

Johanns tackles insurance situation

By JOSH KNAUB
Staff writer

Gov. Mike Johanns knows what to do with a mess: Clean it up.

Johanns said Wednesday he was taking the first step toward cleaning up the mess he saw in the state's handling of health insurance premiums for state employees married to other state employees.

He said he would request an attorney general's opinion about the legality of the current practice of providing free health insurance to state employees married to each other.

"State statute says all employees must pay 20 percent of health premiums while the state contributes about 80 percent," Johanns said. "But the

law then goes on to say that the current bargaining agreement will take precedence. Whatever that means."

Johanns said the vagueness of the law left questions about whether the practice of providing free health insurance to couples was legal.

Johanns said the situation was tricky because married employees had received the benefit for about 20 years.

"Obviously they don't want to lose their coverage," Johanns said. "In our last contract negotiations, benefits were almost as important as wages."

Steve Grasz, Nebraska chief deputy attorney general, said the governor or any constitutional official in Nebraska may request the attorney general's opinion about Nebraska law.

The opinion may be overturned in court but

serves as a guide to officials for what the law does and does not allow.

Johanns said his administration will file a request for the opinion within the week.

He said he would continue to study the problem and will use the attorney general's opinion in deciding what action is needed.

He said, depending on the opinion, he anticipated solving the problem in next year's contract negotiations or the next legislative session.

Johanns said it was unfair for some state employees to receive free coverage while others had to pay.

"But the tacit approval of this practice has created an atmosphere where (free health insurance) is a condition of employment," Johanns said.

He said he would work to end the practice.

"In ... contract negotiations, benefits were almost as important as wages."

Gov. MIKE JOHANNS

"We don't want to penalize state employees who marry other state employees," Johanns said. "But this is ridiculous."

In other news, Johanns named Beverly Neth to head the state Department of Motor Vehicles. Neth replaces Ed Wimes, who left the department last month to enter the private sector.

Police: Player cited for phone theft

By JAKE BLEED
Senior staff writer

Lincoln police cited a Nebraska basketball player Monday for stealing a cellular phone from a Lincoln Tire Store in June, officer Katherine Finnell said.

George Mazyck, a junior college transfer who also reported a season-ending broken patella Monday, was cited on suspicion of stealing money or goods worth less than \$300, a misdemeanor offense.

Police allege he stole the phone from Graham Tire Company, 1918 O St., on July 28.

Jim Cheek, assistant manager and service manager at Graham Tire Company, said he remembered when Mazyck and several friends were waiting by the store's service desk to buy a used tire for a black Ford Explorer.

Cheek said the store was busy when Mazyck arrived and that he'd left his cell phone at his desk momentarily while helping another customer.

Cheek said the phone was in an area restricted to employees.

"People don't go back there," Cheek said.

When he returned, both Mazyck and the phone were gone, Cheek said.

Cheek said he called Aliant Communications to cancel his cellular phone account after realizing the phone had been stolen but that the account was not cut off immediately.

Lela Kalliher, media coordinator for Alltel, the company which purchased Aliant Communications (after the phone was stolen), said an internal miscommunication caused Cheek's account to remain open.

Cheek said someone then made more than \$500 in calls on the phone, including one to Cheek's fiancée.

Cheek said his fiancée's phone number and others were loaded into the cell phone and that someone called some of the loaded numbers.

"I was lying on (my fiancée's) couch two days later, and the phone rang," Cheek said.

The ensuing conversation was brief and rude, Cheek said.

Later, police traced the calls to Mazyck, Finnell said.

Cheek said he paid between \$60 and \$70 for the phone, that he was forced to buy a replacement and that he planned on suing Mazyck for the loss.

Kalliher said Alltel would not pursue the \$500 in charges because of the high number of fraud cases the company handles.

"We have many, many, many reports of stolen phones," Kalliher said.

"It would be very time consuming and costly to prosecute them all."

Basketball Operation Director Nick Joos said he could not comment on the theft allegation and that only Head Coach Danny Nee would. Nee was out of town Wednesday and could not be reached for comment.

Mike Gooding, a trainer with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Athletic Department, said Mazyck reported a fractured kneecap Monday, saying it was sore.

The 6-foot-9, 270-pound forward suffered from a similar injury while playing for Coffeyville Community College last year, a Sports Information press release said.

"We can't put a finger on when it happened exactly," Gooding said.

The press release said the injury occurred during "preseason workouts."

Gooding said Mazyck underwent surgery Wednesday in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Lincoln to repair the fracture.

UNL event examines minority status at UNL

DISCUSSION from page 1

Because of low minority enrollment, several people voiced concerns about the responsibilities placed on minority students and faculty.

