

Disability Fair aims to educate

By Rebecca Oltmans
Staff Reporter

For Chris Etheredge, attending the National Camp for Blind Children changed his life — twice.

Etheredge, a Lincoln man who has been blind from birth, and his seeing-eye dog, Domer, were one part of a Disability Awareness Fair sponsored by Christian Record Services Tuesday.

CRS is a nonprofit organization that provides free publications and programs for the visually and hearing-impaired. It also sponsors the camps.

At the fair, Etheredge talked about his experience attending the first camp for the blind in 1967. Etheredge, who was 15 at the time, had no interest in the camp until he found out that a girl he wanted to date was attending the camp.

Although he barely spoke to the girl, something much more important happened, he said. He got to water ski.

"After I did that I began to wonder what else I had sold myself short on," Etheredge said.

Etheredge experienced another important event at another camp for the blind 13 years later. Etheredge was director of the camp and he met his current wife, who was a nurse there.

Besides question-and-answer opportunities with Etheredge and others with disabilities, the fair also had free testing for glaucoma and hearing loss, a sign language class and games.

During the fair, Rep. Doug Bereuter presented service awards to special education teachers.

Rikki Stenbakken, assistant to the president of CRS, said the fair was designed to educate people about disabilities.



Shaun Sartin/DN

Chris Etheredge, a public information specialist with the Christian Record Services, greets his seeing-eye dog, Domer, during the Disability Awareness Fair Tuesday.

During a beeper ball game, participants hit a baseball off a tee while blindfolded. When a pin was removed from the ball, it beeped so batters could locate it.

Etheredge, a CRS public information specialist, said he tried to educate children, who usually are more open to learn about disabilities than adults.

Freezes may not end sneezes, allergist says

By Josh Wimmer
Staff Reporter

There's something in the air, but it's not pollen anymore. It's mold.

With the first statewide freeze Tuesday morning, the weed pollen count has decreased. But hay fever sufferers hoping for a change for the better might be disappointed, because allergy-causing molds are on the rise, Lincoln allergist Fred Kiechel said.

"We're now into the time of the year where the pollen counts are going down, and the mold counts are going up," Kiechel said.

Various types of pollen remain in the air only for a few months, but molds proliferate throughout the year, he said.

These molds are not the type that grow on old bread or cheese. These are parasitic fungi that release microscopic spores into the air. The spores are a major cause of hay fever, Kiechel said.

Hay fever is the generic name for a number of allergies caused by natural substances in the air such as mold spores and weed pollens, Kiechel said.

Victims of this allergy suffer from congested sinuses and runny noses and eyes. The extremity of the symptoms varies from person to person.

Weed pollen probably is the best-known cause of hay fever, but molds also can cause the allergy, Kiechel said.

"Typically, the weed pollens come out in mid-August and go on until we get a freeze," he said.

Molds, on the other hand, are

more resistant to the freeze and can live indoors as well as out.

The recent upsurge in molds is due to seasonal occurrences, Kiechel said. Grass is starting to die and leaves are beginning to fall, and those events provide greater feeding opportunities for the molds and help stir them up. Both spring and autumn are prime times for molds, he said.

About 10 to 15 major molds can give allergy sufferers trouble, and about six of those account for most of the symptoms in the Lincoln area, Kiechel said.

Hay fever victims can protect themselves from the misery that pollens and molds cause, he said.

Keep windows and doors closed to prevent pollens from entering the house. Because molds can live indoors, however, run a dehumidifier in normally damp areas, such as the basement, he said.

Raking leaves, mowing the lawn and doing other yardwork can aggravate hay fever, because so many pollens and mold spores are stirred up in the process.

If hay fever sufferers absolutely must perform those chores, they may want to wear a mask covering the mouth and nose. They also should shower or bathe immediately afterward to remove any residual pollens or spores, Kiechel said.

Allergy sufferers also should take antihistamines or use a prescription nasal spray before heading outdoors on particularly windy days or to do yardwork, Kiechel said.

Murder suspect confronts former girlfriend in court

FALLS CITY (AP) — A man accused in a triple slaying near Humboldt confronted a former girlfriend in court Tuesday in an obscenity-filled tirade.

John Lotter interrupted the testimony given by Rhonda McKenzie of Falls City at a hearing in Richardson County with some of his own questions and comments.

"Who the (expletive) ... is paying you off?" he asked McKenzie. As she was escorted from the stand, Lotter said: "Get her the (expletive) ... out of here."

After a 30-minute recess, McKenzie retook the stand to continue her testimony without interruption at the suppression hearing that began Monday and is expected to continue throughout the week.

Lotter, 22, and Marvin Nissen, 21, are each charged with three counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of three people in a farmhouse near Humboldt on New Year's Eve.

The men were originally arrested for allegedly kidnapping and sexually assaulting one of the murder victims, Teena Brandon. Brandon, who posed as a man, reported on Dec. 24

that the men forced her into a car, drove her outside of Falls City and raped her.

The hearing is being held to consider whether evidence should be suppressed in the case because the two were arrested on the day of the alleged murders without an arrest warrant.

