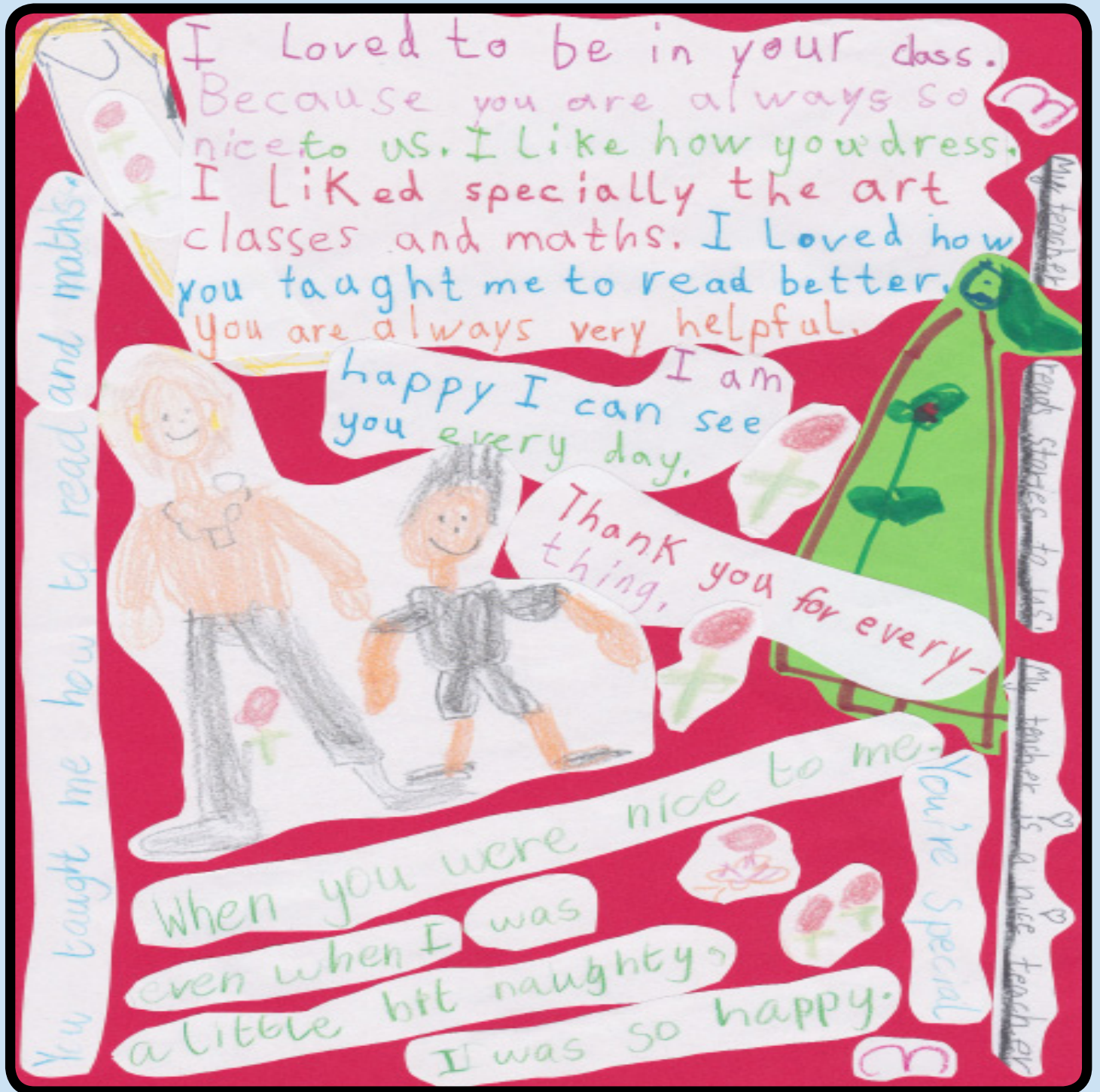


CURRENTS

JANUARY 2014

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School Days



President's Message



I can hardly believe that another year has gone by so quickly! Looking back at 2013, we really accomplished a lot in that time. We took a leap into the modern age with our new digital version of *Currents*. Cat made huge improvements to our website. We had a lot of successful events, including the Independence Day Celebration together with The American Club, our Celebration of Membership, Kara's Books and Bras Brunch, Thanksgiving, and our Christmas events. We did a lot of recruiting, in places like US Citizen Services Days at the US Consulate where we served coffee, and Open House at the International School. I am pleased to say we have recently increased membership by 30%. I also had the chance to attend my first FAWCO conference in Cologne. And best of all, I got to know a lot of you much better.

Overall, my experience as President this last year was a positive one, and as a result I have decided to run for the position again in 2014. I feel that my work isn't over and I would like to be active in seeing that some of the exciting changes we are making in the club come to fruition. Our digitalization of *Currents*, and social networking efforts, are progressing in an exciting way. We have cut a lot of unnecessary costs in our new budget, while putting more focus on activities, and recently voted to reduce membership fees, breaking down some of the barriers to membership in tough financial times. We hope to become more engaged in some philanthropic work. We are also looking forward to organizing and hosting the next FAWCO Regional Conference in November 2014. Please email me if you would like to be part of the planning committee! This will be a wonderful opportunity for us to find out what FAWCO is about, to meet women from all over Germany, Austria, and possibly the Scandinavian countries, and to realize that we are part of a global organization that is working for us as US Citizens, as well as for the rights and well-being of women and children around the world.

As we enter the New Year, I wish all of you health, peace, and prosperity. I look forward to sharing the next year with you!

Love, Shawn

Message from the Content Editors

Do you remember the slogan "If you can read this thank a teacher?" It was seen across the States on bumper stickers and tote bags. This month's editors are proud to be among those lucky people who are teachers and in this edition of *Currents* we hope you'll enjoy reading about some more of us. Not all the articles are flattering but we hope you find all of them interesting.

Whether you're reading this electronically or by the good old fashioned way, with a piece of paper in your hands, please spare a thought for Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz. He was *Time* magazine's Man of the Millennium, the person who perfected the printing press circa 1450 and so opened up the world of reading to everyone.

-Jenny M.

I am just reflecting on Jenny's wise musings. Johannes Gutenberg has undeniably earned mankind's eternal gratitude. The written word in the 21st Century has electronically evolved; reading whether in books or on a Kindle or iPad, still ultimately opens the doors to learning. Today students can undoubtedly acquire knowledge by going online to Khan Academy, a remarkable website which covers just about every subject and vows to be completely free forever. Harvard, MIT, Berkeley anyone? EdX, another incredible website, offers interactive online classes from the America's top universities.

However, don't expect a teacher with forty plus years of experience to admit we are completely expendable. I believe it is the relationships among teachers and students which cannot be completely replaced with technology and online courses. Students can only be educated by a dedicated community of qualified and caring teachers who share a classroom in the real vs. the virtual world. Hopefully this issue of *Currents* will shed light on what teachers have meant to all of us, the good, the bad, and the..... beautiful.

-Pat F.

EDITORIAL

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Message from the Executive Editor

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first issue of *Currents* designed specifically for a digital format! First of all, I'd like to say how completely overwhelmed I've been with submissions, ideas and support from all of you! This month's issue is HUGE and includes information from many different (and even some brand new) contributors. I almost couldn't fit everyone's photo on the contributor page! Thank you for supporting *Currents*, and I hope that you'll continue to read and contribute to our club's beloved magazine.

This digital edition comes with some big changes. We've incorporated color elements into the layout and included plenty of beautiful, color photos throughout. We've also increased the size of the text to make it easier to read on your computer screen or mobile device. You may have also noticed that there is no message from the next Content Editor in this issue. This will be the last issue that utilizes Content Editors (and what a fantastic job Pat and Jenny have done to wrap up the "era" of Content Editors for *Currents*... this issue has turned out beautifully).

The *Currents* Brainstorming Meeting in November produced plenty of great ideas, and we're going to start implementing many of them next month. To start with, *Currents* is going to go back to being a monthly publication! Thanks to our new, digital format, we are no longer bound by page restrictions and printer/post office timelines, so we will begin producing a shorter, more timely, digital magazine for our members each month starting in February. To accomplish all of this without Content Editors, we need volunteers willing to contribute on a regular basis to provide us with various "columns" or "sections" on specific topics. This could be you!

If you enjoy writing and/or taking photos, and can contribute ½ - 1 page of content (made up of text and/or photos) on a particular topic at least 4 times per year, we'd love to have you join our staff as a Topic Editor or photographer!

As of right now, we already have the following Topic Editors for *Currents* (and a big thank you goes to):

Cat C. - Tech Editor

Becky T. – Film Editor

Elizabeth R. - Opera Editor

Karen M. – Fashion Editor

Shawn K. – Club Activities Editor

Tracy M. – FAWCO Editor

Ulrike H. – Fine Arts Editor

We're still interested in finding additional Topic Editors. Our Brainstorming Meeting produced a number of topics that we thought might be of interest to club members including: Membership News, Kids and Family, Markets and Fairs around Hamburg, Travel, Music, DIY/Crafts, Theater, and Food. If any of these topics interest you, or if you have a topic that you'd like to see included in *Currents*, please contact me.

We want to see as many of our members as possible involved in the publication of this magazine. If you're not able to make the commitment to be a Topic Editor, consider writing a short paragraph, tip or review and submitting it to the appropriate Topic Editor. If writing isn't your thing, we'd love you to submit photos of club activities, as well as pictures in and around Hamburg to give our digital pages color and bring our stories to life. Have an idea to improve *Currents*? Please let us know! This is our magazine, and we want it to be something everyone can enjoy!

Watch for our first, shorter monthly issue on our website in February, and be sure to email me at currents-exec@awchamburg.org if you'd like to volunteer to be a Topic Editor or photographer for *Currents*.

Happy Reading!

-Allie

The Secrets of a Successful Teacher

by Pat F.

When my co-editor Jenny first suggested the theme “Teaching” for this issue of *Currents*, I quickly agreed. I had spent sixteen years plus seated in students’ desks, and forty years plus standing in front of classrooms at a blackboard which evolved into a white board, and more recently into a Smartboard.

And I have relished every moment of it, well, almost every moment. There were a few teachers (code word for nuns), who to be diplomatic, toughened me up for life. Then there have been a few students who, to be even more diplomatic, tested my toughening at every possible opportunity.

The secret of a successful teacher is quite simple; relationships are everything. Inspire and challenge each student in a protected, nonthreatening environment. Mollycoddling and patronizing lead to mediocrity, but hugs (verbal hugs, too), are to be encouraged!

There is another secret I am now willing to reveal. I have mostly taught third grade classes; everyone I know, including myself, just loved their third grade teacher. By choosing these eight and nine year olds right from the start, I was predestined for success.

Mr. Matschke Taught Me How to Love

by Karen M.

This is a big “thank you” to my 9th grade history teacher, Mr. Matschke. I did not pay attention to one single word he said about German political history and the incidents that led to WWI. Hell, I almost failed that class! I was too busy staring out of the window daydreaming about a very special boy I knew. Still, my teacher, Mr. Matschke, shared the most inspiring words with my class which I soaked up like a sponge. For me, he was not a teacher, but a philosopher, a life guide. I would love to talk to him now, knowing a lot more than I did then, and dreaming of other boys now.

He loved love and I guess to some extent he felt like he needed to teach us girls (I attended an all-girls school) everything he knew about men and love, encouraging us to become independent and strong women exploring the world. He taught us to always love ourselves before even daring to love someone else. He taught us, “Never say ‘I need you.’ If you say those words you lose. Never need him, but want him. You can want him all you want as long as you will never need him.” It seems like that might not be special, heard several times before, Pinterest is full of that stuff. But for me, I felt empowered by these words, and felt like I could master the universe. Well, turns out I did not so much. But I still think of him frequently and the warning words of love, when I stare out of the window, daydreaming about a boy.

