



Ye-haw! It's Summer ... Let's Get Out & About

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Section I, Page THIRTEEN

Education Grant

MDI Bio Lab Gets \$18.7M

BY ANNE KOZAK
BAR HARBOR — The Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory has been awarded a five-year, \$18.7-million biomedical and education grant from the National Institutes of Health.

The lab's board chairman, Terence Boylan, announced the grant Wednesday.

The grant, which is a renewal of a \$17.8-million grant made in 2004, ensures the continuation of the Maine Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence, a collaborative network of 12 Maine research

laboratories, universities and colleges, with the bio lab's administrative director, Patricia Hand, as the principal investigator.

"The grant gives students the ability to acquire important biomedical research skills — skills that further their careers and allow them to pursue graduate or postdoctoral research, or trains them to work as technicians," said Hand. "A number of undergraduate students who have taken Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence courses during the

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Bio Lab Gets \$18.7M

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academic year have found jobs here and at The Jackson Lab as well as in other biomedical facilities and research labs across the state."

Since receiving funding from the predecessor grant, researchers at the bio lab have joined with faculty from participating colleges to offer intensive courses lasting one to two weeks each spring, usually during the students' spring break.

This year, the lab hosted six of the courses for students from Bates, Bowdoin, Colby, College of the Atlantic, the University of Maine as well as a combined course for students from the University of Maine branches at Farmington, Machias and Presque Isle.

In addition to giving the students hands-on research experience, the courses contribute to the island's economy during late winter and spring. The students who live in dorms at the bio lab not

only eat meals, cooked by staff from Mother's Kitchen in Town Hill, but also dine in area restaurants.

The marine specimens — lobsters, crabs, crayfish — the students use to learn molecular biology techniques are all purchased locally, said Jeri Bowers, director of development and public affairs.

In a follow-up study that Hand conducted last year, she found that 89 percent of the undergraduates who attended the short courses or were mentored by Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence faculty are pursuing further education in science or health-related fields.

"I just wanted to tell you that I am working for the Smithsonian and doing a master's at American University integrating molecular tools into microbiology research," wrote Genelle Harrison, a 2007 College of the Atlantic graduate, in an e-mail to Charlie Wray, an MDI

Bio Lab researcher who has taught a number of short courses. "This all started with the class I took over spring break. It launched everything. I never knew it would shape my career, but it has because all of the subsequent research I've done has used some sort of molecular technique."

Since 2004, a total of 41 College of the Atlantic students have participated in programs funded by the Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence.

The program also has funded research opportunities for 18 students whose home residences are in Hancock County.

Both Wray and Andy Christie, an Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence junior faculty member and MDI Bio Lab researcher, pointed out that the short courses and the summer fellowships augment and complement what students study during the academic year.