

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

DIE DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT VON MARYLAND

VEREINSNACHRICHTEN



Pres. Brigitte Fessenden (left) with our banner at Jamestown, 400th anniversary celebration

A long-due recognition of the first Germans arriving in this country in 1608 was celebrated recently in Jamestown, Virginia, the place of the first European settlement in North America. Those Germans were artisans - glass makers from Hessen - who came along with English settlers, under the sponsorship of the King of England, in order to strengthen the new colony and to establish lucrative trading possibilities. Another German, a botanist and physician from Silesia, studied the plant life in this area around the same time. An excellent book on the history of these early Germans has been written by our member Dr. Gary Grassl, who has been instrumental in bringing the facts of the German presence in early Virginia to our attention.

Our contribution to this major event consisted of co-sponsoring the fabrication and installation of a historic marker in front of the "Glass House", the site where the first German settlers carried out their glassmaking trade. The German Society was well represented by our President and several members who

made the five hour trip to Jamestown.... the German Ambassador, Dr. Klaus Scharioth, The Secretary of Commerce of the Commonwealth of Virginia, David Smith, and the Mayor of Williamsburg, Jeanne Zeidler, and several other speakers were on hand to praise the German contributions.

My term as your President has come to a close - I appreciated the honor and opportunities in leading the German Society of Maryland for the last three years and hope that my work has been beneficial for the good of the Society. I made many new friends and renewed old friendships among the many German clubs and organizations, for which I am grateful. While I believe that we accomplished much over that time, some issues such as the greater promotion of the German language and literature courses in Maryland's schools remain a challenge and will need all of our support in the future. With your continued help we can make a difference!

Thank you for your support - Brigitte V. Fessenden

"The purpose of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve and promote the German heritage and traditions through educational, social and benevolent programs; and to develop the unity and continuity of the German American community in the State of Maryland."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Dear Friends: I am honored to serve again as President of the German society of MD. I want to thank Brigitte Fessenden for her term as President. The Society has benefitted greatly from her vision and accomplishments.

Looking ahead, it is important that the German Society continue to preserve and promote German heritage and traditions. Central to this are our longstanding educational programs and annual award events. However, we should be looking for new ways for our members and community to experience German culture. If people are exposed to our music, food, literature, craftsmanship, and yes, even brewing, they will gain an appreciation of the past and present significance of German Americans. Members can start today by telling their younger relatives about the German society and their German heritage. I believe our efforts to preserve our heritage and culture must begin in our homes.

Sincerely, James D. Schaub, President

DR. JAMES SCHAUB ELECTED PRESIDENT; MARY UPMAN AND WILLIAM KOMMALAN DIRECTORS

Two new directors were elected at our annual meeting. Prof. Mary Upman, recently retired from McDaniel College's, has been an active member of our Society. She has written numerous articles about our activities both in English and in German which have been published in local and national newspapers. William Hay Kommalan is well known in MD ethnic circles. He recently served as president of the St. Andrew's Society (Scots) and is treasurer of Club Fidelitas. Bill's contacts will serve the Society well. He attended high school in Germany for two years.

Dr. James Schaub, who previously served two years as our Society's president, was elected as president again at the April meeting of the Board of Directors. He has been our Society's representative to AGAS, the association of German organizations of the greater Washington area. Jim is a chief economist for the Department of Agriculture and in that capacity recently visited Israel for an international conference as the representative of the USA. He commutes from the Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington to his home in Laurel, MD.

FESSENDEN, A TRUE AMBASSADOR

Our retiring president, Brigitte Fessenden, more than any other president in the history of the Society, has represented our Society on innumerable occasions of great significance. She traveled to Germany as our envoy at the opening of the Emigration Museum in Bremerhaven. She stood next to our banner at the dedication of the historic marker in Jamestown, VA to celebrate 400 years of Germans in America. She ran the gauntlet down I-95 to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany dozens of times. She put our best foot forward with the Deutschamerikanischer Buergerverein von MD; She hosted delegations of cultural officials from Germany in our Mt. Vernon office. She attended the annual banquets of our fellow ethnic organizations, the St. Andrew and St. George Societies. She devoted countless hours at German cultural events in Baltimore and throughout Maryland. She hosted a festive Christmas get-together in her home for all three years of her terms in office.

