



Sheboygan Area Chapter

Happy New Year

January Newsletter 2018

January 11th program to feature energy education in Taiwan

Our guest speaker for January 11th will be Mr. Michael Aprill. Mike is working to complete his educational doctoral degree in educational sustainability at the University of Wisconsin--Stevens Point(UWSP). His research interests include climate change, climate change policy, and the effects of climate change on marginalized populations around the world. He currently teaches physics and earth sciences at Sheboygan South High School in Sheboygan.



Mike has traveled to various Taiwanese counties where he has presented research on energy education in the U.S. which included hands-on activities for Taiwanese teachers. As part of the visit, Mike toured five schools, traveled to Taroko National Park, toured through various counties, and participated in interpretive tours of historical sites and cities around Taiwan.

During his presentation, he will talk about his background and what lead him to Taiwan. He will share with us his experiences in Taiwan including aspects of culture, society, politics, the environment, and education.

The menu for the evening will include Chicken Cordon Bleu, roast pork, Riviera blend vegetables, rice pilaf, salad, rolls, and beverage. Dessert will be supplied by one of our newest members, Cyndi Crimmins. Social hour begins at 5:30; dinner at 6:30; program at 7:30.

The cost of the dinner is \$16.00 per person. Please mail your checks to **Char Gumm, N6222 Woodland Rd., Sheboygan, 53083**. The deadline for reservations is **January 2**.

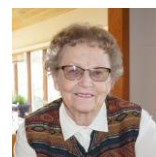
Coming Events



- Jan. 11, '18** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Feb. 8, '18** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Mar. 8, '18** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- Mar. 11** **Brat Fry at RCS Building**
- Apr. 12** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- May 10** Chapter meeting at Elks Club
- August 16** 5:30-8 PM – Thursday night picnic at the Howards Grove Community Center

Lasting friendships

Donna Webb recently traveled to Guatemala to visit three exchange students and visitors who stayed with her as she and John developed many lifelong friendships with people in distant lands. During the first part of her trip she stayed with Randolph and Ana Reyes. Ana stayed with the Webbs for one year as a private exchange student when she was 16 years old.



She next visited Randy Pinto, who came as an AFS student in the mid-70s. He came at Christmastime because his mother in Guatemala had a heart attack. This was the first Christmas after the Webbs' son John had died while in college. Randy stayed with them for six months until the end of the school year.

Her third visit was with Virginia Samora, who came to the US as an adult because their lives were being threatened in Guatemala. Virginia came with her college-age daughter who attended Lakeland during the time they were here. They stayed for more than six months. Donna was looking forward to seeing her friends again.

Donna said before she left on December 1 that she was not afraid to go alone because ALL of her host families would be meeting her at the airport.

The board will meet at 5:00 pm on Thursday, January 11th 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

Have you paid your 2018 dues?

All dues for the 2018 year were supposed to be paid by December 14th. Our treasurer, Rich Miesfeld, is still waiting for some renewal checks to arrive. If you have not already sent him your check, please mail it now to Rich at 2047 Marion Lane, Sheboygan, 53083. Dues for 2018 are still \$35.00 for a family membership, or \$25.00 for a single membership.

Exchange students keep in touch

Back in 2012 Marietta Klvana stayed with the Zemke family when she participated in the middle school exchange program. She and her partner, Katy, became close friends and have stayed in constant touch with each other. Last year, when Katy was studying in Rome, Marietta went to Rome to visit her, and Katy spent the Christmas holiday in Esslingen with the Klvanas. This past November, Marietta spent some time with Katy at Loyola University in Chicago, and she also came to Sheboygan during the Thanksgiving holiday. The girls have a great time together, whenever they meet.



By the way, Marietta's parents in Esslingen are regular members of our chapter – they are usually some of the first to pay their dues each year.

Changes to Brat Fry fundraiser

Henry Schoen, chairman of the brat fry, still needs help in replacing some very necessary chairpersons. He is looking for a chair person for the bake sale, and he needs a co-chair for the wine raffle. Margaret Voorhans will be the other co-chair for the raffle. This is a plea to all members – please call Henry at 451-9160 if you are willing & able to step into one of these positions.

This year we are asking that each family make up a basket for the wine and cheese raffle. Note: we have always called it a Wine Raffle, but your basket does NOT have to contain wine! You may choose a baking theme, or a sports theme, or spa products, or anything. Your basket can be large or small, elaborate or not, but it should contain a description of what is in the basket and its approximate value. Anna will gladly answer any questions relating to the co-chair of the raffle position. Baskets can be delivered to the RCS building early on the morning of March 11 or Tom Hammond is willing to pick yours up on Saturday if you contact him. If you start now, you have plenty of time to get an idea for your family's basket. Enjoy this new endeavor, and be creative!



Have you got your brat fry tickets?

Tom Riemann had the brat fry tickets available at the December 14th chapter meeting for those who wanted to get an early start on getting them out to family members and friends. This is our means of encouraging the general public to attend our brat fry and support our fundraiser. The main thing is to get them into the hands of people who are NOT members of our chapter by either selling them or giving them away. Each family is expected to sell 20 tickets (exchange families are asked to sell 75), and single members are asked to sell 10. If you have not yet received your tickets, please call Tom at 452-5053 to make arrangements to pick them up. You may pay for the tickets when you get them, or you may choose to sell your tickets first and pay Tom after you have sold them. The tickets sell for \$1.00 each, but 50 cents of that purchase can be used toward food or drink on the day of the brat fry, March 11. For that reason, it is easy to sell these tickets. They are a good value, and the Brat Fry is loads of fun.



