



PEOPLE
to
PEOPLE

Sheboygan Area Chapter

Happy Mothers' Day

May Newsletter 2017

Presentation on Children's Library International in May

Our final chapter meeting of the school year will be held on Thursday, May 11, at the Elks Club. Our speakers for the evening will be Rich and Karen Gulig, who will share their experiences with Children's Library International. Their travels included visiting libraries, learning centers, and orphanages in Laos and Vietnam in 2015 and 2016. Their presentation aims to touch on The Children's Library and Learning Centers, cultural diversities, and local food and flower markets.



Rich Gulig

The menu for the evening will be honey pecan chicken, beef stroganoff, mashed potatoes and gravy, Riviera blend vegetables, salad bowl, rolls, and beverage. Dessert will be provided by Henry and Anna Schoen in celebration of Henry's 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 May 1.**

The board will meet at 5:00 pm on Thursday, May 11 at the Elks Club. Please call Bob Quasius at 451-8565 if you need to be excused from the meeting.

Coming Events

- May 11** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- July 18** Middle School students leave for Germany
- Aug. 17** Chapter picnic in Howards Grove (note that this is a Thursday evening) **5-8 PM**
- Sept. 14** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Oct. 12** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Nov. 9** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Dec. 14** Chapter Christmas party at Elks Club

2018 brat fry is scheduled for March 11

Celebration in Sister City

Later this month eight People to People chapter members will be traveling to Esslingen, Germany, with Sheboygan's Mayor Mike Vandersteen and his group of 30 travelers to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Sheboygan and Esslingen. Included in this travel group are Rich and Carolyn Miesfeld, Kris Hancock, Jon and Ann Keckonen, Margaret Voorhans, and Dale and Mitzi Stoltzman. While there the group will have an opportunity to visit some of the high schools in Esslingen. They will also take a day trip to Rothenburg o.d. Tauber, including a guided tour provided by the Oberbürgermeister and the City of Esslingen. Following a festive evening to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Sister Cities on May 19th, they will be entertained on Saturday afternoon by the Esslingen Fire Department. After three busy days in Esslingen, the group will travel by bus to Salzburg and Vienna, returning home on May 27.



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

Summer chapter picnic

The summer picnic will be held on the evening of Thursday, August 17th, from 5 PM to 8 PM at the Howards Grove Village Hall Community Center. The address is 913 S. Wisconsin Drive (Hwy 32). Please enter at the back door, lower level.

The cost is \$6 per person, paid at the door. The menu will include smoked pulled pork sandwiches prepared by Dale and Mitzi Stoltzman. Each family is asked to bring a dessert if your last name begins with A through L, or a salad if your last name begins with M through Z.



A picnic sign-up sheet will be placed on each table at the May 11th People-To-People meeting. If you are not attending that meeting, but wish to attend the picnic, please call Dale or Mitzi (after May 3rd) at 920-565-3756.

Please put this date on your calendars now. We are trying a Thursday evening instead of a Sunday afternoon in the hope that more people will be able to attend.

Brat Fry requests & thanks

Treasurer **Rich Miesfeld** reports that we had a net profit for our brat fry of over \$4600, and **Bob Quasius and Henry Schoen** thanked everyone who helped in any way to make the 2017 fundraiser a success. For those who are very organized and have an electronic calendar, the 2018 brat fry is scheduled for March 11, 2018.

Anna Schoen is still looking for someone to take over the job of filling the wine and cheese baskets for next year. She has complete notes and suggestions for anyone who volunteers to follow in her footsteps. She is especially grateful to Lindsay Ortega and Martha Millen for their help this year. These photos show what Anna's



house looked like just before moving the baskets to the RCS Building. Thank you, Anna, and helpers, for all your hard work in making this such a popular event. You took in \$1195.00 this year – a record!



Esther Weiss is also grateful to her many helpers who assisted her this year. The bake sale took in \$756.64 this year, an increase of almost \$75 over last year. Esther asked that the following message be included in the May newsletter:

“On behalf of the bake sale workers and myself I would like to extend a big thank you for the wide variety and generous supply of baked goods. It always brings the comment from our customers what an assortment of desserts we have. This always makes it fun and exciting. One of our friends said to me that she comes solely to get homemade desserts and a good tasting brat. She brings her own containers for take home to enjoy at a later time. She is a loyal friend and customer indeed!

We had a very busy crew of ladies and a gentleman well acquainted in the kitchen doing the cutting and pricing. At the end of the day I had a customer looking for a specific dessert. Unfortunately we were out. I suggested something else, and he was well satisfied.



