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Do It Yourself

Local group strives to maintain
Lincoln's arts scene.
A&E, PAGE 10

Singing Praise

Decades after his death, King still
makes an impact.
NEWS, PAGE 3



Domestic partner plans unsuccessful

*NU board refuses decision
without Legislature's blessing*

By Dane Stickney

Senior editor

In mid-December, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that gay couples should be given the same benefits as married couples, and some UNL faculty members are hoping NU warms up to the idea.

George Wolf, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln English professor, has been trying to get the university system to implement benefits for partners of gay faculty and staff members.

"The Vermont case could help," he said. "But it seems like we're just running into a brick wall."

Currently, the NU system offers benefits only to married partners, but no U.S. state recognizes gay marriages.

Wolf said he hopes NU will be progressive and offer benefits to gay domestic partners.

"With all the talk of diversity on this campus, this would be a good opportunity for the university to be progressive," he said. "We could potentially lose good faculty members because the university doesn't offer them competitive benefits."

Two years ago, the UNL faculty senate voiced its support for domestic partner benefits and made a formal proposal to the university-wide Fringe Benefits Committee.

The committee, which consists of representatives from all four NU campuses, voted against the proposal and tabled the motion, said Agnes Adams, the committee's chairwoman.

"(Committee members) said they couldn't support insurance coverage to same-sex partners because the state didn't support it," Adams said.

The committee could approve the proposal without state endorsement, but Adams said the members of the committee seemed set in their ways.

"Members have tried to bring up the proposal for discussion," Adams said. "But it's moot because no one wants to discuss it."

Adams said defining the term "domestic partner" has been a problem.

Three of UNL's 11 peer institutions have implemented domestic partner benefits.

The University of Iowa, Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota offer partner benefits to gay employees.

Please see **BENEFITS** on 6



DEPREE HICKMAN, 8, watches a musical performance in the East Legislative Chamber of the State Capitol, where a youth rally was held to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Josh Wolfe/DN

MLK rally spotlights young people

By Margaret Behm

Staff writer

A youth rally Monday brought together people of all ages and colors to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The East Legislative Chambers of the State Capitol were packed with people who listened to speakers tell what Martin Luther King Jr. Day meant to them.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day was a reminder to continue to live out King's message, said Shaima Nassir, a Lincoln High School student.

"This day is to remind you of that dream," said Nassir, "to stand for what it is and make it true." King's speeches and life taught Nassir that she was born with rights, without someone deciding

whether to give them to her, she said.

"This man opened my eyes that freedom and equality are rights that I have," Nassir said, "and are not given to me by anyone."

Nancy Cherng, a student at Lux Middle School, understands what it feels like to be different, but she wants each person to realize everyone is alike.

"At one time or another, we have all known what it's like to be different," said Cherng. "If we are to achieve Dr. King's dream, we have to realize that despite our principle differences, we are all the same."

Scott Lopez of Lux Middle School offered the advice that teaching good ethics is the key to achieving the dream.

"We can help achieve Dr. King's dream through education," said Lopez,

"At one time or another, we have all known what it's like to be different."

Nancy Cherng

Lux Middle School student

"and teaching that good morals is top priority."

Dr. King's dream cannot be real until people make it real within themselves, Cherng said.

Please see **RALLY** on 3

— ELECTION 2000 —

GOP hopefuls criticize Bush in Iowa debate

By Brian Carlson

Staff writer

JOHNSTON, Iowa — Republican presidential hopefuls took swipes at Texas Gov. George W. Bush in a debate here Saturday, hoping to chip away at the front-runner's lead in the final days before the Iowa caucuses.

Scheduled for Jan. 24, the Iowa caucuses provide the first contest of the 2000 presidential primary season.

Saturday's hour-and-a-half debate, sponsored by the Des Moines Register and held at the Iowa Public Television studios in this Des Moines suburb, featured a spirited discussion of tax policy.

According to most Iowa polls, Bush holds at least a two-to-one lead over billionaire magazine publisher Steve Forbes, his closest challenger in Iowa.

Arizona Sen. John McCain, Bush's leading rival nationally, has spent almost no time campaigning in Iowa, focusing his resources on New Hampshire, South Carolina and other early primary states.

The other three candidates participating in the debate — former Reagan administration official Gary Bauer, Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch and former U.N. ambassador Alan Keyes — have received single-digit support in most polls.

Bush, anticipating attacks on his tax proposal, was ready with a preemptive strike at McCain.

Bush criticized McCain's proposed taxation of employer-paid benefits. This would force working people to pay taxes on transportation, meals and continuing education, he said, a plan that "in essence raises taxes on working people by

Please see **REPUBLICANS** on 7

Gore, Bradley examine race issues in debate

By Brian Carlson

Staff writer

DES MOINES, Iowa — In a state where presidential debates often focus on wheat prices or ethanol subsidies, Bill Bradley and Al Gore took on a different set of issues Monday night: race.

In a debate at Des Moines' North High School, one week before Iowa's first-in-the-nation presidential caucus Jan. 24, the Democratic presidential contenders discussed the nation's racial issues. The debate, held on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, was organized by the Brown-Black Presidential Forum.

Gore, the vice president, and Bradley, a former three-term senator from New Jersey, showed little disagreement about the importance of racial issues or their general approach for addressing them. But each candidate sought to demonstrate

that his specific plans could more effectively promote racial reconciliation.

For example, Gore said Bradley's health-care plan, which would scrap Medicaid in favor of a new health-care system, would hurt poor minorities.

"One way not to get there is to eliminate Medicaid and replace it with an inadequate \$150 voucher," he said.

Bradley said the monthly \$150 figure is a weighted average based on health-care costs in each state. He said his plan would improve on the current system, covering the 40 percent of poor Americans who do not receive Medicaid — many of whom are minorities.

"Under my plan, their health care coverage would be mainstreamed, and no more stigma

Please see **DEMOCRATS** on 6