations

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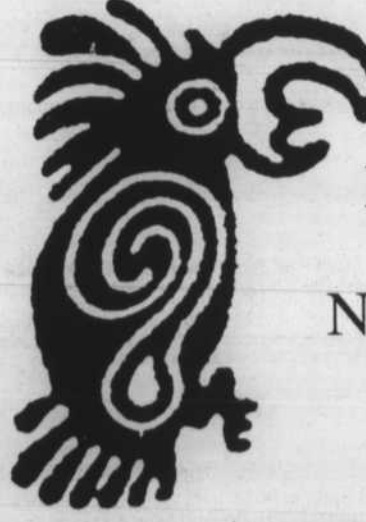
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