

# Fort Dodge welcomes cultural exchange

## Bavarians and Rotarians seek to learn about other cultures

By ANDREA MASON  
Messenger staff writer

To see the "real America," a group of four from Bavaria, a state in southern Germany, traveled to Iowa.

Rotary International regularly sends groups of young professionals around the world to experience new cultures and that is exactly what this group is looking forward to. They arrived Thursday on a flight into Waterloo.

"I hope to see things I normally would not see," said Christian Strasser, a law professor at Ausburg University in Germany.

The "real America" as he described it, isn't in the attractions of the coasts — places he said he would normally have visited as a tourist. It is in the farms and the families of the Midwest.

The natural beauty of a place like this, is what this avid hunter and fisherman is looking forward to. And, he said, touring the John Deere plant.

"Anyone in Germany knows John Deere," the professor of civil, bankruptcy and international law said.

The legal system is so different in America, Strasser said. He hopes to peak behind the curtains of famous American legal

Another Rotary group will represent Iowa in Bavaria next month. Jim Coloff, Cedar Falls; Jeff Friedhaus, Decorah; Brian Chouinard, Cedar Rapids; Tom Storey, Fort Dodge; and Dawn Thompson, Fort Dodge; will tour the southern German state for nearly a month. While there, the group members will tour factories and give speeches about Iowa and their professional work here. Two are engineers, one is a math teacher and coach and one is a reporter for The Messenger. The four were chosen from a pool of applicants across Iowa to represent the state and the nation overseas.

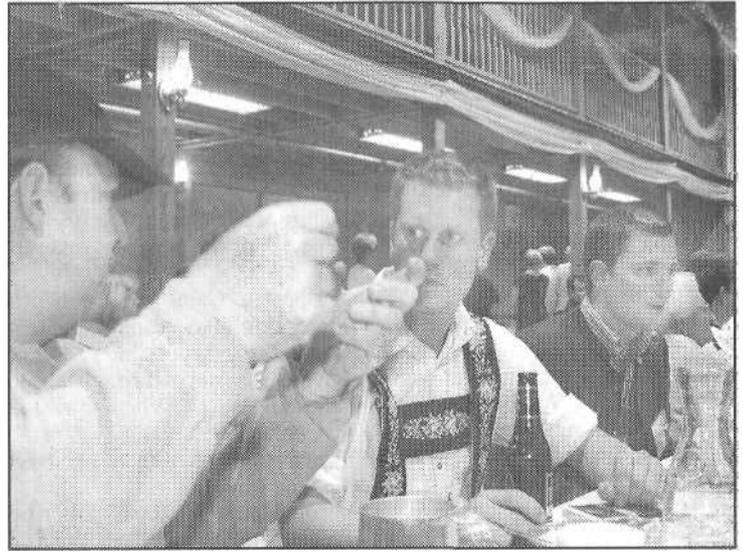
cases he has only seen on TV.

Dave Lighthiser, chair of the Rotary's group study exchange, said the four will have ample opportunity to tour many of the area's factories, as well as look at MidAmerican Energy and the evolving energy concerns in the region.

Lighthiser said his children were especially curious about the culture of their new house guests, asking questions, like "Do you have X-boxes (video gaming systems) in Germany?"

"It's important for communities and for Rotary to be involved," Lighthiser said, "to see different ideas and just meet different people."

Proceeds from silent and live auctions held Friday night, following a banquet in honor of the



-Messenger photo by Andrea Mason

**JIM KIMPELL**, left, talks to Bavarian Rotary exchange member Christian Strasser. Dominik Blanckenstein, also from Bavaria, looks on.

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— Dave Lighthiser

**Chair of the Fort Dodge Rotary's group study exchange**

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guests, will go toward Rotary scholarships.

Exchange students from Peru serenaded the group at the Opera House with songs of their native country.

"Just as a visitor you don't get the context as much," said Dr. Judith Staber, a veterinarian

for the German government's<sup>1</sup> civil vet service. There she supervises animal welfare and disease issues.

Later during the group's visit, Staber will have an opportunity to visit Iowa State University's veterinary hospital, something she said she is looking forward to. -