Brigitte was the first German born and educated president of our society in nearly a century. Her fluency in the language greatly contributed to her success in cultural and in diplomatic circles.

Our Society has been most fortunate to have Brigitte: the Board of Directors is grateful for her service and the hope that she will continue as our ambassador and to provide the Society with leadership.

JANE AWALT PUBLISHES BOOK ON CARE FOR PARKINSON'S PATIENTS

If you have a relative or friend who has Parkinson's Disease and you want to do something for them, then buy a copy of a new book that comes out this week: "*The Stranger Comes at Sundown, Living and Dying with Parkinson's Disease.*" Jane Kriete Awalt is a long term member of our Society and is a major benefactor. She served as a Director of the Society until she had to resign to take care of her husband, Bob, who died last August. Jane has lectured to many Parkinson's care ad support groups. There are over 1,000,000 with Parkinson's and 50,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Jane has recently had book signings at Oak Crest, Barnes & Noble, Greetings and Readings and at the Dundalk Senior Center.

In December Jane made a significant contribution to our Society's Education fund, hoping to provide an example to others to also support the functions of the Society in promoting German language and culture.

KALENDAR

June 29 Annual picnic at Seminary Park
 July 26-27 German Festival at Timonium Fairgrounds
 Nov. 15 Annual Awards Banquet at Adlersaal

OUR ANNUAL PICNIC JUNE 28

The German Society's annual picnic will be held on Saturday June 28 at Seminary Park in Lutherville. This year we are trying something new. \$6 per person; children 12 and under free. Pavilion limit: 64. First paid, first in. Send check to our treasurer, T. Potthast, 1819 Leaddburn Rd., Towson, MD 21204-1830. The Society will provide beer, soda and pretzels. but those attending will bring their own lunch. It is the old fashioned concept of a family picnic, which is still popular in Europe. The picnic site has two grills and the Society will furnish the charcoal and starter fluid. Those who want to grill can bring their own hot dogs, burgers, bratwurst, steaks, etc. Most German club picnics today are costing #20 to \$30. We think the "bring-your-own picnic basket" will encourage members to make it a family affair, "like we did in the old days.:

The park is centrally accessible in Lutherville. It offers a playground for the kids, fields for activities and plenty of walking.

The Society needs to know how many are coming (adults and kids) so we will have enough beer and soda; so please call in to give your name and the number in your party (ages for the kids so we can plan activities for them).

For information call chairman, Tom Werner at 410-825-7166. .

BETTY NIEMANN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF BALTIMORE KICKERS

Betty Niemann, a director of our Society, was elected president of the Baltimore Kickers club, one of the organizations which comprise the Deutsch-amerikanischer Burgerverin von MD. of which our Society is also a member. Betty had also served as the president of the Edelweiss Club. Betty is well known in the German American community for her leadership in a multitude of ethnic projects. Betty is also a member of the council of Zion Church and serves as chair of its property committee. Betty is also known for her spirit of cooperation and her spirit is likely to make the Kickers more open and inclusive.

