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Calendar of Events



Please scan the QR code to see our full events calendar and to register for upcoming events.

The German Society of Pennsylvania

Neuer Pennsylvanischer
Staatsbote

CELEBRATING
1764 **262** 2026
YEARS OF
**GERMAN
HERITAGE**

Summer 2026

Jahresversammlung: Reflections from the 2026 Annual Meeting



Our annual meeting is a time for our organization's leadership and members to connect, to reflect about the year past, and plan for the future ahead. It was fitting that we first remembered those members who passed away during the past year. They helped shape the Society we

inherit today, and we remember them with gratitude and respect.

This year also marks the beginning of my fifth and final year as President. The past five years have been a period of change. We have grown our membership numbers, welcomed new volunteers, board members, and staff. Over the past year, we have expanded our programming, strengthened our communications, improved our operations, and continued to care for the remarkable building, library, and collections entrusted to us.

Yet, what encourages me most is the fact that we are becoming a broader and more active community. We see new faces at events. We see members stepping into leadership roles. We see people bringing new ideas, new energy, and new perspectives to the Society.

At the same time, many of our long-serving members continue to play essential roles as volunteers, committee members, Board members, donors, and advisors. Many have devoted twenty, thirty, or even more years of their lives to this institution. Their commitment, generosity, and steady service created the foundation upon which we continue to build.

We recognized several of our long-time volunteers at the annual meeting. Serving an institution for decades is no small thing, and we owe these members a profound debt of gratitude.

The balance of continuity and renewal has always been one of the Society's greatest strengths.

Over more than 260 years, the people who have carried this institution forward have changed from one generation to the next, while its mission has remained remarkably constant. Five years ago, none of us could have known exactly where the Society would be today. Like every institution, we have faced challenges, but when I look around our community today, I see your dedication and a growing sense of momentum. Today we have 785 members and that number continues to grow.

The German Society's mission remains what it has always been: to connect the people of this region with the cultures, histories, and living traditions of the German-speaking world. Our responsibility is not simply to preserve what we have inherited. It is to ensure that the German Society remains a living place of culture, learning, friendship, and community for generations to come. I remain deeply grateful for the support, generosity, volunteer service, and commitment of our members and for the excellent work of our staff. Together, we have strengthened this remarkable institution, and I am confident that its future is in good hands.

Mark McGuigan, President



Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are now available for the German Society of Pennsylvania's 262nd Annual Stiftungsfest, honoring Dr. Amy Gutmann, former President of the University of Pennsylvania and former U.S. Ambassador to Germany.

Visit www.germansociety.org to purchase tickets or explore sponsorship opportunities.

SAVE THE DATE

262ND ANNUAL

Stiftungsfest

OF THE
GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

November 7th, 2026 at 6pm

Honoring Leadership Award Recipient

DR. AMY GUTMANN

U.S. Ambassador to Germany (2022-24)
President Emerita and Distinguished Professor,
University of Pennsylvania



2026 Annual Meeting Results

On Sunday, June 14, 2026, members of the German Society gathered in the Ratskeller for our 2026 Annual Meeting and Board Elections. A total of 44 members attended the afternoon gathering, which combined official business with warm camaraderie.

This year's election featured six candidates running for six available seats on the Board of Directors. Five candidates were elected to three-year terms in the Class of 2029, while the candidate receiving the fewest votes was elected to a one-year term in the Class of 2027. In addition, the officer positions of Treasurer and Vice President of Communications were on the ballot.

Following President Mark McGuigan's overview of the past year and introductions of the candidates, members cast their votes. While two volunteer teams tallied the results, attendees enjoyed coffee and refreshments coordinated by Hella Volgenau.



Back Row: Stefan Neubig, Del Hausman, Jim Niessen, Maiken Scott, Nils Hansmann, Lew Volgenau. Front Row: Ed Trauffer, Mark McGuigan, Kathrin Hennig

The following officers were elected or re-affirmed for another term:

Lew Volgenau, Treasurer
Maiken Scott, Vice President of Communications

The Class of 2029 will include newly elected Directors **Stefan Neubig**, **Kathrin Henning**, **Nils Hansmann**, and **Ed Trauffer**, along with returning Director **Del Hausman**. **James Niessen** was elected to the one-year term in the Class of 2027.

