



Sheboygan Area Chapter

Happy New Year!

January Newsletter 2017

A PTP trip to the Holy Land on January 12th

Our January 12th program will take you to Petra, Jordan, and The Holy Land. Ed Clabots will be joined by The Rev. Michele Whitford of Grace Episcopal Church in Sheboygan for this presentation.



They were part of a pilgrimage/tour to the area in November, 2015. Ed writes, "It won't be possible to do justice to this trip in the time available, but we'll do our best!"



We will visit fabled Petra, lost to history for 1,000 years, see where Moses viewed the Promised Land, then we'll quickly cross the Jordan River into Israel. See the famous sites where Jesus walked, plus the Muslim Dome of the Rock, the Jewish Wailing Wall, a rare Samaritan community, the walled city of Jerusalem, Masada, a Palestinian village, the Separation Wall and much more! Share insights we had from our Palestinian and Christian tour guides. Get ready for a fast paced educational and inspirational evening!"

The menu will include baked chicken, roast pork, mashed baby red potatoes, gravy, Riviera Blend vegetables, salad bowl, rolls, coffee, and milk. Dessert will be provided by Char and Ken Gumm in celebration of their anniversary.

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 January 2. Remember to mail your check before the end of the year!**

Coming Events

- Jan. 12, '17** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Feb. 9, '17** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- 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



Photo books available

Our Sheboygan PTP Chapter has obtained a number of beautiful photo books on Lake Michigan, compiled and edited by local photographer Lisa Lehmann. She has included a number of other photographers in the book, all of whom live and photograph beautiful scenes along the shores of Lake Michigan. The book also includes a lot of little-known information about Lake Michigan. If you are interested in purchasing one of these books to give as a gift, or a thank you to a host family, please contact Ann Keckonen at 457-4318 or email her at akeckonen@charter.net. We will also use these books as a parting gift for our high school exchange students from now on. Chapter members who are current on their dues are eligible to receive a discount on the books.



The board will meet at 5:00 pm on January 12 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

Exchange Magic

Submitted by Diane Mikolyzk

Most exchanges are successful, and the majority of them lead to lifelong friendships. Sometimes, however, they are magical! In August of 2005, Genoveva Gabetta arrived in Wisconsin to spend a semester living with Mark and Sandy Vollbrecht and family in Howards Grove, Wisconsin. She attended Howards Grove High School and made many friends with whom she still stays in touch.



2005

Melissa Vollbrecht went to Argentina in January of 2006, to spend a semester with Carlos and Marta Gabetta and their family, and the very first semester-long Córdoba exchange became history. The exchange did not end with Mel's return to Wisconsin, however. Melissa and Geno have truly become "sisters" and have stayed in close contact over the past eleven years. Both women have finished graduate degrees and have started their careers-Melissa in social work and Geno in law. Geno has taken over for Carlos as the Argentine coordinator of our PTP exchange program.

Geno and her family have come back to Sheboygan County several times, and the Vollbrechts have hosted her on each visit. Melissa always returns to Howards Grove from New York City or LA, where she currently lives and works, to visit with Geno.

Sandy Vollbrecht always said that she would go to Argentina when Geno got married, and she kept her word! This December the two families were again



Jennifer Moehring, Robby Vollbrecht, Javi, Geno, Sandy and Mark Vollbrecht, Melissa, Michael Viscione

reunited as Javi Paredes and Geno exchanged vows in Córdoba.

Donna Webb also traveled to Córdoba for the wedding, and the Gabettas were thrilled that she was able to make the trip in spite of her failing eyesight and her recent hip replacement.



Geno and Donna Webb

As is the tradition in most Hispanic countries, there were two ceremonies and two fabulous parties:



Front row: Sofi, Sole, Vange Gabetta, Melissa Vollbrecht;
Back row: Geno & Javi

one following the civil ceremony at the Gabetta home on December 8 and the other following the religious ceremony on December 10.

Geno and Javi have begun married life, Melissa has returned to LA where she now works, and Sandy and Mark are back in Howards Grove, but the magic of this exchange will continue for a lifetime!



