

The Long Red Line

Story by ADAM KLINKER

American writer James Baldwin once wrote in his book "Go Tell it on the Mountain" that if people understood themselves better, they might damage themselves less. ♦ For most students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln – or any university for that matter – the phrase may not be well-known.

But it is proved many times over on campuses where a subculture of alcohol and drug use has pervaded what administrators believe should be primarily an institution of education and academic progress.

Charles Greene, UNL's director of the Student Judicial Affairs Office, would agree.

In that capacity, Greene is in charge of handling all cases regarding violations of the Student Code of Conduct.

But really, Greene said, he's in the business of keeping UNL students in school and maybe, more importantly, saving some souls.

A 1967 and 1977 graduate of UNL, Greene talks a great deal about something he calls "the long red line."

"This is my school," Greene said of UNL. "It's got my name on it. I went to Nebraska. As a graduate, your college becomes your moniker.

"And for the rest of the young folks in the process of getting to be a member of the long red line – as soon as you get that degree, you look around and say, 'Hey, I want the people that graduate from there to be good people.' It gets to be a real personal thing."

And as Greene said, that's the thought that keeps him going as UNL's most visible enforcer of student policy.

Greene's job is, as he would term it, not the most glamorous or the most fun, but perhaps one of the most necessary in the UNL administrative circuit.

On a day-by-day, case-by-case basis, Greene handles the residue of drug and alcohol violations that occur at UNL on their own scale.

Based on his appraisal of the situation from UNL Campus Police reports and Lincoln Police Department reports that are in turn funneled through the Campus Police, Greene evaluates code-of-conduct violations by UNL students. Should he find the accusations to be true, Greene then renders sanctions to fit the crime.

Most of the cases Greene deals with are alcohol infractions, such as a minor in possession or drinking on campus.

University Police Chief Ken Cauble said that more than 80 percent of the calls campus security officers respond to involve alcohol. Cauble's department is responsible for reporting to the Student Judicial Affairs office all student violations, on and off campus.

From the University Police, the reports are then handed over to Greene, who reviews them all.

Greene's base interest is not in punishment, but in a modification of the behavior exhibited. Most of all, Greene said, he wants to make sure that students stay in school, no matter their violation.

"I look at myself as a father figure here," Greene said. "Good parents want to see their children stay in school, get a degree. Young people make mistakes, old people make mistakes. If a student makes a mistake, like a father would, I'm going to see if I can find a way to keep them in school."

And, Greene said, if he finds a student to be in violation, he will govern with the hand of a parent as well.

Greene said one of the most effective sanctions he has imposed in his almost two years as an administrator is assigning community service hours to alcohol and drug violators – not just any community service hours, but volunteer time at Lincoln's Cornhusker Place, Inc. Detoxification unit.

James Baird, the executive director at Cornhusker Place, said in recent years that several of those sanctioned to do the service hours in the detox center have had life-changing experiences.

"Those are the positive parts of our job," Baird said. "The best we can hope is to give people the opportunity to understand some of the consequences and problems that arise from abuse of alcohol and other substances."

It is a case, Baird said, of people gaining a better understanding not only of the adverse effects of drugs and alcohol, but of themselves and their own struggles with substance abuse.

"They can take a lot from it, or they cannot," he said. "It's a good experience to see on a larger scale some of those issues."

Of the approximately 400 monthly admissions to the Cornhusker Place, around 40-60 of those are high school and college students, Baird said.

"There's a million stories," Baird said. "The people who volunteer, who work here get a real insight into what it can be like."

For those sanctioned to work at Cornhusker Place, both Greene and Baird agreed that it has far-reaching positive effects.

Such sanctions are just more in the way of the creative sentencing that Greene carries out in his efforts to change lives and keep students in school.

Greene said that in rendering any sanctions or hearing

a case, if there is one thing that is afforded every student that comes through his office, it's that the student will receive a fair deal. But, Greene added, to whomever this courtesy is extended, so should that person give Greene his due.

It's not much, he said, but it always helps; it lies in a 15-page document titled "The Student in the Academic Community: The Student Code of Conduct, University of Nebraska-Lincoln."

Greene said that he expects every student at UNL, whether they are suspected of being in violation or not, to read the code.

"Mr. Greene is very fair," said Andrew Faltin, a student member of the University Judicial Board. "He knows the Student Code of Conduct better than anyone at the university."

Greene said everyone should have a working knowledge of UNL's policies on not only drug and alcohol violations, but other rights and offenses that they should respect.

"The key thing is that students have to read the Student Code of Conduct, every page, every paragraph from the front to the back, to ensure that they understand the rules and the policies of the institution," Greene said. "It's nothing more than what the traditional American family teaches its children."

Greene emphasizes those family values as one of his own motivations for executing the codes and rules that are set down in the code of conduct.

If students feel that they are not being heard out in the one-on-one dealing with Greene, he then refers the case to the University Judicial Board, a tribunal made up of faculty members and students.

Greene presents the case on behalf of the university, and the panel hears arguments from both sides and renders its decision and a proposed punishment.

Greene admits it's not the best way of going about things, but certainly the most democratic for those who may feel uncomfortable with a one-on-one session with Greene.

"I'll be fair with you, I promise you that," Greene said. "We don't have to get the Judicial Board involved, but I can also fully understand that from a student's perspective."

Though Greene's office and his very name can sometimes conjure up images of a great monolithic, untouchable entity, Cauble said that is not the case.

"I feel that his effort is to make the university a better place and to help students make themselves better," said Cauble, who is also a UNL graduate and attended school with Greene. "He does a good job of that and making sure that he accentuates the educational aspect as well."

And that is a credit to his school, Greene said. As an alumnus, he wants to see the graduates at UNL be the best people they can be – leaving college with a better understanding of themselves and the world.

"That long red line is full of good people," Greene said. "My job is to keep students in school, not put them out. I want to see them join the long red line and be good people. That's it."

Party Smart offers alternatives to bars

By SARAH FOX
Staff writer

"Party Smart" doesn't mean "don't party at all," its members said.

Party Smart is a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student organization that encourages students to use alcohol responsibly, and sponsors promotional campaigns and social events for UNL students.

But the organization, which started in 1991, isn't "out to save the world," Bob Schroeder, alco-

hol and drug program coordinator for UNL, said.

"People think Party Smart – that's a bunch of people who don't drink," Schroeder said. "Party Smart is out to provide services and activities for students who drink responsibly."

Party Smart President Angie Child, a sophomore chemical engineering major, said the organization sponsors social events with other alcohol-awareness groups on campus.

The group co-sponsored a concert in October for National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week. They will also co-sponsor a study-break night in the Nebraska Union with free food April

29, and a game night at the Campus Recreation Center on April 30.

Although Party Smart's social events may not draw students from the bars, the events are an alternative for students who don't want to party with intoxicated people.

"They're very useful for people who don't like to be around heavy drinkers," Schroeder said.

Party Smart also shows students how their drinking affects other people. The group put up a "Romeo, Romeo" poster series on campus for Valentine's Day. The posters show a drunk

"Romeo" and a disappointed "Juliet." A statistic reads, "Eighty-six percent of NU students think it is inappropriate to get drunk on a date." The posters were co-sponsored by Project CARE, a University Health Center educational student group.

"A lot of students are upset about how someone else's drinking affects them," Schroeder said. However, most UNL students use alcohol responsibly.

"Most students think the majority of students are heavy drinkers on a regular basis," Schroeder said. "The fact is, they aren't."