We extend our congratulations to all incoming Board members and officers and thank them for their willingness to serve the Society. We also express our sincere appreciation to all members who participated in the Annual Meeting and helped make the afternoon a success.

Anett Mindermann, Executive Director

In Memoriam: *Lya Ilse Pfeifer*

June 12, 1943 ~ May 24, 2026 (age 82)



Lya Ilse Pfeifer passed away on March 24, 2026, in Saddle River, NJ. She was born in New York City on June 12, 1943, to Robert and Hilde Tonn, both immigrants from Germany.

Lya attended high school in New York City and earned a B.A. and M.A. in

German Literature and Philosophy from Syracuse University. In her 40s, she graduated with a law degree from Touro University's Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center in New York. She worked as a German teacher, opened and ran a clothing store in Queens, and practiced law in New York for over 30 years.

Lya served as President of the Max Kade Foundation from 2003 to 2025. The Foundation's mission is to strengthen German-American cultural and language exchange. She had a lifelong passion for the German-American community in New York, which led her to hold leadership positions with the German-American School Association and the Liederkrantz Foundation, among others. Her dedication was recognized with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Lya and her husband, Joseph Pfeifer, became dear friends and benefactors of the German Society over the past twenty years. Under her leadership at the Max Kade Foundation, the Society received operating grants, significant donations to the Horner Memorial Library Endowment, and several major capital improvement grants, benefiting the Horner Library and other areas of the Society.

We recognized their generosity by naming them Honorary Lifetime Members and acknowledged

their wonderful support at the 261st Stiftungsfest Gala on November 1, 2025, where they received the German Society's Leadership Award.

Our sympathy goes out to Joseph Pfeifer; Lya's two children, Anne Doering and her husband, Jens, and Robert Friedrich and his wife, Jane Craig; her two stepdaughters, Jena Boomhower and her husband, Chuck, and Lorraine Pfeifer; as well as her grandchildren and great-grandson.

New Giving Opportunity by E. D. Weiler

Thank you for your continued commitment to the German Society of Pennsylvania. We want to share a recent change in federal tax law that may affect your charitable giving in 2026.

Many taxpayers find that taking the standard deduction is to their financial benefit, and they do not itemize deductions, including charitable donations to the Society.

In the 2026 tax year, there is a unique opportunity. Taxpayers who take the standard deduction are eligible to claim a limited, "above-the-line" deduction for cash gifts to qualified charitable organizations:

- Up to \$1,000 for individuals
- Up to \$2,000 for married couples filing jointly

What counts as a qualified contribution:

- Donation must be cash, including checks, or credit/debit card payments.
- Gift must be given directly to charitable organization like the Society and given in the tax year.

This might be a nice opportunity for donors who do not itemize deductions. It effectively reduces your adjusted gross income (AGI) before other deductions and or credits. As always, we recommend that you review your situation with your tax advisor.



Sprache verbindet by Thorsten Drautzburg

Chicago was my first home when I came to the US in 2008. The Chicago Cultural Center building, with its foreign language inscriptions, introduced me to a Goethe quote that resonated with me:

*O süße Stimme! Vielwillkommener Ton
Der Muttersprache in einem fremden Lande!*

*Oh, sweet voice! Much welcome sound
Of mother tongue in foreign land.*

Whether at Lidl or walking in Center City Philadelphia, hearing German perks me up. I sometimes start a conversation with a stranger speaking my mother tongue.

Our language not only connects me to strangers. At home, it helps me to bond me with my family – with the encouragement and support of my wife, a Chicago-born speech therapist, I am raising our three children exclusively in German. That way, I can share and re-live old childhood favorites with them: Rolf Zuckowski's birthday song, St. Martin's songs, or Janosch books. Even after 15+ years working in English, speaking German still allows me to hit the right tone when sharing personal thoughts and feelings.

