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GIRLS DOING CANCER STUDY AT UM

MISSOULA--

Two Montana high school students and one high school graduate are doing original cancer research at the University of Montana this summer under a program instituted several years ago by the Montana Chapter of the American Cancer Society.

The three girls at UM, Carla Meeks of Fort Benton, Dee Peterson of Laurel, and Barb Koch of Florence, are among 10 Montana students selected for this year's program.

The others are working at Montana State University, Rocky Mountain Laboratory in Hamilton and McLaughlin Research Institute in Great Falls.

UM and the three other outfits cooperating with the venture provide facilities, work assignments and supervision for the 10 students. The three girls here divide their time between the microbiology labs and the animal rooms in the Health Science Building.

The program is centered around microbiology, but need not be limited to cancer research. According to Dr. Jon Rudbach, one of the microbiology faculty members working with the program, the American Cancer Society hopes mainly to get students interested in the field of science.

The Montana Chapter provides small stipends for all 10 students. The money is just enough to cover board and room and transportation.

Even though not much salary is involved, the program is highly competitive. Dr. Rudbach says about 100 students applied for the 10 positions this summer. They were selected on the basis of scholarship and letters of recommendation by a group appointed by Ruth Eaton of Billings, executive secretary of the Montana American Cancer Society Chapter.

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Carla Meeks is the only one of the girls at UM with any microbiology experience. There was a microbiology lab at Fort Benton High School, where she graduated last spring. She will continue in microbiology study at Montana State in the fall.

And her research at the UM lab has a certain western flavor to it. She is working with terpens, carbon compounds extracted from sagebrush, to see if they are cancer compounds.

Barb Koch, who will be a senior this fall at Florence High School, is working with Dr. Carl Larson in a study of a virus that is thought to cause leukemia in mice.

Dee Peterson, entering her senior year at Laurel High School, is working with Dr. George Card. Her project is to halt the growth in the cells of "Bacillus stearothermophilus," a heat-loving bacteria, so they can be used in cancer study.

Dr. Rudbach stresses that the work the girls are doing is original research. They may be a small part of a big study or a big part of a small study, but their work is helpful both to them and to the overall search for a cancer cure.

The girls' work at UM ends with the Summer Session, Aug. 20.

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