

Daily Nebraskan

UNL got stupid and moved the campus ashtrays away from the doors
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The Husker track team found the new indoor track to its liking this weekend
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Rights may be solidified

■ Though already in the form of a constitutional amendment, a bill was introduced that would guarantee victim's rights.

BY JILL CONNER

Although Gus Lamm's wife, Victoria Lamm and her friend, Janet Mesner, were murdered in 1980, he still fights for the killer's life.

"Abraham Lincoln once said, 'You haven't changed a man's mind simply because you've silenced him,'" Gus Lamm said.

In January 1999, the Nebraska Pardons Board, consisting of Gov. Mike Johanns, Attorney General Don Stenberg and then-Secretary of the State Scott Moore, voted to deny a commutation hearing for Reeves, which would have allowed the Lamms to argue against Reeves' death sentence.

Nebraska's constitution states that crime victims, including a victim's family members, have the right to address proceedings dealing with the sentencing or release of the criminal.

The Lamms then filed a suit stating they were denied these rights.

But victim's rights - now in the form of a constitutional amendment - aren't enforceable because the Legislature hasn't passed a bill to guarantee these rights.

Assistant Attorney General Kirk Brown said last December the Lamms could not use the victims protection amendment because it is a "totally unenforceable constitutional right."

But now, victims' rights could be guaranteed if a bill in the Legislature passes.

LB847, introduced by Sen. Kermit Brashear of Omaha, would ensure victims their full rights.

Brashear would not comment about the bill Sunday.

Gus Lamm said he was denied this right in January 1999 when he and his daughter, Audrey, asked the Nebraska Board of Pardons, for the right to express their opposition to impose the death penalty on Reeves.

In defense, Johanns said the case had already been given its dues time in court.

"It's hard to imagine a case being granted more due process than this," Johanns said during the 1999 meeting.

At the same hearing, Stenberg also read a letter written to the Lincoln Journal Star by one of Vicki Lamm's sisters in support of the death penalty.

Gary Lacey, Lancaster County Attorney who originally prosecuted the case, could not be reached for comment Friday.

A situation like the Lamms' would be avoided with the passage of LB847.

The bill ensures victims the right to examine information on public record and receive notice of time and place of any scheduled court proceedings.

It also guarantees victims financial assistance and other social services available, protection from harm and threats of harm.

It permits them to be present throughout the entire trial of the defendant and the right to make an oral or written statement at the sentencing proceeding.

Renny Cushing, executive director of Murder Victim's Families for Reconciliation, a Massachusetts-based group for families who oppose the death penalty, said the Lamms were not given the right to speak at Reeves' re-sentencing because of their anti-death penalty views.

"We find routinely that the law gets interpreted in a manner that if you oppose the position of the prosecutor, then the state no

Please see VICTIM on 3

Cell phones, driving don't mix, senator says

BY GEORGE GREEN

Sen. Dave Landis of Lincoln wants to zip the lips of some Nebraskans.

The Judiciary Committee heard testimony Friday on Landis' bill that would stick the blame for automobile accidents on cell phone users who were chatting when the crashes occurred.

LB42 would modify state law to presume that the holder of the phone was responsible for the wreck.

But the presumption will also allow cell phone users the chance to prove in court that the phone played no part in the crash.

Landis said he introduced the bill to address a serious health threat to Nebraskans.

"Cell phones increase risks on the highways," he said.

Landis equated his bill to cigarette companies having to paste warning labels on their products.

In both cases, he said, consumers deserve to know that their behavior hurts their health.

By dialing and chatting on the road,

he said, Nebraskans increase the likelihood of wreck by 400 percent.

Joe Schuele, a spokesman for Alltel, Nebraska's largest wireless provider, acknowledged that cell phones shouldn't be used irresponsibly.

But, he said, singling out cell phones from the myriad of other distractions drivers endure is not fair.

Combing hair, talking to passengers and deciphering new navigational systems distract drivers just as much as the ring of a cell phone, Schuele said.

"This is anecdotal, specialized legislation," he said.

Frank Nowak, an Omaha resident, said the bill focuses on cell phones because they divert the attention of drivers more than the other distractions.