Privacy Policy Reminder!

by Shawn K.

With our club’s plunge into the digital age, this seems like a good time to remind you of our Privacy Policy. In our Membership Application, which every member was required to sign, the Disclaimer reads: You also grant permission to the AWCH to use your likeness and that of your family members on its website and publications (last names will be omitted) unless you request otherwise in writing. If you would like to exercise your right to keep your name and likeness out of *Currents*, both paper and digital, please send your written request to the AWC board ASAP. Thanks!

A Portrait of Miss Marjorie Graham

by Jenny M.

Academic schoolchildren in Britain face important examinations, called O (Ordinary) and A (Advanced) levels when they are sixteen and eighteen years old. The results of these exams decide whether pupils are university material and so have a major impact on their future careers.

Miss Graham, large and menacing, loomed over the queue of nervous girls. She was handing out their O level results, the results which would shape their future careers.

"Name and form," she said in her self-important manner.

"Kay Wilkinson, form four," replied my friend, obediently.

Miss Graham glared at her. "I said form and name, didn't I?" Then again, in a loud and menacing voice, "I said form and name, didn't I. DIDN'T I?"

"Er, yes, Miss Graham," said Kay, who was anxious to have her results in her hand and know which A level subjects she could choose for the following school year.

"Yes," said Miss Graham. "I knew I said form and name." She looked at Kay and said, "You're stupid aren't you?" Then, when Kay didn't answer, she repeated the question in a louder voice, "You're stupid, aren't you?"

"Yes, Miss Graham," Kay replied.

"Yes, I always knew you were stupid," said Miss Graham in a satisfied voice and finally handed over Kay's results.

You may be interested to know that Kay went on to attend art college and then began an illustrious career as a lecturer in one of London's most prestigious art colleges.

Miss Graham has long gone to the classroom in the sky and so, one hopes, have her methods of teaching. As teenage girls at a school with a good academic reputation we often puzzled over our headmistress's power. Every day we had to ask her permission to go shopping in town rather than go straight home. We were told not to wave to relatives, should they take the trouble to approach us in the school grounds at lunchtime. "There are many undesirables in the city these days and we don't want to attract their attention," said Miss Graham. Were our mums, out on a shopping trip, undesirables, we wondered. She had the uncanny ability to command attention simply by clapping her hands. When she did, everybody in school,

teacher and pupil alike, stood still. Parents and the school governors thought she was marvelous.

Conjure up a Miss Marple character, an overweight lady with yellow buck teeth, wispy, grey hair dragged back into a straggly bun and a florid complexion and you have her. On Speech Day she wore her university gown, adorned with the fur of tiny wild animals, as is the custom, and on every other day she hid her size under a tweed suit. She wore thick, brown, old lady stockings and the kind of sturdy, lace-up shoes which are currently and unfortunately making a come-back.

Despite her appearance there were romantic rumours among the girls of a long lost fiancé who had died in the war and to whom she had pledged always to be true. Apart from that we knew nothing about her other than that she lived alone a stone's throw away from the cathedral which is said to be one of Britain's most beautiful buildings and the castle next to it which housed lucky university students in the tower.

What we didn't appreciate about Miss Graham was her intellect and her interest in the world outside her school. The newspaper delivered to our school library every day was a left wing one and a number of foreign magazines were also chosen by her in order that "her girls" gain insight into world affairs. A couple of years before she and the French mistress retired they attended evening classes to learn Russian. Then, at the height of the Cold War the pair of them embarked on a holiday travelling about Russia. (Goodness knows what the Russians made of the eccentric old Englishwomen, it's a mystery that they were granted visas.)

Are there characters like Miss Graham still teaching today?

Surely self-important, bullying ways are a thing of the past and such aggressive and belittling behavior towards children is no longer acceptable. On the other hand, her ability to control large numbers of schoolchildren with an iron discipline and no apparent effort was legendary. She was a creature of another age, a time when the teacher's word was law, even when it was silly. Her ways caused resentment because they could not be questioned and often were unfair. Still, she probably meant well and couldn't help her eccentricities and it's important to remember that she was a person of her time. Thank goodness, however, that her time is long gone. R.I.P Miss Graham.

An Interview with Mia

by Jenny M.



Mia started half day nursery school in London when she was three years and two months old.

Interviewer: What happens when you first get to school?

Mia: Mrs. Slater helps me hang up my coat. There's a photo of me above my peg so I don't get muddled up. Then she tells us stories

and Sonia helps us wash our hands. I like the toilets, they are yellow and teeny tiny.

Interviewer: Do you work hard at school?

Mia: Ooh yes, we have Circus Skills and Dressing up Time. I like to wear a tararra and play princesses. Next week we are having Chunky Fairy Day and I'm taking my fairy wings what Aunt Kate gave me for my birthday. (Mia's mummy: It says Funky Fairy Day in the weekly update.)

Interviewer: What else do you do?

Mia: We do story time and circle time and writing and painting. I can write my name but Georgina can't. Sonia helps us wash the paint pots and we have tidy up time too.

Interviewer: What was for lunch today?

Mia: We had roast chicken and horrid orange stuff and roast potatoes. Carole's roast potatoes are better than mummy's.

Interviewer: Horrid orange stuff! Do you mean carrots?

Mia: No, it wasn't carrots, I like carrots and everybody said it was horrid. (Mia's mummy: I checked on-line and it was actually sweet potato cubes. Just about everything cook Carole makes seems to be better than mine.)

Interviewer: Have you been on a school trip?

Mia: We went to the aquarium but we didn't see any mermaids. Mrs. Slater told us they were sleeping behind the rocks. Everybody was disappointed but I think I saw one swimming about by the seaweed.

Interviewer: Any other trips?

Mia: We went to the Conservation Area and Mrs. Slater read us "We are going on a Bear Hunt" and we had to swish through the grass, but we didn't see any bears. The best thing was going on the school bus and Carole made us sandwiches. I sat beside PELLELLOPE.

Interviewer: You sat beside Penelope?

Mia: Yes, I like PELLELLOPE and Mrs. Slater put her next to me on the bus.

Interviewer: You must have nice friends at school.

Mia: I play with Leni and Grace and Ava and Betty. Then the big girls help us with lunch and they take us to the library.

Interviewer: What happens when school is finished?

Mia: Sonia helps me choose a book and puts it in my school bag and I read it with my mummy and daddy. Mrs. Slater takes me to my mummy outside and then I have lots of slides in the playground. (Mia's mummy: Mia has to be lured away from the slide and is usually the last to leave.)

Interviewer: School sounds like fun.

Mia: I like my school and I like Sonia and I like Mrs. Slater and I like Carole and I like my friends.

Teaching Ain't What It Used To Be

by Marinell H.

But then neither is parenting. For myself, after a year of kindergarten with the divine Miss White, I attended parochial grade school, then high school, taught primarily by Benedictine nuns, many of whom I fondly remember. The grade school principal, Sister Andrea, reminded us of a bat (wearing the predominantly black and white religious habit) as she barreled, totally in charge, down hallways and in and out of rooms.

Whereas Sister Theophane seemed to float esoterically through the high school, quietly presiding. Back then teachers were given, and gave, respect, at least in the small Midwestern town where I grew up. Of course in those days common knowledge was: misbehave and after the humiliation of being sent to the principal, your parents would be phoned. That of itself was the overriding deterrent.

Even during classes at University of Kansas, decorum presided. A university friend who chose the teaching profession was the first to mention incongruous classroom behavior—chalk erasers hitting his turned back, mimicry from students during classes. But jeez, he taught at an inner-city Chicago high school! Through the years, and new friendships, those who taught talked about the change in students' attitude and their lack of preparedness. Therefore, whenever anyone has complained to me about teachers, I counter with the topic of parenting skills. It's obvious when parents are involved in their children's upbringing: mom taught preschool—after we'd all left the nest—and by the end of the first school day could spot those toddlers whose parents spent time nurturing them. The flip side is, it seems teachers I've known who've worked in the real world bring extra value to the job. One managed restaurants working her way through school, another was Captain of seafaring ships before changing professions; then there's the ex-lawyer, and yet another left broadcasting—you get my drift. Service industries are especially good training grounds to become nimble at dealing with many distinct personalities.

My initial foray into teaching was in the 1990s with students in their last year at a private Hamburg design school—piece of cake; I'm still in contact with one of my students. Yet as the century turned, more parents had to work, producing latchkey kids—the ideal situation for mischievousness. A San Francisco friend teaches at a school for troubled teens—it's common knowledge many are armed; another bemoans the deterioration of students' vocabulary. In Kansas City, Rose said she

spends more time trying to keep up with the educational system's continual “recreating the wheel” than on lesson planning. All concur that parents and administrators think they're miracle workers, albeit support is scanty. With squeezed school budgets, all spend out-of-pocket for their classrooms; all look forward to retirement. All acknowledge it's not everybody, but “one rotten apple can spoil the barrel.” And can make a teacher's life hell.

Substitute teaching this century has increased my appreciation for the tough terrain teachers travel today.

Many parents' attitude is “just deal with it,” since they're on fast-track careers, and/or give social obligations priority. Teachers are hired to educate, yet increasingly “political correctness” has seeped into the system. Those students undisciplined at home carry that lack of guidance into classrooms. Oftentimes cliques form; kids today are unbelievably clever and Internet wily. When dealing with adolescent misdeeds, the outcome often overrides common sense. Educators aren't receiving the backing they need: from parents, school administrators, or governments. Simultaneously, teachers continue to be bombarded with paperwork, meetings, and extracurricular obligations.

An applicable Irishism is: “When you point a finger, there are three pointing back (at you).” Parents need to learn parenting: that “No.” is a sentence unto itself. School systems need to step back and reevaluate. Youth require guidance, nurturing, and love, especially during the formative years. Just as educators should be given the help, and the respect they deserve educating our future generations.

What's A Good Teacher?

by Chris L.

So, I got to thinking about what really makes a teacher a good teacher. I believe it is the ability to engage the kids they teach and to instill in them the desire to learn. To do that requires a real passion for teaching.

I have known two teachers in my life that really fit that bill:

My first grade teacher was such an inspiring force. She instilled in a horde of 25 to 30 six-year-olds a fierce

desire for learning. Not an easy job when you consider that ours was kind of a “bad” neighborhood with a lot of subsidized housing and therefore a lot of kids from homes where learning was not spelled with a capital L. Latchkey kids were relatively common and if anyone had known about ADHD back then, I think several of my classmates would have been diagnosed. But she just kept pulling us all in and it really felt like we were a unit. As is customary here in Germany, we had the

same teacher throughout elementary school – so the first four years. I am really glad that she was mine.

The second example is a teacher I never actually had as a teacher but who taught physics and math at my school. Though I enjoyed math, physics was never really my thing :-). But what impressed me about him was his devotion to mentoring the group of students that each year would choose him as their “tutor” - a teacher that would help students with any issues in 12th and 13th grades. Usually, these teachers would also have lunch with their groups or maybe invite them to their homes for coffee and cake. But once the

students graduated, the relationship would end. This teacher, however, took a continuing interest in “his kids” - inviting them to spend a weekend with him and his wife at their summer cottage not just while he was their “tutor”, but later, too. I know of one such group where these meetings have continued for 30 years to the present day, now including the spouses and kids of his former students as well.

I’ve had other teachers who were good at teaching, but they did not have that ability or desire to make the light come on in a child’s mind.

Photo Impressions of Rural Schools in India

by Ulrike H.