\$5,000 TO HIGH SCHOOL GERMAN LANGUAGE STUDENTS ON MAY 18

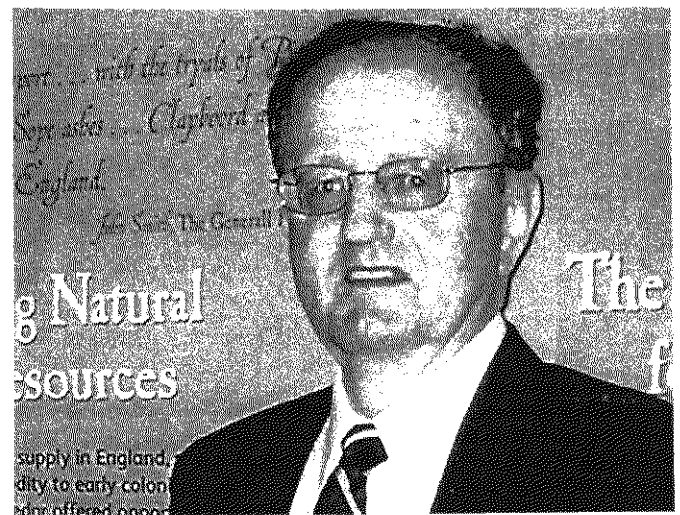
Our Society will present to those German language students in MD who achieved in the highest percentiles cash awards totaling \$5,000 at a ceremony on Sunday, May 18 in the Adlersaal at Zion Church, City Hall Plaza, Baltimore. The program to encourage excellence in high school studies is in its 16th year and has received national commendation from the American Association of Teachers of German. Representatives of the Austrian, German and Swiss embassies will be in attendance. Most students, in addition to cash, will received other prizes, such as books and study aids provided by other organizations and individual donors. Our members are invited to attend. Ceremonies will start at 3 p.m.

Congratulations to our members...

...to **Dr. Randall Donaldson** upon his election as vice president of the German American Studies Society, a national organization of scholars.

...to our members on their 50th wedding anniversaries:
 May 24th, **Katherine and John Geppi**;
 June 28th, **Connie and Ted Potthast**.

...to **Pastor H. J. Siegfried Otto**, and **Barbel Otto**, who have just returned from Germany where they attended the confirmation of a granddaughter, **Madeleine Arena**.



...to **Gary Grassl** on the publication of his book on the first Germans in American, at Jamestown and for his leadership role in the Jamestown 400th anniversary of the first Germans in America.

FINANCE COMMITTEE AND TREASURER'S REPORT

At the annual meeting of members, the treasurer's report disclosed assets as of 3/24/08 OF OVER \$500,000. The Finance committee reported that the securities owned by the Society had been liquidated last fall prior to the stock market crash, so that the Society suffered no losses by reason of that decline. The committee has taken steps to reinvest in the market in gradual steps and will continue to do so through the use of mutual funds rather than the purchase of specific securities.

The finance committee currently consists of Charles Wunder, chairman, Merl Arp, Ted Potthast and Tom Werner. The Society's president is, ex officio, a member of the committee.

OUR MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

NANCY GRASMICK RETAINS OFFICE AS STATE SUPERINTENDENT

Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools and a member of our Society, gained the support of Governor O'Malley and solidified her position as superintendent for another term. She is currently the longest-serving state superintendent in the nation. Our society congratulates her.

DON SCHAEFER PROMOTES CITY, MOVES TO CHARLESTOWN

Our former governor and mayor and beloved German Society member, Don Schaefer donated his left-over campaign funds to promote city neighborhoods, a program he founded while Mayor of Baltimore.

After resisting the move to assisted living, Don has just moved to Charlestown. He took a fall at his home and decided to make the move.

ZAPPA VS. SCHAEFER

Mayor Sheila Dixon of Baltimore appointed a commission to approve or disapprove "art", such things as statues which may honor persons of importance to the city. The commission has just approved the placement of a 15 foot statue of rock star Frank Zappa, while disapproving a similar 15 foot statue of the city's former mayor, William Donald Schaefer. Was that a gift? Zappa was born in Baltimore

and lived in the city until age 10. The city of Vilnius, Lithuania petitioned the art commission for approval of the Zappa statue, since Zappa is a hero to the citizens of Vilnius. Don Schaefer took a city, still suffering from the ravages of the riots of 1968 and raised it from the dead, overseeing the reconstruction of the downtown district and the building of the magnificent Inner Harbor. Most of the members of the commission did not know, until the day they had to vote on the Zappa statue, that Zappa was born in Baltimore. So what does the city's ruling junta have against Schaefer? Is politics somehow involved? Don Schaefer is a loyal member of our Society, so we are offended by the city's action.

