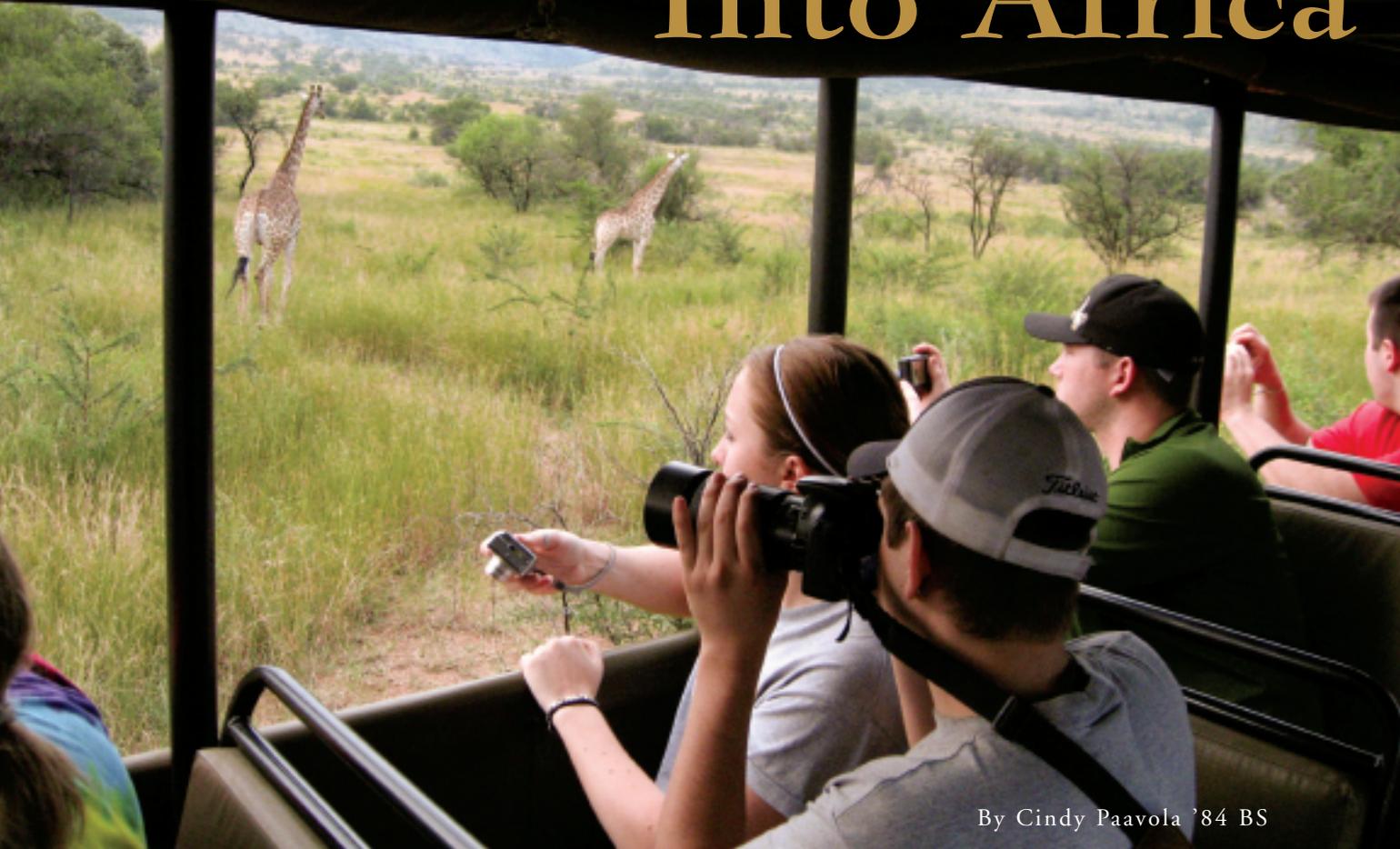


# Cover story

# Into Africa



By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

**P**retoria, South Africa. It was nothing like they expected.

Despite having spent much of a semester in a classroom learning about that region of the world—its people, culture and criminal justice system—when freshman Chelsea Martin and junior John Pfister reached Pretoria, they were surprised. It's a huge, modern city, with a population of 2.3 million.

