

Street preacher riles up large crowd of Lopers

By LUCAS RATLIFF

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Last week street preacher Matt Bourgault spoke twice at the Nebraskan Student Union, once on the inside and again the next day in the green space in front. Both times he attracted a large group of spectators.

Ted Eicholz, assistant chief at the UNK Police Department who has worked at UNK for 13 years, said Bourgault shows up every couple of years to preach and almost always gets a crowd. He also said it was “repetitive” and “like pushing rewind on a cassette.”

“He says his stuff,” Eicholz said. “People find it entertaining and they want to engage.”

Bourgault is a member of the Consuming Fire Fellowship, a group of street preachers who go from campus to campus speaking about their religion. While at UNK, Bourgault spoke about the behaviors that he thought were sinful like

drug and alcohol use, tattoos, piercings and believing in other religions or denominations. This also included premarital relations like kissing, pharmaceutical drugs, rap music, women in the government, short shorts and men wearing pink.

Jenna Buck, a sophomore exercise science major, viewed his performance and called it hate speech because of how he was yelling at students and targeting women.

“He was basically telling women who wore shorts around campus that we were whores,” Buck said.

Buck said there was a difference between how people normally come to campus to promote their religions and what Bourgault was doing.

“It’s one thing when the Jehovah’s witnesses or even like the nuns are here and they stand and wait for people to come up for them,” Buck said. “They’re not harassing people. This is



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Matt Bourgault is approached by John Falconer, senior adviser to the chancellor, and asked to remove his sign.

borderline harassment.”

Buck also said that she thinks that preachers like Bourgault make religious people look bad to the public.

“I grew up in the church and this is not how I’ve been taught to behave, so it just paints everybody else who wants to

profess Christianity in a bad light and that’s not fair,” Buck said.

Eicholz said that Bourgault’s preaching was protected by free speech because UNK is a public university and public property.

“It’s the same right for him as any other entity coming in,”

Eicholz said.

Bourgault has a reputation for suing college campuses. In 2004 Bourgault attempted to sue the University of Texas in Arlington for not letting him preach in 2002.

After Bourgault preached for about an hour on the second day, a campus official talked to him and asked him to take his sign down since it was planted into campus ground. Eicholz said that when Bourgault has shown up in the past he has not gotten as much of a reaction and leaves much sooner.

George Holman, the associate vice chancellor of student affairs, said that students haven’t typically engaged with him as much as they did last week.

“I can’t tell if it’s good or bad,” Holman said. “I’m just glad to see students out here.”

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