



By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

A month after participating in a trip to South Korea, Hong Kong and China, Lamar resident Wayne Bahler remains enthusiastic about the experience and people. He was one of 29 Nebraska LEAD XXVII fellows chosen for the trip.

“The seminar is designed to provide first-hand appreciation and understanding of the global/international community and the potential for people of all nations to work together,” according to Terry Hejny, Nebraska LEAD program director.

During the Jan. 10-24 seminar, LEAD fellows attended briefings at American embassies and met with American business, agricultural trade and commodity groups.

The “global community,” Bahler explained, meant an emphasis on trade. “It was mostly on politics and how it related to trade,” he said, adding “how they (the countries visited) relate with other countries.”

Bahler learned about the importance of relationships between countries, and “How little, almost pride things, get in the way of agreements.”



He said that although the countries visited were populated by people of different cultures who looked different, “It’s similar to what we want out of life.” Family values are the same, Bahler added.

In South Korea, which imports 70 percent of what it uses, Bahler was most impressed by the Taihan Bulk Terminal, an unloading facility for grain being imported.

A ship holds 55,000 metric tons of grain.

“They can unload it quite efficiently to concrete silos, then truck it out,” Bahler said, marvelling at the fact that “I never saw one kernel of corn on the ground.” The terminal was quite clean and the sheer size amazed him.

The group wasn’t in Hong Kong very long, but Bahler got to meet with the owner of Oxbow Hay Co., a Murdock, Neb. native. The company imports the product to make small pet food.

China is a “huge trading partner,” Bahler noted. He visited a farm/dairy which was farmed privately. The government owns all of the land, but some farmers have the right to farm it if it had been in their family before the government claimed it, Bahler said.

The average farm is less than one acre in size. Farmers sell everything they raise, according to Bahler. They make about \$300-400 per month, but don’t pay any taxes.

The LEAD team visited five major Chinese cities, all with populations of 20 million or more—Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xian and Guangzhou.

They made Denver look like a village, Bahler said. They were very crowded and there was a lot of construction going on, he commented.

Bahler enjoyed the street markets in the three countries. People shop every day because they like fresh food, mainly fruits and vegetables. They get to see their chicken killed, or chose between varieties of dried fish for soup.

In restaurants most meat is cut up and mixed in with other food, Bahler said. A ribeye steak will feed a family of four for a week, he stated, because it's sliced thinly and mixed with other food.

The street market is also indicative of how people live, Bahler said. Again, he was impressed by how similar to Americans people were, even with the difference in culture.

The Nebraska LEAD program includes men and women, currently active in production agriculture and agribusiness.

Bahler farms, is a member of the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department and is a past Chase County High School board member.