“Even though we were told in class that Pretoria was one of South Africa's three capital cities, somehow when you know you're going to Africa, you just expect it to be more rural,” says Martin, who hails from Jenison and Vermontville, Mich., and who would like to one day be a

detective, “maybe for a special victims unit.”

Martin was in a unique situation being a part of the CJ 495 International Criminal Justice course and its subsequent trip to South Africa this spring. Normally 400-level courses are not open to freshmen,

**“I'm not who I was before I went there.”**

but as a Freshman Fellow (see box on page 12), her duties were to help professor Bob Hanson organize the 10-day visit. As a reward, she was allowed to take the upper-division course and go on the trip, but only if she did well in the course.

“Which I did, thankfully,” she says with a laugh. “It was great—all of it, helping to plan the trip and meeting with Willie Clack, our point person in South Africa, when he came to NMU to do presentations for the campus and in classes. He's so awesome; he and I just clicked. He's become a role model to me and 'adopted' me as his American daughter. I just love him. And, Africa, well Africa was incredible, absolutely spectacular. The whole experience changed me. I'm not who I was before I went there.”

When asked to explain, Martin puts her hands in the air and opens her mouth, but no words come out. She smiles and says quietly, “It's hard

to put into words, as if it were just one or two things that affected me.”

South Africa is redoing its criminal justice system, explains Martin, which makes this period a great time for criminal justice students to study the past, present and future of the system there.

“Apartheid ended in 1994, which really isn’t that long ago in terms of a whole nation changing. So they are still trying to transition. For instance, there are still problems with affirmative action and they have tremendous problems with theft and armed robberies, although we were always safe there because we were never without our guide.”

While in Pretoria, the NMU students visited prisons and a forensic laboratory, had lectures from criminal justice professors from the University of Pretoria and got to go on “ride alongs” with police officers.

“One of the things we learned about was how respectful the prisoners and guards are to each other—so different than our prison system,” says Martin. “When we went to the forensic laboratory, we saw the only automated DNA machine in the world—something almost no one has access to and we saw it. We went to an explosives unit. One of the ride alongs with police I was on they had to deal with the crime scene of two armed robberies. We were safe, though. They wouldn’t have put us in any danger. Wow, what a set of incredible experiences.”

Upon returning to campus, Martin had a question: Why doesn’t

*NMU students on safari at an animal park outside of Pretoria (left). On this page, top to bottom: Chelsea Martin gets a goodbye hug from her South African “father” and mentor Willie Clack; NMU Professor Bob Hanson cuddles up with a lion cub; student Aaron Luther with a new little friend; and John Pfiester bravely standing in front of the largest bull elephant in captivity, Thembo.*



the university require more than one world cultures course? It now seems important to her that college students understand the world better. This was a shift in thinking from when she came to NMU.

“Being over there and being a minority was such an experience that it made me think more about what it’s like to be a minority on our campus. I’m different because of Africa. I feel different now. I act different now.”

John Pfiester, a criminal justice major from Rapid River and a member of NMU’s ROTC program, knows that he will never be the same.

“I went to South Africa with about \$250 spending money in my pocket and I had more money than most people had to live on for a year. That was kind of sobering. But these people were so willing to share their homes, their food, their time. Everyone was so hospitable and friendly. Every single race was very friendly. And, they all speak so many languages. I met one guy there who spoke 12 different languages!”

For Pfiester, the trip wasn’t just his first out of the United States, but his first requiring air travel. He said he was ready for a global experience and had decided he was going, “no matter what,” almost from the first he heard about it in an earlier CJ course. He took out a student loan to cover the \$3,000 cost, and it was “definitely worth every penny.”