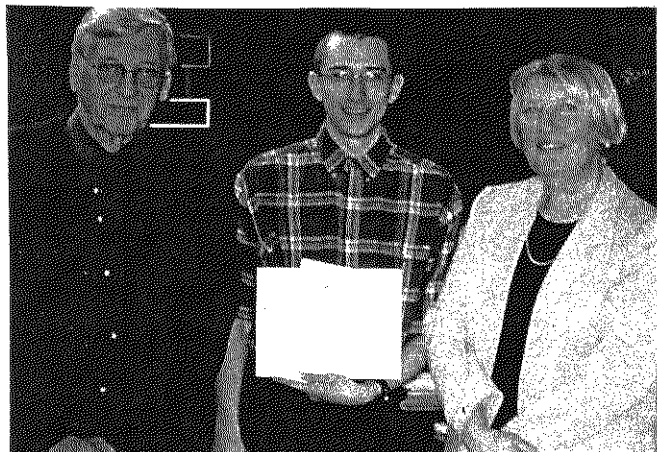
GERMAN SOCIETY & EDENWALD

Towson's preeminent assisted living residence is undergoing a vast expansion; as you drive along Goucher Blvd. across from the gigantic mall you will see the immense broad and tall building which now houses many well-to-do retirees. It was not always thus. Edenwald grew from the German old folks home on Athol Avenue in west Baltimore, often referred to by the German community as the "Greisenheim" - home of the grey-haired one. It was basically a charitable home where penniless old Germans could live out their days among their own. As the years rolled on, the building deteriorated and the residents dwindled in number. The charitable corporation which operated was running out of assets to operate the home. The decision was made to sell the property, move to Towson and build a self-supporting retirement home, open to all who could afford the tab. The directors of corporation insisted, however, that those residents of the old home would have to be given a place to live in the new premises and supported there for the balance of their lifetimes: there were about 8 who made the move (all are now deceased). The corporation which operates Edenwald is still called "The General German Aged Peoples Home of Baltimore, Inc.. The German society of Maryland is a member of that corporation and has been so for over 60 years. We received our official notice of the annual meeting of that corporation, held in the Board Room at Edenwald (where our own Board of Directors holds its quarterly meetings).

DECEASED MEMBERS: R.I.P.

A moment of silence was observed at our annual meeting for our members who died in the past year: Richard Ater; Robert Awalt; Isolde Brooke and Sister M. Benedicta Viebeck, SSND.

\$2,000 IN MERIT AWARDS GO TO GERMAN LANGUAGE STUDENTS



Dr. Armin Mruck, Christopher Tabisz & Pres. Fessenden

Our Education committee selected 4 college students for merit awards for German studies and presented checks for \$500 to each of the following: Kristin Gaddy; Kirah Yen; Christopher Tabisz and Allison Chang. Vice president Armin Mruck announced the awardees and President Fessenden congratulated the merit scholars and handed them their cash prize.

RECENT MENCKEN HAPPENINGS

We learn from the latest newsletter of The Mencken Society that a ceremony is conducted annually on the Sunday closest to Mencken's death (January 29) at the ledger-type gravestone in Loudon Park Cemetery which his ashes are buried. This year's event was attended by at least one member of our Society, Phil Hildebrandt, who heard the memorial given by the Mencken Society's secretary, Oleg Pancczenko who said that Mencken would never think to apologize for expressing what was on his mind. Today "not a thing worth hearing can be said without offending somebody. In the spirit of Mencken, we would not parse what we honestly intend to say for what might offend somebody. but speak what we think and to the detractors say 'be offended and be damned'".

In the same newsletter we learn that Mencken constructed summer and winter quarters in his backyard on Hollins Street for the family pets: several tortoises.

The current issue of German Life magazine contains an excellent article on Mencken by Prof. Don Heinrich Tolzmann in which he described Mencken's pride in his German heritage. We regretted that Dr. Tolzmann failed to mention that Mencken was a loyal member of The German Society of Maryland.