"The ratio of Caucasians to minorities on this campus poses a unique challenge for minority students and faculty," said Gail Latta, Academic Senate president. "We ask them to do way too much, and we place added demands on them."

Jessie Myles, a representative for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, told participants that minorities should try to make a difference even if their numbers are few.

"We can take a small core of people and get out there in this university and make change," he said.

"You might have to make some drastic changes that might not be popular."

Overall, the goal of the meeting was not to point fingers but to point out solutions, said William Olubodun, assistant director of UNL Student Involvement.

"We need to get beyond finding blame," he said. "We need to start talking about what it is that we should do from this point forward."

Competition building in display-making

DISPLAYS from page 1

Friday morning, and many of the participants will work right up to the deadline.

"We're usually more productive at night," said Dale Walker, a sophomore member of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.

The competition is a lot of fun for everyone involved, said Ryan Felton, Sigma Alpha Epsilon's homecoming chairman. Meeting all the people who work on displays is one of the best parts of the competition, Felton said.

Fraternities and sororities construct most of the entries, but the competition is not limited to the greek system. Neihardt Residence Center, Mortar Board and Innocents Society all have displays this year, Stowe said.

Felton said he thought the competition would benefit from more residence hall involvement.

One possible reason for the lack of residence hall involvement is funding. The materials necessary to build a display can get expensive, therefore limiting the amount of participation, Stowe said.

Many contestants are incorporating this year's homecoming theme,

"The Biggest, The Best, The Last of the Century" into their displays.

Theta Xi Fraternity, however, is departing from the theme. The brothers are constructing a large papier-mâché Tom Green, in hopes the MTV star will visit their house, said member Chris Rezac.

The winner of the competition will be announced at halftime at Saturday's football game.

Entrants will be busy finishing their displays throughout the night.

"We just hope it doesn't fall down," said Zac Gemar, Sigma Nu Fraternity's homecoming chairman.

Flu vaccinations available at unions

University Health Center offers lower prices for students and faculty.

By MATTHEW BEERMANN
Staff writer

As the days get shorter and the nights get colder, another unwelcome guest arrives: the flu.

More than 100 million people catch the flu each year, but it doesn't have to happen to you.

Beginning this week, the University Health Center will be offering affordable influenza shots to students and faculty members.

Each Wednesday and Thursday, the center will have booths from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Nebraska Unions to administer the vaccine.

"Just walk up, pay your \$8 and we'll give you the shot," said Linda Rizjis, vaccinations nurse at the health center.

One of the main ways of contracting the flu is in crowded conditions.

"We've been recommending it to everyone, since most students are in crowded housing or crowded classes," she said.

The health center was at the Nebraska East Union on Wednesday and will be at the Nebraska Union today. Next week vaccination booths will be at the union on Wednesday and the east union Oct. 14.

The need for vaccinations for students goes well beyond the familiar flu and tetanus shots.

Take Hepatitis B, for example.

"The current group of college students is missing its Hepatitis B shots," Rizjis said. "They give it routinely to babies now but wasn't available when this generation was young."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, it "can cause loss of appetite, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting,

jaundice, liver damage, liver cancer and death."

Each year, more than 200,000 people in the United States, mostly young adults, get infected with the virus, and 4,000 to 5,000 of those die.

Rizjis said students should find out whether their vaccinations are up to date.

"Go back to your family physician, and they should have all of your information," she said. "Or check with your parents; you'd be surprised at how good of records many mothers keep."

All incoming University of Nebraska-Lincoln students are required to have their Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) vaccinations. International students are required to have a PPD, a skin test that checks for the presence of tuberculosis.

In addition, anyone traveling or studying abroad should also visit the health center.

"Just tell us what country you're going to, we'll type it into the computer and tell you just what you need," Rizjis said. "Hepatitis A, Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever, you name it, we've got it."


These vaccines are usually temporary and thus given only to travelers.

Another common concern is chicken pox, known to doctors as varicella. Common and usually harmless to children, it can be extremely serious in adults. A vaccine was developed in 1995.

"If you've never had chicken pox, you should very definitely come in and get the varicella vaccine," Rizjis said.

The Hepatitis B vaccine consists of a series of three shots, costing \$20 for persons under 19 and \$40 for adults. The varicella vaccine requires two doses and costs \$54.

For students who have health insurance, many providers will pay a portion of vaccination fees.



Career Services Snapshot

...see what's developing next week in Career Services

TUESDAY!

October 12th
9:30 am-3:30 pm
Devaney Center

it's gonna be really big
BIG career fair
learning, exploring & schmoozing

UNL Career Services — 230 NE Union — 316 East Campus Union

Check us out on the web.
dallyneb.com