

Diversity Players' skits play out minority issues

Students experience life in others' shoes

involvement

By LINDSAY YOUNG
Assignment Reporter

For about 30 students last week, the front of 116 Henslik Hall served as a stage.

It was a stage to act out situations some students on campus face every day.

But most of the students in the class had never been forced to deal with the situations presented — which involved racist or homophobic remarks — and what many students feel are harmless stereotypes.

Students in the audience replaced the actors in the skits whenever they felt the actors did not deal with the simulated experiences effectively.

And if no one was jumping in, the actors' voices would shout things like, "No one sees anything wrong with this?" Soon after, someone, like Billy Gabel, sophomore physical education and health major, would give one of the actor's positions a shot.

And that shot gave Gabel a different outlook on things he experiences every day, he said.

The UNL Diversity Players presented three skits — "Little Brown Brother," "Latina Sorority" and "Fairyland" — to a multicultural education class in the Teachers' College April 7. The players have performed more than 20 times to classes and university groups since their inception last fall.

In "Little Brown Brother," Gabel jumped in to replace the actor who was

"When you ask (the audience) to rewrite the skits they write them in very weird ways — but very effective ways."

DEANNA ZAFFKE
Diversity Players coordinator

playing the position of a character named Manuel, a Mexican-American.

Manuel was called several names, such as "little brown brother," by his friend, who was white.

The actor playing Manuel didn't respond. But Gabel decided the things Manuel's friend did were wrong and fed his own ideas into the skit.

Eventually he told the friend, "Well, I'm not your friend anymore!" The crowd roared with laughter and applause.

"I got defensive. I felt I should stick up for me," Gabel said in an interview after the skit.

When he was watching the plays, they didn't affect him as much, Gabel said.

But, he said, "When I was in that position, I just had a total 180."

Candace Cain, a sophomore middle school education major, said although she didn't participate in the skits, they still made her think.

"It just made me think, 'What would I say if something like that happened?'" she said.

The actors posed many questions to the class throughout the presentations such as, "How many of you just ignore it and just keep on going?" and, "Would you honestly say something to her?"

English Professor Anne Whitney said she felt some students thought the presentations were too confrontational.

Whitney had the group perform for three of her composition classes and had the students write about it in a journal.

But maybe the confrontational style was good for the students, she said.

"So suddenly they said something they really believed, and half the classroom take offense at what they said," she said.

"I think this is hard. This is really hard."

Deanna Zaffke, Diversity Players coordinator, said the experience is new for the players every time they perform.

"When you ask (the audience) to rewrite the skits they write them in very weird ways — but very effective ways," she said.

The group hopes to grow from the 24 students it has now to 100 by the end of next year.

Zaffke said the group is still looking for more minorities and men. People interested in joining can contact Zaffke at (402) 472-1880.

Whitney said the presentations were worth it, and her students' reactions proved it.

Project to aid low-income housing

By BRIAN CARLSON
Senior Reporter

Habitat for Humanity members hope to make life a little easier for a few low-income homeowners in Lincoln Saturday when they tackle a home-repair project with helping hands and open hearts.

For the Hand and Heart project, sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln chapter of Habitat for Humanity, a group of volunteers will spend Saturday working on home repairs at 13 local houses. Event organizers hope to attract 100 volunteers for work such as painting, light construction work and fixing odds and ends like windows and smoke alarms.

"The whole goal is to make houses more livable for low-income families," said Chris Stone, a sophomore dietetics major and event coordinator.

Stone said a house's problems often aren't evident from the outside. But inside, houses may suffer from prob-

lems such as collapsed staircases or leaky roofs. Cold drafts let in by broken windows and the presence of lead paint can cause illnesses.

Hand and Heart volunteers aren't expected to have construction skills, Stone said. An adult supervisor and a student supervisor will be stationed at each work site, and anyone may volunteer.

Stone said the group hopes to gain a better understanding of substandard-housing problems in Lincoln and do its part to help the situation.

"I think this is a very worthy project," she said. "I don't know of a better way to spend your Saturday than helping people."

Jason Dubs, president of UNL Habitat for Humanity, said without projects like Hand and Heart, many low-income families wouldn't be able to afford repairs.

"One of the most important things is that you get a sense of empowerment and an idea of how an individual can make a difference," he said.

I don't know of a better way to spend your Saturday. ..."

CHRIS STONE
event coordinator

Hand and Heart home repairs are provided at no charge to low-income families. The UNL Habitat for Humanity chapter purchased its construction supplies from Payless Cashways at wholesale price.

Travis Fisher, a junior who will serve as a student site supervisor, said although the problem of substandard housing in Lincoln is larger than what volunteers will be exposed to Saturday, volunteer efforts are a good start.

"It comes down to helping people who need help," he said. "It's one of the ways we can feel like we're accomplishing something that needs to be done."

95th Legislature comes to close

Nelson bids adieu

By TODD ANDERSON
Assignment Reporter

Legislature

After summing up the work his administration has done in the past eight years during a speech before the Legislature, Gov. Ben Nelson signed into law two more tax reduction bills.

Following the close of this year's legislative session, Nelson gave his last sine die speech in the Capitol chamber Tuesday.