While every Indian child aged between 6 and 14 years is entitled to free, quality schooling, the reality is rather sobering. Schools in India range from schools without any building to schools with all hi-tech facilities and some even have their own websites. Approximately there are still 287 million illiterate adults in India, that is close to the entire population of the US.

While traveling in India, I was able to visit and photograph several classrooms in rural parts of the state Maharashtra, which I would love to share with you.

Village school in Pattewadi



FEATURE

Village school in Babulwandi



FEATURE

Tuk Tuk bringing pre-schoolers to Missionstation in Ajra



Private, Jesuit managed elementary school in Watangi, the children are from the surrounding dwellings and the small village Watangi.



School bell made from an old truck wheel rim



The Ideal Classroom

by Nancy T.

This drawing is a visual character composite, gleaned from information given by the writers of a children's book I am illustrating. It is a work-in-progress on pause while the husband and wife writer-team have their first child.

Any comments from you are gladly received and would help me retank. Thank you!

Here are some thoughts to inspire you:

"(A tough, unimpeachably moral person who believes there is a right and wrong way to do things, is fair right down the middle and knows her material), is like all those great teachers you've had as a kid. You

hated it when you are being taught by them, but then you thank them the rest of your life"

Chris Koch, Scrubs director

"I thought about the different methods people use to teach...."

Enduring is often the rite of passage you go through to get acceptance.

Ultimately you can deal with anything as long as you have a group of friends around to go through it all with you."

"JD, Scrubs season 5 episode 2



The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

by Chris L.

Let me start by saying that for the vast majority, I would consider the teachers I had good or even great. But as I reminisce on my school years – which are so last century, I know – there are a few that stand out – for better or for worse. I especially remember three:

The Good: This was my English teacher for much

of my middle school years. I had him in English and in P.E. I was a grade A student in English but at best a C- in P.E. So, what was so great about this teacher? To me, it was the fact that he never once tried to grade me lower in English or higher in P.E. than what I deserved based on my work and efforts.

The Bad: Then there was our German teacher, who was also our class teacher. He also taught music – which was very obviously his true passion and at which he was quite good. The music classroom was his domain. In the regular classroom teaching German to a bunch of teenagers, he unraveled. In order to regain control of the class, we had to mark where the table legs and chair legs were and there was hell to be paid if they were moved even the slightest. Our class was really pretty tame but we actually went to the principal and told him that this could not continue. The next year, we had a new German and class teacher.

The Ugly: This was our geography teacher. He wasn't a bad teacher but he had a very nasty way of calling out the kids in class that were weakest and

humiliating them in front of everyone. He also insisted on calling everyone by their last name. All other teachers called us by first name until 9th or 10th grade when they were supposed to call us Miss Lorenzen and Mr. Schmidt – although most asked us if it was OK if they just continued with the first name. Calling someone by their last name without title always felt dehumanizing to me – although I know that not every one of my classmates would agree.

Again, many of my teachers I really liked and I learned a lot from them. And I know that some of the ones I liked were not exactly favorites of my friends. Just goes to show that even as a teacher, you cannot please everyone.

What Would You Do?

by Jenny M.

When Queen Elizabeth celebrated her silver jubilee she visited every corner of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to meet the local people. In the northern English town of Durham it was decided that two children from every school in the county would be chosen to meet her and they would congregate on the green lawn in front of Durham Cathedral. It was hoped that she would greet them before going into the cathedral to attend a ceremony celebrating her reign.

Just after the invitations to attend the event were issued the headmaster of a village school which admitted children from four years to sixteen, walked into his staff room and looked at the puzzled faces of his teachers, "What's the matter?" he asked.

"We have a problem and we don't know how to solve it," said one of the teachers. "We'd love Davey Smith to be one of the children from our school to meet the Queen but how can we choose him without it looking suspicious?"

Davey Smith was a young, gravely ill boy who was suffering from a mysterious illness which his doctors couldn't identify and didn't know how to

treat. The headmaster had already cut through educational red tape and arranged swimming lessons for the child during school time because they helped alleviate his pain and provided him with fun.

"We don't have a problem," said the headmaster. "We ask every child in the school to write his or her name on a piece of paper and put it in a large container. Then we ask a child who can't read to pick out a name."

And that is what they did. One of the youngest children in school was delighted to be chosen to pick the winning names. She pulled out two pieces of paper and handed them to the headmaster. Every child cheered when Davey's name was called out. The second child's name, picked from the container legally and quite by accident, belonged to another child who well deserved a treat and she was cheered by the other children too.

This is a true story though I've changed the little boy's name. How do I know it's true? Because the headmaster was my dad. Like him, under the circumstances I'd have bent the rules too-would you?

ACTIVITY CALENDAR JANUARY 2014

This isn't all! Sometimes special events come up after the *Currents* deadline. In this case we will use **Evites** and our e-Newsletter to notify members. Check your email and our online calendar for the most up-to-date event information.

Stitch'n'Bitch

Tuesday, January 7 and 21 any time after 19:00

Where: Watch the newsletter for location information

Otherwise known as Portable Hobby Night. Come join us for lots of laughs and snacks, a glass of wine, and some crafting.

Hamburger Helper Get-Together

Wednesday January 15, 2014, 19:30

Are you looking for something new and interesting to do in the New Year? Would you like to meet new people and feel good by giving some help to a new AWC Club Member? If you already are a member of the Hamburger Helper team or if you are interested in learning more about being a Hamburger Helper, please join us for this evening get-together. We will share our experiences in assisting new members and talk about what more we can do to serve them best.

Location : Restaurant T.R.U.D.E. Maurienstraße 13-15, <http://www.trude-hh.de>

The Restaurant T.R.U.D.E. is located on the premises of the "Museum für Arbeit", very near to the S-,U- and Bus Station Barmbek.

Cost: What you order

We kindly request you to sign-up by Sunday, January 12th to hhhelpers@awchamburg.org

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Film Reviewers' Group

The film group attends free press showings of films slated to open in Hamburg and writes reviews for *Currents* and other media. Communication is via email or fax. For more information, contact Becky T. at filmgroup@awchamburg.org

HH Helpers

This group helps new AWCH Club Members to live the good life in Hamburg! If you have recently joined our club and need some assistance, you are encouraged to contact Regina D. She will not only give you details about the next New Members' Event but also refer you to the HH Helper in your area and to the groups and committees that might interest you. If you have already been a club member for some time and are interested in assisting new members in your area, please let us know. We are looking for more HH Helpers – especially in the western and southern parts of Hamburg. Contact Regina at hhhelpers@awchamburg.org

Moms and Bumps

We are looking for moms and kids who like to get out and about! If you are interested in getting together, not just for playgroups, but for mother/child-friendly activities, please contact Melissa or Jess at momsbumps@awchamburg.org

[org](http://www.momsbumps.org)

Opera Club

At the monthly meetings of the Opera Club, we are discovering opera one masterwork at a time. We meet several times to get to know a selected opera and then attend a performance together. Beginners are particularly welcome! Meetings are held Friday mornings in Hamburg-Poppenbüttel. Contact Elizabeth R. at opera@awchamburg.org

AWC Cancellation Policy: All events for which participants must reserve in advance and pay at the door must be paid for whether or not the person attends the event. However, if the cancellation is called in before the sign-up deadline, there will be no charge. If a person cancels after the sign-up deadline, she need not pay if a confirmed substitute can be found.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR JANUARY 2014

Please check with activity leaders to confirm meeting times and places. More details on all meetings can be found in the membership section and on our AWC website: <http://www.awchamburg.org>

January

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7 Stitch'n'Bitch	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Hamburger Helper Get- Together	16	17	18
19	20	21 Stitch'n'Bitch	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

The American Women's Club of Hamburg I n v i t a t i o n

Are you looking for something new and interesting to do in the New Year? Would you like to meet new people and feel good by giving some help to a new AWC Club Member?

Come and join us for the next

Hamburger Helper Get-Together

Wednesday, January 15, 2014, 19:30

Restaurant T.R.U.D.E.

Maurienstraße 13-15

<http://www.trude-hh.de>

Cost: What you order

If you are already a Hamburger Helper, like: Allene, Birgit, Chris, Denise, Jess, Katia, Mary Frances, Monika, Regina, Silke, Sylvia, Thelma, Tina and Tracy, or if you are interested in learning more about being a new Helper, please join us for this evening get-together. We will share our experiences in assisting new members and discuss how we can improve our service for our Club.

We kindly request you to sign-up by Sunday, January 12th, to: hhelpers@awchamburg.org

How to get there: The Restaurant T.R.U.D.E. is located on the premises of the "Museum für Arbeit", very near to the S-,U- and Bus Station Barmbek

Bank Account Change

by Brooke V.

We are in the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA) and are obliged to use our IBAN and Swift/BIC with effect from February 1st, 2014.

This replaces the club account number and BLZ (bank sorting code).

Please note that our IBAN is DE75 2069 0500 0000 9117 71

And Swift/BIC is GENODEF1S11

Please use our IBAN and Swift/BIC for transferring money to our account.

For those with online banking, these changes can be made and used immediately.

Congratulations!

by Sylvia T.

We celebrated the wedding of my son Christian and his fiancée MacKenzie in Cody, Wyoming over Labor Day Weekend. MacKenzie, my new daughter in law, grew up in Cody. She works for HFZ Capital Group and Christian for LGT Capital Partners in New York City. Both met being introduced by their friend Charlie at 5 am in Central Park going on an early morning bike ride. They are a great couple and the wedding was lots of fun with a beautiful reception at the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, WY. In addition, my husband Wolfram and I had a great time touring Teton and Yellowstone Park with its gorgeous country side and the "Old Faithful".



Congratulations January Birthday Girls!



Charlotte M.	6	Anja K.	16
Jennifer C.	7	Imke R.	22
Kalee S.	7	Elaine S.	27
Monika S.Y.	10	Kirstan B.	29
Nina T.	10	Venita K.	31
Ashley A.	15		

Event Review: AWCH Thanksgiving

by Cynthia M.

Carrying my mashed potatoes as I rode the subway, the container warmed my fingers as I battled the chilly Hamburg fall weather, and jostled for a seat. This was not starting as the Thanksgiving I am used to in California. However, when I arrived, my senses were delighted by an array of familiar tempting smells, warm smiles, and cheerful chatter. The AWC Thanksgiving welcomed whole families to share good food and good times with friends, and a chance to reflect on what they were thankful for.

From the first sip to the last over-filling bite, to the gossip in the kitchen as the team championed a mountain of dishes, the AWC Thanksgiving is a warm tradition I am thankful to have been welcomed to. It delivered all the favorites that one may expect of a Thanksgiving feast, and left no space for loneliness on my first holiday away from home.

CHRISTINE D.H.



“Hello, my name is Christine D.H. and I moved to Hamburg in August 2013 from Denver, Colorado. I am originally from a small town in central Massachusetts with a population of only 6,000. At the young age of 22, I followed a boy to Colorado and he is now my husband of 16 years and father of our two daughters, Alina (9) and Kyra (7). My husband is a journalism professor at the University of Denver and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to work at the University of Hamburg. I have my master’s degree in Public Health and worked at a local public health agency in Colorado as a data analyst. I still continue to work on a contract basis for the agency. In my spare time I enjoy biking, swimming, traveling, reading and crafts. I love exploring new things and I’m looking forward to making friends to just chat or to visit many of the exciting

places and events that Hamburg has to offer. I also have an incredible sweet tooth so if anyone is interested in trying out the many different cake shops (*Konditorei*) with me, give me a call.”

IMKE R.



Hi there,

My name is Imke R. and I recently joined the AWCH. After 12 years of living in the US (San Anselmo, CA/Miami, FL/North Brunswick, NJ), we returned in December of last year to Hamburg. For us it was a very tough decision to finally leave the US, but after all our decision was mainly based on the fact that we wanted to be closer to immediate family again after all these years.

