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Teaching tools sought abroad

By **AMY KELLER**
Staff Reporter

Fifteen people traveled down under this summer to understand the teaching strategies used in Australia, and implement them in American classrooms.

This group of University of Nebraska-Lincoln professors and Nebraska teachers spent July 7-27 living with Australian teachers who teach the same subjects to the same age groups as the American teachers.

Inger Bull, an assistant for the study abroad program at UNL, said the trip was "a chance to look at Australia's school system, and compare it to what we have in Nebraska."

Bull has been involved with this program for four years, but this summer was her first chance to participate. The program, which started in 1994, has continued almost every year since then.

The trip cost each participant \$2,500, which included tuition, airfare and housing for the three weeks. The teachers each stayed in two different homes for a week at a time, then spent four nights in hotels while traveling and sightseeing.

The first home-stay was in Brisbane, a town in the north coast region of Australia, a rural area. To have a contrasting experience, the second home-stay was in Sydney, a large metropolitan city.

All of the teachers who went on the trip were required to turn in a paper about their experiences and the differences in the Australian and American school systems. They were also required to do a unit on Australia in each of their classrooms.

Bull said the experiences in another country made each traveler examine the advantages and disadvantages of both school systems, including how they are funded, how administration works, how much the community is involved in the school system, and the relationships between students and teachers.

Jim Emal, the computing coordinator for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and a UNL professor, said that he went on the trip as a representative for university distance education, so he stayed on five different university campuses.

"You don't go over as a tourist or Christopher Columbus exploring things. ... They match you to your specific purpose," he said.

Emal said that he learned a great deal from staying with the newly retired director general of the school system, especially since public schools are state-run in Australia, which amounted to many differences from American schools.

"I'd recommend it. ... I'd go back in a minute," Emal said.

Barb Skala, a teacher at Wausa High School in Wausa said she had some interesting experiences on the

trip. A former student of hers lives in Australia, and Skala had a chance to stay with her during the trip.

In addition, Skala tried to contact a former exchange student from Indonesia who also went to Wausa High School. Despite a change in phone numbers, Skala eventually contacted the student and visited her.

Skala said there was a definite difference in the academics of Australian schools.

"I think that they aren't pushed as hard as kids are in Nebraska ... they didn't have to do homework," she said.

But she also said the exam taken for acceptance to Australian colleges is harder than the qualifications for college in America.

Emal said that the same Australian teachers who opened their homes to Americans this summer are planning a similar trip to the United States next fall to experience the school system in the states.

On Saturday, the group that traveled to Australia got together for one last meeting, and to turn in their papers and compare pictures.

Similar trips are being planned for next summer, and the study abroad program members are debating whether to have the trips every summer or every other summer.

"More and more teachers should do it because it was a fantastic experience," Skala said.

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Hepatitis vaccine eludes students

By **JOSH FUNK**
Assignment Reporter

Many college students are not aware of the vaccine for hepatitis B or how it is spread, according to a University of South Florida study released recently.

College students have a high risk of contracting the virus hepatitis B, which can be easily prevented with a vaccine.

The director of the University Health Center, Dr. Linda Herrmann, said they had no way of knowing how

informed Nebraska students are about hepatitis B and its vaccination.

Hepatitis B is a virus transmitted much like HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. It can be contracted through sexual contact, shared needles, contact with contaminated blood or body fluids or birth by a contaminated mother.

"Many people don't realize that the virus can be transmitted by things like sharing a toothbrush or razor, tattooing or ear piercing," Herrmann said.

High risk groups include:

- People who have had more than one sexual partner in the last six months

- Intravenous drug users

- People who require frequent or large-volume blood transfusions

- Travelers to high-risk areas like Africa

- Health-care professionals or other workers who regularly come in contact with bodily fluids

Once infected with the virus, there is an incubation period lasting six weeks to six months before symptoms begin to appear, Herrmann said.

Then flu-like symptoms - including nausea and vomiting - start to appear; but the symptoms will persist for four to

six weeks until recovery begins.

Along with the flu jaundice, a yellowing of the skin and whites of eyes, develops after three to 10 days, according to the American Medical Association.

With hepatitis B there is also a chance of death due to liver failure, and sufferers of the disease can become carriers for life.

"Because it is a viral infection, there is no treatment and no cure for hepatitis B," Herrmann said.

However, while most adults do recover from hepatitis B, full recovery may take six months.

While there is no cure for hepatitis B, there is a vaccine available for hepatitis A and B.

The vaccine is administered in three injections over the course of six months, and is available at the Health Center. The adult student rate is \$40 for each of the three injections. The pediatric student rate, which may be available to students under age 20, is \$17 for each injection.

If anyone thinks they may be infected they should contact a doctor.

"Anytime you have a flu that lasts more than 48 hours you should seek medical advice," Herrmann said.

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