

OPINION PAGES

Our VIEW

Up the river

Towns seeking prisons send wrong message

Crime pays. Regardless of what the McGruff the crime dog says, it must.

If it didn't, why has every cash- and job-strapped community in Nebraska with a little political gusto been vying for a correctional facility to be built in its backyard?

We saw it with the state prison, which Tecumseh won in a heated battle with McCook.

Now we're seeing it with Fullerton and Geneva, who are among four communities hoping to attract a new privately run wilderness camp for juvenile delinquents.

Town leaders say a seemingly bottomless farm economy makes all new jobs attractive, even those in corrections. So eastern Nebraska communities want the new juvenile camp run by a firm out of Austin, Texas, with a \$3.5 million projected annual budget.

Towns with correctional facilities used to get the stigma "prison town." Townspeople used to think that stigma wasn't wanted.

Prisons once were bad places for bad people you wouldn't want living in the shadow of your block party. Prisoners were outcasts, not financial assets. Crime was undesirable.

Now, if the crime rate keeps dropping, someone could be out of a job. If crime prevention worked and incarceration levels dropped, someone wouldn't get a new prison. The new corrections industry could plateau.

So, is it any wonder the incarceration rate has increased? Is it news that some states' "three strikes, you're out" policies have increased prison populations without deterring crime?

Or is it any surprise politicians can't wait to tout their tough-on-crime policies? After all, each new 1-year sentence is money in some powerful voters' pockets - voters who could contribute heartily to campaigns.

The correctional facilities that follow tough-on-crime policies are among the hottest pork-barrel items of the decade, and it's time they are recognized as such.

It's also time that somewhere, amid the "Build a prison here!" philandering, someone stands up to demand that the same amount spent on prisons is spent on crime prevention.

For instance, former NU Football Coach Tom Osborne is among those promoting a legislative bill to fund mentoring programs - a proven method of crime prevention. That bill should have at least as many communities fighting for it as those fighting for a correctional facility.

But it likely won't. After all, prevention dollars' benefits are hard to see. Their effects aren't immediate, like a shining new prison. And no one shouts for prevention like Tecumseh, McCook and others who shouted for a state prison.

And they shouted to every man, woman and child in the state who would read, watch or listen: "Crime pays!"

Let's hope it doesn't pay for long.

Siers' VIEW



DN LETTERS

What's UPC?

I'll give you \$1,000 if you know what UPC is! Actually, I can't. Our budget just got cut.

You may have heard lately about a group on campus known as the University Program Council. And what does this mean to you? Nothing, I guess, after CFA cut the UPC budget.

UPC is a volunteer organization that uses student funds to bring events to campus that are educational, multicultural and entertaining. The "totally" hot programs mentioned in the DN editorial Feb. 18, including Run DMC, the Simpsons animator and MTV's Loveline, are in the one-third of UPC events that are purely fun and games. UPC also addresses hot issues that I guess people just don't care about like affirmative action. So what are the members of UPC to do when we vote on what to bring to campus next semester?

Every semester before we vote, we hold an open forum for students, faculty and staff to attend to inform us about what events they would like to see. I have been on UPC for two years now. At the first two forums, we had one - that's right, one - person attending, and no one attended the last two forums. So, I challenge you CFA members and DN staff to come to our open forum and tell us, the UPC, what you want to see. Keep in mind we are required to plan educational and multicultural events, and Loveline doesn't count.

We have brought three concerts in the last year and a half that have paid us a small amount to advertise on campus, but it's a shame that we can't even get people to come to those events. One of them is the Everclear concert tonight, the same night we co-sponsor a program with the UNL Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention group. Everclear was coming here whether UPC promoted it or not. With a budget cut, we will have problems co-sponsoring events with as many student organizations.

How do we please you, campus? UPC has been an organization since 1938, but where do we fit into the new millennium? Shape up or ship out?! We've heard it all before. We had a turnover rate of 70 percent from the 1998 council to the 1999 council. But our outlook is bright, because we have 26 new men and women who love to volunteer and coordinate events. It's

our passion. We do our best with what we have.

Many people scream for Adam Sandler. He charges \$50,000 just to perform (plus travel, lodging, food and the rider), and now we have \$115,665.38 to work with, minus \$4,000 for UPC member training. He's entertaining - sure, he's Jewish, too, according to his Hanukkah song - but that's not why he'd come to UNL. Big-name acts cost big-

to Tyronn Lue and Venson Hamilton. This team has proven that they are better than their more than likely NIT bid. Let's get a coach in here that can use our talent rather than frustrate it.

Jesse Maddox
first-year law student

New greek-house decor

I have been noticing recently that some residents of City Campus greek houses have been parking near and at times on the sidewalks around their houses. I first took notice of this on Feb. 11 when the weather was nasty and things were icy. I initially thought, "Well, I'd try to park as close as I could if the weather was bad, too," so I didn't pay much attention to it. Since the sidewalk that I was about to take was blocked by cars, I took to the icy street. Still, the blocked sidewalk didn't faze me, probably because I was focused on not falling on the icy edge of the street.

In front of me was a fellow UNL student who was disabled and walking with the assistance of a cane. This student had to walk down an icy slope, along edge of a busy icy street, and then back up an icy slope to return to the sidewalk. Unwilling to accept assistance, this student eventually made the detour to get back on the sidewalk.

I had intended to call that particular house and inform them of this occurrence and suggest that they move their cars, but as I drove away I noticed that I'd have to call several houses. Even a couple of days later when the weather was nice, I noticed that several of the sidewalks were blocked so much that someone without disabilities would have to dodge the front end of cars. Think of how much trouble that would cause for someone who requires the assistance of a wheelchair for ambulation. The past couple of weeks, I have noticed several blocked sidewalks around greek houses. I did notice that most of the fraternities do a great job of scooping the sidewalks when it snows. Thanks! Just please don't park on them.

Heather Swanson
senior nursing



time money, and we don't have much.

So to suggest programs people we can now afford and people will actually attend and enjoy, call UPC at (402)472-8146 or stop by 117 Nebraska Union. We'd love to listen to your ideas, or you can just pick up an event calendar. We'll see you at our next event!

Summer Spivey
UPC executive member

Fright causes goose bumps

Unbelievable. A week removed from being a near lock in the NCAA tournament, and having his name being thrown around as Big 12 coach of the year, Danny Nee has managed to lose at home and then go lose to a team ranked 149th in the RPI. Then to top it off, he throws a tantrum after allowing the smallest guy on the court to go coast-to-coast untouched to beat his team in the final seconds.

The players can only do so much without a coach. Nee's self-destructive nature and lack of discipline was witnessed in front of a national audience Saturday night. How much do we as fans have to take before we get rid of this loser? This guy could coach the Harlem Globetrotters to a loss. Enough is enough! As far as I'm concerned, Nee owes his last two year's paychecks

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