We have two daughters: Mia Catharina is now 3 ½ years old and is American by birth, Johanna Charlotte was born here in Hamburg earlier this year.

Both my husband and I work for Hapag-Lloyd. Due to the birth of our younger daughter I am currently taking parental leave until spring of 2015. I truly enjoy spending time with my daughters at home - there’s never a dull moment as you can imagine ;)

I am looking forward to meeting the many members, participating in the “Moms & Bumps” events and would like to thank the AWCH for such a warm welcome to the club.

KERSTIN M.B.



I grew up in the Altes Land just outside Hamburg. I moved to Hamburg from Carmel, Indiana. We came over last winter to be closer to family and because it was time for a change.

I graduated from the Universität Hildesheim and have been working as a technical translator for over a decade, currently in Finkenwerder.

We are owned by two cats (brought them with us from the US), who demand lots of attention. As far as hobbies go, I like to work on leathercraft (decorative stuff, games, clothing, and more) and sculpt miniatures.

My guilty pleasure is the phenomenon known in Britain as *Doctor Who*.

The *Blue Box* that is bigger on the inside is not very well known off the Isles, but I really love the time traveling alien.

My husband John is a programmer/software developer. He is still looking for a job in town at the moment.

My favorite foods are probably almost anything seafood and Rote Grütze with chocolate pudding...

I am very fond of the public transportation in Hamburg, and being close to family and old friends is great, but I miss our US friends and family, too. And 24/7 grocery stores...

CELEBRATION OF MEMBERSHIP

This year's Celebration of Membership, held at the Consulate, included several speeches from members (longstanding and new) as well as a lovely (and hilarious) performance by Robin Meloy Goldsby.

The AWCH has played and continues to play varying roles in the lives of its members, as evidenced by the speeches given that evening. Here are a few of those speeches.

Speech by **Brooke V.**

My story with the American Women's Club began several months before I moved to Germany when I learned about this organization from a woman I met at an international research conference. I think her words were something like, "This club has pretty much saved my life." So, with that endorsement, I decided to check out the club online. I was still feeling a little skeptical because it seemed like most of the people I talked to or books I read said what a great adventure it was to live abroad – that is, for a year. Who knows what happens after that? I was starting to slightly question my decision to marry a German and live in Germany for a few years, maybe forever! As I started poking around the website, a few things jumped out at me. First, I thought, "These women look like they're actually having fun!" The pictures of smiling faces at a luncheon and women dressed up in pink for the Race for the Cure events were far from the stereotypical German seriousness that I had heard of, and they reminded me of things I might do with my girlfriends back home. Then, I stumbled upon a few articles and thought maybe I'd take a look expecting to read more about how hard life in Germany is. I couldn't have been more surprised! I was so encouraged by the articles from members about the positive aspects about living in Germany, how they have overcome challenges to make a home away from home, and even reverse culture shock (I had no idea that existed!). Although I hadn't met anyone from the Hamburg AWC at that point, I knew that AWC is something that I wanted to be a part of and was hoping that it would still be around when I came to Hamburg several months later.

Now, a year after moving to Hamburg, finding out that the club is indeed still here and then

becoming a member, AWC has played a big role in my adjustment to life in Germany. Over the past year, I've met many of the lovely members of our club, attended many of the events and have served on the board. I can now say that my expectations and hopes for the club were realized! There have been countless times over the past year when I have been feeling lost or overwhelmed about life in Germany. Being able to ask other club members about things like – do I really need to bring cake on my first day of work? And, how do you measure those huge chunks of butter that they sell at the store? One of my favorite activities has been going to Stitch'n'Bitch, which has been a huge source of encouragement as I'm constantly in awe of the women that moved here before me and before the days of Internet and Skype. However, SnB is also a little dangerous, as I've spent hours afterward watching YouTube videos that the other members recommend and basically having entire meals of cheese and cookies on Tuesday nights. This is what makes AWC so special. Meeting members for coffee or lunch outside of AWC events has made Hamburg feel more like home. I still remember my surprise the first time I was walking downtown and ran into Denise S. Until then, Hamburg had been a city of unfamiliar faces, but just that one familiar face made it feel a little less unfamiliar.

Although I'm still adjusting to life here, I want to say thank you to all of the members that have made my first year in Hamburg better and to all of you who have worked so hard so that there is a club for new members like me. I feel lucky to be part of such an organization of women and hope that I can share my experiences with the AWC with other expats like me.

Speech by **Karen M.**

Dear Members,

I am this year's secretary, 27 years old, and have been a member of the AWCH for exactly a year now. Though I am German (that is, a dual citizen, but in this club I guess I can refer to myself as German among true blooded Americans) I am not home in Hamburg. I do live far away from my family, which is spread all over the world, and my mom lives about five hours away in Bavaria. As I am from the very south of Germany, please do not underestimate the cultural shock I experienced here up north with the Fischköpp, rather distanced and reserved, so different to the hot blooded Franconian fellows and gals I know from home.

Unlike most of you, I am not married, I don't have family here and friends are difficult to find if you work full time and are trying to make your best at your career. Don't get me wrong, I love Hamburg, and everything I am experiencing here.

Every now and then though, I need the comforting words of my sisters, a friend or my mother, in which moments of talking on the phone just won't do.

I feel blessed to have found the AWCH which welcomed me with open arms, so far away from home with so many great, interesting and inspiring women who so often just give me the advice and supporting and comforting words, only a sister, a friend or a mother can give.

Speech by **Ann G.**

The odd thing about my standing up here is this: I am not really a club person. Understatement of the year: no, I have NO knack for organising, inviting, coordinating, soothing, or smoothing. I am the epitome of the anti-clubber.

Yet here I am a member of this club for over 20 years. Why on earth?

Because...it's comforting and supporting to me. Well, let me do a food analogy.

It's November today, and when it gets dark and wet outside a lot of us think back to summer days.

So say it's the end of a stifling hot July day. In my mind's eye I'm tasting those New York State white hot straight off the lakeside grill, served with everything on them. Or maybe a creamy white round bowl of New England clam chowder eaten all hunched up on a park bench. A home-brewed root beer with real sassafras or maybe a root beer float are pretty good too. It's nice to be in a club where so many members understand how these thoughts pop up now and again, maybe even define us culturally. To me, the AWC is allspice cookies and blueberry pie.

And the events---the meetings in other groups I am in, are like wholesome oatmeal cookies. The events of the AWC are like angel cake with glitter. Everyone needs a little glitter.

The AWC is comforting, and it's stimulating.

It is great to meet so many different people, and with no ulterior motives, just curiosity and empathy. And generosity.

Because...it's varied.

... every time the world changes our membership changes too.

In this club I have met people who, like me, remember when Hamburg had no enclosed Einkaufszentren, just markets and shabby ugly open malls, and remember the old Mensa with the Spartakus leaflets on the table.

I have met musicians who performed in the first musicals, and classical musicians who came over when the going was good over here.

MEMBERSHIP

I used to tramp through the Lüneburger Heide in the fall with our hiker, Anke C. That was when people did hikes.

I used to have dinner out with Joetta M.'s group in the Walddörfer area in the early nineties, and trade juicy tidbits from Erika Berger's night talk show about sex; and those in the know would bring in even juicier tidbits from David Letterman or Bob Barker. We were all scandalized. THAT was pre-YouTube. After that I met people who founded Internet startups in the dot-com era (only 10 years ago, seems like another age), and lived through the heartbreak some of them went through in burying the startups and leaving Hamburg in uncertain circumstances.

Long-term residents like me are now following issues like taxes, dual citizenship, health, exploring the unexpected nook and cranny close to home, thinking about forms of living as we get older, and enjoying what we have.

It's time to say thank you:

-- I have learned so much about the tax situation in the workshop the last few years, and tried to pass this on to every American I know.

--On the enjoyment agenda, Ulrike, I love your art column!!!!

--Shelly's book exchanges were always just wonderful, and now Kara has taken it up. It takes a brave woman to open her home to boxes and boxes of books.

--Nancy always has a smile and an open door with her jazz on Friday evenings.

--at one of the dinners I met Thelma, who is now my close neighbor and always up for a coffee or a lunch at Grossneumarkt. We are the subchapter Grossneumarkt New York club, and if you know anyone who qualifies, please let us know.

And now...

I've noticed increasingly ambitious working women here for short periods of time. The vocabulary that describes our lives has changed. Women are a lot less naïve, a lot more savvy than I for one used to be. And, thank heavens, our members have job smarts a lot earlier now.

We are moving increasingly digital with the times. Even I got a smart phone this month, finally. And *Currents* is moving in this way too. We are changing again.

So... here's a thank you to all our diverse members for all of your generosity that keeps this club going and helps us all muddle through the Hamburg November damp!

David Opperman

Certified Public Accountant

Specializing in U.S. income tax preparation for Americans abroad

I am an American CPA located in Hamburg, Germany

Telephone: 040 5500 8170

E Mail: David@DavidOppermanCPA.de

Speech by **Jess M.**

My name is Jess and I have been a member of the American Women's Club of Hamburg for nearly the last four years. As one of 23 Associate Members of our Club, and one of only three Australians, I am here to hopefully represent an international aspect of the AWCH.

My six-year anniversary here in Hamburg came around last week and, in so many ways, my time here seems to have passed in the blink of an eye. But when I think back at my first couple of years, I had it pretty tough. We didn't have any Internet. Facebook was not in our daily lives and, as an Australian, it didn't even occur to me to google something like American Women's Club Hamburg. So my days were long, isolated, and full of homesickness and sightseeing (Besichtigungstermine).

I could never have imagined how debilitating the reality of taking away all forms of language would be. All of a sudden, going to the bank, buying milk or riding the bus, became exhausting mountains to climb.

After about six months, I stumbled across an online forum for English-speaking people living in Germany, and thought I had struck gold! Finally: people who understood my need for baking soda and vanilla, an explanation of the complexities of the recycling system and why drinks always cost more at the Kasse, than on the shelf.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long to realise that some of the most active members of this forum had nothing positive to say about Hamburg, Germany, or even living abroad in general. They spent their days deliberately knocking people down, people like me, who felt vulnerable and desperate for some like-minded conversation. This was not helping me assimilate in any way.

I did make two very good friends there though, one of whom is now back living in Montreal and the other, lucky for me, is not only still here, but was a member of the American Women's Club of Hamburg. Beth G. soon introduced me to her fellow club members and invited me to come along to Stitch'n'Bitch at her place, which I can stand here tonight and say, without a doubt, changed my life.

We underestimate the importance of belonging and being able to relate to one another. When we stay in our hometowns or countries, surrounded by family and friends, who have known us all our lives, it's not something we think about. Those who never pick up

and leave 'home', have no idea what that's like. The very fact that my fellow club members have been through this transition and come out the other side, with happy, successful lives, is why being a member of this club is so important to me. Your first-hand experiences trump any understanding phone call home.

You remind me every day how lucky we are to live here, how beautiful Hamburg is and what a privilege it is, to experience this expat life, even if you're only here temporarily. I needed that more than anything, to realise what I had, instead of constantly thinking about what I was missing back home.

Even though my days in Hamburg are much less sunny and colder than I will probably ever get used to, they're filled with more laughs than tears. I feel more equipped to handle anyone trying to push in front of me in a line and have triumphed over Pfand, HVV and my DHL Packstation. I am an active host and participant of Stitch n Bitch, where I've learnt valuable vocabulary like "Fluffer-nutter", "PB & J" and "FBAR". The inevitable exchange of cultural differences makes living life here that much richer. I think it's ace that I can tell my friends to "throw their bathers in the boot", "put on their sunnies" and "come to a BYO barbie on the beach this arvo" - and they still understand what I mean.

