



Jay Calderon/DN
TYSON BASSETT, 3, wheels around a Spinoza Bear that was presented to Saint Elizabeth's Pediatric Unit by the Lincoln Jaycees.

Teddy bears soothe patients with hugs of love, peace, comfort

By LORI ROBISON
 Staff Reporter

Bringing peace of mind to a young patient surrounded by the antiseptic walls of a hospital can be a tall order.

But 3-year-old Tyson Bassett, a burn patient recovering at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, has a new friend. He brings messages of love, peace and relaxation and lulls the blond-haired little boy to sleep each night amid his strange surroundings.

And thanks to the Lincoln Jaycees, Tyson's new friend will be available for the next patient at St. Elizabeth's, relieving some of the stress almost everyone feels while staying at a hospital.

The "friend," donated to St. Elizabeth's by the Jaycees Thursday evening, is a 17-inch tall, soft, cuddly teddy bear called Spinoza.

However, at a cost of about \$200, Spinoza is very different from his run-of-the-mill stuffed relatives found in most children's toy boxes.

The bear was designed in 1984 by a communications specialist and a special education teacher in Minneapolis as a relaxation tool for terminally ill

children. Spinoza has found a niche working in several hospitals across the country.

The bear comes equipped with a tape cassette and microphone that fits snugly inside its stomach and an on/off volume switch at his heart. It can be made to play a variety of soothing messages specifically designed to reduce stress and tension.

David Spohr, chairman of the Lincoln Jaycees, says it is the messages the soft bear brings to patients that make this relaxation tool effective.

Along with tapes about such subjects as friendship, apprehension about upcoming operations, proper breathing techniques, self-esteem and stress about being alone in a hospital, Spinoza also can play messages recorded by parents or other loved ones.

All messages are specially recorded using tones and soothing background music designed to promote relaxation.

"Spinoza is there to be a friend," Spohr said. "If (patients) are calm, they tend to heal better, and the medicines work better."

Although the Lincoln Jaycees donated its first bear to Bryan Memorial Hospital in May 1996, Spinoza already had to be sent away for repairs because

of frequent use, Spohr said.

"They just wore it out," he said, adding that Bryan has used its own funds to purchase a second bear because of the high demand for Spinoza.

Responding to the positive feedback to the bear by Bryan's patients, an anonymous donor made it possible for the Lincoln Jaycees to purchase two more Spinozas, Spohr said.

These bears have since been donated to Lincoln General Hospital as well as St. Elizabeth's, ensuring that all the major hospitals in Lincoln have one.

Demand for Spinoza from patients at Bryan Memorial and Lincoln General has been so positive, Spohr said, that the bears have found their way all throughout the hospital including the surgery recovery rooms and burn units, as well as the emergency rooms.

"(Spinoza) can be used even for grown-ups if they just want to hug a bear," Spohr said. In fact, the bear has been used by people of all ages.

Bob Lanik, St. Elizabeth's president, said the bear is special because it can be personalized.

"Spinoza is a hit," Lanik said. "We will use it with great joy and pride."

Lotus e-mail system may link NU campuses

By ERIN GIBSON
 Senior Reporter

Regents

With the NU Board of Regents' approval, an advanced new e-mail system could soon connect all four University of Nebraska campuses.

James Van Horn, NU vice president for business and finance, announced the new e-mail system at the regents' Business Affairs Committee meeting Friday. The system would replace 30 separate current systems, save maintenance costs and allow an easier exchange of materials and ideas.

"The key is a more efficient system," Van Horn said. "We kind of have a Tower of Babel right now."

The 30 current e-mail setups require a host of maintenance workers trained to handle the different systems. Systems are not compatible, and prevent the transfer of documents and other information, he said.

The current systems cannot handle the future of e-mail, including video conferencing, Van Horn said. The new system, using Lotus Notes software from Lotus Development Corp., would be able to handle such leading-edge technology, he said.

Van Horn said he planned to

bring a contract for implementation of the new system to the board in the next two to three months.

In a year of legislative budget-crunching, the start-up costs of the new system are reasonable, said Walter Weir, NU assistant vice president and director of Information Services. Preliminary estimates indicate \$635,000 could be required for all software and hardware during the first year, he said.

For example, Greg Gray, NU Information Services specialist, said he receives about 10 to 15 calls per day for help with problems in a 32-user e-mail system. One efficient, consolidated system would greatly reduce such frequent and costly maintenance problems, he said.

And Weir said the benefits for users of the Lotus Notes system are outstanding. For example, all users could access their e-mail accounts with an Internet browser from any location worldwide.

Lotus Notes technology is already in place in some Lincoln public schools, Weir said, which could eventually create a "seamless education" for Lincoln students who later attend NU.

Regents debate budget

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Cuts could come from administration, which currently makes up three-fourths of all university employees, he said. Cutbacks in administration wouldn't harm students and wouldn't require more tax dollars for the university, Miller said.

The regents would then have leverage in trying to gain Nelson's approval on a deferred-bond initiative that could channel \$102 million into the university's deferred maintenance backlog, he said.

But Smith said cuts in administration could not make up for the lack of increased funding.

"We can't solve all of our problems by simple administrative efficiency and downsizing," Smith said.

Smith said the \$18 million requested by the regents was still \$2 million short of the amount required to raise faculty and staff salaries 3 percent across the board. And a lack of full funding from the Legislature could result in raises in tuition.

Smith said he would not be content with the governor's recommendation and would testify on behalf of the university's full \$18 million increased funding request in front of the Legislature's Appropriations Committee March 11.

In other news, the board:

■ Approved a \$560,835 proposal Saturday for a new mainframe computer for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The new computer will provide space to back up research and administrative files, as well as provide a strong web server for Virtual University initiatives and Internet development.

■ Created a new committee on Virtual University and Technology.

■ Approved a \$592,060 proposal for renovations to an inpatient care unit at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's University Hospital in Omaha.

■ Elected Regent John Payne of Kearney as board chairman and Regent Charles Wilson of Lincoln as vice chairman for 1997.

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