

Cupid to fly again

BY AMANDA STONE / Lincoln Journal Star

It was her sanctuary. It was the place she came to say goodbye when her stepfather passed away. And it inspired the former waitress to donate \$950 in tips to repair it the last time.

So when the "Cupid in Cigno" fountain in the Antelope Park Rose Garden was destroyed again, it lit a fire of determination in Sandy Smith and others to put a stop to vandalism in Lincoln's parks.

"It's not going to stop me from coming here," Smith said. "Idiots, as I call them ... there is no reason for it except they have to be idiots."

A \$3,000 reward is being offered for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the party responsible for the damage, said Clancy Woolman, president of the Parks and Recreation Foundation.

Lynn Johnson, director of the city Parks and Recreation Department, said he hopes part of the punishment will include countless hours of community service.

Alice Reed, gardener with the parks department, thought picking up cigarette butts on the edge of 27th Street or pulling weeds all day without breaks would be a fit punishment.

"It's just senseless that this would happen," Woolman said.

A replacement fountain was ordered from Canonbury Antiques in London, Johnson said. It will cost around \$3,400 and should be shipped soon, he said.

Johnson said he hopes to get the new fountain up by Aug. 1.

"We wanted to find something to put here immediately to let vandals know that the parks won't put up with them," said Johnson.

The new statue is a bronze Italian Baroque Cherub holding a fish. Bronze is much more durable and much less susceptible to vandalism, Johnson said.

"We spent some time trying to find something similar, with a cherub or cupid in it, and we found this piece in London."

Cupid is the Roman god of love. He is identified as a boy with wings carrying a bow and a quiver of arrows. A cherub is a small angel depicted as a chubby, winged child.

Private donors and the parks department are paying for the replacement, Johnson said.

"We plan not to let these vandals run us out of these parks," Woolman said. "Lincoln loves its parks. The citizens want to see artwork back in that spot."

Smith said she had to find "sneaky ways" to help with donations this time.

"They won't take any money from me," she said. "They told me that I've done enough."

Johnson said the people of Lincoln have been tremendously supportive of the efforts to end vandalism.

"People are excited. They love their gardens and they love the art," Reed said. "It just makes the city feel richer, and Lincoln's hungry for it."

Reed, who has worked in the gardens for the last 22 years, said she has seen the parks through all manner of destruction.

"Well, vandalism happens, but we just hope to get them. I'd like to get my hands on them," Reed said. "I have teenage boys, and if it were them I'd probably send them off to work camp."

To discourage vandals, security will be set up in the parks, Johnson said. A camera will possibly be placed in the Rose Garden and there is a "garden watch" in the Sunken Gardens. The watch is volunteers monitoring the garden

once a month from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m.

"All we can hope is the people will speak out," Reed said, "and if they see someone doing something they can yell, 'Stop jerk.'"

Johnson said if someone sees something suspicious they should call 441-6000 to let the police know.

Smith said the parks belong to Lincoln so it is everyone's responsibility to watch for vandals.

"I think what they need to do is make a statue out of cactus," Smith said. "So when someone goes to push it over it will stick 'em."