I am one of your Hamburger Helpers and was excited to be on the Board this year, as your Membership Chair, giving me the invaluable experience to witness first hand, just how much time and effort goes into running this Club. This Club has opened my eyes to a life I'd never dreamed of, filled with life-long friendships.

My husband and I fly back to Melbourne most years for Christmas, for a much needed sunny recharge of our batteries. There were years I couldn't wait to go home and dreaded the flight back to Hamburg - and the 27-hour trek didn't help. But as the years go by, I am finding my heart continually in two different cities. Melbourne will always be home...but now I can't wait to fly back to Hamburg either.

Thank you all for making this club a place to call home, here in Hamburg.

How I Finally Learned German

by Allison M.

I struggled with my German classes; learning this language was a big source of frustration and disappointment for me. Contributing to this was the added stress of the high cost of these classes. There were times I couldn't believe I was paying so much money to be so miserable! After suffering through nearly twelve months of intensive language learning classes, I decided that I had had enough. The people who taught me were great, and infinitely patient, but it was just the wrong fit for me.

Although I had learned enough German to get along fairly well here, I knew that without daily exposure to German conversation I would quickly lose my tenuous grip on this language. My solution? Dialog in Deutsch. This award-winning program is run by the Hamburg public library system, manned by volunteers, and attended by a fascinating group of people in all stages of language acquisition. I'm a library junkie, and, thanks to my library card, had already been accessing the extensive collection of language learning materials, sample tests and study guides at the Zentralbibliothek. When I discovered that there were free opportunities to practice my conversational German with other language learners such as myself, I was totally on-board.

What I discovered within these groups was a diverse collection of library volunteers who guided conversations, helped us to find words, and periodically corrected our most atrocious grammar mistakes. The beauty of this program, though, was that this was a discussion group. Free from the stress of learning a specific grammar rule or preparing for an upcoming exam, the group was able to explore a myriad of different topics, and I managed to learn something new each time

I went. The library volunteers often started the conversation with a discussion about different holidays, foods, current events, etc. and the participants took it from there. New, unfamiliar words are simply written on a small chalkboard, and everyone participates. The different language levels, cultures, ages and backgrounds of the varying participants guarantee that we are all exposed to something new with each session.

For me, it was the perfect solution to my dread of language classes. It costs nothing to participate, you don't have to register or have a library card to attend, and you can go to as few or as many sessions as you'd like. These library volunteers and fellow "classmates" turned out to be some of the best teachers I could have hoped for. My German is still far from fluent or perfect, but it's a lot better thanks to them!

Dialog in Deutsch activities are held in every library branch in Hamburg. Some branches have meetings just once or twice per week, others meet nearly every day. I attended Dialog in Deutsch at the Zentralbibliothek because they offered multiple groups each day (several days of the week, morning groups actually meet before the library is even open). If you'd like to learn more about it, click on the link here: http://www.buecherhallen.de/dialog_in_deutsch/ and if you'd like to check it out with a friend, feel free to give me a call!

FAWCO Region 5 Meeting Rocks!

by Tracy M.

After an opening evening of entertainment Friday and an early morning start with FAWCO Board and FAWCO Foundation updated we got down to brass tacks with an introduction to the new Target Project.



Michele Hendrikse Du Bois, President of The FAWCO Foundation, spoke about the philanthropic work FAWCO is doing by explaining how member clubs and individual members can benefit and how they can contribute! Laurie Richardson, FAWCO VP for the Target Project and all Committees, gave an introduction to the new Target Issue: Human Rights for Women. This was followed by a moving presentation by Sybille Fezer, Program Manager, Liberia of medica mondiale e.V., about their work in Liberia assisting women and girls who are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence.

Then the working sessions began. Liz Janson, Munich IWC, facilitated a dynamic session on Communications.



As always Region 5 conferences do have a fun portion and we went on the Rooftop Tour of the Cologne Cathedral and Cologne Walking Tour -a special opportunity to experience this amazing gothic cathedral from a unique perspective.

We were up early again on Sunday and back to work to discuss common issues all clubs face in their daily operations, offering a platform for the exchange of ideas and information. My-Linh, FAWCO President, began by asking each club what their primary challenge is today.

A discussion followed on how clubs' members perceive FAWCO and what can be done to better promote FAWCO among members. My-Linh followed with the topic of External Relations which encompassed PR, advertising and corporate sponsorship.

Michele from The FAWCO Foundation covered the session on fundraising and shared that a "How To" toolkit on corporate sponsorship is in the works. My-Linh took up again addressing the issue of volunteers: how to increase participation and motivate members to help.



Barbara Bühling, of Düsseldorf and FAWCO Youth Program Chair, brought two FAWCO Youth Volunteers to speak about their experience in Dubai.

The day ended with a tribute to Frauke R.H., who after 10 years stepped down as Region 5 Coordinator. Frauke is due all the credit for making Region 5 such a strong and cohesive group through her dynamic leadership. Taking over is Angelika M. of Berlin.

Session notes for all of these topics and Liz's session

on Communications are available on the FAWCO website at: Region 5 Rocks!

Cologne is happy to hand the baton over to Hamburg. The AWC Hamburg will be hosting the Region 5 meeting in our Hansestadt in November

2014.

Please read the articles on other FAWCO topics such as The Target Project and US Issues also found on the following pages.

FAWCO Philanthropy

by Tracy M.



With the introduction of a new Target Project, funds will be raised through various fun and interesting events to support a single project within the field of Human Rights for Women. Many clubs including your very own AWC Hamburg, have submitted applications and the final project will be chosen in March at the 2014 conference in Brussels. The following article from the Target Chair, Johanna Dishongh tells you more. We will be choosing the project to vote for at our Annual General Meeting in January. Let me know what project speaks to you!

FAWCO is pleased to announce the short list of nominees for the Target Project of our Human Rights for Women Target Program:

Women's Microfinance Initiative, East Africa
Submitted by: AWG Paris, Joan Burns

Free The Girls: Fight Human Trafficking, Sub Saharan Africa, South America
Submitted by: AW Surrey, Catherine Marland

Project Dignity: Empowering Liberia's Women
Submitted by: AIWC Cologne, Tricia Saur

Detailed information on each project, including a project summary and a visual presentation, will be available on December 15, 2013 to assist

clubs in decision making. During the voting period, December 15, 2013-February 15, 2014, each FAWCO Member Club will be entitled to cast one vote to select the Target Project. The winning project will be announced at the Interim Conference in Brussels, March 15, 2014.

In total, the Selection Committee reviewed twelve applications, all impressive projects. We acknowledge the effort involved with completing the Target Project Application and would like to recognize all those who submitted applications:

Kathmandu Rehabilitation Center - AWC Perth, Kath Balfour

Empowering Children - AWG Paris, Tamara Chant

International Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Safety Net - FAUSA, Paula Lucas

Abolish Kamalari Tradition - AWC Hamburg, Tracy Moede

Bakery on Wheels - AILO Florence, Tina Carrari

Empowering Women = Progress and Development - AAWE Paris, Bernice Dubois

Promoting Freedom from Sexual Violence for Women in Morocco -

AIWC Casablanca, Cynthia Smith-Ayed

Restoring Smiles Through Dance - AAWE Paris, Corinne Ott

Assilassimé Solidarité - ANC Rotterdam, Mary Adams

Thank you all for your interest in this important Target Program.





Happy Birthday to Us!

By Becky T.

The AWC Hamburg is 57 years old this month. Actually we already existed in 1931, and joined FAWCO in 1935. We even hosted the eighth FAWCO conference in 1938. During the war years the club was disbanded to return officially in January 1956 as the American Women's Luncheon Club. Shortly afterwards it became The American Women's Club of Hamburg. Originally the "newsletter" was a one-page invitation to the monthly luncheon written by someone's husband's secretary, printed and mailed from his office. The first dues were DM 5 in 1973 to cover the costs of this mailing. In 1979 dues were raised to DM 35, after an end-of-year review showed a deficit of DM 144.90. Dues were raised to DM 65 in 1984, to DM 70 in 1987, and to DM 100 in 1992. The one-page invitation began to expand in 1976 to include current events in Hamburg, recipes, places to visit, as well as survival information. Later, this provided the groundwork for publication of *Hamburg in Your Pocket* and then *Bloom Where you are Planted*. In 1985 we became a registered club (eingetragener Verein or e.V.).

Now, many years later, we are still changing, expanding, analyzing, and working for the betterment of the club. Soon we will have an electronic issue of *Currents*; dues will be changed again –this time in the opposite direction, i.e.,

lower rather than higher.

In Germany there are six more American Women's Clubs (although Augsburg and Munich are actually international) in FAWCO – our sister clubs, so to speak. What about them?

Augsburg was founded in 2010 and has 35 members. Dues are € 50. Their newsletter is published only electronically.

Berlin was founded in 1931, disbanded during the war and came back in 1994. It has 15 members. Dues are € 50, with special rates for senior citizens. They correspond electronically.

Cologne was founded in 1961, and has 260 members with dues at € 60. They publish an electronic newsletter, but print one six times a year as well.

Düsseldorf, founded in 1959, has 180 members, € 65 dues, and an electronic newsletter, as well as a printed one which comes out four times a year.

Munich came into existence in 1980, has 240 members, dues at € 50, and only an electronic newsletter.

The Taunus (aka Frankfurt) was founded in 1971. It is the largest with 400 members, most expensive at € 75 and has only an electronic newsletter.

GOOD NEWS! What FAWCO has been able to do for US citizens living overseas.

From the FAWCO U.S. Liaison, Lucy Laederich (AAWE Paris)

FATCA

For most of us in FAWCO today, Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) has come to symbolize invasive reporting on private financial information related to our legitimate accounts in the countries where we live and work (and often, those of our non-American spouses). However, there has been some good news: the original \$50,000-aggregate threshold above which individuals are required to submit IRS Form 8938 with their tax declaration has been raised to \$200,000; the deadline for FATCA reporting has been pushed back, several times; Treasury

has created an extremely complete and helpful "topic index" for overseas filers (<http://taxmap.ntis.gov/taxmap/internationalindex.htm>); foreign financial institutions are now obliged to report extensively only on "high-value" or "high-risk" accounts. We must also remember that FATCA is a fact: it has been signed into law and both EU and OECD countries are exploring ways to implement their own versions.

Following the first "joint statement" signed in late 2012 between the United States and France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, seven countries (Denmark, Germany,

MEMBERSHIP

Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Spain and the UK) have signed “Model 1” InterGovernmental Agreements, and two (Japan and Switzerland) have signed “Model 2” GAs.

Voting

Four more states (Kentucky, Missouri, Montana and Pennsylvania) enacted the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA) in 2013, bringing the current total to 13 in addition to DC. States are free not to adopt the Act in its entirety, so that some states have decided, like Utah, not to extend voting eligibility to U.S. citizens who reach voting age without ever having lived in the United States. UMOVA’s most important benefits are to extend UOCAVA protections to state and local elections, as well as special and run-off federal elections. And one more state

(California) has joined the growing list of those that allow young Americans who have not yet established residency in the U.S. to vote at the address of their eligible parent(s).

... and more good news

FAWCO partner Overseas Vote Foundation will once again provide us with a dedicated FAWCO-OVF voter registration and ballot request website for truly “one-stop shopping” for visitors to the FAWCO website (including the election official directory for needed addresses and phone numbers, state-specific deadlines and other voting information). January 2 is the time to start the new year off right on the FAWCO home page (you must request your ballot in every calendar year!), clicking on the FAWCO-OVF button.

