



David Clasen/DN

LEGENDARY SHOW: B.B. King jams with his band Monday night at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. He said early in the performance that he feels old when he sits down, but his band told the 75-year-old he had earned it.

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Environmentalists: Hemp could save some farmers

BY GEORGE GREEN

With environmentalists urging citizens to use recyclable energy sources and family farmers struggling because of poor commodity prices, some people suggest introducing a controversial crop: hemp.

John Roulac, president and founder of NUTIVA, a company that distributes hemp products, said his product has a variety of uses and is completely biodegradable.

Hemp, Roulac said, can be used to make paper, building materials, interior automobile parts, food products, plastics, textiles, garments and ethanol.

"The list of uses seems endless," he said.

Erwin Sholts, chairman of the North American Industrial Hemp Council, a group that advocates the legalization of industrial hemp, said hemp could put many farmers to work because it has many potential

uses.

Wisconsin loses four family farmers a day, he said. But when hemp was legal in the 1930s, Wisconsin was the hemp capital of the U.S., employing hundreds of farmers, Sholts said.

Despite what some see as multiple benefits from hemp, the federal government will not grant farmers permits to grow, Sholts said.

The Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 does not forbid farmers from growing hemp, but requires interested farmers to apply for permits, he said.

But since the middle of the 20th Century, the government has not taken an active role in giving permits because of hemp's close relative, marijuana, Sholts said.

"In the wisdom of the Drug Enforcement Agency, very few have been given," he said.

The difference between hemp and marijuana, Roulac

said, is hemp contains less than 1 percent of the chemical THC, which causes marijuana users to feel high.

"Smoking hemp just gives you a big headache," he said.

Terri Teuber, a public information coordinator for the Nebraska State Patrol, said hemp already causes problems for local law enforcement officials.

Each year criminals from outside Nebraska converge on the state to harvest large amounts of hemp that grow naturally here, she said.

She said the criminals mix the non-potent hemp with marijuana, which allows them to make more money off each sale.

Furthermore, she said the criminals are frequently armed felons who pose a threat to area residents.

"These people are dangerous to home owners," Teuber said.

Mike Chapman, a spokesman for the DEA in

Arlington, Va., said that hemp causes problems for law enforcement officials simply because it is so closely related to marijuana.

He said a person could be growing marijuana under the guise of growing hemp because the plants are nearly identical.

But, he said the DEA does acknowledge the potential benefits of hemp.

"We're not insensitive to the hemp argument," he said.

Chapman said the DEA is reviewing the government's policy on hemp.

Despite reluctance from the federal government, Sholts said support for industrial hemp is growing.

Former CIA director, Jim Woolsey, joined Sholts' hemp council board of directors after he learned about industrial hemp's many uses, he said.

When Ford and Mercedes-Benz learned about industrial

hemp, the companies made plans to construct some of their automobile parts from the fiber within this decade, he said.

Some Nebraskans support industrial hemp, too.

Last year, Sen. Ed Schrock of Elm Creek introduced a bill that would allow farmers to grow hemp in Nebraska if they received federal grants. The bill was defeated.

Seven other states including Illinois, North Dakota, Virginia and California have passed similar bills, Roulac said.

More than 30 countries, including France, Germany, England and Canada already recognize the values of industrial hemp cultivation, Roulac said.

But, Sholts said, because the government associates hemp with marijuana, it is hesitant to let farmers grow.

"Because its spelled H-E-M-P, you can't have it," he said.

Law & Order

Police arrest 16-year-old for vandalizing sculpture

University Police caught a 16-year-old boy responsible for vandalizing a campus sculpture in September when he returned to the scene early Monday morning.

When confronted, the boy admitted smashing some marble panels taken from a retaining wall around the sculpture "Willy" north of Kimball Hall and east of Westbrook Music Building, Assistant Chief Mylo Bushing said.

The boy also implicated a friend in the vandalism that caused an estimated \$5,250 damage. Between Sept. 13 and 15, 12 marble panels were pried off the retaining wall and smashed on the sidewalk.

The retaining wall around the sculpture is faced with 3-foot by 1-foot panels of travertine marble, which were imported from Italy.

Bushing said police planned to talk to the other boy involved early this week.

Shortly after midnight Monday, a University Police officer patrolling the sculpture garden area spotted the 16-year-old and recognized the boy from a suspect description from one of the September incidents, Bushing said.

When asked, the boy told police he knew something about how the slabs were destroyed, and after being read his rights, the boy admitted smashing two or three of the panels.

The boy was ticketed for felony vandalism.

Man with bag over head robs Cornhusker Bank

A Lincoln bank was robbed at gunpoint Saturday morning, and police are still looking for the suspect.

Shortly before the

Cornhusker Bank's 6100 O St. branch's noon closing time, a man with a white sack over his head entered and demanded money, Lincoln Police Ofc. Katherine Finnell said.

The suspect pointed a handgun at the two tellers and demanded money, Finnell said. The suspect got an undisclosed amount of money from the tellers' drawers. On the way out, the man also took a bank bag from a customer, who was waiting to make a deposit, Finnell said.

The suspect was seen leaving in a Honda minivan. The van, which had been reported stolen Friday, was found a short time later in the Gateway Mall parking lot, Finnell said.

The suspect is described as a black man, 5 feet 8 inches tall, 170 pounds and wearing on his head a white sack with eye holes cut out.

Lincoln man ticketed for attacking float dummy

A Lincoln man who said he was told he couldn't get into a fraternity party unless he tackled a Herbie Husker dummy in the house's homecoming float, was ticketed for vandalism early Saturday morning.

The man responsible, Christopher Bouwens, 21, flagged down a University Police officer on R Street at 2:50 a.m., and said he had been beat up at the Alpha Tau Omega house, 1433 R St., after tackling Herbie and a Jayhawk in the float.

The fraternity's vice president told police that Bouwens and another man started the fight after they were confronted about the vandalism.

Bouwens was taken to BryanLGH Medical Center East for treatment of minor injuries and cited for vandalism.

Compiled by Josh Funk



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