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES

One of our member's daughters, a first grader, has been telling her classmates that the logo on her father's new German car (BMW) is on the car because they're his initials (Briam M. Walsh).

INVITATIONS FROM FELLOW BUERGERVEREIN MEMBER CLUBS

Members of the German society have been invited to attend these events by other MD German organizations:

...**Club Fidelitas** will sponsor a bus trip to the Lancaster Liederkrantz festival on June 14. Tickets are \$25. First come, first served. Call Tom Werner at 410-825-7166 (Bus seats are limited.)

...**Baltimore Kickers Club** celebrates its 55th anniversary with a festive banquet and dance on Sunday, September 7. Details in our next newsletter

...**Society for History of Germans in MD** will hold its annual banquet and lecture on Tuesday, Sept 16 6 pm in the Adlersaal of Zion Church.

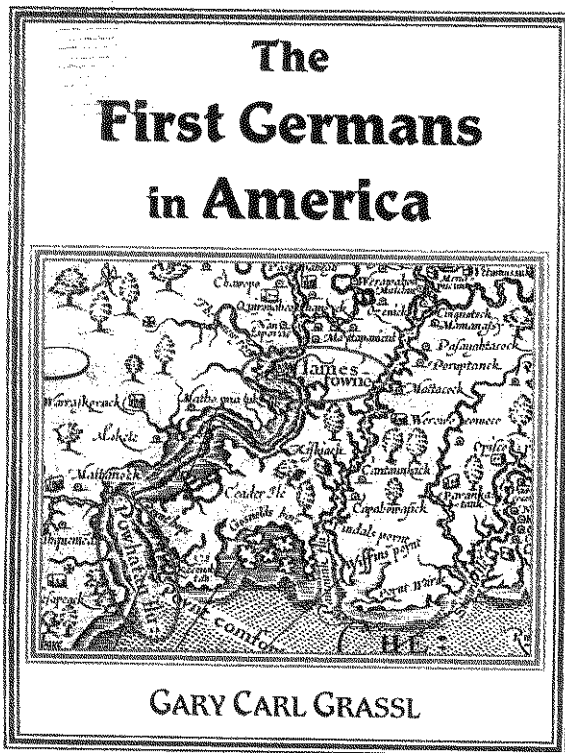
...there are many other activities sponsored by German american organizations in Maryland which will be described in detail in our June-July newsletter.

EXPENSES OF ANNUAL MEETING

Only 40 people called to say they were coming to the annual meeting. Our committee figured that some members who did not respond would show up anyway, so food for 70 was ordered. Actually, 80 attended. The cost of the meeting was \$782: food, \$442; sodas, beer, wine and coffee, \$140; hall, \$100, and set-up and cleanup, \$100. The cost per attendee was \$9.78.

The announcement stated that there would be free food, but Dan Brooke, who greeted the attendees and signed them in, had set up a box for donations to help offset the expenses. 7 persons contributed \$20 or more (\$150). The remaining attendees contributed a total of \$98. The net cost to the Society, after deducting the \$248 contributed, was \$534.

Some of our directors have suggested that the annual meeting commence with business, with "refreshments" afterwards, since our income has fallen drastically due to low interest rates on investments.



Gary Carl Grassl, a member of our society, was a leader in promoting the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the first Germans to settle in a permanent colony in English North America, namely at Jamestown, VA in 1607. His 88 page book was published for distribution at the celebration, April 18-20, 2008. The book, though scholarly and well documented, is easy and interesting to read, containing nearly 100 maps, photographs and illustrations. The book is dedicated to the early Germans whose exploits are described in detail in the book, and particularly to Johannes Fleischer, M.D., PhD., who landed May 14, 1607 (13 years before the Pilgrims landed in the Mayflower in Massachusetts). Other German glassmakers, explorers and woodworkers at Jamestown are also described. The book is a marvelous collection of information on the contributions made by the Germans at the earliest state of the history of our country. Grassl also discusses earlier explorations of North America by other Germans, particularly the discovery by Pining and Pothorst (an early version of the name Potthast) who arrived many years before Columbus.

