



EXCELSIOR GERMAN CENTER

Oakland, June 3rd, 2021

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Dear EGC members,

It has been a long time since I wrote to you, and so much has happened at our organization. We held our annual board member elections via mail, with record turnout (over 90 participants, thank you so much!), and afterwards re-elected the officers on our board in the same positions as last year.

Board of Directors

President
Petra Specht

Vice President
Anthony J. Schaller

Secretary
Hannelore Avalos

Treasurer
Hilde Lorentz

Members
Marlene Feuerstraeter
Otti Kiraly
Petra Kübler
Bärbel Steensen
Michael E. Willis

The German School of the East Bay is about to move to Emeryville where they will hold classes this coming fall at the East Bay German International School (EBGIS). Our rooms in the Excelsior building may be too small for them as it is to be expected that physical distancing regulations may still be required for students, especially if they are not yet vaccinated. We will miss them dearly. I want to thank Birgit Steensen and Otti Kiraly who spent a lot of time - and still will – coordinating with GSEB and now organizing the upcoming move.

The Berlin and Beyond Film Festival just ended, although the online movies can still be watched until June 6. The 25th anniversary of Berlin and Beyond faced a number of obstacles, and I want to congratulate Sophoan Sorn, Noemie Njangiru and their team at the Goethe Institute for a very well organized “hybrid” event, with drive-in movies, a Vogue theater show and many online films available to choose from. A big thank you also goes to Petra Kubler who coordinated this event from our side.

In the meantime, Marlene Feuerstraeter worked with a Piedmont girls scouts group to upgrade the Altenheim vegetable beds. Now, the residents have more space to grow their own plants, and you can see many happy faces when you visit the beautiful Altenheim gardens. Also, Marlene and several EGC volunteers pruned the roses. Thank you to all, especially Marlene. Her constant gardening activities preserve the beautiful outside area around our Altenheim.

The history committee is also quite busy, and they got new help. Monica Clyde is writing a story about our transition from the Altenheim Association to the EGC, with the help of Hilde and Jim Lorentz and Michael Willis. Our member Arndt Peltner offered to assist with the organization of our museum artifacts. Arndt also provided us with a [series of audio files](#) describing [several aspects of the history of Germans here in the Bay Area](#). You will find those links, for both German and English audio series, in the “news” section of our website (excelsiorcenter.org). Some of the German teachers may like to use them, too. Please, check them out. Thank you to Monica, Arndt, Hilde, Jim and Michael.

With the upcoming relaxations of COVID regulations in California we thought that we could offer some first joined activities for June. We are starting the activity “**Wandern mit Christiane und Ingo**”, spear-headed by our members

Christiane Frederickson and Ingo Mathias. As a pilot project we will start easy, in the levelled and sun-protected terrain of Heather Farm Park in Concord. If you are interested to join us for a shorter walk – about one hour – on Wednesday morning, June 16, starting at 10am, please contact me (psspecht@sbcglobal.net or via phone at 510-652-3911) for more information. We plan to have lunch together afterwards. If there is interest, we can organize more such activities, possibly one per month.


Eden Housing got new leadership for the Altenheim management. Hannelore Avalos is organizing a joined meeting where we will discuss our continued collaboration, and when / how we will be able to use Prior Hall and the Community Hall again. We may organize a garden party for members at the end of September, a Christmas Bazaar with UGAS-EB, a New Year's concert 2022 and a Karnevals party in early 2022. I want to thank Hannelore Avalos as well as Christine Beam and Inge Junginger and their team from UGAS-EB, and also Otti Kiraly, Petra Kubler and the whole EGC program committee who will have to shoulder a lot of organizational work, to make this happen. We also expect that we can have our fall membership meeting finally in person again.

Of course, we should not forget to mention Tony Schaller's continued engagement for our German Radio program. For those of you who may not be aware, you are invited to tune into the German Radio show airing Sundays from 9-11 AM PT on 1450 AM and online through KEST San Francisco on Tune-In or via www.kestradio.com. Music includes a wide variety of artists and genres along with a regular weekend news summary. Thank you, Tony!

Last, certainly not least, our long-time member John Binder recently celebrated his 90th birthday. Congratulations, John, and thank you for all you did for our organization! When I heard of John's birthday, I realized that we at the EGC board do not have birthdate information from our members. So, I intend to gather this from all who are willing to provide it.

There will be more information coming, as we are planning more activities in the Excelsior building this coming fall, after we heard the upcoming announcement of our Californian governor on June 15. We may have to add equipment such as mobile air purifiers, hand sanitizing stations and/or adjust the setup in our rooms, to allow for physical distancing regulations. We'll see what will be needed. However, with a group of such dedicated people as I described above who step up any time when needed I have no doubt that we will manage our next tasks formidably.

Let's continue! With greetings from Oakland,



(Petra Specht, President of the Excelsior German Center)