Since 2018, I have organized my workweek around PhillyKinder. St. Martin introduced me to PhillyKinder, and when our first child was old enough, we started the weekly trek to the classes, first to Overbrook and now to Ardmore. Our three children are regulars, and I have been volunteering as a classroom assistant. Early on, I enjoyed the community of the parent-child group that the *Kleine Freunde* group offers for our youngest. Today, I enjoy how the German language and culture connect the diverse group of children.

Asked to join the board a few years ago, saying yes felt right as a way to give back. And, when Adrienne Frangakis asked me to take her role as president after her move, I also agreed – despite the big shoes to fill!



The stars of PhillyKinder are our teachers and directors, Anja Hilliard and Birgit Splitt. The teachers do an incredible job teaching our children German language and culture in a joyful way at a time – Thurs-

days after 5pm – when many are tired from a long day of school. Anja and Birgit provide tireless, resourceful support. As the incoming PhillyKinder president, I hope to support Anja and Birgit in much the same way I have supported our teachers as a classroom assistant.

While teaching our children is our priority, opportunities to connect outside the classroom benefit everyone in the PhillyKinder community – children and grown-ups – and also the Philly-area German-speaking community. Special events can bring more of us together beyond our everyday activities. Apart from the traditional block-buster St. Martin festivities with the GSP, we have started to offer more events such as an Eagles stadium tour (thank you, Susanne Johnson!), a German movie matinee (thank you, Jennifer Dixon!), or parent get-togethers in coalition with the *Media and Main-Line Netzwerk Philadelphia* (thank you, Michael Dieterle, Nils Hansmann, and Gita Pezeshki). I am excited to work with Mark McGuigan and others at the German Society and beyond to make the German-speaking community more vibrant and connected!

Warmly,
Thorsten Drautzburg

The Horner Library's Prize-Winning Transcription Project Reveals Hidden German-American History by Bettina Hess, Librarian

I am delighted to share that the German Society's Joseph Horner Memorial Library was recently honored by the prestigious Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL). PACSCL awarded the Horner Library's Transcription Tuesday group its Noel Prize for excellence in increasing access to Special Collections materials.



Celia Caust-Ellenbogen, Chair of the Noel Prize committee with Bettina Hess and Frank Hoeber

The Horner Library's archival transcription project opens previously inaccessible historical documents to German Society members, historians, and family researchers. To date, the group has transcribed thousands of pages, including a civil war journal, the GSP's first minute book, and writings of Pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and Henry Keppele, the German Society's first president. These precious records, which have been undecipherable to most people for over a century, are now available in digital typescript to readers all over the world.

On May 3, transcription group member Frank Hoeber and I attended PACSCL's annual general meeting at Bryn Mawr College and accept-

ed the award on behalf of the library. The Noel Prize, named in honor of PACSCL's former board chair Will Noel, included a check for \$250 and some gag gifts, but we were most thrilled to be recognized by our peers for our good work. PACSCL's press release stated, "in particular, the Committee was impressed with the community-building around this project, which nurtures the enthusiasm of many volunteers, and keeps them connected both to each other and to the wonder of primary sources." Indeed, the group has been going strong for over six years, and has dedicated thousands of hours to the project!

On June 25th, Transcription Group members held a special event in the library to share some of their discoveries with GSP members and the public and to celebrate the award.



Frank Hoeber, Beth Hessel, chair of the PACSCL board and Bettina Hess

The German Society Awards \$31,000 in Scholarships for 2026

by Donald Rainey, Chair of the Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee has once again awarded several scholarships in the name of The German Society of Pennsylvania. This provides an appropriate opportunity to summarize aspects of this meaningful, significant, and long-standing scholarship program, which supports and fosters the study of the German language and culture. It is also fitting to acknowledge the generous financial support of numerous individuals and the tireless contributions of time and effort by so many members of the Society.

Records dating back to April 2013 show that substantial scholarship funds have been awarded each year to approximately 94 aspiring students of German. This significant financial support has been repeatedly acknowledged and appreciated by individual recipients. The Society's efforts have also contributed to the support of German language programs at several colleges and universities.

The Scholarship Program is announced on the Society's website in early January. The announcement includes the application deadline, important dates, and information regarding the required supporting materials. Individuals selected as finalists are invited to an in-person interview at the Society's historic headquarters. The six members of the Scholarship Committee conduct these interviews primarily, though not exclusively, in German. Scholarship recipients are typically announced in late April.

