



The Excelsior German Center

at the Altenheim in Oakland, California

History, Organization and Connections

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Intro

Excelsior German Center (2005 to date)

formerly known as:

Altenheim Association (1890 – 2005)

around 1900



2015





How it all started:

December **1886**: Fritz Rosenbaum, President of the “German General Benevolent Society” suggests to found a senior home for seniors with German heritage

March **1890**: the Altenheim Association was founded, first known as the “German Altenheim of San Francisco”. Famous founders were Fritz Rosenbaum, Adolf Sutro, Claus Spreckels and Charles Bundschu.

The first Altenheim burned down in **1908** and was replaced by the current building. **1927** the “Excelsior building” was added, to accommodate Altenheim employees. Today, the Excelsior German Center uses this building for their own meetings and events. From **1998 bis 2020** the “German School of the East Bay” was located there as well.

At the end of the last millennium the non-profit organization “Altenheim Association” could no longer manage the operation of the senior home. A number of unfortunate decisions almost ended its existence. With private financial assistance of some members this crisis was overcome. The Altenheim closed under the association’s management in **2002**. The remaining residents were relocated.

The Altenheim Association had to re-orient / redefine itself!



Arial view of the Alenheim at its current state

(leased since **2004**, for 90 years)

The property is currently run by Eden Housing, as “affordable, independent living” for seniors

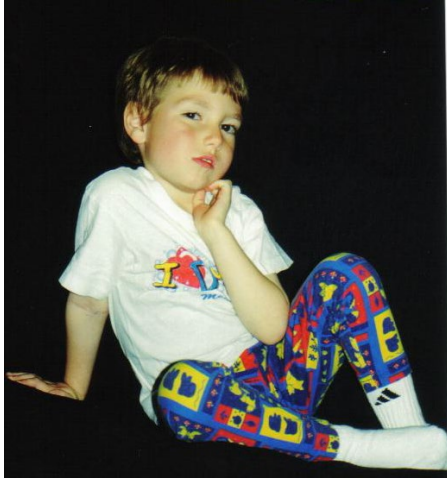


(newer buildings are circled)



My personal connection to EGC started at GSEB

Matty Christian



born 1995 in Oakland



2004:
GSEB promotes membership
of the Altenheim Association,
to preserve the property for
the German community

German School of the East Bay:
1999 to 2011
(2005-2010: president)



Changes in the organization

- 2004: GSEB members and others enrich the Altenheim Association membership
- 2005: Name change to reflect **support of seniors**
AND German culture and language education
Neujahrskonzert / renovations / have members contribute in committees
- 2008: **Max Raabe und das Palastorchester** perform at the Altenheim
- 2012: Closer connection w/ schools start, new committee structure
- 2015: 125-anniversary: incl. consulate / Bundschu contact / UC Berkeley
- 2016-2018: Bylaws / Interviews: oral history / **new members** / new logo & website
- 2019: contacts were broadened: clubs, schools and institutes
continued support for Goethe Institut's "**Berlin and Beyond Film Festival**",
support **(high) school projects** (GAPP, 4-course system)
- 2020: plan to connect German businesses w/ high schools (summer internships) were halted by pandemic, schools receive support to transfer teaching to online mode, hardship assistance, EGC works directly w/ umbrella organizations (e.g. AATG) fire assistance, support of Mitzvah project, Altenheim maintenance efforts (garden)
- 2021: Restart of cultural events:
Berlin and Beyond / Maifest / Neujahrskonzert (recording)
- 2022: German Day in San Francisco (Golden Gate Park)
first "East Bay Weihnachtsmarkt" in Emeryville, w/ EBGIS and BAKS+



German Day, Oct. 2022





Berlin and Beyond, in Berkeley

photo credit: Barak Shrama





UCB German Dept: Cabaret



**EXCELSIOR GERMAN CENTER
OAKLAND**
Invites You
to a performance by the
UC Berkeley
German Department

was es alles gibt

a German literary Cabaret

*The students present a (mostly) humorous mixture of poetry, skits, and music with texts by Robert Gernhardt, Ernst Jandl, Karl Valentin, Friedrich Hölderlin and many others.
A poetic and playful celebration of the German language featuring a marital dispute with only the nicest of words, the adventures of German tourists in search for lunch in Berkeley, a couple of really bad jokes, and a philosophical look at the existential qualities of a table.
Mixed in are mice, bats, and cats, an intercultural love song,
and instructions on how doing dishes can become a swashbuckling adventure.*

Sunday, April 28th 2019 at 2 pm
in the Prior Hall at the Altheim in Oakland
enter at 1699 Excelsior Ave. Gate #3
Free Admission – Donations Accepted
For more information contact Petra Specht 510-652-3911





New Year's Concert



Happy New Year
2023



More changes and statistics

2022/23: new board members, new officers –

treasurer: Karl Pfeiffer

VP: Petra Kubler

house committee: Thomas Kronemeyer

Average age on the board: **69** (we are working on it)

Membership age distribution (135 members, steady since 2004)

u 30	u 40	u 50	u 60	u 70	u 80	o 80	
1	0	7	16	32	29	50	135

When members joined our organization: (22 lifetime members):





QUO VADIS ?

We want to preserve old traditions (oral history, podcasts about the Germans in the Bay Area) while also developing new ways to cherish our German heritage (Film Festival, Cabaret, Golden Gate Choirs Festival, Jugend Debattiert...). We try to jointly organize events which a single organization can no longer handle by itself. While connecting with like-minded organizations we get new ideas, learn from others and also find more members.

We try to do our part to support ALL entities of German heritage. If high schools strive, universities get more students for German language education. In turn, our organizations profit from cabaret performances, volunteers for our events and friends who can help us master the internet (digitizing historic artifact images, handle website and social media accounts, organize carpools...). If German bands, dance groups and choirs survive we will be able to show the public – for example at a German Day – this part of our culture.

Sometimes traditions transfer to different groups, though. For example, we now have children and youth choirs who also – but not exclusively – sing in German. That's ok, we can still sing together from time to time...