

It's summertime and the visitors flock to NIEHS

By Eddy Ball

NIEHS welcomes visitors all year, but, when June arrives, the number of guests increases dramatically, as summer program students participate in tours of the Institute. The serious science continues as well, but the fresh and eager faces of young people, who are interns or visitors, become much more common in the halls, meeting rooms, cafeteria, and labs at NIEHS.

From June 3 to July 16 alone, the NIEHS Office of Science Education and Diversity (OSED) called on Institute scientists for help organizing programs and tours for teachers and 11 groups of students, ranging from youngsters in the John Avery Boys and Girls Club of Durham, N.C., summer program, to graduate students in their early to mid-twenties, studying at the North Carolina State University (NCSU) College of Veterinary Medicine.

Students learn not all vets treat livestock and companion animals

For the veterinary students' visit June 26, OSED Special Assistant for Community Engagement and Outreach John Schelp took advantage of a group of volunteers from among NTP's staff of veterinary scientists, including Cellular and Molecular Pathology Branch group leader [Dave Malarkey, D.V.M., Ph.D.](#), who organized the half-day program for the fourth time, and worked with Schelp, who led the 40-minute tour.

The 30 students were accompanied by NCSU faculty advisors Jody Gookin, D.V.M., Ph.D., and Sam Jones, D.V.M., Ph.D. Their program is aimed at encouraging veterinary students to consider alternative careers in clinical or basic research.

The visitors seemed to be fascinated by the fact that more than 20 veterinarians work for NIEHS and NTP, pursuing such veterinary specialties as pathology, laboratory animal care, and animal welfare. "The students really enjoy the program Dr. Malarkey puts together," said Gookin. "Many are also surprised to learn that part of the NIH is right in our own backyard."

The program began with presentations by NTP Associate Director John Bucher, Ph.D., and NIEHS and NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., who were participating in the program for the first time. NIEHS cancer biologist John Roberts Ph.D., spoke enthusiastically about the current understanding of metastasis, and the excitement and pure fun of conducting basic research in the lab.

Joining Malarkey were other volunteers from NTP and NIEHS, who described alternative career opportunities for veterinarians in various areas of biomedical research. They included Angela King-Herbert, D.V.M.; David Kurtz, D.V.M., Ph.D.; Arun Pandiri, Ph.D.; Gregory Travlos, D.V.M.; and Michael Boyle, D.V.M.



Malarkey, right, and Jones, center with beard, joined the students on the stairs overlooking Lake Discovery on the NIEHS campus. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

Feedback from tour participants

The campus tours, Schelp said, usually include a slideshow and overview; NIH Summer Internship Program (SIP) presentation from NIEHS SIP coordinator Debbie Wilson; two or three career talks from young scientists; a walking tour of the main building; chance encounters along the route; and a lab visit and demonstration. In addition to summer, according to Schelp, fall and spring semesters are popular times for the tours.

NIEHS can depend on OSED and its volunteer scientists and staff to make the experience rewarding for visitors and their program leaders, as evidenced by comments Schelp has received after the tours.

- "John, at this point in their lives, exposure to a place like NIEHS was extremely beneficial. Beyond that, learning about the agency and hearing about health, environment, and research from such a terrific advocate like you was invaluable."

Gidi Shemer, Ph.D. - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- "This was very much a learning experience for us all about the environment in which we live. Thanks so much for your dedicated community service."

Earle Manhertz, White Rock Baptist Church

- "Hi John: I want to write a serious thank you note for the wonderful tour that we had and for the presentations."

Faye Calhoun, D.P.A., North Carolina Central University

- "Wanted to let you know how much we all enjoyed our tour today and to express how much was learned. The students have been raving about what a wonderful field trip experience this was and I truly thank you for all that you did to make this possible."

Gloria Green, Granville Central High School

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