“I was a little nervous about the plane ride, wondering if I’d get sick,” he remembers. “At Sawyer [Airport in Marquette], we got on this little matchbox-type plane and it was like a roller coaster, so I was thinking then that flying wasn’t so great. But the plane that took us to Johannesburg was huge and you couldn’t feel a thing. It was a 23-hour flight and I slept most of the way. I’ll fly again

and I'm definitely planning to travel to more places around the world."

With a population of more than 8 million, Johannesburg is more than 25 times larger than the entire population of the Upper Peninsula. "As we drove through Johannesburg, I kept thinking, 'Man, are there the lights here'—big city. Then we got to Pretoria and it, too, was a city. I thought, 'It's huge.' Like any city, there was lot of homelessness. I also saw a lot of modern, high-quality cars there—Toyotas, Fords, Chevies, Mercedes—more expensive cars than you see driving around in the U.P. So my first impressions were nothing like I thought Africa would be."

## While in Pretoria, the NMU students visited prisons and a forensic laboratory, had lectures from criminal justice professors from the University of Pretoria and got to go on "ride alongs" with Pretoria police officers.

walking down the road not three feet from our van with nothing between them and us. My heart never beat so fast. It was incredible," he says. Both he and Martin had a

rest of the NMU group. In fact, he took 2,800 photos and 12 gigs of video, went through four sets of lithium batteries for his brand new camera and wrote 21 pages in his journal—all single spaced.

"Once I decided to go, I went out and bought a digital camera. I knew I'd want to take a lot of photos. I didn't want to miss a thing and I wanted to record everything we did and saw, tasted and felt. I took every initiative I could while there to be out doing things. I wasn't going to just sit in a hotel room. I wanted to be out there, trying it all, and I made sure I wouldn't forget a single minute of the experience," he says.



The surprisingly large city of Pretoria; the cadre of criminal justice students on the trip; and John Pfiester and Chelsea Martin with two of the local police officers they rode along with in the cruiser to actual calls.

Pfiester also was surprised to find big shopping malls that looked just like those in large U.S. cities, with one striking exception.

"Many of the restaurants and stores had all the food just sitting out for you to see and pick from. I don't think the FDA would approve of this, but the food tasted great everywhere we went. I loved the jerky shops; it was the greatest jerky I've ever tasted."

Pfiester and his classmates did get to see the animals that better suited their stereotype of Africa on a visit to Pilansburg Park, a 120,000-acre animal park outside of Pretoria.

"There were two male lions

chance to be photographed next to the biggest elephant in captivity.

Of course Pfiester took photos of the lions, elephants, food, city, people and everything else, much to the amusement of Hanson and the

Pretoria, South Africa, say Martin and Pfiester, didn't turn out to be exactly what they expected, but so much more than they ever imagined. ■



### Freshman Fellowship Program

Each year, 40 incoming freshmen are selected from among the competitors at the Presidential Scholars Competition as part of NMU's Freshman Fellowship Program. Each fellow can earn up to \$1,000 in wages doing research or other scholarly activities with an NMU faculty or staff member. Normally, the fellow works about two to three hours per week throughout his or her freshman year.

To learn more about the program, as well as the Presidential Scholars Competition, go to [www.nmu.edu/presidentialscholars](http://www.nmu.edu/presidentialscholars).

# On Location

## A behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to lead a study-abroad trip

By Cindy Paavola '84 BS

**M**any who get into teaching do so with the goal of helping to change lives.

Northern faculty who have become involved in the university's faculty-led, study-abroad program say they get to watch students undergo transformational change right before their eyes.

"Organizing and supervising study abroad trips is more work than most realize, but when you see what the students get from the experience, it's worth every minute," says Bob Hanson, a criminal justice professor who has taken students on three trips to South Africa. "You get to be a part of a life-changing experience for many students. You get to show them a side of the world that they have little knowledge about. They get a view of diversity that they might not otherwise ever experience. Students learn as much about themselves as they do about the country and cultures they are visiting."