I want to express my personal appreciation to all of the volunteers from the past years as well as the present that have helped in any way to make the bake sale a success. I continue to say this – teamwork makes it happen. Thank you everyone.” *Esther Weiss*

Summer exchange students

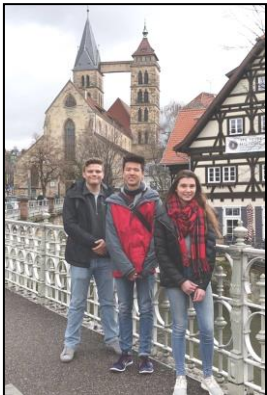
Carolyn Miesfeld will be the chaperone for five middle school students as they travel to Esslingen to meet their exchange partners on July 18, returning with their respective partners for another three weeks in Sheboygan on August 9.



The students are enthusiastic about traveling to Germany and experiencing a different culture, as well as showing their partners what life is like in Sheboygan. This year's students are Nathan Banko, Aidan Bistan, Alex Unger, Natasha Rammer, and Amelia Redell.

Berlin trip for H.S. students

Our three high school students who are currently spending five months studying in Esslingen will be taking a trip to Berlin on May 29 with Beth Hejl and her



father, Jon Keckonen, as their chaperones. This trip is funded by the City of Esslingen. Their fall program for the chapter will surely include a lot of photos from that 3-day trip because both of their chaperones are avid photographers. Reports are that all three are enjoying their experiences in Esslingen this semester. Ryan Dicke, Nat Werth, and Grace Unger will

share their experiences with us at the October chapter meeting.

Exchange programs-then & now



Beth Hejl is a former PTP exchange student, now living in Germany with her husband, and when possible we include excerpts from her blog about comparisons between life in Germany and the U.S. This one is long, but very timely.

When I was 17 and in 11th grade, I left home for six months to participate in an international exchange program. The exchange was between my hometown (Sheboygan, WI) and its sister city (Esslingen, Germany) and organized through the Sheboygan Chapter of People to People International.

In June of this year the two cities will celebrate their Golden Anniversary - 50 years of partnership. The exchange began three years later, in 1970. For the next 32 years the exchange program flourished with students on both sides of the ocean. Not every exchange was perfect, but all-in-all there was great success throughout the years. Since then there were years here and there where no students applied from Sheboygan, so the program floundered a bit.

Recently some life was breathed back into the exchange, and now that I'm living here I'm involved in the program from an organizer assistant's standpoint. Namely, I spend two weeks in Esslingen near the beginning of the Americans' stay to help them boost their German skills before they head off to the *Gymnasium*. I also am one of the chaperones who take them on a 3-day trip to Berlin and remain a contact for them in case things go wrong.

Since I was recently in Esslingen with this year's group of three, the idea came to me to write a "Then & Now" post about the exchange experience. Much has changed in those 31 years.

Photography

I haven't seen this year's students take many photos yet, but I suspect they are using their smart phones. I use my digital camera, and I can transfer them to my laptop and upload them to our Facebook group the same day. The parents in Sheboygan can see photos of their kids the same day they were taken.

In 1986 I not only used a film camera, but I took mostly slides. In order to look at my pictures from back then, I need to find a slide projector and a big screen or an empty white wall. In order to see my pictures or slides while on the exchange, I had to first take 24 pictures without being able to see whether they were any good or not, bring my used film rolls to a camera shop, wait three days for the developing, and pay (I don't remember how much - 20 Marks?). Only then could I see if the photos had turned out or were blurry.

Communication

When the kids choose to (and apparently they don't choose to often enough to suit their parents), they can send a short message over Facebook or other social media, or send an email to their parents, either of which the parents will receive the minute they wake up. We have a Facebook group where students, host parents, and parents can post messages or photos, and I imagine they all send SMS (text messages) with their fancy smart phones.

Back in my day... I wrote letters to my friends and family and mailed them. There was no internet, no Skype, phoning was too expensive, and there were no mobile phones. My letters and postcards took 5-7 days to get to Wisconsin, and if the recipient wrote back immediately, I would get a reply 6-8 days later. So we're talking two weeks between "How are you doing?!" and "Fine thanks, how are YOU?!" By the time I received a reply, I'd forgotten what I'd written!