Nelson, who will leave office in January because of a law limiting him to two terms as governor, highlighted the success of his eight-year administration at fostering economic growth and cutting taxes.

"Nebraskans asked us to downsize government without downsizing the good life," Nelson said.

"The past seven years-plus have been a building process toward that goal. We've tried to get better every year, to build on our success."

Nelson said he hopes Nebraska's new governor and next year's Legislature continue to build on his success.

"The leaders of the future must continue to be careful with taxpayer dollars and with our quality of life," he said.

Nelson finished by saying he will be leaving a job he loved and said his administration had worked to renew hope for Nebraska.

"If we have been successful in doing that, we truly have laid a solid foundation for future generations," he said.

After shaking hands with senators on his way out of the chamber, Nelson headed to his press conference room to sign the tax cuts passed by the Legislature earlier in the day.

Though he was critical of the budget increases approved by the Legislature this year, Nelson commended senators on their hard work.

"The Legislature gets high marks when it comes to tax cutting," Nelson said, "but their marks aren't as high on the spending side."

Nelson signed LB1104, a bill sponsored by Sen. Ray Janssen of Nickerson.

While Janssen was away from the Legislature because of illness, Beatrice Sen. Dave Maurstad and Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers worked together to rally support for the tax cut, Janssen said.

The new law lowers the state sales tax from 5 percent to 4.5 percent for one year, totaling almost \$92 million in savings.

Nelson also signed LB1028, which will extend a two-year, 5 percent tax cut into the future, as well as the \$10 increase in the personal exemption and the 100 percent exemption of health insurance costs for the self-employed.

The bill also increases the limits on child care income tax credits.

The two bills together will change the way Nebraskans think of April 15, a day normally associated with tax payment deadlines, Nelson said.

"(Today) is the day a lot of Nebraskans don't look forward to," Nelson said. "But this is a good day for them."

"The hard-working people of Nebraska are getting well-deserved cuts in their state sales and income taxes."

Omaha Sen. Deb Suttle, one of the sponsors of the bill, said returning dollars to taxpayers would prevent the state from spending more money.

"We can't spend it if we don't have it," Suttle said.

Sen. Shelley Keil of Omaha said the bill would help women who want to start their own businesses.

6 senators bid farewell in final legislative day

By JOY LUDWIG
Staff Reporter

Laughter and tears filled the Nebraska Legislature Chambers Tuesday afternoon after a few hours of heated debate and tension earlier in the day.

The last day of the 95th legislative session also signaled the end of an era for six senators who have served a combined total of 68 years.

Retiring Sens. Dave Maurstad of Beatrice, Eric Will of Omaha, C. N. "Bud" Robinson of Blair, Owen Elmer of Indianola, Chris Abboud of Omaha and Don Wesely of Lincoln, among others, were honored for their dedication and hard work after the last bill had been voted on and passed for 1998.

Speaker of the Legislature Doug Kristensen of Minden began the series of speeches that followed. He said he wanted to thank all the senators for doing such a good job.

"Don't let anyone criticize you of the effort and desire of this Legislature this year," he said. "Each and every one of you made this session work."

Lieutenant Gov. Kim Robak also considered the session a success. She said she has enjoyed presiding over the legislative sessions

and working with the senators. This year marks her last because she is not seeking re-election.

"I wish the public could see what I see," she said. "I see senators who care about people and the state of Nebraska."

Robak also attributed her success to her mother Sen. Jennie Robak of Columbus.

Each of the outgoing senators gave a short speech to the body, including Elmer, who choked back tears when he said, "You are all my friends."

Longevity marked the career of Wesely, who in his 20 years as senator has passed more than 300 bills.

Sen. David Landis of Lincoln said Wesely would best be remembered as one who "would not turn a blind eye" because of his efforts in the health and human services area.

Wesely, who had served the longest of any of the outgoing senators, said he has made great times and had great times in the Legislature.

But being a senator is about more than just fiscal notes because senators have the responsibility to decide the present and future of the state, Wesely said.

"People — that's what it's all about."

Daily Nebraskan

Questions? Comments? Ask for the appropriate section editor at (402) 472-2588 or e-mail dn@unlinfo.unl.edu.

Fax number: (402) 472-1761

World Wide Web: www.unl.edu/DailyNeb

The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.

Subscriptions are \$55 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.

ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1998

THE DAILY NEBRASKAN

Editor: Paula Lavigne
Managing Editor: Chad Lorenz
Associate News Editor: Erin Schulte
Associate News Editor: Ted Taylor
Assignment Editor: Erin Gibson
Opinion Editor: Kasey Kerber
Sports Editor: David Wilson
A&E Editor: Jeff Randall
Copy Desk Chief: Bryce Glenn
Photo Director: Ryan Soderlin
Design Co-Chief: Jamie Ziegler
Tony Toth

Art Director: Matt Haney
Online Editor: Gregg Stearns
Asst. Online Editor: Amy Pemberton

General Manager: Dan Shattil
Publications Board: Melissa Myles,
Chairwoman: (402) 476-2446
Professional Adviser: Don Walton,
(402) 473-7301
Advertising Manager: Nick Patsch,
(402) 472-2589
Creative Director: Dave Ahlman
Classified Ad Manager: Marni Speck