As part of Northern's strategic goal to provide more students with international experiences, both on and off campus, the faculty-led, study-abroad program is starting to flourish.

These short-term, out-of-the-country learning trips usually range from two to four weeks in length and cost students about \$2,000 to \$4,000, depending on the duration,

location and details of the trip. Some are an optional or required component of an on-campus course while others are full but condensed courses.

During the 2007-08 academic year, including this summer, NMU students are participating in programs that take them to Europe, Africa, Asia and South America (see list on page 15).

What goes into creating a successful faculty-led, study-abroad experience? Recent program leaders say early and extensive planning, committed partners in the host countries, advance site trips by the faculty and a flexible attitude.

"Pack your sense of humor and a Plan B," says Mary Jane Tremethick from health, physical education and recreation, who is making a third trip to Honduras with co-leader Eileen Smit of nursing and 13 students who have an interest in health-care issues in Latin America.

"You need to organize, organize, organize, but in the end things never go exactly as planned, so being

flexible and willing to roll with the punches is key," Tremethick says.

Also critical to success is location, location, location.

"Will the area be safe for students?" says Hanson. "Will it be the right environment for good learning activities? Will there be enough interesting things for the students to do during their free time?"

Reliable, committed partners in the host areas play a key role in productive faculty-led experiences, say the NMU program leaders.

Amy Orf, one of the two modern languages and literatures faculty who took 21 students to Parral and Chihuahua, Mexico, in spring 2007, worked with Universidad Regional del Norte (Regional University of the North), one of Northern's international university partners.

"We were able to tell the URN people what we were interested in and they helped coordinate things. The university officials gave us many suggestions on what would be good



*Clockwise: the group ready to depart for Honduras; NMU students Danielle Fure, Trista Buzzo and Angela Wandell work with Honduran children.*



*Clockwise: Alec Lindsay and Chief Chitambo, at the spot where Sir David Livingstone died in 1873; students taking in the Zambian wildlife and light; the group, referred to as the Zambassadors, at Victoria Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world; biology major Julian Dupuis examining a local beetle.*

for our students. Also, our class sessions were held on the URN campus,” says Orf.

Hanson adds, “The right kind of help on the other side makes a huge difference. Our success in going to South Africa has been directly related to teaming up with people who are as committed to the educational mission as we are, and because of that, they volunteer an incredible amount of their time, helping us find ways to make things affordable for the students and offering us opportunities that wouldn’t be available if we were just tourists.”

Assessing safety is among the top priorities in planning the international experiences. One major concern is availability of medical services. “It is important to know where the nearest hospital is located and how to get there fast,” says Orf.

“That became essential when one student fell and cut her hand on broken glass,” she adds.

The lack of access to medical

services was a primary concern for biology professors Alec Lindsay and Jackie Bird before taking 13 students to Zambia to do field work in 2007. To better prepare for emergency conditions in rural Africa, Lindsay traveled to Boston to complete a three-day Wilderness Advance First Aid certification course.

“Having this training was important because we were camping out in national parks that often were hours from any type of medical assistance,” explains Lindsay.

The training also gave him some insight into accidents. “We were taught that 95 percent of all accidents on study-abroad experiences are caused by students doing foolish things, not because of unsafe situations in a host country,” he says. “So, faculty need a good balance between maintaining discipline while still allowing students a chance to explore and learn independently.”

The learning experience is the next most important planning issue.

“I wanted our students to both understand the complexities and the joys of doing field work, and also to have a poignant and personal life experience within a developing country,” says Lindsay. “What they came away with was a healthy respect for what it takes to do science in the field and an entirely new perspective on their own lives. For instance, before leaving Marquette, one student was worried about coming up with \$350 for rent. Once in Zambia, she met local families whose income for an entire year is \$350. To say these ‘Zambassadors’ gained a new perspective on life is an understatement.”

