

Daily Nebraskan

Freshman legislators learn the ins and outs of lawmaking
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Husker football wideout Wilson Thomas is showing he knows how to play with a round ball, too
In Sports/Wednesday/10



The Lied Center brings myriad of musicals, performing artists to Lincoln for the spring season
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Regents

Regents adjust quickly to jobs

BY JILL ZEMAN

Dishing out millions of dollars and determining tuition rates that affect tens of thousands of students are just a couple of the responsibilities for members of the NU Board of Regents.

As overwhelming as it may seem, the two newly-elected regents say they're adjusting well to their new jobs.

Regent Jay Matzke of Seward, who took the position vacated by Robert Allen of Hastings, said he's looking forward to taking action as a member of the board.

"We're talking about neurons, not baby brains."

Jay Matzke regent

Several people have focused on recruiting more out-of-state students, and while Matzke said he agreed with that, he said he thought the university needed to find a way to make it more affordable for them.

Regent Randy Ferlic of Omaha, who defeated incumbent Rosemary Skrupa in November's election, also said he wanted to keep tuition low and increase financial aid to students.

Enhancing and focusing on research that transcends differ-

Please see REGENTS on 7

Involvement leader ready to leave UNL

BY JILL ZEMAN

UNL's Student Involvement office, which oversees more than 350 student organizations, will lose its director at the end of the month.

Marilyn Bugenhagen, who served as director for the past 10 years, will leave the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on Jan. 26 to become director of the student union at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisc.

Bugenhagen will also step down from her role as associate director of Nebraska Unions, she said.

The job at Marquette offers more than career advancement, Bugenhagen said, - it offers a chance to be near her family, much of which is in Wisconsin.

"It's kind of sad and happy all at once," she said. "I really enjoyed working at Nebraska, but this is a great opportunity for me."

At Marquette, Bugenhagen will be in charge of a student union slightly smaller than UNL's Nebraska Union.

She will also oversee a recreational building called the Union Annex.

"It's a lot more responsibility," she said.

James Griesen, vice chan-

Please see DIRECTOR on 7



Sharon Kolbet/DN

The facade of the former building at 901 S. 13th still remains while the rest of the building has been razed to make way for the new F Street Recreation Center. The construction of the community facility is expected to be completed by January 2002.

Recreating the recreation

The new F Street Recreation Center, now under construction, will provide activities for all.

BY SHARON KOLBET

Outside the F Street Recreation Center, a touch-football game takes place on an impromptu playground that used to be a parking lot.

With only a chain link fence separating the play area from 13th street, time-outs are often called when a football sails into the busy intersection.

The community center's small outdoor basketball court is also crowded and the game room inside the building is much the same.

"We have 175 registered children, but the building starts to become full with just 50 or 60 kids," F Street Recreation Center Facility Manager Karla Decker said.

A lack of space is a problem for the community center located at 930 S. 13th St., but with a new recreation center now under construction, a solution to the overcrowding is near.

Inside the neighborhood center Decker welcomes kids

who arrive for the after school program. She points across the street to the lot that will, in about a year, be the site of the new recreation center.

"Right now we have less than 5,000 square feet of space, but as soon as the new center is completed we will have eight times as much room."

Officials at the Parks and Recreation Department, the city agency that runs recreation centers, know the expansion will help all aspects of the center, not just the after school program.

"The F Street facility serves all ages," said Holly Lewis, a Parks and Recreation administrator. "It opens at 8 a.m. for seniors and doesn't close its doors until 9 (p.m.)."

"People may not be aware that we offer programs for the entire community," Lewis said.

The F Street center has classes available to the public in tai-chi, Spanish, conversational English, computer skills and creative writing.

"I am sure that as soon as we open it, we will fill the building," Lewis said.

The new three-story structure will include a gym, weight room, walking track on the sec-

"I am sure that as soon as we open it, we will fill the building."

Holly Lewis
Parks and Rec administrator

ond floor, a computer room, community meeting hall and police sub-station.

The only downside to this expansion, Decker said, is because of the cost of the new building, less money is available to pay for full-time staff, so the need for volunteers will increase.

"The university has really helped us out," Decker said. "The student involvement office has sent us volunteers and a number the fraternities and sororities have given generously."

Within the last year, Decker said they have expanded their popular after school program to include an evening meal for kids.

"With donations from businesses and the local food bank

Please see RECREATION on 7

Super board could replace NU Regents

BY GEORGE GREEN

The governing bodies of the state's universities and colleges could be fused into one if a bill introduced by Speaker of the Legislature Doug Kristensen of Minden passes.

LB401 calls for the termination of the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska and the Board of Trustees of the Nebraska State Colleges.

