



Sheboygan Area Chapter

Happy St. Patrick's Day

March Newsletter 2017

A new kind of program for our March 9th meeting

An idea from your program chair, Ed Clabots

Last year our board decided to try something different for our March program. The intent is to help us get to know about each other through the travels we have had. Each person who wants to participate should bring in one or two souvenirs of their travels and tell group members what the object is and why it is of special significance for you.



Jon Keckonen has offered to take a picture of what you have so that we can show each item on the big screen in order for everyone to see it clearly. Please contact Jon **no later than March 1st** so you can arrange for him to take the picture of your item. Call him at 920-457-4318. He will be out of town from March 2-8, so it is vital that you call him now.

The menu will also be different this month. We will have 4 different kinds of pizza, homemade by the Elks Club chef. We have been told by club members that the pizza she makes is delicious. She will make pepperoni, sausage, cheese, and supreme pizzas. We will also have bread sticks, salad bowl, coffee and milk. Dessert will be provided by Don Haack in honor of his 80th birthday.

Social hour, 5:30; dinner, 6:30; program, 7:30 pm.

The cost of the dinner is \$16.00 per person. To make reservations, please make out a check to PTP-Sheboygan and send it to Esther Weiss at 1426 N. 15th St., Sheboygan, 53081. **Deadline is February 27.**

Coming Events



Mar. 9, '17 Chapter meeting at Elks Club
Mar. 12, '17 Brat Fry Fundraiser at RCS
Apr. 12, '17 (Wed night) Chapter meeting at Elks Club
May 11, '17 Chapter meeting at Elks Club

PTP Brat Fry is March 12

Remember that our brat fry fundraiser is at the RCS Building, 1607 Geele Avenue, on March 12 from 10:00am – 4:00pm. We

have a lot of people in the community who love our event because of the awesome bake sale items, the best brats in the county, delicious potato salad and beans, and our



flea market. Anna Schoen is preparing her amazing wine, cheese, and sausage baskets available for the purchase of raffle tickets. Curt Hancock will provide special music for us once again, an added treat to make this brat fry a good place to spend part of your Sunday.

If you live in the Sheboygan area and are reading this newsletter, we invite you to support our annual fundraiser. The proceeds from this event are used to support our three student exchange programs. We look forward to seeing you at the RCS Building on March 12th.

The board will meet at 5:00 pm on March 9 at the Elks Club. Please call Bob Quasius at 451-8565 if you need to be excused from the meeting.

PTP This newsletter is produced monthly for members of the Sheboygan, WI People to People Chapter, which is affiliated with People to People International. Newsletter items should be submitted by the **15th of the month** to Ann Keckonen, 1542 Golf View Dr. E., Sheboygan, WI 53083 or by Email to akeckonen@charter.net. Our website is www.ptpsheboygan.org

New Chapter Website

We are pleased to announce that the website for our chapter has been re-designed and is now ready for you to check it out. The URL is the same as the old one, so if you have it in your favorites, you should be able to go directly to it. If not, the link is www.ptpsheboygan.org. We will be adding more pictures and information in the next few weeks, but it is live as of this past week. If you have suggestions for additions or changes, please contact Ann Keckonen at 457-4318. We welcome suggestions and comments.

Córdoba student arriving

We will introduce Jeremías Meier, at our March 9th meeting. Jere is arriving from Córdoba on February 24 and will be staying with the Kittelson family. He will attend South High this semester and is already planning to participate in track. Look for him at the March meeting and also at the brat fry. Jere is the 13th student we have had in our program from Córdoba. In his application he wrote, "I want the committee to know that I'm a really hard working person and I'm going to give my best in order to make this exchange a great experience." We look forward to meeting Jere and to introducing him to life in Sheboygan.

das Sprachcafe



Excerpt from Beth Hejl's blog. She is a former PTP exchange student, now living in Germany with her husband, and she entertains us with her comparisons between life in Germany and the U.S. This was written last year, but is timely because of so much discussion right now about refugees.

Once a week I go to the community center in Horb where volunteers have organized a *Sprachcafe*. Everyone is invited, and the focus is to bring community



members and *Flüchtlinge* (refugees) together for *Kaffee, Kuchen, und Konversation*. It is really well-attended, and sometimes so crowded it's hard to hear each other! It's a lively and friendly group, and each week there are new guests. The volunteers do a lovely job of providing

refreshments, organizing the room, and cleaning up afterwards! Conversation tends to be in German, Arabic, English, Denglisch, and Deurabisch (Deutsch-Arabisch). This is an article with photo about this *Sprachcafe*, and the reason I'm sharing that is because of the grinning chap in the front of the photo. His name is Omran, and he is as friendly as he looks.

Last Friday in our local paper I saw a letter to the editor written by him. I am so happy I saw this letter, because moments earlier I had read an article that surely gave any of its readers misgivings. That article reminded me that I don't *really* know my students or their pasts (though the same was true of my teenage students in the U.S.). Omran's letter reminded me to trust my gut and the good souls I see in front of me.

Here is his letter translated into English:

Dear German People,

I am a Syrian refugee. My words and thoughts - how I feel sometimes - are: We feel like we've come from another planet. Often, for instance on the train, Germans look down on us and keep their distance from us. We have suffered a lot, experienced and been through terrible things. We didn't come here by choice, but rather by necessity. The truth is, if we had stayed in Syria we would have been forced to kill or been killed ourselves. Personally for me: this is precisely the reason I left Syria.

Some people in Horb have helped us a lot and have allowed us to forget our concerns just a bit. Although Germany is a free, peaceful, and safe country, we do not feel happy here because we are far from our families and those who are dear to us.

Not all Syrians are bad! A single one who behaves badly is enough to damage the reputation of everyone. In addition to that, many claim to come from Syria or travel with a fake Syrian passport, which is easy to get. We are all trying to do everything right here in Germany. We are working hard to learn German and can manage in town and at public offices - not always, but usually.

We became a people who lost their dreams and we have become a people with only one dream left: to return home, after the war.

We thank the German people and Mrs. Merkel.
Omran, Horb

I had sat with him for a bit at last week's cafe, and I had my notebook with me as usual. He took the notebook and wrote a few lines in German and asked me if they were correct. From what he wrote I know he is sad because his life is not here in Germany. He studied four years in Damaskus to be a math teacher - and I'll bet he will make a good one. A math teacher needs to smile a lot, I think, and he does - despite his sadness. He has a large family, including eight siblings, and he misses them. I hope the war will end someday and Omran will be able to return to his home and his family.