Nursing professors Anna Sanford and Kathleen Thompson designed a course that would teach how medical conditions such as HIV, AIDS, and tuberculosis pandemics are handled by first- and third-world clinics in Pretoria, South Africa.

“The students will not do any hands-on care because it’s not safe, but they will be able to see first-hand the tremendous disparity between the medical services in the shanty communities and those in the South African cities,” says Thompson.

Program leaders admit that not all of their faculty colleagues would be well suited for leading study-abroad experiences. They say a “compulsive attention to detail” is a job requirement.

“It’s not just that you have to be prepared for the wide variety of student personalities and unexpected circumstances during the trip, but planning the trip you’ll find yourself working with people thousands of miles away and this can be challenging,” says Tremethick.

A considerable amount of planning time includes teaching students how to travel internationally—applying for or updating a passport,

getting immunizations, discussing what is and isn't appropriate clothing for the weather and the culture.

And then there is that wide range of personalities being flung together. Planning a study-abroad experience, the program leaders say, has a few similarities but more differences than planning a family vacation.

"On the trip, the group becomes like a family. The members get close, but like any family, there are the various personalities that cause occasional arguments," says Orf.

"Who's afraid of spiders and bugs? Who gets sick when eating

certain foods? Who gets crabby when they don't get enough sleep? You know you're going to be with these people 24-7 and you have lots of unknown variables going in," says Smit.

Smit and Tremethick say that the best part about their trips to Honduras has been watching the NMU students interact with the Honduran people, especially the children.

"Our students are struck by the people being so happy despite their limited living conditions and the inequity of what some parts of the world have compared to others," says Smit. "These learning opportunities

help students get beyond being a tourist so that they can see the joys and the heartbreak of the people who live in these places. They come to realize that joy and friendliness is contagious, regardless of nationality."

Hanson points out that study abroad also helps faculty become better teachers.

"I can honestly say that I only truly understood our criminal justice system to the extent I do now—its positives and negatives—once I saw the South African system first hand," he says. "It's not just the students who gain a broader perspective." ■



## Spending Summer 2008 Abroad

Several other NMU faculty-led study-abroad experiences are taking place during the 2008 summer sessions, including:

### Alternative and Complementary Health Care in Peru

*Taught by Julie Higbie and Barbara Wittler, Nursing.* Students will learn about the culture of Peru and about the five major areas of complementary and alternative medicine, as outlined by the National Institutes of Health: alternative health care systems; mind-body interventions; biologically-based therapies; manipulative and body-based healing methods; and energy therapies.

### Social Changes in China and Tai Chi

*Renxin Yang, Sociology/Social Work.* A four-week program in China where students are introduced to the social environment, culture, people and the changes in China during the past few decades. They will practice with masters of calligraphy and landscape painting, and learn to meditate and strengthen their bodies with Tai Chi.

### Hamlet in Sweden and Denmark

*Jim Schiffer, English.* A three-week course at Växjö (Sweden) University, one of NMU's international university partners. Students from both schools will read the play, explore its sources and review the critical response to the play over the last four centuries. The students will visit Kronborg Castle in Helsingør, Denmark, which was built on the site of Elsinor Castle, where the play is set. Students will also learn about Swedish history and culture through lectures from Växjö University instructors.

### South America's Southern Cone

*Rebecca Ulland, Modern Languages and Literatures.* Students will travel to Argentina for four weeks to study the literature, culture and history of the country. The students will live with host families, meet peers from the Universidad del Salvador and visit sites such as the Casa Rosada and Iguazu Falls. The course is being offered in cooperation with Michigan State University.

### Multicultural and Global Education, Peru

*Rod Clarken, Education.* This study of culture and education in Peru is designed to develop multicultural and global perspectives affecting teachers' and students' knowledge, attitudes and behavior.

### Cultural and Artistic Heritage of Europe

*Nell Kupper, Modern Languages and Literatures.* Students will experience a multi-disciplinary introduction to contemporary French-speaking Europe. The course will examine the heritage of modern French-speaking European society as it manifests itself through various cultural artifacts, such as visual art, film, architecture and social customs.

