

DailyNebraskan

Officials are making some changes to Hamilton Hall to make its air safer to breathe in News/4

Practices heat up as volleyball players compete for spots in SportsWednesday/14



'Survivor' kept audiences glued to their TV screens; tonight is the finale in Arts/11

Amendment would doom partner benefits

The Defense of Marriage Amendment, which will be voted on in November, deems same-sex unions invalid.

BY VERONICA DAEHN

As of Aug. 14, students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln can do something that their faculty and staff counterparts cannot.

Because of a new health insurance provider, students are now able to receive benefits for their domestic partners, regardless of sexual orientation.

But if George Wolf, associate professor of English at UNL, is correct, the benefits won't last long.

If the Defense of Marriage Amendment, drafted this summer by a group of Lincoln resi-

dents, is approved in November, domestic partner benefits could become unconstitutional.

"(The student benefits) are a first step in the right direction," Wolf said. "And they're going to be pushed back."

James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said he hasn't researched the amendment enough to comment on what effect it would have on the insurance plan.

The Defense of Marriage Amendment says: "Only marriage between a man and woman shall be valid or recognized in Nebraska. The uniting of two persons of the same sex in a civil union, domestic partnership or other similar same-sex relationship shall not be valid or recognized in Nebraska."

The term "domestic partners" refers to two people who live together and share financial

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vice chancellor for student affairs

responsibility. This includes both heterosexual and gay couples.

Wolf is one of several UNL faculty members who has been working for years to gain domestic partner benefits for faculty and staff.

UNL English Professor Barbara DiBernard said she, too, had been pushing for domestic partner benefits but was frustrated by the administration's lack of action.

"I don't deny it's complex," she said. "But I feel we've had walls thrown up in front of us,

and we haven't gotten the information as to how to push it through."

Griesen said he was in favor of domestic partner benefits for students because it was a student insurance plan not funded by the university.

"I took the position that if we can do this, and it doesn't cost anybody anything, it sounds smart," Griesen said.

The university was in the process of looking for a new health insurance carrier at the same time the Association of Students of the University of

Nebraska was discussing support for faculty and staff domestic partner benefits last spring.

When ASUN senators passed a bill Feb. 23 overwhelmingly supporting domestic partner benefits, Griesen began asking the finalists in the insurance race what they could offer students.

None of the insurance carriers objected to providing domestic partner benefits, Griesen said, and it didn't affect the prices of policies at all.

Chickering Claims Administrators was signed as the new insurance provider for students, said Bev Heiserman, student insurance coordinator at the Health Center, and it will provide benefits for domestic partners of students.

There are conditions students must meet to be eligible for the benefits.

The two must demonstrate a long-term commitment to each

other by showing proof of joint bank accounts or joint lease of property.

They must also have durable power of attorney over one another, which means if one is comatose, for example, the other can speak for him or her. If a student qualifies, his or her domestic partner must buy a separate policy at the spouse rate, not the student rate. The rate for a spouse is more expensive than the rate for a student.

"It will be a handful of people who make use of this," Griesen said. "You'll be able to count it on two hands, and the majority of those will be opposite sex couples."

Griesen said it would be less expensive for most students who are in same-sex relationships to

Please see **BENEFITS** on 3



Erstad's work ethic helps him chase league hits record

Story by
Brian Carlson

Former Husker Darin Erstad prepares for a pitch in a game earlier this year. Erstad leads the major leagues in hits with 189 and is on pace to record one of the highest totals in baseball history. He was the No. 1 pick in the 1995 Major League baseball draft.

ANAHEIM, Calif. - Clad in shorts and a cutoff T-shirt, Darin Erstad stands in the carpeted hitting tunnel just behind the Anaheim Angels' dugout and stares straight ahead at the pitching machine.

As he awaits the next pitch, he settles into his slightly open, left-handed stance. His bat is held high, just above his ear. When the ball arrives, he lashes a line drive into the net with his compact but powerful stroke, releasing his top hand as he follows through.

It's just before 3 p.m., more than two hours before game time on Aug. 13, but Erstad, the former Nebraska baseball and football star, has been at work for hours.

After arriving at noon, the Angels' left fielder lifted weights and began to mentally prepare himself for that night's game. The Angels were set to face the two-time defending champion New York Yankees and their starting pitcher, five-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens.

When Erstad goes to the indoor hitting tunnel, his mission is clear. He will work on his swing until it feels just right. And when it's right, he will have no doubts.

"You just know," he said. "Everything in your swing just flows together. Everything is relaxed. You feel a relaxed intensity."

Erstad has felt that relaxed intensity all season long, giving him the chance to pursue one of baseball's most enduring records.

After a disappointing 1999 season, Erstad went on a tear to start this season and has hardly cooled since.