Thanks to John and Donna Webb who hosted Carlos Gabetta as an AFS student over forty years ago and made the Córdoba connection for our chapter and to the efforts of Ed Clabots, Judy Slawny, Jon and Ann Keckonen and all the members of the Exchange Committee, this program continues to promote peace, understanding and friendship. We thank all of you, our chapter members, for your work and dedication in supporting our exchange programs!

May this New Year be full of joy, may your resolutions last as long as your cravings for unhealthy food, and may you feel the magic of the New Year in your heart.

Exchange students chosen

We are happy to announce that the Student Exchange Committee has selected a total of 9 exchange students plus two additional host families for the 2017 year.

Jeremías Meier will arrive from Córdoba, Argentina, in late February to spend 6 months with Andrew and Laura Kittelson and their family. He will attend South High School.

Aidan Bistan, Alex Unger, Natasha Rammer, Amelia Redell, and Nathan Banko will take part in the middle school exchange with Esslingen this summer.

Grace Unger, Ryan Dicke, and Nat Werth will be leaving in February for their exchange in Esslingen and will attend gymnasiums in Germany, where they will earn credit toward high school graduation.

In July we will welcome five students from Esslingen who will stay with their host families until mid-December and will attend high schools in Sheboygan and Kohler. We thank the **Rupp, Krause, Unger, Quasius, and Glavan** families for hosting those five exchange students.

All of these families will be busy selling brat fry tickets to help fund these exchange programs, and you will meet them all at the brat fry at the RCS Building on March 12.

Brat Fry tickets available

Brat Fry Tickets were distributed to members who attended our December 8th meeting. Family memberships received 20 tickets (\$20) and single members received 10 tickets (\$10). Exchange families received 75 tickets. If you did not receive your tickets already, please contact Tom Riemann at tomriemann63@gmail.com or call him at 452-5053 to make arrangements to pick up your tickets. The tickets are for you to sell/give away to friends or relatives to increase attendance at our fundraiser. The brat fry will be held at the **RCS building, 1607 Geele Avenue, Sheboygan, on March 12, 2017.**

Please use these tickets to encourage your friends and relatives to attend our fundraiser. The distribution of tickets is by far the BEST way to increase attendance at our brat fry. If members get hungry while working at the brat fry, you are encouraged to pay for your food with cash.

If you need additional tickets, please contact Tom Riemann. **Snowbirds and out-of-towners** are encouraged to send a donation (check) to Tom Riemann at 4436 Tara Lane, Sheboygan, 53081.

2017 dues must be paid now

If you have not already paid your chapter dues for 2017, please do so now. The deadline for renewal was the December 8 chapter meeting. If you missed that deadline but wish to remain a member of the chapter, please send your check ASAP. Dues remain at \$35 for a family membership and \$25 for a single. Make checks out to People to People-Sheboygan and mail to Rich Miesfeld, 2047 Marion Lane, Sheboygan, 53083.

When you send in your membership checks, please make sure you update your address, phone AND email address for Rich's records.

Date change for April mtg

For those of you who have put the People to People meeting dates in your calendar already, please note that the April meeting has been changed to **Wednesday evening, April 12th**. This change was necessary because our normal meeting night would fall on Maundy Thursday, and that would conflict with too many church services. Please mark your calendars correctly.

In case of bad weather....

Remember that we will not cancel an evening PTP meeting earlier than 2:00 in the afternoon because too often the weather differs from the prediction. We will make every attempt to hold our meetings as scheduled, and if a cancellation is necessary, it will be announced on the local radio stations in the afternoon. We will also send an email to those of you who have registered for the meeting.



Bits from the memory bank

Tom Hammond has located some interesting old information about the early years of our chapter. Among other things, a newspaper article advertising the February, 1977, meeting indicated that a family-style dinner would be served for \$4.25 per person **at the American Club (!)** My, how times have changed!

Another item – an excerpt from a letter written by the late Marilyn Minster says, “The best reason for having a People to People Chapter is selfish—being an active member in the Sheboygan PTP Chapter for the past 21 years has made more friends for me in my own hometown than I ever imagined. This bonus was unexpected, as I did expect to make many friends overseas.” The recipient of the letter is unknown, but she was apparently trying to convince that person to start a chapter in his or her city. She was so right about making many new friends right here.

Riding a German bus- not so fun



Excerpt from Beth Hejl's blog. She is a former PTP exchange student from Sheboygan, now living in Germany with her husband.