# Sharing a Sandwich

By Richard Whelan



Every day after class I would go to a plaza to eat lunch near the hostel where I was living during my time in Buenos Aires. The poverty in the capital of Argentina is at times overwhelming and the country is still recuperating from the collapse of its economy in 2001. A substantial number of people live in the streets, collect trash and beg for money.

One day during lunch I met Frank. We met by accident, or perhaps by chance, because he happened to be looking for something to eat in the trash can that was next to the bench I was sitting on. Frank did not have to ask what he wanted as he paused from his search; he said it with his presence and simply looked up at me with the eyes of someone who is 12 years old and wants nothing more than to eat because he is hungry. I slowly slid over what remained of my sandwich, without speaking. Frank smiled, and then ate in a funny silence on the other side of the bench.

I guess the beginning of a friendship can take many forms—at times it is instantaneous and sometimes it takes

effort. With Frank, the formation of a friendship took only a few moments and before I knew it, we were speaking. We were communicating in Spanish, and on that first day we had a conversation about all the things that do not matter in life because those are the easiest things to talk about.

The next day, I went to the same plaza at the same time and Frank returned to see me. This time he brought a bottle of Coke for the two of us to share. Again, I shared my sandwich with Frank and we talked about whatever he wanted to talk about, because 12-year-old boys like to talk. To make a long story short, Frank and I started to have lunch together a few times a week. I would now bring two sandwiches from the supermarket and the Coke, because Frank could not afford to do so. We would just enjoy the company of one another, some days in silence, some days with conversation.

After about three weeks of lunches, I told Frank that I would be leaving soon to go and travel. I wanted to know if he wanted to go anywhere with me during the upcoming weekend as a final sendoff because I would not be returning to Buenos Aires. Frank told me that outside of the city there is an amusement park that he would like

Frank simply looked up at me with the eyes of someone who is 12 years old and wants nothing more than to eat because he is hungry. I slowly slid over what remained of my sandwich...

to go to because he had seen pictures and the advertisements, but had never been able to go there because of the cost. I told him I would pay, and we made arrangements to spend our final Saturday together.

There are some things in life we as individuals cannot change; poverty is one of them. However, I believe we can help people escape, momentarily, from realities that cannot be completely changed. For the better part of a month I gave Frank some food and conversation. For a few moments he could forget what he left behind when he was with me. When Frank and I went to the

amusement park, I felt peace and a strange sense of joy. I saw the enjoyment on his face as he rode the rides, ate cotton candy and was able to experience something that he never thought possible.

It was a wonderful day, for me and for Frank. As we rode the train back to Buenos Aires, he started to talk about his family, and it occurred to me that he had never spoken of them. They never came up in conversation. He told me about his father, mother and three siblings, and he spoke with emotion and feeling. Despite the fact that they have the life they do, there is love.

As the train pulled into the station and we made our way back to the subway, Frank asked if I wanted to meet his family. I was taken aback by this question and was hesitant, feeling uncomfortable about meeting them. But I went because Frank asked me. We arrived at a plaza in one of the more impoverished districts in Buenos Aires and I slowly made my way to a corner of it where I saw a few mattresses. That was where Frank and his family slept.

I was welcomed without scrutiny or suspicion by the family. Everyone wanted to know what happened that day at the amusement park and Frank recounted what he had done. As the evening passed and the sun began to set, I began to say goodbye and thank Frank for his company over the past few weeks. As I walked away, Frank's brothers and sister ran past me asking me not to go. Then, for a reason I did not understand, I asked them what they were

doing the next day. They replied that they were doing nothing. I asked all of them to meet me in the plaza at noon. They asked "Why?" and I said, "Why not?" That was the end of the discussion, and they seemed pleased.

The following day Frank and his brothers and sister showed up and we went to a district in Buenos Aires where you can buy cheap clothes. This is not a district of stores, it is more or less a black market for inexpensive goods. Anyway, I bought Frank and his siblings some clothes, shoes and things they needed. Items that you and I take for granted; needs that they have learned to live without.