Tips from Members

Our hall *Einbauschränk* (built-in closet)—2 x 3 meter (approximately 6.6 x 9.9 feet) with two sliding doors—looks like the space was waiting for it. Komandor’s showroom exhibits the many exterior finishing options available, plus ideas for interior layouts. Consultants work with you: using computer software you can visualize exterior choices, and receive help customizing interior shelving and drawers. I designed our closets interior space division to meet our specific needs. It’s been a while since we’ve been so impressed by hand workers: professional, clean, and friendly. Friends that used Komandor are planning more built-ins. German and Polish spoken. Komandor-Nord, Mundsburger Damm 56, Uhlenhorst: www.komandor-nord.de – *Marinell H.*

An addition to Kara Wahn’s entertaining, and informative article, “Surviving Thanksgiving Chaos”, Nov./Dec. 2013, I’d like to include a tip regarding purchasing a turkey. If your grocery has a fresh meat section, check out whether you can order a fresh or frozen turkey in advance. We have been doing this for years at our local (now an *EDEKA*) grocery store. – *Marinell H.*

Cramer *Moebel* (furniture) made our custom shelving. Basically we went in, told the consultant what we wanted, looked at some catalogs of modular offerings, and gave them measurements. They built it, delivered it, and assembled it. And when we moved, they had a service that we could call; their techs disassembled and reassembled it in our new place. Although it wasn’t cheap, it’s the best quality furniture I’ve ever had. We also got our grey sleeper sofa (*Schlafsofa*) from them. Cramer *Moebel*, with three Hamburg stores on Kieler Straße, Osterstraße, and in the city at Gertrudenkirchhof: <http://www.cramer-moebel.de/cgi-bin/adframe/cramergruppe/standorte/index.html> – *Cat C.*

There’s a real honest-to-goodness butcher’s shop (*Metzgerei*) in Altona Alt. The beef, lamb, and chicken are delivered fresh from Schleswig-Holstein. Displayed on white paper in an L-shaped cooler, the butchers will cut larger pieces to your order, and trim, de-bone, etc. while you watch. Special cuts may be ordered in advance. Convenience foods, dry goods, and canned items line the walls of the spotless shop. Helpful, friendly service; reasonable prices. We won’t buy beef or lamb anywhere else. Dogutürk, Große Bergstraße 187 (across from Netto): 040 38907776 – *Marinell H.*

Bagel Fundraiser a Success!

by Tracy M.

Once again the AWC sold American style bagels. These doughy treats are products of the American Bagel Company and are freshly baked on a daily basis according to original American recipes. Randy Adams and Mathias Letsch, the owners and bakers, lay the utmost stress on highest quality standards with regard to the production of their bagels, cakes and pastries. The bagels are from all natural ingredients with no preservatives and can be frozen for future use. They are as close to tasting like any bagel I have ever eaten in the United States and so yummy!

The fundraiser will benefit the AWC Heart Pillow project for breast cancer patients. We use the proceeds to purchase the supplies needed make the pillows. In a group project we cut, sew, stuff and close stitch heart pillows for breast cancer patients. They tuck the heart-shaped pillows under their arm to help relieve pain associated with their surgeries.

In the past we have also worked with COCOMAT in Blankenese, a natural bedding and

furniture maker, and have been able to donate over 150 heart pillows to the Mammazentrum in the Jerusalem Krankenhaus in Eimsbüttel.

Women helping women is our motto and we feel a certain special satisfaction knowing we are making a difference in someone's life. Please contact Beth G. or Tracy M. if you would like to be involved in this fun and rewarding project.



Kaffeetrinken/ Coffee Get-Together

by Karen M.

Twelve members met in the super cozy atmosphere of a turn of the century coffeehouse Die Kafferösterei in the Mönckebergstraße. We even had two brand new members attend their first event! The many different yummy cakes were the perfect addition to the great coffee which is freshly brewed at this special coffeehouse. It's a great venue to chat and get to know each other. Thanks Tina, for yet another great event!

Opera Club!

by Elizabeth R.

Opera Club finished up its sixth season in early November with an outing to hear and see the opera *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini. We had a wonderful evening and experienced a sumptuous production that was thrilling, stirring, and completely captivating. The Opera Club members who were regrettably not able to attend the performance still did not miss out on the performance. They were able to attend a "second-chance" viewing of a streamed Metropolitan Opera *Tosca* video, thanks to gracious hostess Mary W.

One of Puccini's most notable musical

contemporaries in the German-speaking world was Richard Strauss. Strauss is very well known for his Lieder, his magnificent tone poems (such as *Also sprach Zarathustra*), as well as for his orchestral works. Beyond this, he also wrote a number of sublime operas. This clearly makes Strauss the perfect focus for our new winter/spring Opera Club season.

The Hamburg Staatsoper will be presenting the Strauss opera *Arabella* in June in a co-production with the Vienna State Opera, and we will be there to see it. In the meantime, we will meet once a

month to get to know more about Strauss and his music. We will consider five of his most significant operas in turn, with a special focus, of course, on *Arabella*.

Our meetings take place on Friday mornings in Hamburg-Poppenbüttel at Elizabeth R.'s home.

The first meeting for Richard Strauss and *Arabella* is planned for Friday, February 7 starting at 10:00.

Contact Elizabeth R. at opera@awchamburg.org for more information.



Relatively speaking, The English Theatre's Latest Play is a Hoot Relatively Speaking by Alan Ayckbourn, Clifford Dean directs

by Marinell H.

The phone rings Greg awake—Ginny's already up. And apparently clueless about the strange phone calls, and the numerous bouquets and gifts cropping up in the flat. Ginny's justifications ring hollow, but she's pressed to catch a train to visit her parents—alone—outside London. Greg is doubly hurt when Ginny flatly refuses his accompanying her. Her flimsy rationalization is her parents' penchant for routine, and that they've only known one another a month. Once she has left, but for the scribbled address Greg finds, he would not know where to find Ginny; he dashes out in pursuit.

Meanwhile, Ginny's boss Phillip and wife Shelia breakfast, somewhat testily, in their sunny garden. Where Greg turns up, unknown, i.e. unexpected, yet resolute on asking Ginny's parents for her hand in marriage. Unbeknownst to Greg, and Shelia, Ginny's enigmatic trip is to break off her affair with Phillip. Ever polite, Shelia humors Greg; Phillip misconstrues that it is Shelia Greg wants to marry. Ginny's arrival further complicates the situation—let the games begin.

In this, **Alan Ayckbourn's** seventh play—he's written 77—we're treated to uproarious comedy. Ageless and still considered one of Ayckbourn's best-crafted plays, the London cast excels. Dale Monie captures Greg's naiveté and determination, whereas **Charlotte Croft's** cagey Ginny has yet to realize honesty is the better policy. **Jan Hirst's** Shelia—

trusting but no fool, and **James Walmsley's** Philip—a randy old rascal caught unawares, delivery and timing is spot-on. As the quips fly, and under **Clifford Dean's** marvelously measured direction, the actors' physical and verbal expressive interaction is excellent. *Relatively Speaking* adds sunny laughter and fun to the gray wintry days, while focusing on relationship themes begging for contemplation.



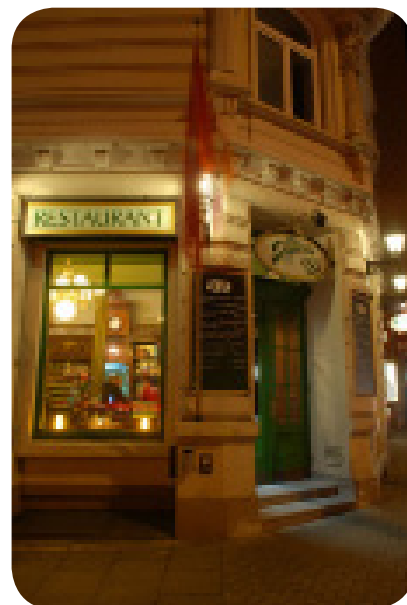
Relatively Speaking runs until February 8, 2014. Evening and matinee performances; tickets available at the theatre or online: www.englishtheatre.de. The English Theatre of Hamburg, Lerchenfeld 14, 22081 Hamburg, Tel: 040-227 70 89; U-Bahn Mundsburg.

Ready for Some Different Vittles?

by Marinell H.

Hang the “Kitchen’s closed” sign! Satiated with scrumptious turkey, goose, carp and wurst, pumpkin pie, mince tarts and plum pudding? Ready to go out to eat instead? Having repeatedly dined at these Altona restaurants, where vittles are tasty and reasonably priced, I find it easy to recommend them.

Proudly perched on the corner of Holstenplatz, Anno 1905 was established to accommodate the then-hotel patrons. Many conducted business, or worked, at the Holsten Brauerei (brewery) catty-corner to the hotel. Kindling nostalgia for bygone days, the interior is the real McCoy—right down to the mammoth cash register! Serving “new-German” fresh and delicious food; choose from fish, various meats, vegetables, homemade soups, desserts, and assorted beverages. There are three menus (*Karten*): Saisonkarte—seasonal; Mittagskarte—lunch, changing weekly; and Speisekarte—main menu, downloadable from their website, also in English. My American relatives were knocked-for-six when we took them there—the mouthwatering food and the atmosphere. As well as the many friends we’ve dined with there. Did I mention the owner and some staff speak English? An added uniqueness is that not many of these originals are still present in Hamburg. Anno 1905, Holstenplatz 17: S-Bahn Holstenstraße. Website: www.anno1905.de/ – I’d recommend reservations weekend evenings.



If you’re hankering for spicy, try south-of-the-border Mexican that’ll make your taste buds blush. Fellow club member Cat put us on to *El Pikosito*—luckily we live within walking distance. The guacamole with taco chips alone is worth going for, and a margarita tastes like it should—tart rather than sweet. The wide-ranging menu includes: a variety of small dishes, tacos, burritos, enchiladas, mixed platters—meat and vegetarian—(the Enmoladas con Pollo in a chili-chocolate sauce is one of my favorites), salads, desserts and a comprehensive drink list. Everything we’ve tried is good! Round off your meal by choosing tequila from their collection that covers almost three menu pages—don’t be too timid to ask for advice. English, German, and Spanish are spoken.

El Pikosito

MEXIKANISCHES RESTAURANT

El Pikosito, Behnstrasse 23: S-Bahn Königstraße. Website: www.el-pikosito.de/?lang=en –Reservations at the weekend are recommended.

If it’s family style you’re after, with every conceivable choice of food to choose from, then *Sait Köz* is spot-on. A restaurant and a grill combined, food is grilled, pan fried, and baked. I confess we spend a lot of time going through the menu because everything looks so good, and has tasted as good as it looked! Besides breakfast and children selections, there are soups, salads, vegetarian dishes, and mixed platters. Meat or lamb, chicken, fish, and turkey prepared as fillings for pastry (*Teigschiffchen*), casseroles, Döners, and pizzas are available. We especially like going when the weather’s warm and sit in the back garden. German and Turkish are spoken. English? Don’t know. *Sait Köz* – Altona, Große Bergstraße 165: Bahnhof Altona. Website: www.sait-köz.de/



Art in the City

by Ulrike H.

Haus der Photographie, Deichtorhallen

GUY BOURDIN RETROSPECTIVE

through January 26, 2014

The legendary photographer Guy Bourdin (1928–1991), whose career spanned more than forty years, worked for the world's leading fashion houses and magazines. With the eye of a painter, Guy Bourdin created images that contained fascinating stories, compositions, both in B&W and in color. This most comprehensive exhibition to date is both an overview of the essential components of Guy Bourdin's oeuvre and an introduction to unveiling works from his personal archives which have never been seen before. This is the first time that both his works as a painter and his notes on films will be shown at an exhibition. B&W shots dating from the 1950s are also included, showing portraits of artists and views of the city of Paris as well as Polaroids, sketches and texts. The exhibition examines Guy Bourdin's oeuvre, but moreover, it provides insight into the complex working processes of the photographer's mind and aims to establish his status as a visionary image-maker.