The scholarships are formally awarded during the local chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) Awards Program, which is held at the German Society. This year, the Committee awarded six scholarships totaling \$31,000. The funds will be distributed directly to the colleges and universities the recipients plan to attend. One condition of the award is that each recipient must enroll in at least one German course per semester.

This year's recipients and their intended universities are:

- **Liliana DeFeo** (Elsa Schweikert Scholarship), University of Maryland
- **Daphne Challingsworth**, Penn State University
- **Sophia Lawless** (Leon H. Volgenau Scholarship), Bryn Mawr College
- **Maya Hartung**, University of Pennsylvania
- **Lily Juska**, West Chester University
- **Carson Weaver**, University of Michigan

The awardees graciously expressed their profound appreciation to The German Society of



Donald Rainey, Carol Olenschlager, Maya Hartung, Sophia Lawless, Lily Juska, Liliana DeFeo, Hardy von Auenmueller

Pennsylvania for its support and, in particular, to the sponsors of the Leon H. Volgenau Scholarship and the Elsa Schweikert Scholarship.

The scholarships were officially presented at the local chapter of the AATG Preisverleihung (Awards Ceremony) on April 26, 2026.

Meet our German Teacher: Andrea Schmidt, Ph.D

by Monika Moyrer, Chair of the Language Committee



Andrea Schmidt, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of German at **Temple University**, where she teaches German language, film, and general education courses. Her areas of expertise include German film, gender and sexuality studies,

environmentalism, and literature, with research interests in contemporary German film and television, literary adaptations, and memory cultures. In addition to her work at Temple, Dr. Schmidt also teaches German language courses at the German Society.

Since when have you been teaching at the German Society?

I recently celebrated my one-year anniversary at the German Society! In my full-time position at Temple University, I teach undergraduate students German language, film, and general education courses. Altogether, I've been teaching German language and culture for more than 15 years.

What is your favorite course to teach at the German Society, and why?

I'd say German 1C, because that's the point where students' German really starts taking off. Once they're able to use the past tense, we can begin having real conversations about what they did over the weekend and other everyday experiences. It's exciting to watch their confidence grow.

What is appealing about teaching German language and culture in Philadelphia?

Philadelphia has an incredibly rich and accessible German-speaking cultural scene. While I love New York City, I certainly don't love \$200 symphony tickets! Here in Philadelphia, there's so much happening—from a Käthe Kollwitz expert at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to the Lightbox Film Center hosting the director of the Austrian Film Archive, to the Philadelphia Orchestra performing works by nineteenth-century German women composers. The German Society itself continually brings outstanding speakers, writers, and musicians to the city. Within just 24 hours, we hosted poets from the world-renowned Leipzig Writers Program and a talented young musician from Frankfurt. It's an inspiring community to be part of.

What do you find most rewarding about teaching at the German Society?

Our students are incredibly engaged and genuinely passionate about learning German. My university students are wonderful, but the atmosphere here is very different. At the German Society, we can continue conversations at events like the Biergarten, which creates a real sense of community. And on a personal note, I also found my two cats in the German Society parking lot! While that hasn't been particularly rewarding financially, it's certainly been rewarding emotionally.

What inspired you to become a German language teacher?

My father was born in Zeil am Main, near Schweinfurt, so learning German was always simply part of growing up. I found a wonderful community through German studies in college, continued into graduate school, and eventually realized that teaching was what I truly loved. It's a privilege to have a career that I genuinely enjoy every day.

continued:

erschwinglicher – und Mallorca entwickelte sich Schritt für Schritt zu dem, was viele bis heute augenzwinkernd als das „17. Bundesland“ bezeichnen.

Ob damals mit der Bahn an den Wörthersee oder heute per Billigflug nach Palma: Der deutsche Sommerurlaub bleibt ein ganz eigenes Kulturgut. Zwischen Sonnenbrand, Sandalen, Aperol Spritz und der ewigen Frage „Haben wir die Liegen schon reserviert?“ zeigt sich vielleicht am deutlichsten, dass Reisen für viele Deutsche mehr ist als Erholung. Es ist Tradition, Sehnsucht und manchmal auch ein kleiner Wettkampf um den besten Platz in der Sonne.