"Your mind is completely diverted," he said.

Steve Lathrop, a spokesman for the Nebraska Bar Association, said he didn't have a beef with Landis' cell phone claims.

Please see CELL on 3



David Clasen/DN
Eddy Cunagin, a Lincoln resident, looks at cell phones at the Cellular One kiosk at Gateway Mall Sunday. Cunagin said he does not have a cell phone but supports any bill that would keep people from driving while talking on one.

Math talents bring women to conference

■ More than 93 undergraduates from all around the world gathered at the third annual event held on the university campus.

BY SHARON KOLBET

Friday afternoon 93 undergraduate women gathered at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to crunch some numbers and to break some stereotypes.

They traveled from local and international locations to attend the third annual Nebraska Conference for Undergraduate Women in Mathematics held in Lincoln this weekend.

Judy Walker, a UNL math professor and chairwoman of the organizing committee for the conference, gave the opening remarks.

"Look around you," Walker said to the conference participants gathered in Burnett auditorium. "The people in this room will be your colleagues for life. Take time to make some friends."

With 52 schools represented at the conference, Walker said the weekend was designed to encourage women's scholarship in mathematics.

Julie Berg, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln mathematics graduate student, said the conference was a wonderful opportunity for women to meet other researchers.

"There aren't too many conferences for women in mathematics," Berg said.

The impetus for the annual conference came in 1998 after the UNL math department won the Presidential Award of Excellence for its success with women graduates. Walker said the department used money from this award to start the first women's undergraduate conference.

The 1999 inaugural conference had nearly 50 participants. The next year saw nearly 70. Walker said this year's program included 93 undergraduates, including those who traveled from as far away as Puerto Rico and Ireland to attend the event.

"I am proud to be associated with this department," said Richard Hoffman, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, when speaking at the conference's opening event.

Nationally, about 25 percent of post-doctorate mathematics degrees are held by women, Walker said, but at UNL, the percentage of women doctoral candidates is much higher.

"Forty percent of the PhDs awarded by UNL's Math department have gone to women," Hoffman said. "The climate in this department must be extraordinary."



Josh Wolfe/DN
GAZING AWAY: Freshman Bethany Theer looks at the planet Mercury on Friday night at the UNL student observatory. The event, which included glimpses of Venus and Jupiter, was open to the public. See page 3 for story.

ASUN raises curtains, unveils four parties ready for battle

BY JILL ZEMAN

Whether it's folding table tents or defending party platforms in debates, students running for office in the ASUN elections have their campaigns in full swing.

Four parties have officially announced their candidacy and will run for office.

No Bull, Score!, NU Force and The One Party will vie to get their candidates elected in the March 1 Association of Students of the University of Nebraska election.

No Bull is represented by Presidential candidate Andy Mixan, First Vice-Presidential candidate Bill Westering and Second Vice-Presidential candidate Alisa Hardy.

No Bull's platform, as stated in its official party announcement last week, is to replace student Bigred e-mail accounts, change the Dead Week policy and create a student advocate program for students who are accused of violating the student code of conduct.

Members of the Score! party said they intend to repair ASUN's negative reputation with students.

The party is represented by

Presidential candidate Nathan Fuerst, First Vice-Presidential candidate Jessica Lopez and Second Vice-Presidential candidate Nick Fitch.

The group will focus on maintaining tuition rates for current UNL students as well as implementing a book exchange program in the ASUN offices.

NU Force, whose members aim to diversify ASUN, is represented by Presidential candidate Angela Clements, First Vice-Presidential candidate Erick Kinyungu and Second Vice-Presidential candidate Rowena Y. Pacquette.

The group wants to increase upper-

classmen scholarships and financial aid, especially for minorities and international students.

The One Party, led by Presidential candidate Jaron Luttich, will announce its candidacy and platform today.

Two more students also plan to run for president independently but have yet to make platform announcements.

The four groups of official ASUN candidates will face off at 6 p.m. Tuesday in a public debate sponsored by the Daily Nebraskan.

The debate will take place in the Nebraska Union, 1400 R Street. The room will be announced.