Pentax-Kalender, 1981. Asahi Optical Company Limited. Tokyo, Japan.
© Estate of Guy Bourdin (WITH HEART)

Hamburger Kunsthalle

Two exceptional women artists at the Galerie der Gegenwart through March 2, 2014

Gego

Line as Object



*Gego during installation of Reticulárea. Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas
1969 Photo: Juan Santana © Fundación Gego*

Gertrud Goldschmidt (Hamburg, 1912–Caracas, 1994), widely known as Gego, was one of the most important women artists in Latin America. Born and brought up in Hamburg, she originally trained as an architect in Stuttgart. Gego was of Jewish origin and emigrated in 1939 to Venezuela, where she began working as an artist and also as a university teacher. Her delicate, rhizomatically structured objects made of metal and wire challenged the traditional definition of sculpture as an enclosed mass and volume. Gego also pursued transparency and lightness in her numerous works on paper, where she employed lines as objects. Her groundbreaking and experimental approach to sculpture and 'drawing in space' had a significant influence on subsequent generations of artists in Latin America, leaving its mark on contemporary art far beyond Venezuela. In Europe, on the other hand, Gego's work is much less well known. This exhibition – the first of its kind in Germany – is therefore a tremendous opportunity to experience her unique work at first hand.

American Women's Club of Hamburg e.V.

Eva Hesse**One More than One**

Eva Hesse (Hamburg, 1936–New York, 1970) was one of the foremost women artists of the 20th century. In the mid-1960s she began experimenting with new materials that had never before been used to produce art objects; these included polyester, fiberglass and latex. Hesse's highly distinctive sculptures, which are now included in the collections of major international museums, combine multiple – and also opposing – qualities such as hard and soft, fragile and substantial, abstract and evocative. While their seriality and reduction show the influence of the emerging Minimal Art movement, her sculptures and drawings are uniquely charged with sensuous materiality and physicality. EVA HESSE. One More than One is the first solo exhibition of the artist's work in her native city, which she was forced to leave in 1938.

Bucerius Kunstforum**Dionysus****Intoxication and Ecstasy**

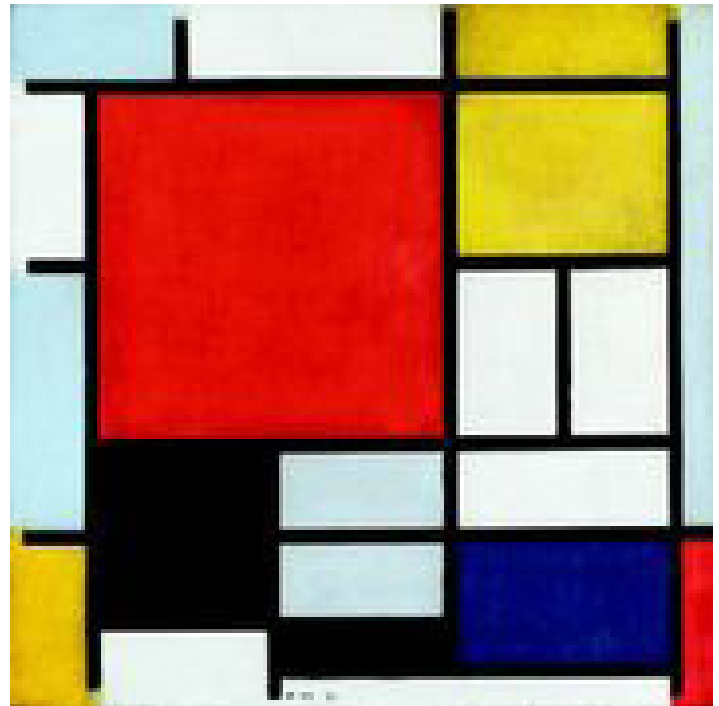
Through January 12, 2014

Dionysus remains the most fascinating of all the Greek and Roman gods. His allure is based on the mystery and wildness found in the Dionysian ritual as well as the way it liberates from social constraints. Since classical times, the god of joy, intoxication and fertility has been depicted in victory processions with his ecstatic retinue of dancing satyrs and maenads. Worshiped in religious mystery cults by the Greeks and the Romans, who knew him as Bacchus, Dionysus symbolized the triumph of life in Renaissance art. For Baroque painters, he represented the joy of life; he embodied a natural sensuousness and he and his bride Ariadne are among the most frequently depicted lovers in paintings. In works from classical antiquity to the 20th century, the exhibition draws attention to the lively, boisterous world of Dionysus.

Mondrian. Color

Through May 11, 2014

In the landscapes he created shortly after 1900, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) painted the rays of the sun and the glow of the moon in order to make a new statement about color. He was no longer interested in capturing fleeting external reality in the impressionist sense; instead his goal was to capture spirituality and focus on the fundamental nature of painting.



Piet Mondrian (1872-1944): Komposition mit großer roter Fläche, Gelb Schwarz, Grau und Blau, 1921, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag © 2013 Mondrian / Holtzman Trust c/o HCR International USA

Museum der Arbeit**Wanderarbeiter**

Through March 2, 2014

No one knows the exact number – in China alone about 200 million people are migrating in search of labor from the country into the big cities like Shanghai, Hongkong or Shenzhen. But also in other countries people leave their native homes for months or years to earn a living away from home or to escape from the narrowness and lack of prospects.

The exhibit “Migrant Workers” turns to this global phenomenon of the “new working class”. Nine photographic positions - Mauricio Bustamante,

Henning Christoph, Andrea Diefenbach, Brigitte Kraemer, Ingar Krauss, Wolfgang Müller, Oliver Tjaden, Ralf Tooten and H. R. Uthoff – present different forms of migratory labor.



Xu Fang, Trash Recycler, © Wolfgang Mueller, 2012

Hamburg Museum

„Geht doch!“
Inklusion erfahren. Eine Erlebnis-Ausstellung

Through April 21, 2014

No matter if old or young, man or woman, with or without disability – Inclusion (disability rights) means to be with the crowd. Although disability rights have historically existed as a relatively cohesive movement, the movement centered around inclusion has only recently begun to take shape and to position itself in the eye of the general public.

On the basis of poetic staging, interactions and media installations the visitor dives into social environments of people with and without handicap and experiences playfully their everyday life. For example: “inclusion” tabletop soccer in a bar or shopping from a wheel chair driver’s point of view. The visitor gets right in the middle of the life of different people, gets to know them, proceeds interactively in her situation and becomes sensitive for different living conditions. There is also room for humor: With the push of a button a man in a wheel chair appears on a screen and says: “My handicap is that I cannot yodel.” At the end you will ask yourself, where does a handicap actually begin? With a psychological or physical handicap? As a wearer of glasses? As a leftie? What is my handicap?

Museum für Kunst + Gewerbe

Kleine Welten

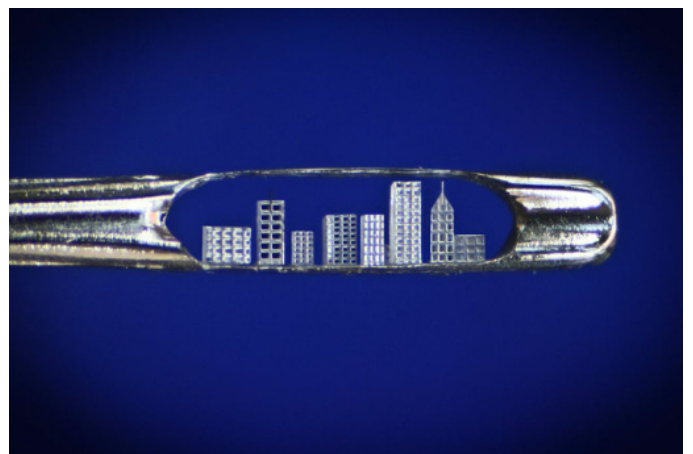
Micro Sculptures by Willard Wigan

Through March 16, 2014

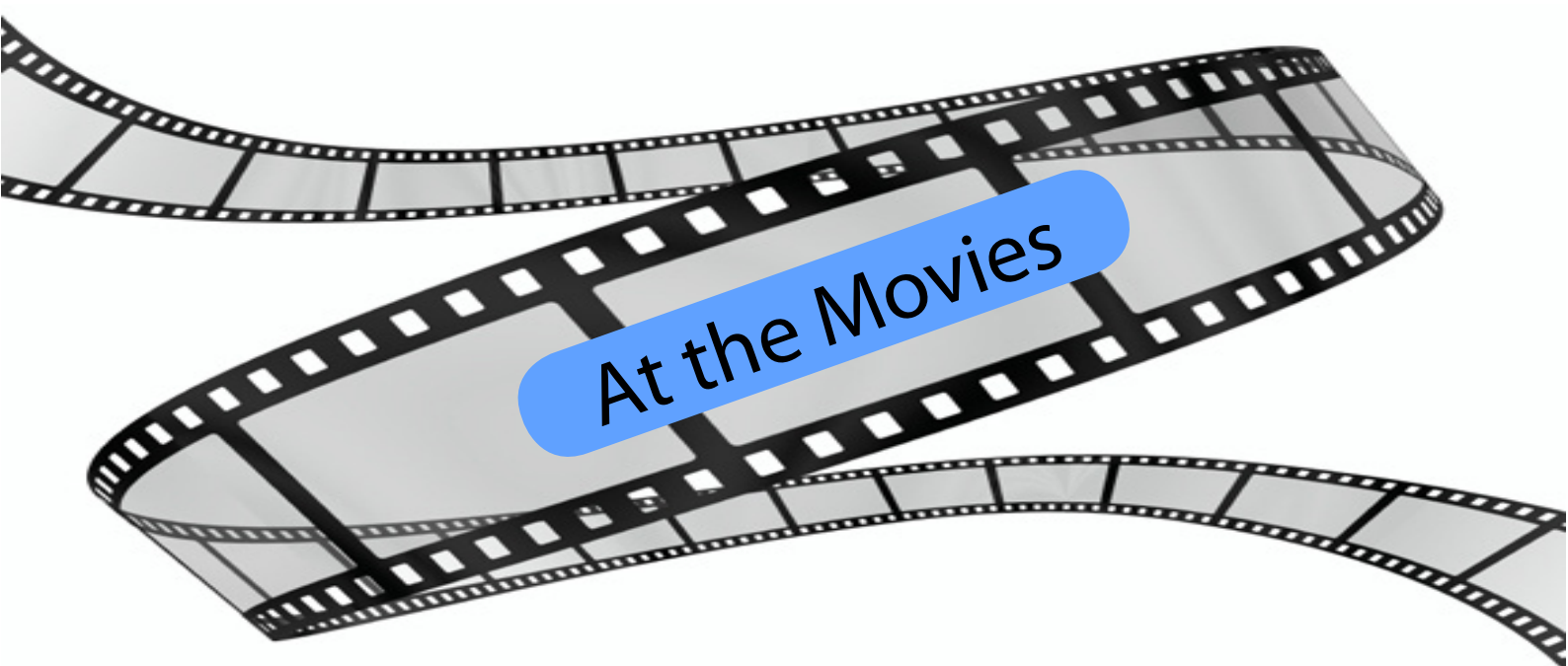
The sculptures by British artist Willard Wigan are so minute that one could easily inhale them. The skyscrapers, trees and fairy tale scenes are less than 0,005 millimeters. “It began when I was five years old,” says Willard. “I started making houses for ants because I thought they needed somewhere to live. Then I made them shoes and hats. It was a fantasy world I escaped to. That’s how my career as a micro-sculptor began.” Each piece commonly sits within the eye of a needle, or on a pinhead. The personal sacrifices involved in creating such wondrous, yet scarcely believable pieces are inconceivable to most. Willard enters a meditative state in which his heartbeat is slowed, allowing him to reduce hand tremors and sculpt between pulse beats.