Our Society is grateful to Mr. Grassl for his kind donation of two copies of his book as prizes for the German language high school students at our event on May 18, in conjunction with the Teachers of German.

Individual copies are available for \$10 from Gary C. Grassl, 4207 Oxford Drive, Silver Hill, MD 20746-3030 (e-mail: garygrassl@verizon.net). Quantities are available free to German clubs and student groups, while they last.

SISTER BENEDICTA VIEBECK, SSND



Maria Viebeck, a member of our Society since 1985, died February 28, 2008 at age 93. She was born in Bavaria on July 6, 1913. Her father was a farmer who also served as mayor of the town. After her local schooling, she entered a lengthy teacher training Seminar in Munich and was awarded Bavarian Elementary School Teacher Certificate in 1934. During that time she entered the School sisters of Notre Dame and took her religious name of Sister Mary Benedicta. In 1936 the Nazi government took over her school and gave the nuns one month to leave. In 1938, she and several other nuns answered a call to come to America as teachers. In 1944 she became a naturalized US citizen. Here she taught in schools in Newark, NJ, Brooklyn, NY, Tacony, PA and at the Institute of Notre Dame and Notre Dame Preparatory School in Baltimore. For three years she was the Mother superior of the community at the Notre Dame international headquarters in Rome, Italy; and served in a leadership position on the order's Maryland Provincial council. Her health caused her to stop teaching in 1991, but she worked daily until the time of her death speaking and writing on the history of the School sisters and translating documents from German to English.

Sister Benedicta was happy to be a member of The German Society, and attended our functions at Zion Church, our picnics and the German Festival. In the days when our annual meeting always included a lecture, she was the lecturer at our 1985 annual meeting.

The foregoing information was provided by sister Mary Fitzgerald, SSND, also a member of our Society. A more detailed account of Sister Benedicta's life will appear in our next newsletter.

A. S. ABELL IN THE NEWS

In the 1800's the founder of the Sun newspapers was a member of our society. In a recent article in the *Sunday Sun* by Fred Rasmussen we learn that he owned a 350 acre estate in the Guilford section of Baltimore City; on 6 1/2 of those acres is now found the Sherwood Gardens, a majestic urban spread of tulips daffodils, azaleas, dogwoods and ornamental trees. Where the gardens now stand was formerly a large pond on the Abell estate. The gardens were started by John w. Sherwood, a Baltimore business man, philanthropist and a pioneer in the oil industry.

MARYLANDERS IN 1900: 54% HAD GERMAN ANCESTRY; 4TH HIGHEST

A chart captioned "Vereinigten Staaten, Im deutschen Sprachgebiet Mitteleuropas Geborene" revealed that 53.4% of Marylanders in 1900 had one or both parents who were born in a German speaking district of middle Europe. Maryland was exceeded only by Kentucky (57.4%), Indiana (56%) and Missouri (54%). The national average was 30.2%. At 4.2%, Massachusetts had the smallest percentage. The "deutsche Sprachgebiet" included all areas of German-speaking peoples, including Austria, Switzerland and areas which now include parts of Italy, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Russia, etc.

The chart, along with a map of the heavily German-populated areas of "Amerika" and an article by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, was published in the first edition of the new magazine "German Life" which is published in Maryland.

BALTIMORE GERMAN AMERICAN CAPTAINED FIRST INVASION BOAT

The first landing boat to touch the Normandy beach on June 5, 1944 was commanded by Captain Leonard T. Schroeder, Jr., 25, "who comes from Baltimore, Maryland, and is of old German-American stock." So it was reported in the News-American on June 7, 1944 and quoted by Michael Olesker in The Sun during the recent celebration of the 50th anniversary of D-Day.

The German Society checked the telephone directory to try to find a current listing for Capt. Schroeder, without success. Schroeder is a popular Maryland name and the phone book has two columns of them. Baltimore even has a Schroeder Street, evidencing the prominence of the name.

