

Corralled!

The Husker basketball team won with a 79-67 victory over Texas on Sunday. It avenged a loss the Longhorns handed to it in November. PAGE 7



Roll the dice

"Vegas Vacation," the latest installment in National Lampoon's "Vacation" series, gets laughs, but doesn't live up to its predecessors. PAGE 9

February 17, 1997

SUNNY SIDE UP

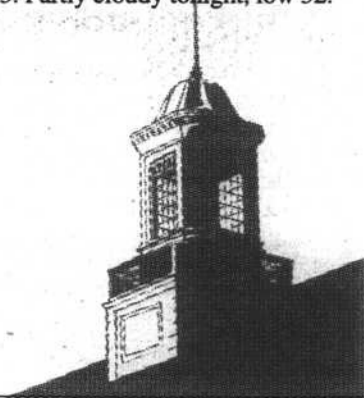
Sunny, high 53. Partly cloudy tonight, low 32.

Daily Nebraskan

VOL. 96

COVERING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN SINCE 1901

NO. 102



Leading the Way

The black leaders of the Lincoln community

Lite at the Top

Leadership, responsibility mixed bag for director

Editor's note: In honor of Black History Month, the Daily Nebraskan is profiling prominent black leaders in the Lincoln community. Today is the first of a five-part series.

BY ANTHONY CASKEY
Staff Reporter

For black leaders in Lincoln, it seems there is little to solve the problem of professional solitude.

And Donna Polk is one of the lonely ones.

"Being a black executive is lonely," said Polk, director of the Nebraskan Urban Indian Health Coalition. If she wants to talk with another black colleague, she said, she only has one other co-worker she can turn to.

It is a trend she finds disturbing and is a situation she tries hard to remedy.

But as a black woman running a clinic for people who have little or no money to pay for medical treatment, she said the road to achieving equality in the workplace — as well as building confidence — is long and difficult.

"Over the years, we've tried to develop support groups, but it never works," Polk said.

Polk's work as director of the coalition has won the respect of her co-workers and Lincoln community members.

According to Libby Raetz, director of St. Elizabeth Emergency Services and Outpatient Clinics, Polk was the person who contacted St. Elizabeth to start a health clinic with the coalition. The result of the collaboration between the two organizations, the Nebraskan Urban Indian Medical Center, has been operating at 1935 Q St. since March 4.

And Polk is the key to the center's success, Raetz said.

"Donna walks the walk," Raetz said. "I've seen her leave meetings early so she could drive people to



DANIEL LUEDERT/DN

DONNA POLK, executive director of the Nebraskan Urban Indian Health Coalition, stands in front of a dream catcher at the Nebraskan Urban Indian Medical Center at 1935 Q St. She has worked for the coalition for the past six years.

a funeral, which took several hours — these people are casual acquaintances."

Renee Geller, clinic supervisor at NUIHC, said Polk is not just an advocate for blacks.

"She is for everyone. She works for all cultural groups and for people who are at a lower socio-economic level," Geller said.

Polk takes her accolades in stride, however. Competency at a job is not the only ingredient for success, she said.

"It's not what you know but who you know," she said. "I knew the president of the board of this organization, Syd Beane, and he thought I would do a good job."

"It's the best career move that I've ever made."

In addition to one's connec-

tions, Polk believes that mentors are important to a person's career.

"It doesn't matter how much you know; if you are in uncharted territory, you need someone to show you where the traps are," she said.

But preparation for success lies in the standards of the community, Polk said. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for example, should be responsible for promoting strong leadership, she said.

"I believe UNL could play a greater role in preparing minority executives," Polk said. "I see that UNL has the responsibility for creating an environment that promotes leadership and community participation by minority faculty

Please see POLK on 3

Officers' families may see amends

BY BRIAN CARLSON
Staff Reporter

Two bills designed to make it easier for convicted murderers of police officers to receive the death penalty met no opposing testimony Thursday, but one senator's absence at the hearing led to controversy.

Testimony on LB422 and LB774, sponsored by Sen. Jerry Matzke of Sidney and Sen. Kate Witek of Omaha respectively, was heard by the Legislature's Judiciary Committee.

Both bills are designed to amend current law, which stipulates that a murder victim's status as a police officer may only be used as an aggravating circumstance if the accused was already in the officers' custody at the time of the murder.

Under the proposed legislation, a criminal who knowingly killed an on-duty police officer would face the additional aggravating circumstance in sentencing.

Jimmy Wilson Sr., whose son Jimmy Wilson Jr. was murdered in August 1995 while working as an Omaha police officer, testified in support of both bills.

Before a joint hearing on the two bills began, Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, a Judiciary Committee member, left the room and did not return.

Legislature

Wilson expressed frustration at Chambers' absence.

"I would like to have a chance to face that individual senator," he said. "He did the same thing to me last year."

Wilson said he favored the law not because police officers' lives were more important than those of other citizens, but because of their role in preserving order in society.

"We're not asking you to help just policemen," he said. "We're asking you to allow us to make a start, by legislating some tough laws and doing the things that it takes to turn things around."

Gov. Ben Nelson, who asked Matzke to sponsor his bill, asked committee members to crack down on "a crime against all society."

"We must provide the opportunity for maximum punishment for those who kill on-duty officers," he said. "We can do that by clearly spelling out that the killing of an officer while in the performance of his or her duties is an aggravating circumstance under which the death penalty can be applied."

Nelson said the legislation was not meant to renew the debate about the death penalty. Since most murders of

Please see POLICE on 3

Medical center surgeons use television technology

BY ERIN GIBSON
Senior Reporter

Two University of Nebraska Medical Center surgeons made history Jan. 30 by removing two cancerous kidneys from a man in Omaha.

They did it while watching television.

Inderbir Gill, a UNMC doctor who performed the surgery, said the television is necessary for organ removal with a laparoscope. A laparoscope is a small camera inserted inside a patient through a small incision.

The camera projects what it sees inside the patient on a television screen. Surgeons perform surgery watching the screen, not the patient, Gill said.

As a result, surgeries like the kidney removal can be performed without large incisions, he said. Patients' incisions are typically small enough to be covered with a small bandage. Patients recover with less pain in less time, Gill said.

The patient was walking and eating the next morning.

Tom O'Connor, UNMC public affairs officer, said the surgery was the first time doctors removed two cancerous kidneys simultaneously while using a laparoscope in surgery.

"As far as the patient is concerned, it's definitely a much easier operation."

INDERBIR GILL
UNMC doctor

Gill joined surgeon Martin Grune in performing the nearly five-hour procedure, O'Connor said.

Gill said removing cancerous kidneys is more difficult than removing non-cancerous kidneys for both surgeons and patients. He said all fat and adrenal glands surrounding the kidneys also must be removed to prevent the spread of cancer cells.

Typically, in such an operation, an 8-inch incision is made along the side of the patient, Gill said. The incision cuts through important muscle tissue.

"That's disfiguring," Gill said. "That hurts and that requires a lot of healing

Please see KIDNEYS on 6