

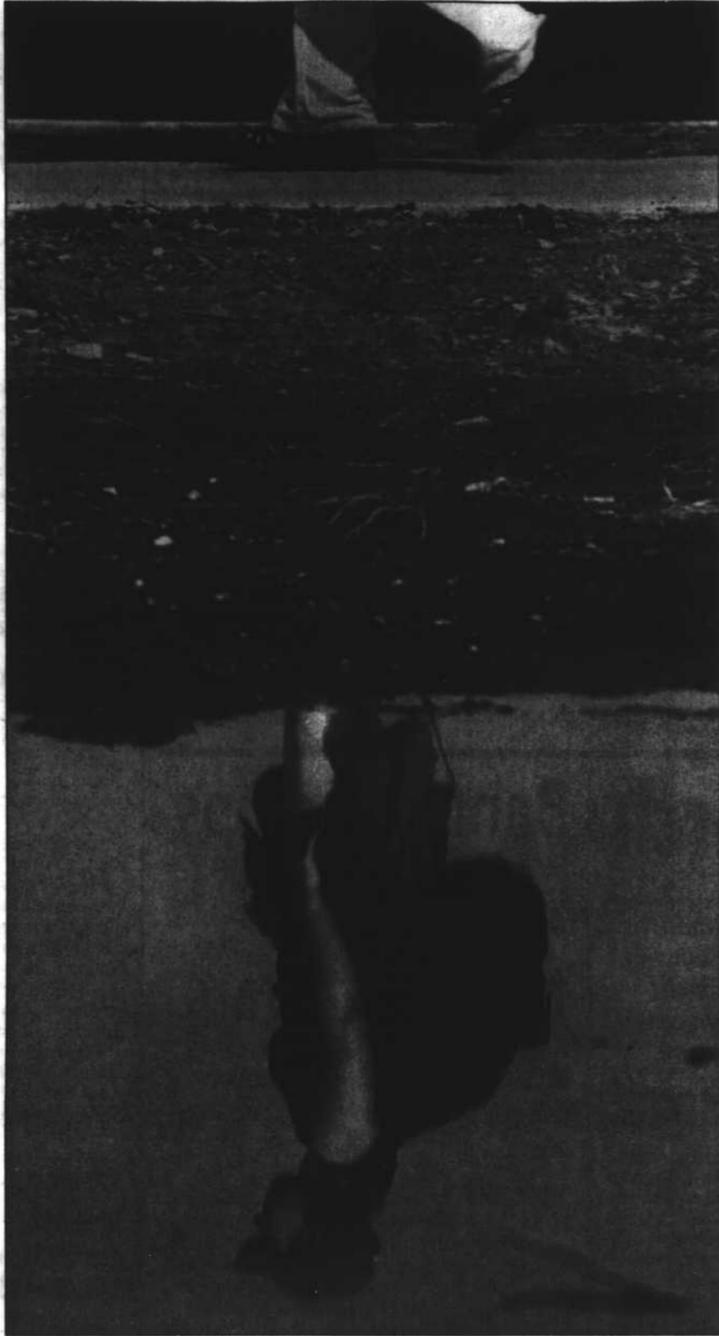
Daily Nebraskan

All the world's a stage, canvas and dance floor at tonight's arts festival on the Sheldon arts quad in News/5

NU's Paige Phillips returns after a knee injury ready to prove critics wrong in SportsWeekend/10

WC's tosses Angry Salad this weekend, a band with a Boston flair in Arts/8

Seeing double: Senior nursing major Jami Hoelscher passes by a puddle Thursday near 14th Street on her way home from class. "Hallelujah, it's time to go home," she said.



Watchdog: NU-hired construction firm unsafe

The university disputes the claims about Hawkins Construction Company, which is working on the Othmer chemical engineering building.

BY VERONICA DAEHN

A California organization plans to distribute leaflets Monday on the UNL campus that allege a construction firm working on a university building is dangerously unsafe.

But the company and university administrators dispute that claim and say that Hawkins Construction Company of Omaha, which is working on the Othmer chemical engineering building, is safe.

In a June letter to University of Nebraska President Dennis Smith, an organization called Legal and Safety Employee Research, or LASER, said Hawkins Construction Company had violated health and safety guidelines, had been subject to a severe amount of lawsuits and had a history of fatal accidents.

The university has hired Hawkins Construction as the construction manager for Othmer Hall, the chemical engineering building being constructed between 16th and 17th streets and Vine Street.

