

# Bill to support gifted programs advances

From Staff Reports

Although bad weather kept the Legislature from reaching a quorum until the middle of Monday afternoon, senators were able to advance a bill that would provide funding for gifted education.

The Legislature, which didn't begin its business until the 25th senator arrived at 2:45 p.m., voted 28-0 to advance LB1229 from general file.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Ardyce Bohlke of Hastings, would appropriate \$6 million for the fiscal year 1998-99 to provide state support for school systems that implement accelerated curriculum for gifted students.

Bohlke said participating school systems would receive a base of \$6,000 and \$2 in matching state funds for every \$1 the local system spends on gifted education.

Bohlke said test scores indicate the United States' top students are slipping behind those around the world. Nebraska, which faces a labor shortage and has sought means of retaining its top students, should ensure that bright students are sufficiently challenged, she said.

"If we want to keep them, we must first properly educate them," she said. "To identify students is a start, but it's not enough; we can do better and should."

Sen. Dave Maurstad of Beatrice

expressed concern that the bill would encourage schools to develop only one area of gifted education, such as drama or math and science, to set themselves apart and compete for students.

But Bohlke said the bill would encourage school districts to work together to offer a variety of gifted curriculum. "Magnet schools," which would each offer an especially strong gifted education program in one or two particular fields, would allow students a range of options in selecting a school, she said.

The bill will advance to enrollment and review to incorporate amendments. After being reviewed, it will move to select file, the next stage of debate.



**DANA POTRATZ**, from the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Rapids, Iowa looks for her next step during the Flatland Climbing Competition on Saturday at the Campus Recreation Center. The first-ever competition drew competitors of all ages throughout the Midwest.

DAWN DIETRICH/DN

## Competitors climb at first UNL contest

BY RYAN BRAUER  
Staff Reporter

Though the vital element in rock climbing — a mountain — was absent, Nebraska's first climbing competition happened anyway Saturday.

Dozens of competitors climbed the Campus Recreation Center's 37-foot indoor climbing wall during the inaugural Flatland Climbing Competition.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Climbing Club sponsored the competition attended by about 30 climbing enthusiasts of all ages.

Competitors in both intermediate and beginner divisions had 3½ hours to complete five climbs to the top of the wall.

Their goal was to score the most points for each climbing performance.

Points, awarded based on the difficulty of competitors' climbing routes, could be scored only if a climb was completed using the specified route of color-coded footholds and handholds.

Routes were rated from 100 to 750 points.

Justin Reese, president of UNL's Climbing Club, said the competition was open to anyone over age 5, and attracted many out-of-state competitors, including some from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kan., and the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Michael

Lary, a 19-year-old Kansas student, won the intermediate division with 2,750 points.

Lary said he had been climbing for a year and this was his third competition.

"I like the competitiveness," he said, "but the best part of these competitions is the people you meet."

Shane Eckelberg won the beginner's division with 2,025 points.

Frank Marek, 13, from Blair was the youngest climber to compete and placed fifth in the beginner's division.

Marek, who has been climbing for a year, said he learned to climb on a climbing wall at the Blair YMCA.

"I'm having a real good time," Marek said. "I like the people I meet and I just really like to climb."

Stacy Fairbank, a professional climbing-wall route setter from Kansas City, Mo., who climbs with the national competitive circuit, helped the climbing club organize the competition and set up the routes on the wall.

"I helped out a little, but I've got to give this club credit," Fairbank said. "They've done a great job and are putting on a quality competition."

Reese said the event was both a fund-raising event for the UNL Climbing Club and a chance to build interest and establish the club among local climbers.

"The Climbing Club was instrumental in the construction of the wall," he said. "so this was a nice chance for us to show it off."

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