

Group appeals Brandon decision

■ Equal rights group will appeal for higher settlement for victim's mother.

By Michelle Starr

Staff writer

A national equal rights group will be handling an appeal in a wrongful death judgment.

It will re-examine the extent of financial liability a Richardson county sheriff had in the 1993 death of Teena Brandon.

The Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund announced Wednesday that it will litigate the appeal made by Joann Brandon, the victim's mother, because it said the amount of the settlement was too low.

The attorneys are appealing last year's decision by Richardson County Judge Orville Coady that the county and former sheriff Charles Laux were only responsible for \$17,000 for negligence in Brandon's death and any pain and suffering caused to her mother.

John Lotter and Marvin Nissen

were convicted of murdering Brandon, 21, Lisa Lambert, 24, and Philip DeVine, 22, in a farmhouse near Humbolt in 1993.

Lotter is on Nebraska's death row for the murders, and Nissen is serving a life sentence.

Coady ruled the two murderers were more responsible in the murder than Laux. He reduced the original \$80,000 awarded for pain and suffering to \$17,000, said David Buckel, attorney for the national civil rights group.

Joann Brandon accused law enforcement officers of not doing enough to protect her daughter from being murdered a week after she had reported the same men had raped her.

Buckel agreed.

Teena Brandon was living as a man in Falls City at the time of her death, which is what prosecutors said was the motivation for Lotter and Nissen to murder her.

"Everyone knew that this person's life was in danger, but they let Brandon Teena (Teena Brandon) walk out the door," Buckel said.

He gave at least three options Laux could have taken to prevent

Brandon's death, including arresting the suspects after they were questioned, sending Brandon back to Lincoln or taking her into protective custody.

Laux and the Richardson County Sheriff's department were unavailable for comment.

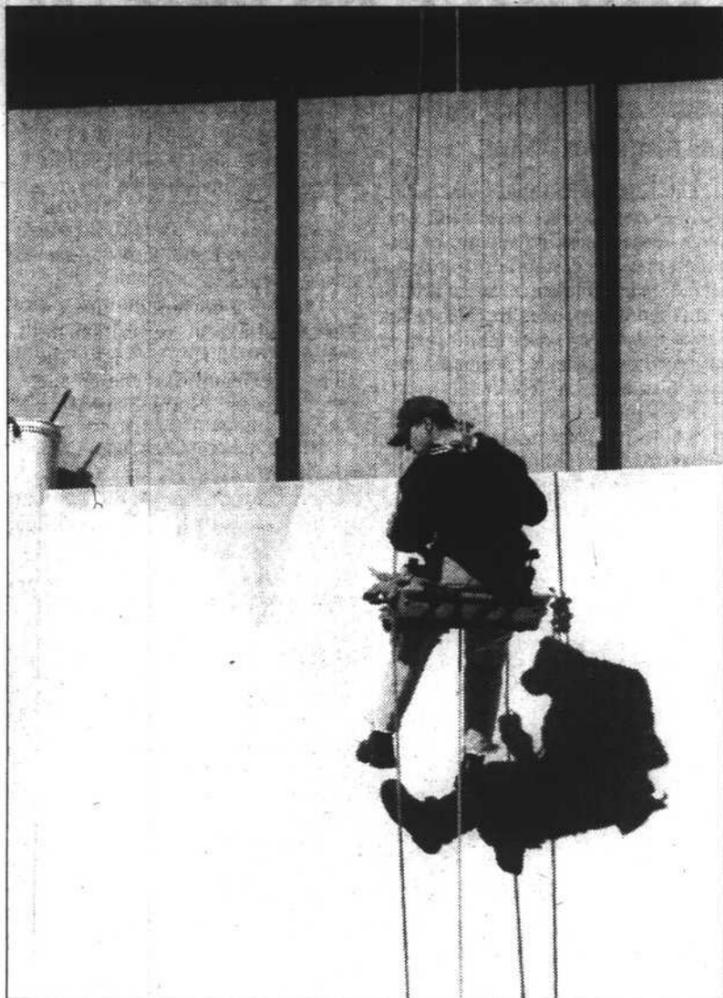
Buckel said he took the case to help change the way minorities, particularly gay and transgendered people, are treated by law enforcement officers when reporting crimes.