Assistant Police Chief John Caverzagie of Falls City had testified that he knew law enforcement officials did not have a warrant when the two men were arrested but he feared that if they waited the men would flee. In addition, Caverzagie said he felt they had enough probable cause to make the arrest.

On Tuesday, a police investigator with Falls City testified that the murders were "probably a factor" in the arrest of the two men on the rape charges.

Keith Hayes said he knew of no hard evidence that linked the two men to the slayings but that their involvement was "basically a theory."

Hayes said he did not know that the arrests had been made without warrants until a few weeks later.

UNL gets grant to develop uses for wheat gluten

By Gregg Madson
Staff Reporter

The USDA has awarded the University of Nebraska-Lincoln a \$172,000 grant to pioneer new, environmentally friendly uses for wheat gluten.

Curtis Weller, assistant professor of food science and technology, said the new uses include a different type of mulch and plastic bags made partially from the wheat gluten.

Weller said the research will focus on making plastic bags that are more environmentally friendly.

"I hesitate to call the bags biodegradable, it depends on your definition of the word," Weller said. "We would hope these bags will be

compostable." The bags would break down quicker than ordinary plastic bags, he said.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln researchers requested the grant because they wanted to find more uses for agricultural commodities, Weller said.

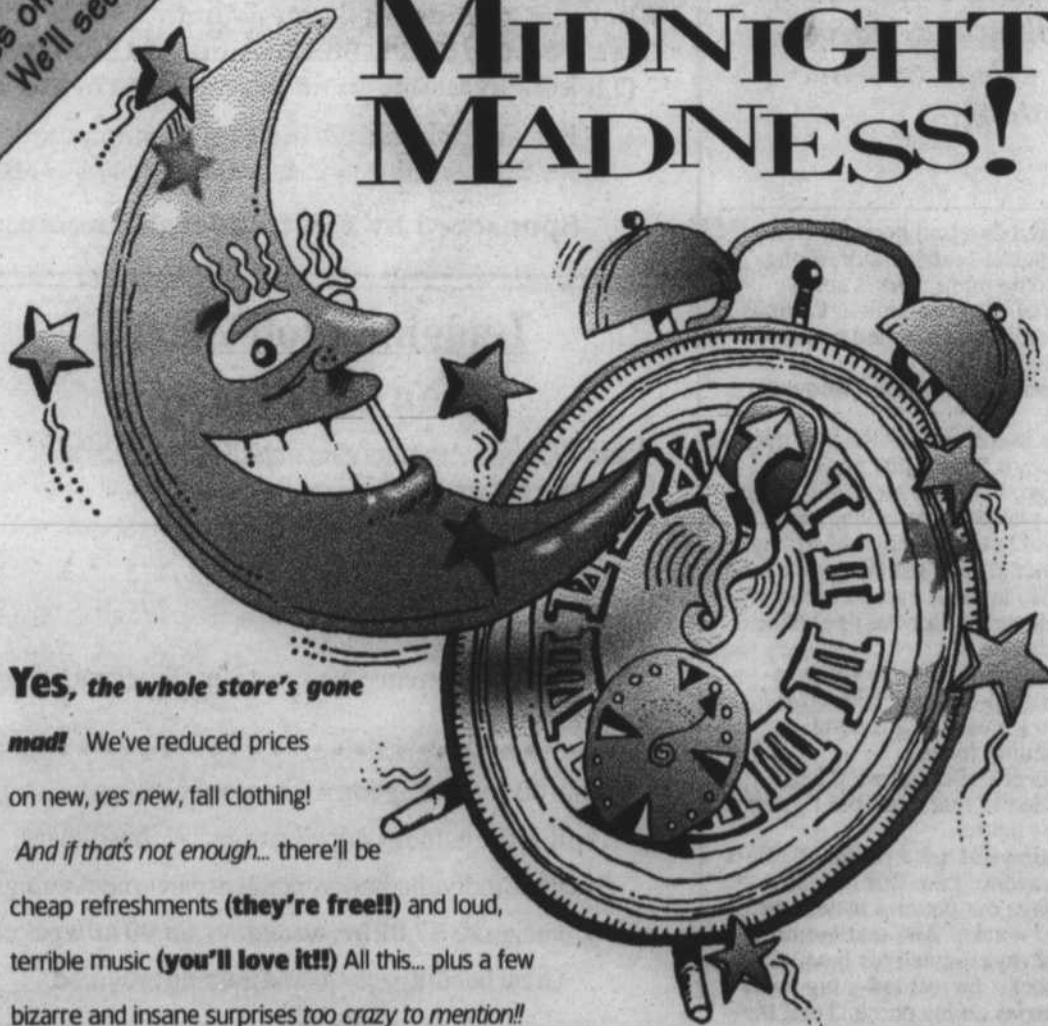
"The USDA has many programs which they award money to. There were 150 applicants for this program and about 25 of them were accepted," Weller said.

The research has already begun, he said.

"This grant is really a continuation of funds to keep our research going," Weller said.

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