Rebecca Koller, NU assistant vice president and director of facilities planning and management, said the university had researched the allegations made by LASER and had found Hawkins Construction to be safe.

"We did not find anything that was of great concern to us," Koller said. "Hawkins is one of the safest contractors who works for the university."

LASER President James Wilson said his Gridley, Calif.-based firm investigates construction companies nationwide to promote safety, productivity and honesty in the construction industry.

LASER reported Hawkins had been charged with violations from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and had been assessed "tens of thousands of dollars in fines."

The OSHA Web site, www.osha.gov/cgi-bin/est1, lists more than 100 violations committed by the Hawkins Construction Company that were found in 75 OSHA inspections.

A Web search of other local construction companies listed 69 violations logged in 78 inspections of the Peter Kiewit and Sons company of Omaha. Sampson Construction Company of Lincoln had 62 violations in 41 inspections.

Wilson said his organization had a moral obligation to distribute information it uncovered about a firm that showed itself to be unsafe.

In a brochure LASER drafted about Hawkins, it describes a case where a roofer working for Hawkins fell and was impaled through the pelvis. The brochure says the roofer, Clay Olson, sustained \$70,000 in medical bills.

According to court documents, Olson sued Hawkins Construction for failure to "properly and adequately supervise the scaffolding work" and for failure to "provide a safe place for employees to work."

The judge ruled against Olson in favor of Hawkins, which LASER's brochure does not mention. Richard Wood, general counsel for the university, said LASER's allegations in the brochure are not necessarily true.

"Their material is misleading and incomplete," Woods said. "We have done some investigation with Hawkins' safety record, and their record has been very good."

Joe Rowson, assistant to the NU president, agreed that Hawkins was a suitable construction company.

"Over the past eight years, they have had a 30 percent lower average on safety problems than the rest of the industry," Rowson said.

The Harry A. Koch Company, which has been the construction firm's insurance agent for 20 years, confirmed the safety record in a June 14 letter to Hawkins President Fred Hawkins.

Roy Trent, vice president of business development at Hawkins Construction Company, said this was an "old issue" for the firm.

Trent would not comment further on the case, except to say that safety is a top concern at the firm.

Fred Hawkins could not be reached and did not return phone calls to the Daily Nebraskan.

The LASER group's Wilson maintains that Hawkins is not a responsible contractor.

Before publishing its report, LASER gives each contractor a chance to object to the findings.

On July 7, Wilson sent Hawkins Construction Company a copy of the LASER report before it was published. On July 25, Wilson sent another letter to Hawkins requesting a response.

Trent told the Daily Nebraskan that Hawkins Construction did not intend to respond to the allegations.

To spread their findings to the public, Wilson said, LASER volunteers will likely hand out brochures on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus Monday. If volunteers cannot be organized, direct mailings will be used, he said.

Got a roommate from hell?

University Housing says it's the computer's fault: Machines do the matching.

BY JILL ZEMAN

When freshman general studies major Jeremy Liesveld moved into the residence halls last week, he didn't really know what he was getting himself into.

He filled out his housing contract, just like everyone else, and requested a non-smoking floor in a coed residence hall.

Liesveld ended up in a "temporary triple," which is slightly larger than a double room and houses three students.

He did end up in a coed hall, but he was placed on the all-men's floor, which allows smoking, he said.

"Nothing against my room-

mates, but (University Housing) could have done a better job matching us up," he said.

Despite stories like this, roommates are not paired up randomly, said Sylvana Airan, assistant director of business contracts and student services.

Students fill out information about themselves and what type of living environment they prefer in their housing contracts, Airan said.

They can choose whether they want a smoking or non-smoking floor, whether they prefer to go to sleep before or after 11 p.m. and whether they wish to use the room for quiet studying or for socializing, she said.

Along with these designations, students are asked to choose one major from a list and one hobby, as well.

The contract asks students

to pick their top three residence halls and also allows students to make a roommate request.

Airan said Housing tried to pair up students who asked for the same things, but their requests were not guaranteed.

All applications are processed by computer, Airan said.

The first request Housing aims to fulfill is for specific roommate.

The second most important choice is residence hall, she said.

Abel, Schramm, Neihardt and Selleck are the most popular halls, she added.

Smoking is another key issue because the university attempts to carry out students' wishes for smoking or non-smoking floors.

The other information is

Please see ROOMMATES on 3

Commission to get Cheetahs case

BY JOSH FLINK

Coaches Sports Bar and Grill will keep its liquor license for now after the county commission deferred its final judgment to the state liquor control commission.