One day this week I took the local bus for the first time in a while to get to and from school because M needed the car. The ride down at 8:00 was fine, and the bus wasn't crowded. But after class I caught the 13:00 bus back to our village, and the stop is in front of the *Gymnasium* (grades 5-12, I think). I waited for 20 minutes while more and more kids showed up and my mood waxed darker and darker. At 12:57 the bus arrived, and a billion urchins stood in a herd, grappling for position, cutting in the non-existent line, shoving past me... The bus driver (I'm calling him Gustav) opened the door and barked at the youths to move back. I admire this man, though I've never seen him before. The "horrible phalanx of pubescence" oozed back, and as the first two students stepped onto the bus and dutifully flashed their passes, the rest of the swarm pushed forward again, threatening to crush the youngest under their impatient feet. Gustav barked at them again, and they pretended to comply and remain orderly. A kid next to me moaned, "*Der Tag war so schön, bis jetzt!*" (It's been such a nice day, until now!), which was clearly a shot at the bus driver, though I nearly said to him, "My thoughts exactly!" aimed at the kid and his cohorts! Gustav was my hero for the day.

He stayed at the door as kids passed, and every now and then he must have seen someone cut in the still non-existent line (Germans don't know how to queue – it's something expats have been pointing out for years), and he sent them to the back of the line. One little tart dared to say, "But I didn't do anything!" Gustav puffed up his chest, shot daggers out of his eyes at the cheeky upstart, and said, "Do you **need** to have done anything? Get BACK!" He was like the soup guy from "Seinfeld." I was starting to get nervous, knowing I'd have to hold up the line while I paid for my one-way ride.

I managed to get in about halfway through the mob, paid quickly, money in hand, and sat where no kid would ever choose to sit – right behind my hero, Gustav. I watched the rest of the show silently cheering on Gustav and high-fiving him in my imagination every time he sent one of the grubby little hoodlums back to the end of the pack.

After more kids squeezed onto the bus than I would have thought possible (some had to stand in the aisle), Gustav shot them one more "Don't mess with me" look, closed the door, and we pulled away. Our next stop was the *Bahnhof*, and this is where I started to shake my head at humanity. Only three people got on, all adults – a Syrian man (I know him), a woman not older than I

wearing a beautiful headscarf, and a German man. Other than the one other adult woman who had sat next to me from the *Gymnasium* and me, the entire bus was filled with kids ages 10 to 17. Not one of them acknowledged the adults who had just got on the bus to offer their seat. Ok, the men were not old, and perfectly capable of standing – and probably very used to doing so. The woman was also young enough and not apparently in any special need. But when I was young 150 years ago, it was just understood – kids do not sit on a crowded bus while an adult stands. I don't even know how I know this, because although I remember taking the city bus often when I was young to get around town, I don't recall it ever being crowded. I also don't recall my parents or any teacher instructing me about bus etiquette. Perhaps it was just obvious?

I am certain this was also standard protocol in Germany not terribly long ago. In fact, I am happy to say that about two years ago on probably the same bus when I had to stand because it was full of kids, a young girl offered me her seat. I thanked her more than was necessary, but told her it was ok – my stop was not far. I wish that girl knew that, two years later, I still remember her thoughtful - and apparently unusual - gesture.

My students have told me about witnessing this time and time again, because they do all their traveling here in Germany by bus and train. They have told me that in Syria it would NEVER happen that an adult – especially a woman! – would have to stand on a bus or train when there are children seated. Some of them have expressed surprise at such disrespect in German kids. I actually doubt that it is blatant disrespect, despite appearances. I think it is plain ignorance (though I do not know which is worse). I think it just wouldn't occur to most kids nowadays, who are sitting comfortably in a seat on the bus because they were lucky enough to squeeze on ahead of the rest of the mob, to relinquish that seat to anyone else.

This is not something kids should have to be taught in school. This (consideration for others) is something parents should be teaching their children. Why are children not learning to give consideration for others when they are out and about? It might be because their parents are not good models. How much time do parents spend with their faces in their Smartphones rather than noticing teachable moments for their kids? Kids don't learn what we don't teach them.

You know you're getting old when you find yourself grumbling about TWO generations behind you - kids who don't offer their seat to adults on a bus **and** their parents!

