

—LEGISLATURE—

Bill would help parents with child-raising tips

■ The packet would include tips such as fun activities and good books.

By Veronica Daehn
Staff writer

Omaha Sen. Deb Suttle said she knew nothing about child care when she had her first baby.

She made it through, of course, but told members of the Health and Human Services Committee on Thursday that she wanted to make it easier on future parents of Nebraska children.

Suttle's bill, LB1139, would authorize the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a packet called "Learning Begins at Birth."

The packet would include material on how to rear a child.

"These things are so important for parents to know," Suttle said.

Included in the packet would be a list of activities parents can do with their children, a list of enjoyable children's books, information about brain research and healthy development, information on how to get a library card and information about childhood diseases and immuniza-

"Advertising is a good thing when it helps to pay for something good."

Deb Suttle
Omaha senator

tions.

Information about the effects of secondhand smoke on children and what child care is available would also be included.

Starting in January 2001, the packet would be given to every Nebraska resident who has a baby.

Suttle said she got the idea for the packets from a program started in Michigan in 1998.

Michigan spends \$9.25 on each packet it produces, Suttle said, and it distributes 20,000 packets a month.

Nebraska only has 23,533 births a year, she said. So the number of packets distributed would be much fewer.

In creating the packets, the departments could not endorse any private companies or products, but private companies could have their materials advertised in the packet.

This would help cut the cost to the state of the packets, Suttle said.

"Advertising is a good thing when it helps pay for something good," she said.

David McBride, executive director of the Nebraska Optometric Association, said he supports the bill and urges the committee to add an amendment that would add information on eye care to the packets.

"Of all the senses that are critical to the development of a child, vision is the most important," McBride said. "Eighty percent of learning comes through the visual system."

McBride said one of four sixth-graders has a vision deficiency that can be corrected better the earlier it is detected.

Suttle said the packets would be a good resource for new parents.

"This would give people some idea of what to expect," she said. "The only shortcoming is that you can give people information, but it doesn't mean they'll use it."

Money available for organizations

By Lesley Owusu
Staff writer

The Student Alumni Association is trying to ease the cost of putting on events for student organizations.

The Student Enhancement Fund is money the Nebraska Alumni Association has given to the Student Alumni Association to be distributed and used to enhance student life on campus, primarily through student groups.

An annual \$25,000 is available to student organizations, and individual student groups can receive up to \$1,000.

Shelley Zaborowski, director of student programs, said: "It is often difficult for students to find funds for holding events. The Student Enhancement Fund is simply an outlet available to students to help them."

The purpose of the fund is to provide opportunities for interesting student programs that meet certain criteria; the activities should create a greater harmony on campus among diverse groups, enhance campus life for students in a meaningful way and create a greater understanding of the student-alumni relationship, Zaborowski said.

Students who feel their organizations can meet this requirement are encouraged to apply.

Jim Cahow, the Student

Enhancement Fund Committee Chairman, said: "This fund is an excellent program for students, and students need to be aware of what is available to them"

Student groups who have benefited from this fund include ASUN, UNITE, Indian Student Association, Student Involvement, NU on Wheels, Malaysian Student Association and International House.

ASUN President Andy Schuerman said the enhancement fund has many benefits.

"This fund gives students opportunities to hold events and to enhance the campus community," he said.

Applications are reviewed by the Student Alumni Association Student Alumni Committee once a month.

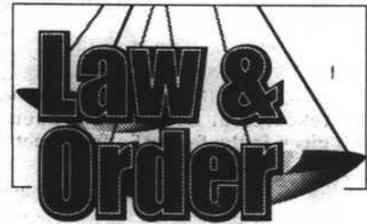
Student groups must submit a written proposal and give a presentation to the committee providing a detailed description of the goals of their program and activities.

Applications are reviewed, and selected groups are expected to report to the committee upon completion of their program.

Zaborowski encourages all groups to seek assistance.

"We sincerely hope to help students and achieve our goals with the fund," she said.

Deadlines for applications are March 23 and April 6 and may be turned in to the Wick Alumni Association.



Drive-by damages doors

A drive-by shooting left a metal-framed door damaged Thursday

morning.

The 3:40 a.m. shooting damaged a metal door at J-Mart, 501 W. A St. The business was closed, and no one was injured, Lincoln Police Ofc. Katherine Finnell said. Damages totaled \$75.

Police were alerted to the shot from an alarm system in the convenience store. Officers found a .40-caliber casing on A Street, Finnell said.

Police have no suspects, Finnell said.

Man arrested for theft by deception

A man was arrested in connection with two instances of trying to swindle convenience store clerks on Tuesday.

Police said Archie Brown, 44, 2701 S. 14th St., and another man allegedly went into two different

Kwik Shops, one at 3939 A St. and another at 5600 Holdrege St., and ordered \$100 money orders at each location. After the clerks told the men they didn't have enough to pay, Brown said they would return with more money, Finnell said.

Brown, who had already put the \$100 in his pocket, took out a different money order for \$1 and handed it to the clerks, Finnell said.

The clerks each believed it was

the \$100 money order.

By the time the clerks discovered the envelopes contained \$1 money orders, Brown had left with \$100 money orders, Finnell said.

Brown was arrested for two counts of theft by deception, Finnell said. The second man has not been arrested.

Compiled by staff writer Michelle Starr

Here kitty, kitty: Cats help students

CATS from page 1

everyday life. Using cats is a good way to observe more familiar organisms.

Because students don't have a lab in the class, it gives them hands-on experience, Osterman said.

The program has been highly successful, Christensen said, with nearly 100 percent of the students participating in the extra-credit project.

Once the results are in, the data are tabulated and used for illustrations in the population genetics section of the course.

In order to keep the data on the cat population for the area accurate, the professors instruct students to avoid counting the same cat twice. Christensen said he reviewed the sheets students turned in to see if there were any duplicates.

Cats from outside the general Nebraska and Iowa area are not included in the population data, either, he said, though observing any cat will garner extra credit for students.

"I strongly encourage them to use cats from Nebraska or nearby, but I allow students to collect them from anywhere," Christensen said.

Students have chosen cats from all over. Once a student even used her two cats from Japan, he said.

All of the extra credit available is given for collecting information on only one cat, but a few students go cat-crazy and observe many more.

"The record is 31 cats, shattering the old record of 15," Christensen said. The record is held by a student who

observed cats on her farm.

Osterman said the data can be used to calculate the frequency and stability of cats' genotypes in the area's population. Cat populations tend to be stable in their characteristics, he said, so the information can be used in a variety of ways.

He said different frequencies of color combinations have made it possible to trace former trade routes in Europe. In the United States, some of the first settlers to travel through an area have left their mark with cats.

In Nebraska, much of the cat population comes from trail travelers, he said.

"The typical barnyard cat probably has ancestors going back to the Oregon Trail," Osterman said.

Dana Novak, a sophomore biochemistry major currently enrolled in Osterman's class, said being able to look at a cat's fur to study its genes is a good application of genetics.

"It relates to the next thing we're doing, because it will be about population genetics," she said.

Novak plans to go home to Bellevue this weekend and look at her two cats there.

"It's easy," she said. "It's definitely worth the 10 points."

Christensen said he has submitted a paper on the project titled "Cats as an Aid to Teaching Genetics" to the journal Genetics. He has not heard back from the journal, but he is optimistic.

"I think it's kind of a novel idea, and I'm hoping to get the paper published," he said.

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