

College Tour provides carnival atmosphere Halls

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Booths provide games, free food, minute in spotlight

By Katherine Gordon
Staff Reporter

UNL students took a comedy quiz, were contestants on "The Price is Right" and "Family Feud" and were taped in scenes from their favorite CBS soap operas Monday.

But they didn't have to go to Los Angeles.

The CBS College Tour — a menagerie of booths offering games and activities to promote various sponsors — is visiting the University of Nebraska-Lincoln offering students the "American Dream" — a moment in the limelight, plus free food and samples.

The tour, hosted by the University Program Council, began Monday at Broyhill Fountain and will resume today from 9 a.m. to around 4 p.m.

The tour is produced by manager Joe Mercante and 13 events producers from the Contemporary Group, a St. Louis-based events marketing company. Student volunteers and employees hired through UPC help to make the event possible.

A little rain and wind won't discourage the team, Mercante said.

"We're very tailored to the weather," he said.

If the rain was enough to keep students away or to damage the electrical equipment, the tour would have to close down until the weather cooperated.

"We try to never close for the whole day," he said. "We spend a lot of time building this stuff and with all these students pulling for us we try to stay open."

Mercante's 13-man team is mostly made up of communications or marketing graduates who work full time promoting the CBS College Tour. They enjoy traveling the country during their eight-month tours, and their visit to Nebraska is no exception.



Jeff Haller/DN

Jen Kross, right, a senior business management major, celebrates after winning a game of high-low at the CBS College Tour's "The Price Is Right" game booth. Charlie Horsey, left, and Erin Walton worked at the booth.

"When we're in Boulder, there's the Rockies, but we look at different things," Mercante said. Lincoln is a fun college town, he said, partially because of the large student response to activities.

When the tour workers have time off, Mercante said he and his co-workers took "mental health days." They take advantage of outdoor opportunities like the mountains and beaches around the college areas they're visiting, in addition to exploring the night life in the area, to give them a break from work.

But during the day, booths and games fill the time.

CBS sponsors have booths such as AT&T's "It's Your Call" simulated sportscasters' box. Students can sit in the announcers' chairs while wearing borrowed suit coats and dub their

voices over a taped highlight from a CBS sportscast. Participants can keep the Maxell-donated video tapes of their performance.

Nestle's sponsored "The Price Is Right" booth, where participants guess the price of Nestle's products. Winners are awarded prizes, and even losers receive Nestle's product samples like coffee, hot chocolate and candy.

For the jock — or aspiring jock — there's the Schering-Plough Health Care Products Obstacle Course and the Coca-Cola Shoot Out.

To win at the obstacle course, participants set a time goal in which they will complete the five feats: make one basket, one putt, one goal kick, one tennis shot and one targeted throw. Those who meet their self-set time limits win Frisbees, and all contestants

receive Schering-Plough samples of cold medicine and sunscreen.

The Shoot Out objective is similar to that of an around-the-world basketball game. Stations are set up around a basketball hoop and the participants attempt a shot from each station. They can shoot more than once from each station, but to win, participants must have completed each station before the time is up.

All participants receive a free Coke and winners win cassette tapes.

The tour producers also hand out posters, compact discs, T-shirts, fanny packs, cups and a variety of snacks.

All these lures may cause skeptics to avoid the circus-like area. But tour manager Mercante said there was no catch.

"You can't spend a nickel here," he said.

"That leaves just a little over 100 to fill," he said. "I think that's definitely possible."

Schumann said the move to convert Pound was risky, but he felt confident it would pay off.

"It's a gamble," Schumann said. "But hopefully, it'll all work out."

The combination of Cather and Pound to form an all-upperclass complex for students who otherwise would not have returned was needed at UNL, Schumann said.

"We want to stress the importance of community," he said. "We think (this complex) will provide students with a comfortable community that helps them with their education."

Schumann said the advantages of the upperclass complex over other residence halls, such as convenience, proximity to class and the added vacation housing, helped to increase the demand for Cather-Pound rooms.

He said most of the Cather-Pound rooms would be assigned as single rooms, but double rooms were available with some restrictions, he said.

"In order to have a double room, the students will have to know each other," he said. "That way, two total strangers aren't just thrown together."

Schumann said the decision to move to an upperclass environment was spurred by a combination of factors.

Student feedback was the first major factor, he said.

"They were wanting to get focused and to find an environment where they could concentrate on academics," he said. "Often, returning students don't feel very comfortable in a highly freshman environment."

The housing department also talked to other universities that have experimented with upperclass residence halls, including Western Illinois University and the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, Schumann said.

"We won't be the first school to try this," he said.

Aerts

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would ask them where they worked and take cards to their offices.

"One guy came in (to Amigos) and wanted a stack of cards to take to his fraternity house," she said. "But I couldn't give them to him while I was in Amigos, so I took my uniform off and ran across the street and gave them to him."

Aerts said she didn't get embarrassed about approaching strangers or shouting in front of the union.

"Who cares?" she said. "No one's going to say 'Hey, you're stupid.'"

"I like to win!" she said. After the first day of the contest, Aerts went back to work and requested 2500 cards. Her store, on 14th and Q streets, didn't have that many cards and her manager told her to stop bugging her. But Aerts was undaunted.

She called the store's main office for the cards — then gave them away in one day. She walked around her classes handing them out and came up with dozens of other strategies to win.

Soon her strategic planning became more obsessive than competitive.

"It got bad," she said. "I skipped classes to initial cards and hand them out."

She said sometimes people got annoyed with her, but most were friendly and cooperative.

"A guy in my English class was teasing me," she said.

So she payed him back by torturing him into helping her.

"My family raises about 600 to 800 chickens a year and slaughters them," she said. "I wrote a story for this English class about these gut fights we used to have."

Gut fights?

"Yeah," she said. "I've always been the poorer and the gizzard cutter."

Each member of the Aerts family was assigned a body part when they were

— 66 —

Anyway, this guy said I was really disgusting. He was this Omaha city guy and I was this town girl. I thought gut fights were pretty normal.

— Aerts

UNL student and Amigos employee

— 99 —

slaughtering chickens and they occasionally battled each other with the organs, she said.

She demonstrated the intestine attack by swinging her arms in a helicopter motion above her head.

"Anyway, this guy said I was really disgusting," she said. "He was this Omaha city guy and I was this town girl. I thought gut fights were pretty normal."

Kayla said she went into great detail about guts for her classmate until he agreed to distribute a stack of cards for her.

But not all of her methods were so unconventional. She recruited her four sisters, two brothers, one brother's girlfriend, both her parents, her boyfriend and her boyfriend's parents to help her initial and hand out the Amigos cards.

"I made my little sister sit and practice her handwriting so they'd look nice," she said.

Aerts' efforts paid off.

She won the contest and used the cash for a car payment. However, she skipped the trip because she had just spent a weekend in Kansas City.

"I wasn't really into it for the money," she said. "It was just fun."


This year, Aerts said she was not as caught up in the contest.

"It takes a lot of energy and I'm really busy in school right now," she said.

When asked if she expected to win the contest again, Aerts answered, "No. I don't know. Should I say yes? Maybe."

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