This space reserved for YOU

I really want this monthly newsletter to contain articles and information about members and their interaction with friends from different cultures. Each month I hope to get news submitted by other chapter members, but I seldom receive anything. The deadline is the 15th of each month – please think about your recent interaction with friends around the world and submit something via email that I can include in the next issue.

I use excerpts from Beth's Hejl's blog often because I want to add something of interest and also because several members have commented that they like her articles the best. If any of our four students who are leaving for Esslingen on February 5 wish to write a blog during their 5 months in Germany, I will be sure to include that as well.



bluessketchpad.deviantart.com

A funny Christmas tradition



Beth Hejl, former exchange student living in Germany, continues to entertain us with her blogs. This one is about a German custom that is new to most of us. Enjoy it and have a little chuckle!

“Welch ein schöner Christbaum!”

After five years in southern Germany, I believe I have learned about all the customs, traditions, and events connected to the Advent and Christmas holidays. *Sankt Nikolaus*, Christmas markets, *Glühwein*, *Adventkalender*, *Adventskränze*, *Heiligabend* (Christmas Eve), *Dreikönigstag* (Epiphany), *Weihnachtspyramide*, *Räuchermänner* and *Weihrauch* (incense), and “Dinner for One” on *Silvester*, or New Year’s Eve.

There’s one Swabian tradition I haven’t written about yet, though, and that is *Christbaum loben* – Christmas tree praising. M and I had the opportunity just a few years ago, but now that I’ve learned more about it, I realize we botched it and need to try again.

Christbaum loben is something that Swabians do “*zwischen den Jahren*” – between the years, or between Christmas and Epiphany. Traditionally the Christmas tree goes up and is decorated on Christmas Eve, so this can’t be done in the weeks before Christmas, as it could be in Wisconsin where Christmas trees and decorations are often up the whole month of December.

Here’s the procedure: Visit a friend’s, neighbor’s, colleague’s or acquaintance’s home, even unannounced. After being invited in, make your way toward the *Christbaum*. Proceed with voluminous, enthusiastic, very un-German praise* of the *Christbaum*.

*It does not actually matter if you like the tree or not; this is the one situation in Germany when sincerity and directness is tossed out the window. Even the negative qualities of the tree can be lavishly and sarcastically praised: “Look at that beautiful bald spot! Where there are no branches as all, it’s so easy to grab hold of the trunk to move the tree! How delightfully convenient!” “How ever did you get such a lovely stumpy tree to lean so far to the left?!” “The wall color shows so beautifully through the branches!” “Look at that – the entire tree is decorated in only one color! And what a lovely shade of brown it is!”

Praise the shape of the tree, the *Schmuck* (ornaments), the candles or lights, the *Standort* (position) stuffed into the corner between two sofas... After every single guest has generously extolled the virtues of the *Christbaum*, the hosts bring out the reward. Act surprised and over-pleased at this, even though it’s obligatory: the *Schnaps* (or wine)! The hosts also offer Christmas cookies or *Stollen*, or leftover Christmas fruitcake that nobody wanted in the first place. After a drink and a nibble, it’s time to make your way toward the door – not forgetting to throw a last

bit of additional praise at the *Christbaum* as you pass – thank your hosts for their generosity, and decide which house you’ll visit next.

Repeat at each subsequent home.

Sometimes within a *Verien* (club), the members will make an afternoon and evening of visiting each other member’s home, or the hosting duties are rotated from year to year. They sometimes make a competition out of it, using actual score sheets to rate each tree on its size, symmetry, *nadelfestigkeit* (are the needles still strongly attached, or are they starting to shed already?), straightness, decoration creativity, etc.

If, for any other reason, you happen to pop in to visit someone “between the years,” you should be ready for “*spontanes Loben*” – spontaneous praise. Basically, whenever you find yourself near someone’s *Christbaum*, praise it! It’s enough to use the line with which I started this post: “What a lovely tree!” You ~~might~~ should get a *Schlückchen* (nip/dram) for your trouble, because Swabians always have a bottle of wine or *Schnaps* on hand.

What if you go visiting and your host doesn’t have a tree? Some people don’t bother if they’re older or the kids aren’t coming home anyway. No problem! There’s a solution for that as well (Germans are great planners) – “*Loben mit eigenem Baum*” (Praising your own tree). If you think you might face this awkward situation, just bring your own! Most flower shops have small tabletop trees, which fit in a trunk or back seat – just bring it in and set it in the middle of the room for everyone to praise! The host still obliged to provide the *Schnaps*, and you take your tree with you when you leave.

Swabians apparently started this tradition around the end of the 19th century. There are several theories as to why it developed, one being that Swabians don’t have time during the year for social contact – because they’re working all the time. Many people are off “between the years,” so the Swabians get their socializing for the year accomplished then. It also makes for a good excuse to share a medicinal dram without feeling guilty. It’s tradition!!



The Christmas scene at Beth Hejl’s home in Germany. The tree is actually in the unheated wintergarden, the room behind the large glass window. The Alpine Village is on a shelf in front of the window, in the living room.