



One down ...

The Nebraska women's basketball team clawed its way to a 82-71 win over Texas A&M in the first round of the Big 12 Tournament. PAGE 9



South by so what

Every year the best unsigned bands go to Texas for a giant music festival and a chance to get signed. Two invited Nebraska bands say "big deal." PAGE 12

March 3, 1999

SUN SIGNS

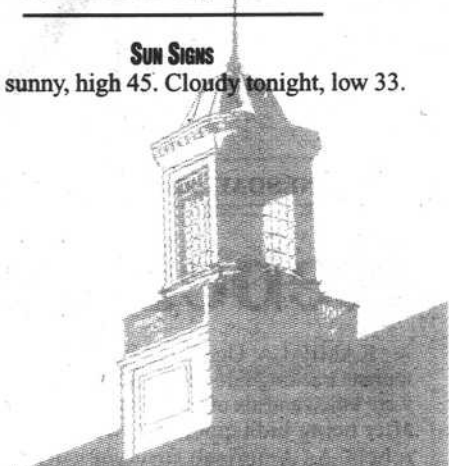
Partly sunny, high 45. Cloudy tonight, low 33.

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## Three arrested in Pickinpaugh murder case

Police say a drug deal was involved

By JOSH FUNK  
Senior staff writer

Police arrested three suspects this week in the murder of a Lincoln teen-ager who was found dead in Van Dorn Plaza Shopping Center on Feb. 18.

The murder was the result of a botched robbery in the parking lot, Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady said.

Brandon Pickinpaugh was shot once in the head while the three men tried to steal the approximately three quarters of a pound of marijuana and the \$950.40 Pickinpaugh had with him, police said.

Casady said Pickinpaugh had been dealing drugs.

All three men were arrested for other crimes, and the County Attorney will charge them for the homicide after reviewing the files.

Pickinpaugh, 17, was shot and was found lying on the ground next to the green Chevrolet Cavalier he was driving.

A McDonald's customer who was parked near Pickinpaugh saw his body when he was returning to his car around 9:30 p.m. and called police.

Pickinpaugh, a Hastings native, had been living in a group home run by Robert and Marilyn Beggs since he became a ward of the state in December 1997. He was a junior at Lincoln Southeast High School.

None of the suspects arrested were group home residents, but several of them were known gang members, Casady said.

Jeremy Kurtzer, 18, was arrested Monday evening at 6011 S. 43rd St. for possession of stolen property. Police said Kurtzer gave a stolen handgun to another teen-ager who robbed an ATM user in January.

Derek Graves, 20, was arrested for several outstanding warrants Monday afternoon when police served a search warrant at his apartment, 4600 Briarpark Drive, Apt. 112.

Graves was wanted for burglary, possession of a controlled substance and refusal to comply with a police officer.

The SWAT team found several guns in Graves' apartment, and they arrested Graves' roommate, Tanner Andrews, 19, for having a .38-caliber revolver that was stolen in a November burglary. Andrews has not been linked to the murder.

Monday evening, police arrested Jedidiah Ngirchoimei, 19, for the

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TOM CASADY  
Lincoln police chief

attempted robbery of Pickinpaugh. Ngirchoimei, Graves and Kurtzer are all implicated in the murder, but police have not said which one shot Pickinpaugh.

During their investigation, Casady said police encountered several teen-agers who concealed evidence or lied to them.

Dennis Sciscoe, 19, was arrested Tuesday morning for concealing evidence. He was charged with being an accessory to a felony.

Casady said that more arrests could follow for accessory to a felony and giving false information to a police officer.

In recent homicide investigations, Casady said the trend has been not to tell the truth to police.

But Casady said investigators feel strongly that people need to be arrested for lying.

"This isn't the Paula Jones lawsuit," Casady said. "If you lie in a murder investigation, you get arrested."

While police had Graves' apartment under surveillance, Casady said veteran investigators were taken aback by the number of teen-agers who hung out at the apartment even though they were aware of the gang activity.

"It deeply concerns me to see 15-, 16- and 17-year-old kids hanging out here after school," Casady said.

Casady said that this murder should be a warning for parents.

"The message to parents is wake up and pay attention to who your kids are hanging around with," Casady said.

Parents need to get their children away from people involved in these activities, Casady said, so they are not subject to the risks.

It is dangerous to normalize this kind of conduct, Casady said.

"When you get a couple of wanna-be gangsters together with a gun, you get a wanna-be homicide."

## Taking the floor



TOUR GUIDE RON ROCKENBACH explains the origins of floor designs to visitors at the State Capitol on Tuesday afternoon. "I love my state," said Rockenbach, a 42-year-old UNL graduate with a degree in Great Plains folklore. "My family has some real roots here."

RICK TOWNLEY/DN

## Candidates make final cases

Communication, academic rigor top lists of priorities

By KIM SWEET  
Staff writer

ASUN

ASUN election candidates faced off one last time Tuesday, giving curious voters a chance to cement their decision on which box they will check in today's elections.

Presidential and second vice presidential candidates shared the microphone with senatorial candidates for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources positions during the first debate held on East Campus.

When asked what the biggest issues students will face next year

are, Kate Hutchens, Voice senatorial candidate for the agricultural college, said communicating with students and finding out their concerns will be the biggest issue.

"Just making sure students feel a part of the university they are in will be important," Hutchens said.

Focus presidential candidate Paul Schreier responded with the words retention rates and academic rigor.

How the Legislature will view the university when considering a spending cap will also be a discussion that

university students will have to participate in next year, Schreier said.

Responding to the question of how the candidates plan to bridge the divide that currently separates East Campus, Focus party senatorial candidate for the agricultural college Matt Rasmussen said bringing more core academic classes there would force students to become more familiar with the campus.

Hutchens said unifying East Campus first was necessary before trying to bring the two campuses together. A Voice ticket that is made

Please see DEBATE on 6

## Student aid dollars may be at risk

A loan program's switch to nonprofit raises concerns about funding.

By JESSICA FARGEN  
Senior staff writer

Millions of dollars in scholarships and educational support for Nebraska college students was at stake recently when NebHELP - Nebraska Higher Education Loan Program Inc. - switched from for-profit to nonprofit.

Concerns that the transition last year was done largely behind closed doors and with little public scrutiny is what brought representatives from a national consumer group to Lincoln

this week.

Patrick Gardner, coordinator of the Educational Assets Project for the Consumers Union in San Francisco, was in town to increase awareness about funds available for student financial aid through an educational foundation created with the \$100 million.

"We are trying hard to get the public interested in their own community," he said. "We're trying to open the door that you all walk through."

Gardner met with representatives from social and educational groups Tuesday at the Nebraska Appleseed Center. Today he will meet with state officials, the Attorney General's staff and UNL Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen.

NebHELP, which buys and sells

student loans, has actual assets of about \$100 million. This money was accrued during the last 20 years through issuing tax-free bonds. The \$100 million was used to create the Foundation for Educational Funding.

The FEF partially funds three student-loan help centers statewide, one of which is at 13th and O streets. It also has given out \$500,000 in need-based scholarships.

Gardner said the FEF was created with taxpayer money and therefore the public should be involved in determining its mission. Insufficient public input has gone into the foundation, he said.

"When you have a nonprofit, you

Please see AID on 6