Thursday's revocation hearing was based upon a little, if ever, used 20-year-old resolution prohibiting nudity in liquor-serving establishments.

Earlier this year Coaches' owners, DLH Inc., leased part of the building to Cheetahs strip club, which opened July 28.

The Lancaster County Sheriff's investigation into the club found that the dancers were naked while liquor was being served, which would violate the county resolution.

"I was convinced there was a violation," commissioner Bob Workman said of his motion to refer the matter to the liquor commission.

After the motion passed 5-0, Deputy County Attorney Dave Johnson had to ask the board to clarify whether, in deciding to refer the matter to the liquor commission, the board had found Coaches violated the resolution that forbids nudity in establishments that serve liquor.

County Board Chairwoman Kathy Campbell responded that she thought commissioners agreed there was a violation.

DLH President Duane Hartman said that the commission was aware of Cheetahs and the nature of its business since

"I just don't know if you can be fair (judges) when you have already decided to prosecute."

K.C. Engdahl
Coaches bar lawyer

early spring when he first tried to delete the part of his liquor license that applies to Cheetahs. The strip club also had applied for its own liquor license and was denied.

Please see CHEETAHS on 6

Study to illuminate rays

BY SHARON KOLBET

They enter the earth's atmosphere carrying as much energy as a well thrown baseball.

They are subatomic and travel nearly the speed of light.

They can trigger an avalanche of particles that cover up to 50 square miles of the earth's surface.

They are cosmic rays. Some of them originate from solar activity, but the ones with the highest energy are still a mystery.

Now, thanks to a new program started by two University of Nebraska-Lincoln professors, high school and college students will get a chance to help scientists understand these cosmic showers.

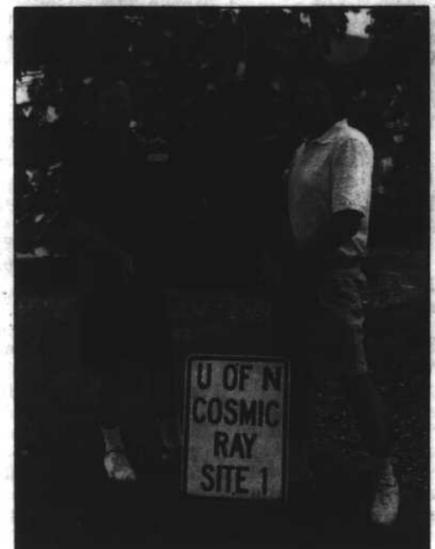
"Scientists have been analyzing cosmic rays for nearly a century, but the origin of these high-energy particles is still a mystery," said Dan Claes, UNL assistant professor of physics and astronomy.

In an effort to study this unexplained radiation, Claes and Physics and Astronomy Professor Greg Snow have initiated a statewide cosmic ray research program.

The Cosmic Ray Observation Project was conceived by Snow and involves installing cosmic ray detectors on the rooftops of participating Nebraska high schools.

Following an in-depth summer orientation, five area high schools have signed on for the pilot year.

They include Lincoln Northeast, the Lincoln Public Schools, the Lincoln Zoo School, Norfolk High School, Marian High School of Omaha and Mount Michael Benedictine of Elkhorn.



Sharon Kolbet/DH

Currently the five schools are building and integrating the detection systems. Claes and Snow said they hope that by early next year, the students will be collecting data and studying the rays.

"The program is unique in that it involves high school students, teachers, college undergraduates and graduate students," Snow said.

"Unlike the usual canned science experiments that are designed to fit into an hour, with this project nothing is certain. Nothing will be easy."

The project gives students a chance to get involved at the ground level of an important scientific study.

Students will learn how to operate and maintain the detectors and will experience the frustrations and excitement of a

UNL physics and astronomy professors Greg Snow and Dan Claes display one of the detectors they will use in their Cosmic Ray Observation Project. Through the project, detectors will be placed on the roofs of participating Nebraska high schools.

long term research project.

The professors said they were pleased with the interest shown by the five schools and plan to add high schools over the next several years.

The goal for the next four years is to have cosmic ray detectors working at 20 to 30 high schools in the Lincoln-Omaha area with additional expansion planned for the rest of the state.

Snow and Claes have received national attention for their project. This spring the program received a \$1.34 million seed grant from the National Science Foundation.

The CROP program acquired its detection devices free of charge through a donation from

Please see RAYS on 6