By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

Three Chase County Schools (CCS) students and their social studies teacher traveled to the nation's capitol in June, completing the Nebraska Civic Leadership Program.

Callin Ledall, Spencer Hartman and Mason Holmes, escorted by teacher Al Zuege, met with government representatives and toured historical sites June 15-20.

They met with Sen. Ben Nelson and representatives of the National Endowment for the Humanities and Council on Foreign Relations.

Some of their group, which included students from other schools in Nebraska, toured the Supreme Court.

Hartman observed a Senate floor debate, which he said he found fascinating, as he also recognized numerous lawmakers such as John Kerry.

Besides the Holocaust Museum and the Newseum, which focuses on the news and media, the group also visited Arlington National Cemetery.

Hartman said that was the highlight of his trip. "It was humbling and really cool to see how vast an area the (markers) go on and on," he said. "You stand on the hill in front of Robert E. Lee's mansion and see them all in a line."

Zuege said the trip was "a good experience for the kids, and educational."

He also brought up the five days spent on the University of Nebraska-Omaha (UN-O) campus last February.

Zuege said that as students from Omaha North, Omaha South and Marion High School, a Catholic girls' school, all participated in the program, there was cultural diversity.

"They had exchanges of political ideas with articulate, smart kids," Zuege said, ranging from poor black youth to urban Hispanics to rich white girls to rural white youth.

Hartman said the Omaha phase of the trip was "mind opening, being aware that there is more than middle class white conservatives out there."

During the Omaha phase of the program, the group visited the Nebraska Legislature, lobbyists, the governor's office and more.

The CCS students, who will be seniors this fall, had to meet certain qualifications to be chosen for the trip. Zuege learned of the program through ESU #15.

The program was sponsored for the last three years through UN-O and private donors.