Our interest in the history of German Americans

in Maryland prompts us to continue to search for the answers to the questions: Did Captain Schroeder survive WWII? Did he return to Baltimore? What happened to him thereafter? Our members are requested to contact any of your friends named Schroeder and report back to the Society.

POPE TOUCHES DOWN IN MD

The first place the German Pope stepped foot in America was in Maryland, when his plane landed at Andrews Air force Base in Prince George's County upon his April visit to the USA. It was obvious that the Bavarian Benedict XVI likes America. He has another tie to Maryland: his personal theologian and one of his closest advisors, Cardinal Francis Stafford, grew up in West Baltimore, studied at Loyola Blakefield and Loyola College, St. Mary's Seminary on Paca Street, was ordained as a priest of the Baltimore archdiocese and was an auxiliary bishop of Baltimore.

WHY OUR TREASURY NEEDS GIFTS

We have a substantial sum in our treasury, so why are we asking for donations? The answer is because our savings account - our investments - produces inadequate income to pay our bills and fund our projects. Low interest rates in the current marketplace will yield us less than \$16,000 per year and dues produce about \$10,000. Our expenses run about \$36,000; so we face a shortfall. Gifts to our education fund will enable us to take care of our educational projects without raiding our "savings". The same applies to gifts to our Newsletter Fund: the newsletter is paid for from the general fund.

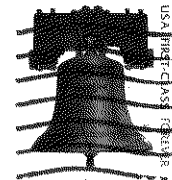
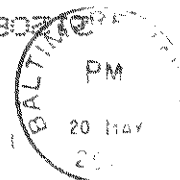
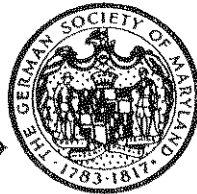
HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBSITE?

You can learn a lot about the German Society of Ms by perusing our website: www.germansociety-md.com The history of the Society, a booklet entitled "Pioneers in Service" appears on our website, along with recent issues of our newsletter and announcements.

TOWSON UNIV. NEEDS HOST FAMILIES FOR SUMMER PROGRAM

Students from Germany who will be attending Towson U. to improve their English language skills from July 11 - July 19 are in need of housing and transportation to school. Many of our members have participated in the past. Please consider taking them in. Contact Arlene Prince, International Programs, Towson U., 410-704-2239 or e-mail aprice@towson.edu

Founded 1783
Incorporated by Act of the General Assembly
of Maryland, Chapter 100, Feb. 3, 1818



The German Society of Maryland

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**ATTEND OUR
ANNUAL PICNIC
JUNE 28TH IN
LUTHERVILLE**

**OUR ECUMENICAL
SERVICE -
SUNDAY SEPT.
28TH PLAN TO
ATTEND**

**HILARY HAHN IS
THIS YEAR'S
HONOREE AT OUR
AWARDS
BANQUET, NOV.
15; TICKETS ARE
SCARCE - FIRST
COME, FIRST
SERVED; THINK
AHEAD**

**GIFTS TO OUR
SOCIETY ARE TAX
DEDUCTIBLE**

**REMEMBER OUR
EDUCATION FUND**

**JOIN A
COMMITTEE AND
HELP LEAD OUR
SOCIETY**

MAIL TO:

Maureen M. Helinski
22 Glenmore Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21206

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ Zipcode: _____

Spouse (Optional): _____ Phone: _____

Referred by: _____

"I hereby apply to be a member of the German Society of Maryland"
Annual dues \$25 Spouse may be included at no extra cost.

The German Society of Maryland
P.O. Box 22585
Baltimore, MD 21203-4585

This newsletter is published by The German Society of Maryland, an organization founded in 1783 and incorporated in 1817 by Act of the General Assembly of Maryland. It is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation pursuant to the provisions of §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Society is a member of Der Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland, D.A.N.K. (German American National Congress) The United German-American Committee of the USA, Inc. and other civic groups which promote German-American culture and heritage. Please submit items of interest to Theodore J. Potthast, Jr., Editor, at 1819 Leadburn Road, Towson, MD 21204-1830 or fax 410-832-2903.