Auf gut Deutsch gesagt: Auch wenn es heißer wird, die Deutschen lassen sich den Sommerurlaub nicht nehmen.

Andreas Copes

Celebrating German Language Day on July 1 by Monika Moyrer

Language carries memories, stories, and values from one generation to the next. For our German-speaking community in Philadelphia, the German language is a living link to our shared heritage and a bridge to the future.

The GSP Language Committee extends its warm wishes to all readers on German Language Day and expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the many teachers, families, volunteers, and students whose dedication keeps the German language vibrant throughout the Philadelphia region.

We look forward to welcoming you back this September for German language courses at all levels, our Book and Film Club, *Konversationsabend*, and many other engaging programs and events.

Bis bald und genießen Sie den Sommer!
Monika Moyrer

Immanuel Students Shine at 2026 AATG Awards Ceremony by Del Hausman

This year's Awards Ceremony of the Philadelphia-Delaware chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German was held on Sunday, April 26, at the German Society of Pennsylvania. We are extremely proud of the students of the Immanuel German School. Thanks to their scores on the National German Exam, Immanuel students earned multiple bronze, silver, and gold medals.

Medals and awards on the National German Exam are based on percentile, that is, how students performed in relation to students nationwide on the three levels of this exam. Students receiving bronze medals scored higher than 70 - 79% of their US peers, silver medalists scored better than 80-89% of their fellow students, and students receiving gold medals outperformed 90 - 99% of US students. Here's Immanuel's scorecard: Bronze 4, Silver 8, Gold 12.

the German American Police Association. Seraphina Ware and Nishka Rajaram each received Hans R. Haug Memorial Awards and a monetary prize.



Nishka Rajaram with Del Hausman

Daphne Challingsworth was awarded a major scholarship by the German Society of Pennsylvania. Last but certainly not least, Nishka Rajaram received the AATG/PAD study trip to Germany this summer.



Ruby Caviezel & Seraphina Ware receive the Concordia Trust Award, presented by Glenn White



Maximillian Klon: Goethe Institut Prize

In addition to the medals, Maximillian Klon won a Goethe Institute prize; two students, Ruby Caviezel and Seraphina Ware, won monetary awards presented by the Concordia Trust; and Renate Burri won a monetary award given by



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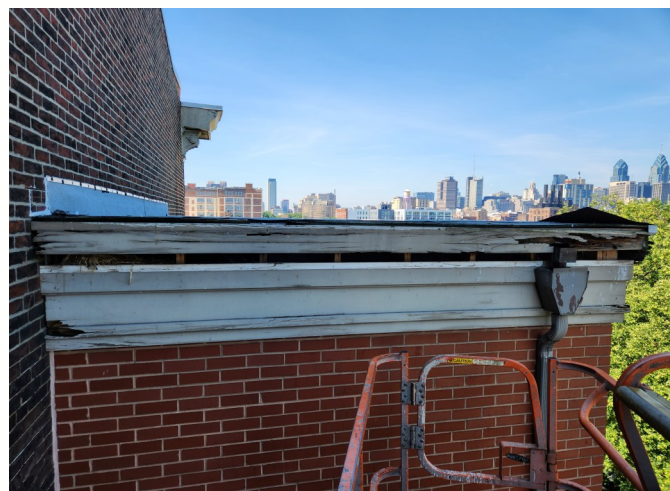


FACING THE FUTURE

GSP CAPITAL CAMPAIGN 2024 - 2027

We launched our GSP Capital Campaign 2024-2027 in mid-November of 2024 by means of a special mailing to our members and the friends of the German Society of Pennsylvania. In our letter, we stressed that "time has taken its toll on our beautiful building. The exterior façade, windows, and structural elements of our historic building are in urgent need of repair. We are facing significant renovations that are critical to preserve our home for future generations. The estimated cost of these repairs stands around \$2,000,000."