Willard Wigan’s sculptures are all but invisible to the naked eye and come with their own microscope.

Prince Charles, Mike Tyson and the Marquis of Bath own microscopic sculptures made by Mr. Wigan, which can cost more than \$40,000 a piece. A set of 72 such works was acquired by former British tennis player David Lloyd and was insured for £11 million, or about \$17 million, in 2007.



Willard Wigan, Skyline, © Willard Wigan



At the Movies



compiled by Becky T.

MOVIE RATING SYSTEM

- ***** Excellent flick! Don't miss it!
- **** Good movie, worth going to
- *** Not a bad way to spend a few hours
- ** OK, but read the review to understand my reservations
- * Bad, but we've got to give them credit for making a movie!

Once Upon A Forest *****

(Das Geheimnis der Bäume)
(Il était une forêt)

Starts January 2

French botanist Francis Hallé had the idea for this educational documentary by **Luc Jacquet**, creator of *March of the Penguins*. Beautifully filmed on location in Peru and Gabon (Africa) and aided by animation, it takes us through the 700-year evolution of the tropical rainforest.

Hallé's narration accompanies this fascinating and entertaining look at the intricate interaction and communication among plants, and between plants and animals. His care and concern for this unique but sadly diminishing environment is evident, his excitement infectious. Though beautiful, the classical sound track is superfluous, even distracting where just the sounds of nature would have been perfect. The film answers as many questions as it poses, tempting the viewer to find out more about the subject. It is equally a powerful educational tool as it is an effective call to protect this unique environment. (*Carola A.*)

StreetDance All Stars *****

(Streetdance Kids Gemeinsam sind wir Stars)

Starts January 2

Gina (**Ashley Jensen**) runs a youth center called The Garage where kids can hang out and be themselves, a chance to forget outside pressures of school and ambitious parents. Jaden (**Akai Osei-Mansfield**) overhears Gina in a dispute with a city official who announces that the youth center will be razed to make room for a parking lot. Jaden has a wild idea for preserving the youth center: organize a talent show and sell tickets. One of the talents could be street dancing, except that Jaden is the only actual street dancer, and he has to keep that a secret because his parents blame his poor grades on this hobby, which might prevent his acceptance in a fancy boys' school. (This is England where kids wear school uniforms.) Ethan (**Theo Stevenson**) didn't realize he had an interest in street dancing, until he fell for Lucy, a member of another street dance group. In order to impress her, he unites with Jaden and together they recruit four more unlikely

candidates and begin to practice. Naturally we are not surprised when, in spite of all obstacles, the talent show is a huge success, especially the six members of All Stars.



Many elements make this an excellent film for the whole family, 10 years and older. Although the actors are around 14 years old, they appear younger or as Gina says to Jaden, “You’re eight at the most. Well, okay, maybe eight and a half.” There are conflicts with an unbending city bureaucrat, with Jaden’s parents who only want the best for their son, with Ethan’s father, an immature, irresponsible man with an unrealistic idea of himself, who has left his wife and two children. The four new members of the dance group could be symbolic of personalities everywhere: an overweight boy, high society twin ballroom dancers, and a tomboy judo expert. It’s all worth every minute just to see Akai and Theo as Jaden and Ethan – both excellent actors. This is Ethan’s first Street Dance appearance, while Jaden appeared in both previous films (*StreetDance 3D*, 2010 and *StreetDance 2*, 2012), but this time he has a leading role. There are two artistic dream sequences; one represents Jaden taking his exams, dreaming his way through questions for which he has no answers. Besides the talented acting and dancing, there is the wonderful music – at least 35 fun songs, which will have you out into the aisles, even if you aren’t a dancer. (*Becky T.*)

Bethlehem * * * * *

Starts: January 9

The conflict between Israel and Palestine forms the backdrop of this gripping political thriller, which depicts the vicious rivalry between the Israeli secret service and rebel Palestinian groups such as Hamas and the el-Aqsa-brigade. But it also shows the

terrible tensions generated by competing loyalties among families and individuals on both sides. Set in Bethlehem, a city governed by Palestinian officials, the film revolves around the attractions and uncertainties of a relationship between an Israeli secret service agent and a young Palestinian informant he has coerced into duty. The agent Razi, portrayed by **Tsahi Halevi**, is strong, stunningly handsome, and kindly. He advises his young informant in personal matters, protects him and cares for him when he is injured, and exploits him for information at the same time. The boy Sanfur, on the other hand, convincingly played by **Schadi Mar’i**, longs to be respected like his older rebel brother Ibrahim but also desperately needs the attention of a caring father figure. He agrees to become an informant in order to get his real father out of prison and then becomes increasingly attached to Razi, whom he admires but does not completely trust. This is the decisive question: How can you develop trust when you play both sides as Razi and Sanfur do? When each of the two men is cornered and existentially threatened by his own people, the consequences are fatal. If you like political thrillers, this is a must to see. I was on edge throughout the whole film. Israel submitted it for an Oscar in 2014 in the best foreign language film category. Directed by **Yuval Adler** (*Pat N.*)



12 Years a Slave * * * * *

Starts January 16

Solomon Northup (**Chiwetel Ejiofor**) is a free black man living in Saratoga, New York, in 1841. When he is offered a job for two weeks playing fiddle with a travelling performing group, he accepts, not knowing that this would end in his abduction and sale into slavery. For the next twelve years, he suffers immense cruelty and violence until

he unexpectedly meets a Canadian abolitionist (**Brad Pitt**) who would change his life forever.



12 Years a Slave is groundbreaking, amazingly well-acted, shockingly brutal, and should have been made years ago. It is astounding that it has taken so long for a slave memoir, told from the point of view of the slave himself, to be translated to the screen. Indeed it is telling that in order for this film to be made, it had to be undertaken by a British director with largely British leads. There is nothing overtly new here. The unjustness and cruelty of the actions of slave owners and overseers against slaves is something every school child learns about. However to see it in film is what makes it concrete, what makes it real, and that is something that many people in America, and indeed the world, need to have cemented into their minds. Perhaps that is why it has taken so long for such a film to be made, for it is difficult to come face to face with the uncomfortable truths of our own past. Instead it is easier to gloss over the truth, but a film such as *12 Years a Slave* doesn't allow for such things. It is a tough pill to swallow, but one that we must take if we are ever to truly understand the past and make strides in future society.

While there has been much talk about **Michael Fassbender's** portrayal of the cruel slave-owner Epps, the real breakout performance is **Chiwetel Ejiofor** as Solomon. His quiet and subtle performance allows the humanity of his character to ring out. He is not some one-dimensional good person, but rather a complex human being who has to make extreme sacrifices of his dignity in order to survive. This is not to say that **Michael Fassbender** was not excellent, but to downplay the importance of Ejiofor (and indeed, **Lupita Nyong'o's** performance of the broken woman Patsey) would be to ignore the aspects of the film

that made it so strong. Without their humanism, Fassbender's performance would fall flat. His performance is entirely dependent on the abilities of Ejiofor and Nyong'o to make you care. This multidimensionality of the story and of its characters is what makes *12 Years a Slave* a truly powerful film. Without this strength, the film would have struggled under the weight of the subject matter, but the characters drive the viewer to continue watching, even as sickening events unfold.

There is no doubt about it; this film is difficult and terrible to watch. However, like *Schindler's List* (1993) and *The Killing Fields* (1984) before it, there is an importance to putting such stories into the medium of film. It makes it so the story can no longer be ignored and allows for an emotional connection to the terrible truths of history. This is a film that every adult should watch, and maybe it will allow for a greater discourse and more important films on the topic to be made. Directed by **Steve McQueen**. (*Rose F.*)



A Touch of Sin ***

Starts January 16

Four botched lives in modern China end in fiascos. Dahai works in a mine where the miners receive practically nothing, while proceeds land in the private hands of the local bureaucrats, one of whom drives a Maserati and is shopping for a private plane. Zhou San sends money home to keep his wife and small child in comfort. He is proud that he has increased his payments, although does not reveal that they derive from thievery. During a home visit he realizes that he has grown impossibly distant from the family. Then there is Xio Yu who meets her lover in a highway rest stop and begs him

finally to leave his wife. She faces reality, accepts a job in a sauna and resists the advances of a rich customer. Xiao Hui is a young man, almost still a boy, who owes money and works as a waiter in a night club; this job fails and no one can guide him to any kind of auspicious future so that he solves the problem in his own way. All four solutions are violent.



Director **Jia Zhangke** said in a recent interview, “This film concerns four deaths, which actually happened in China over the last few years: three murders and one suicide. The Chinese population is well informed about the details, which happened in Shanxi, Chongqing, Hubei, and Guangdong – a huge area which reaches from north to south. I wanted to adapt these news reports into an all encompassing portrait of life in modern China.”

He also said that he tried to incorporate the idea of Wuxia, or martial arts films; the title purposely resembles *A Touch of Zen*, a famous kung fu film by King Hu in 1971. I am amazed that this film could ever show in China, a country which still tries to project an image of a fair (if not always good) life for all. That is not so. Jia Zhangke goes on to say that since the era of Mao, the rate of robbery has increased 3000-fold and “China is the most capitalistic country in the world.” The film showed in all the major world film festivals: London, New York, Vancouver, Abu Dhabi, Toronto, Munich, etc. It won best screenplay at the 2103 Cannes Film Festival. (*Becky T.*)

Disconnect * * * *

Starts January 30

Disconnect deals with a number of common issues in our society today that result from the negative side of communication technology. The film by director Henry Alex Rubin follows three stories that

focus on a world where virtual communication is king and face to face communication is becoming a lost skill.

In one storyline, Nina (**Andrea Riseborough**) is an ambitious TV reporter doing a story on Kyle (**Max Thieriot**), an underage chat room stripper. Nina’s quest for the story results in dramatic repercussions for the young man. Meanwhile, a young couple (**Paula Patton / Alexander Skarsgård**) struggle with the loss of their baby son by going online to find solace in chat rooms and gambling sites. Their online sharing of detailed and personal information leads them to become victims of identity theft. After the police are unable to assist them in finding the culprit they turn to a specialised private investigator (**Frank Grillo**) to track down and stop the identity thief. Unbeknownst to the private investigator his own son is involved in another form of online crime, cyber bullying. The bullies hone in on Adam (**Jonah Bobo**) an awkward kid who can not connect with the kids at school but does find it easy to connect with ‘Jessica’, a bogus female persona made up by the bullies for sport. The game spirals out of control when this vulnerable boy’s naked photo is sent to the entire school. Adam is mortified and takes drastic steps to end his suffering.



If you do not directly identify with one of these three scenarios you will know someone who does. The inability of individuals to connect with each other and the increased personal sharing online is as scary as it is factual in our society today. This is a cautionary tale leaving us to think about our need to reconnect in the real world. (*Christine R.*)

DANKE! DANKE! DANKE!

To the **2013 Board Members** for all of their hard work this year.

To **Jana F.** for all her hard work as a *Currents* Layout Editor... we'll miss you, Jana!

To **Shawn K, Chris L, Carolla A, Karen M, Jana F, Tracy M, Jess M, Becky T, Silvia T, Ulrike H, Carol S,** and **Marinell H** for coming to the *Currents* Brainstorming Meeting with great ideas and insight.

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To **Nancy C.** for inviting us to the Consulate for the cookie exchange.

To **Kara W.** for opening her home to host the Book and DVD Exchange Brunch.

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