I asked my host parents if I could call my best friend on her birthday, which of course they let me do. I don't know how long we talked, but afterwards I told my host mom to tell me what I owe her when the bill comes. She just quietly said, "That's ok. You wouldn't be able to afford that." Yikes! I also got a call one morning from home. My parents called to tell me that the U.S. had bombed Libya during the night, and I should know that before being confronted by it in school. I didn't even know where Libya was back then!

Berlin

In 1986 my group (seven of us from Sheboygan) traveled with our chaperone to Berlin for five days. Berlin was still divided then, and there was no indication that it would ever be otherwise. One day we went over to East Berlin - through the underground checkpoint at

Friedrichsstraße - had to change 25 German Marks for 25 nearly worthless East German Marks, and were warned that we needed to get out of there before midnight if we didn't want to have problems at the border. Another day we peeked over the barricade at the *Brandenburger Tor* and walked along the graffiti-covered *Berliner Mauer* to one of several outlook platforms. We went to the **Museum at Checkpoint Charlie** which focused on escape attempts and successes, we attended an evening operetta, and we spent a sunny afternoon at the *Wannsee*, where the lads among us ventured into the FKK section - where they were easily pegged as the Americans because they were the only ones with "a white zone".

Last year I accompanied the same chaperone (who is now my *Schwiegermutter*) as her assistant with the group of four Americans. The wall is gone though there's a trail through the city that shows where it was, we could walk right through the *Brandenburger Tor*, the hub of the city is now in what was East Berlin, and the *Ku'Damm*, where we had stayed in 1986 and again last year, is nearly dead (compared to the bustling Western central it was in 1986). We roamed freely around the city making use of the underground, which was only functioning in the West back in my day. In order to give the students an idea of what life in Berlin was like with the wall, we visited the Asisi Panorama as well as *Bernauerstraße*, where there is a viewing platform over a reconstruction of the wall, the barbed wire, the mine field on the east side and a guard tower.

Language

When I was in high school, it was still common for Americans to learn a foreign language. I remember a decent enrollment in my German classes, and all four Sheboygan high schools - North, South, Lutheran and Christian High - offered German. It made (and would still make) sense because there are many families with German roots in Wisconsin. I didn't knock anyone's socks off with my expert German-speaking skills, but at least I had the opportunity to learn it for several years before coming to Esslingen.

Nowadays due to budget cuts, foreign languages other than Spanish are a rarity in Wisconsin schools. I know of one German teacher who teaches in both public high schools, but both private schools have cut German. Last year's group of Sheboygan students had had virtually no German before the exchange, so our classroom lessons consisted mainly of learning basic conversation. This year all three have had some German (between several months of an online course and three years in the classroom), so we were able to do some grammar as well as conversation and vocabulary building.

It frustrates me no end that world languages get cut so easily and quickly in American schools. Sure, they

are electives, but if we want to be part of a global society, we need to learn more about other languages and cultures, not less.

Applicants

In the year I applied for the exchange there were fourteen applicants from local German classes who wanted to spend six months in Esslingen! Seven of us were chosen, and we had a great time together. I don't think there were ever that many applicants again, but back in those days there were surely more than there have been recently. As I said, since 2002 there have been several years when no one at all applied from Sheboygan, and in the years when there have been applicants, there have been usually just two or three.

There are always applicants in Esslingen - part of the education program in German *Gymnasien* (college-track high schools) focuses on world languages and opportunities to travel to France, Greece, England, Spain, Italy... even in the younger grades as class trips. But for most students in the U.S. it seems friends and sports are more important than exploring the world independently. Of course, the flight overseas is not cheap, and that presents another huge obstacle. One of the current students mentioned college preparations and the ACT test as a reason students don't want to miss half of their 11th grade, and that's surely a weighty reason. It's possible to get around that, though, as one of the other students - an 11th grader - is proving. Where there's a will, there's a way.

Journaling

The final big "then & now" difference that has occurred to me is the way students have kept record of their time abroad. I kept a hand-written journal, which I still have on my bookshelf and consider an important possession. Every now and then I pull it out to read what I was doing this day 31 years ago. There are many events and incidents I would have forgotten about had I not written that journal.

Today students can keep an online journal - a blog! - as one of ours is doing. It's a great way to combine journaling and communicating with friends and family back home, killing two flies with one swat, as the Germans say ("*zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen*").

I am really proud of the exchange students we have had since I got involved with the program, who have broken out of their comfort zones and ventured to a foreign country where the local language is not their own. I would like to see exchange programs - especially the Sheboygan-Esslingen exchange - flourish again in the coming years as they once did. Students all around the world want to travel to the U.S., and I would like to see more young Americans get out and experience the world as more than tourists.