**We arrived at a plaza in one of the more impoverished districts in Buenos Aires and I slowly made my way to a corner of it where I saw a few mattresses.**

In my opinion, many people invest their time or money trying to obtain something useless. I could have elected another set of actions and decisions, but the choices I made caused me to feel complete.

I guess the voyage into another culture is complicated and there is the possibility to choose many different experiences. You can travel with your eyes shut or with your eyes open. I chose to see this country with my eyes open. ■



*Richard is the recipient of a Vandament Scholarship, which enabled his study abroad. This is one of the "culture reports" students submit to their sponsoring department in order to receive credit. He adds about his NMU Foundation scholarship: "Through the generosity you imparted to me I was able to then pass that generosity on to the needs of others."*

*For more information, see [www.nmu.edu/foundation](http://www.nmu.edu/foundation).*

# Tickets to Travel

Two more programs launching students around the globe

By Rebecca Tavernini

## Student teaching

Getting classroom experience is one thing for education students; getting that experience overseas is quite another. **Mark Henrion '07 BS**, who taught at a Department of Defense school in Bamberg, Germany, says, "It was one of the best things I have ever done in my life, and it has served me well in my first year of teaching in Buckeye, Ariz., because I can tell kids how things are done in a different culture on a whole other continent."

DoD schools in many locations have been a popular training ground for NMU students, who have also taken advantage of student teaching partnerships or exchange programs with schools in Russia, China, Ecuador,

England, Mexico and more.

**Janet Anderson '02 BS**, currently a middle school teacher in Marquette, student taught in New Zealand. There, "children start school the day they turn five. So throughout the year, new students are added to the class." She notes that more than half of each day was spent on reading and writing, which results in the country's high literacy rates.

"New Zealand is a very large melting pot. This experience showed me how big the world really is. That people from all over the world are very different, and yet very similar. We all laugh the same, love the same, and hurt the same. Through all the differences, we can find similarities and beliefs that hold true around the world. I also learned that kids are kids no matter where you are!"



Janet Anderson with her students in New Zealand.

## Student Ambassadors

In the last five years, four recipients of the regional Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, a \$24,000 award to study abroad for one year, have been NMU students. The most recent recipients are Kimberly Martino, who is leaving this summer for New Dehli, India, and Nicole Weber, who will spend the 2009-10 academic year either at the University of Geneva in Switzerland or in France.



Kimberly Martino

"Once I decided to travel to India, I discovered that most aspects of my life lend themselves towards an interest in India," explains Martino. "I will be studying life sciences at Delhi University. I am also hoping to become active in Rotary's Polio Plus Program, working to eradicate polio." This will be her first time living abroad, and although she's nervous, she senses the trip will shape her future. "I know that the work I want to do for the rest of my life will benefit people and the environment. I am very interested in sustainable development. I am hoping this experience in India will push me towards a more specific field; that I will find something in India that is my calling."

Nicole Weber was motivated to apply for the scholarship after completing a year-long study-abroad program last year at the University of Alicante in Spain. Much of

what she learned overseas applied to her dual major of community health education and Spanish. Part of her studies focused on the millennium development goals established by the World Health Organization.

"Studying that material and being able to see the differences between the Spanish health care system and the U.S. system really got me interested in looking at health as a global issue and I realized the importance of international collaboration on health issues," she says. While in Spain she also did volunteer service with seriously ill or displaced children.



Nicole Weber visiting with Spanish children with cancer so their parents could take a break for coffee or a bite to eat.

"There's no way you can learn about your country or yourself better than by leaving it," says **John Weting '02 MA**, who just retired from NMU's international studies program and now serves as district Rotary Foundation chair. "I'm involved because on the news you see such ugliness—drugs, gangs, murders. With the students in this program you see there's good leadership coming up in this world, who will make it a better place. As someone with a grandchild on the way, I want that."