We have made significant progress; new windows, new window sills, and lintels have been installed in the townhouse and the main building. Brick pointing was completed on the townhouse and the north side of the main building. After slowing down over the winter months, we



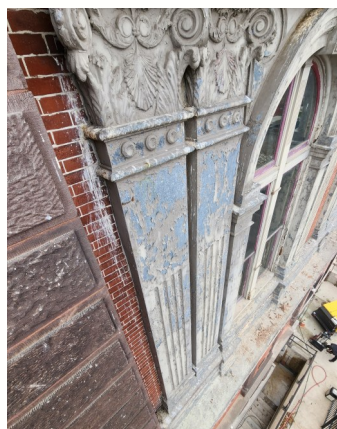
Roofline needs repairs to address rotting wood, peeling paint, and gaps that may allow water intrusion.

are ready to work on the two dormers over the townhouse, a source of significant water intrusion. The roof, the cornice, and gutter system of the elevator tower are next. And additional brick pointing and masonry will follow.

We have secured **\$1,632,188** in grants from a number of foundations. As previously reported,



Picture left: Work has begun on repointing the terrace-facing brick wall to repair deteriorated mortar and protect the masonry from water damage.



Picture right: Window areas require restoration, repair, and repainting of the decorative architectural elements.

we set ourselves an ambitious three-year goal of **\$500,000 for gifts from our members**. Our funders are obviously interested to know that our membership is very much engaged and supportive of this project. As of June 2026, we received **\$167,714** in donations plus **\$12,335** in pledges. We have a long way to go to reach our goal.

We are very grateful for all gifts and pledges; we stress again that any amount will be very much appreciated.

Ed Weiler & The Capital Campaign Committee

Please scan the QR code for donations and façade project updates.



Auf gut Deutsch gesagt

by Andreas Copes

Wir befinden uns mitten im Hochsommer. Meine Eltern in Deutschland sagen, es sei noch nie so heiß gewesen wie in diesem Jahr. „Näää, et wird auch immma heißer“, sagte meine Mutter kürzlich am Telefon, als das Thermometer mal wieder 35 Grad Celsius anzeigte. Aber ist es wirklich viel wärmer als „damals“? Der Deutsche Wetterdienst sagt: Ja. In den Jahren von 1951 bis 1990 gab es insgesamt nur ein Jahr, in dem im Durchschnitt über ganz Deutschland mehr als zehn heiße Tage verzeichnet wurden. In den Jahrzehnten danach bis heute waren es hingegen 13 Jahre, und neun davon allein im Zeitraum von 2010 bis 2024. Trotzdem schaffen wir es Jahr für Jahr, die Urlaubsorte von Spanien über Italien bis nach Griechenland zuverlässig zu füllen. Wir Deutschen sind schließlich bekannt für zentimeterdicke Sonnencreme, strategisch platzierte Handtücher auf Liegen und den manchmal etwas bemühten Versuch, die Sprache des Reiselandes zu sprechen. Doch wohin reist der „Durchschnittsdeutsche“

eigentlich am liebsten? Laut dem Opodo-Reisereport liegt Palma de Mallorca ganz klar auf Platz 1, gefolgt von Barcelona und London. Beim letzten Reiseziel können wir uns immerhin darin messen, wer am ist. Die Reiselust der Deutschen ist natürlich kein neues Phänomen. Prof. Ulrich Reinhardt von der Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen erklärte gegenüber dem Magazin *Reisereporter*, dass Tourist*innen aus Deutschland bereits in den 1950er-Jahren die Ostalpen für sich entdeckten. Damals führten etwa sechs Prozent der Urlaubsreisen aus Deutschland nach Österreich. Die meisten deutschen Urlauberinnen und Urlauber reisten mit der Bahn an, nämlich 54 Prozent. Weitere 19 Prozent kamen mit dem eigenen Auto, 17 Prozent mit dem Bus. Im Sommer zählten Tirol und der Wörthersee zu den beliebtesten Reisezielen. Mit Beginn der 1970er-Jahre und den zunehmenden Reisemöglichkeiten per Flugzeug gewann dann Spanien deutlich an Beliebtheit. Sonne, Strand und Meer wurden