To fill the void, the bill would create the Nebraska Higher Education Board of Regents, a super-board vested with the powers and responsibilities of all of the institutions it usurped.

The board would be governed by 15 regents. Eight regents would be elected and the remaining seven would be appointed by the governor with approval from the Legislature.

Kristensen said his bill would bolster Nebraska's commitment to secondary education by giving all of the institutions involved in secondary education a "unified voice."

By fusing the three organizations, he said, one voice would speak for higher education, as opposed to three different voices with a myriad of legislative requests.

It is especially vital for sec-

Legislature

ondary education institutions to join forces now because the percentage of state spending allocated for education is shrinking.

If the groups had one voice, Kristensen said, they could more effectively maintain the amount of state aid they receive.

Officials from the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, one of the groups that would be eliminated under the bill, don't see many benefits to merging the institutions.

Patsy Martin, a spokeswoman for the commission, said proponents of the plan believed it would increase efficiency on the administrative side of education.

But Martin said the efficiency argument had never been conclusively proven.

"One is not necessarily more efficient than many," she said.

Kristensen, though, said efficiency would increase, but efficiency wasn't the most valuable benefit of the plan. A unified voice in higher education is the plan's main purpose.

Regardless of efficiency,

Please see BOARD on 3

Paper's stories spark UNL talks

BY LINDSEY BAKER

At Tuesday's Academic Senate meeting, Interim Chancellor Harvey Perlman made his first response to the Omaha World-Herald's four-day series on the university, which he said delayed an update on the prioritization of university programs.

"UNL: Confronting Mediocrity," details problems within the university. The World-Herald said results in UNL's low academic ratings and funding difficulties.

The series, concluding today, centers on what The World-Herald called five "key shortcomings," what the newspaper listed as: "lack of high-quality research, low tuition revenue, low classroom spending, lack of standout programs and historically open-ended admissions."

Though Perlman said he disapproved of the "negative tone" of the series' headlines, he said

Academic Senate

he agreed the content of the stories was accurate.

"I'm embracing the articles," he said.

"We are not what we want to be. Our vision is to be a first-tier research university. The series increases the urgency of our task."

Senate President-Elect Miles Bryant agreed that the headlines "misrepresent what's in the articles themselves."

"I think that the content of the stories is useful and interesting," he said.

Academic Senate Executive Committee member and Theater Arts Professor Tice Miller said the series presented a fair view of UNL.

"I don't think they're too far

Please see PERLMAN on 3

'Cries for help': After two suicides, students urged to be alert

In both cases friends and family said no warning signs were given before the students took their lives.

BY LINDSEY BAKER

Two recent student deaths have left university students mourning and campus administrators calling for groups to come together to provide support and strength in numbers.

Junior Jason Ponec, 22, jumped from the roof of Abel Hall on December 13.

"He was a good kid," said Nancy Ponec, Jason's mother. "He loved politics. He loved his church. He loved helping people. The eagle and his flag were his two favorite things," she said.

Sixteen days after Ponec's death, junior Greg Renard, 22, committed suicide at his home near Curtis.

Renard was well-known in Pound Hall, where he lived, and worked part-time doing computer repair work for the university.

The deaths came as a shock to many. "Everyone was completely shocked," senior physics major Alex Kieckhafer said. Kieckhafer lives on the sixth floor of Pound, where Renard did.

"Greg was one of the louder guys. He was a major factor in our social life. When we did something, he was around," Kieckhafer said. "It's been a lot quieter."

In both deaths, fellow students didn't see the men publicly struggling with suicidal thoughts, though Ponec's family had suspicions because of Ponec's long battle

with depression.

"Jason did have a real serious battle with depression," said Nancy Ponec. "He hid it from a lot of people."

In the wake of the suicides, students' awareness should be heightened to signs of depression, said Dr. Bob Portnoy, director of counseling and psychological services for the UNL Health Center.

"There's a myth out that if people talk about suicide they're not going to do it," Portnoy said.

In actuality, he said, 75 percent of all people who commit suicide give some sort of warning. "It's important to listen to these cries for help."

Portnoy said suicidal feelings could be triggered by recent losses, major disappointments, major life changes and physical or mental illnesses.

Nancy Ponec said her son had made some poor financial decisions, and his doctor, in retrospect, believed Ponec may have been bipolar.

Visual indicators of a suicidal person, Portnoy said, include a withdrawn, low-spirited attitude; difficulties relating to others; changes in behavior; crying; irritability; a decrease in physical care; tiredness, sleeping problems or lack of concentration; and a change in eating habits.

Portnoy said some verbal warnings may include a person stating a loss of hope or self-worth, as well as indicators of suicidal methods, such as saving up pills or driving without care.

"(Suicidal people) are generally pretty

Please see SUICIDE on 3