He said minorities are put in a dangerous position if fear controls whether they hesitate to report a crime.

Along with reducing the amount awarded to the mother, the court also threw out the ruling that Brandon received abusive treatment while being interviewed about the rape and that the loss to Brandon's mother was nominal, Buckel said.

Buckel and the civil rights group will be working with Herbert Friedman, of Friedman Law Offices, and Michael Hansen, of Berry, Kelly, and Hansen. Both lawyers have been handling the case and work out of Lincoln.

Hanging around



Nikki Fox/DN
GARY BRUNS, from G & M Window Service, descends from NBC Center on O Street on Thursday afternoon.

CAMPUS BRIEFS

Mueller puts on show for youth

A children's book has inspired the Mueller Planetarium to try something a little different.

In observance of Black History Month, the planetarium will present "Follow the Drinking Gourd," named after a song, on Saturdays throughout February.

Before the Civil War, slaves moving northward to freedom used the song as a guide on their journeys. The "drinking gourd" of the song is the Big Dipper constellation.

Slides, video and a star projector will be used during the shows, which are intended for children, said Jack Dunn, coordinator of Mueller Planetarium.

Produced by the New Jersey State Museum Planetarium, the show is designed to give perspective on how a culture used the sky in a practical way to enhance lives.

"Follow the Drinking Gourd" begins at 3 p.m. on Saturdays in February. The 30-minute program will begin with a discussion of the night sky followed by the recorded program. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$3 for children, students and

senior citizens.

Dunn said the program expands what the planetarium typically offers.

"This is just as much about history and culture as it is about astronomy," he said.

New orientation for student organizations in place

Last semester, ASUN approved changes to the bylaws that govern recognized student organizations, and those changes are now in effect.

Before the changes, students could pick up and return current officer information forms to ASUN, both Student Involvement locations and Student Organizational Financial Services.

Forms may still be picked up at all four locations, but they must be returned to either Student Involvement location, at 200 Nebraska Union or 300 Nebraska East Union.

Students who return the forms will be given a 10-minute orientation about the services available to recognized student organizations.

Tom Dake, assistant director of

Student Involvement, said the orientation is an important addition to the process.

"We want to make sure that student groups know exactly what resources are available to them," he said. "I think a lot of groups have missed out on some things simply because they didn't know about them."

Sexuality presentation scheduled for Monday

The College of Arts and Sciences and the Family Research and Policy Initiative are sponsoring a presentation titled "Adolescents, Sexuality and the Media."

The presentation will take place at 3:30 p.m. on Monday in the Nebraska Union.

Jane Brown, a professor at the University of North Carolina, will be the keynote speaker.

James Knight, co-editor of "Media, Sex and the Adolescent," will also be part of the presentation.

The presentation is part of the Children, Families and the Media: New Challenges, New Research lecture series.

Show makes student a millionaire

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (U-WIRE) — Harvard Law School student Rahim R. Oberholtzer became the biggest game show winner in television history two weeks ago — but NBC forced him to keep his million-dollar fortune a secret until Wednesday, the show's air date.

Over the course of two episodes of the primetime quiz show "Twenty One," Oberholtzer amassed the record sum of \$1,120,000.

"It's hard to think that it's real until you actually see the check," Oberholtzer said.

Oberholtzer's record-breaking win prompted fanfare on the episode that aired last night.

"You are the game show king!" host Maury Povich told him, as blue and white balloons tumbled around him.

Oberholtzer, who is a third-year law student, defeated a series of competitors by answering multiple-choice questions — with subjects ranging from Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to the hit film Jerry Maguire — and expanded his winnings from \$100,000 to his wallet-bursting total.

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