In his first six games, he pounded out 15 hits. He set a



major league record with 48 hits in April.

Through Tuesday night, he led the major leagues with 189 hits, placing him within striking distance of George Sisler's 80-year-old single-season hits record of 257. He has played in 122 of the Angels' 125 games, and he has gone without a hit in just 22 of them.

With 84 RBIs, he is well within range of Boston Red Sox star Nomar Garciaparra's record of 98 RBIs from the leadoff position.

Most importantly, as far as Erstad is concerned, his play has helped give the Angels a chance to contend for the American League West championship or the AL Wild Card.

Although Erstad has a reserved personality, he has been indispensable to the Angels' success because of his intensity, hustle and work ethic, his teammates and manager said.

"He's the MVP in the American League so far, as far as I'm concerned," said Angels Manager Mike Scioscia. "Every day he comes to the ballpark, I see him driven to win. He has a passion for the game you don't see in other guys."

"From day one of spring training, his work ethic and habits have been impeccable."

Erstad's teammates are equally appreciative of his efforts.

"He's a catalyst, man," said Mo Vaughn, the Angels' first baseman. "He's the definition of a gamer. He does whatever he has to do to win a ballgame. He's great to have on a team."

"I haven't capitalized like I should this year. I should have over 100 RBIs, as many times as Darin's been on base for me."

On the defensive side, Vaughn said: "I like to say, if it's in the ballpark, he's going to catch it."

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Erstad, 26, grew up in Jamestown, N.D. At Nebraska, he was a punter and place kicker on the 1994 national champion Cornhuskers while starring as an outfielder on the baseball team. He was the top pick in the 1995 draft and, in his four full seasons in the majors, has played in two All-Star Games.

For Erstad, who was hitting .357 with 21 home runs through Tuesday, 2000 has been quite a

Please see **ERSTAD** on 12

Police crack down on illegal drinking, partying students

BY JOSH FUNK

Each fall thousands of students travel to Lincoln, settle in to new homes and attend raucous parties. Some would call it a rite of passage.

This year, like each of the last two, Lincoln Police will travel all over town, settle in on the bigger parties and arrest the raucous partiers.

Last weekend, police resumed efforts to discourage the large parties that disrupt neighborhoods and are often frequented by college students.

"This is a means of improving the quality of life in neighborhoods that are plagued by these parties," Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady said.

Using a combination of plain-clothed and uniformed officers, the police infiltrated three parties and handed out 53 tickets.

Police also call landlords and parents, and if the offender is a student here, UNL officials will be called.

University students could face penalties as severe as expulsion under the student code of conduct, and they may also face criminal penalties. The university has a right to enforce the code off campus if officials can demonstrate an educational need.

"These people are of age (18, 19 and 20), so we're not legally required to contact parents," Lincoln Police Capt. Joy Citta said. "We've found that parents still have an influence in young people's lives."

The party enforcement team was created in 1998 to reduce high-risk drinking, especially among the city's youth and college populations, Casady said.

Lincoln Police have long worked closely with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to address student-related problems and concerns.

"We don't want to create an environment that will encourage students to get into trouble," Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen said.

The university's efforts to reduce high-risk drinking on campus in recent years may have pushed more partiers out into the city.

In this weekend's enforcement, Lincoln Police broke up parties at 2932 Q St., 1430 S. Ninth St. and 1331 N. Ninth St.

Police seized \$195 from two of the houses and 13 kegs of beer, both empty and full, from all three houses, Citta said.

But Sgt. Brian Jackson, who headed the effort, said police also visited several parties that were considered lawful and where no tickets were issued.

A party becomes illegal when people are charging money for alcohol, minors are drinking or the party is disruptive in another way such as noise, litter, parking and public urination problems.

"The Lincoln Police Department is not interested in preventing parties or someone's enjoyment," Casady said. Preventing other crimes and preserving the rights of neighbors are prime concerns for the party enforcement team, he said.

Griesen confirmed that the university was not out to spoil college students' fun; officials want students to exercise good judgment and have fun responsibly.

"We want students to have great times in college," Griesen said. "We're working hard to help students see ways to have great times without drinking excessively."

THE PARTY IS OVER

Three large parties were broken up and 53 tickets issued this weekend by the Lincoln Police Department as part of an ongoing enforcement effort.

- 10 maintaining a disorderly house
- 10 procuring alcohol for minors
- 5 selling alcohol without a license
- 12 minor in possession
- 11 urinating in public
- 1 failure to comply with an officer
- 2 providing false information to an officer
- 1 resisting arrest
- 1 inmate of a disorderly house
- \$195 seized from two parties (One was not charging.)
- 13 kegs of beer, empty and full, seized

Tim Karstens/DN