



Festival Issue  
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Issue 131

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*The purpose of the German Society of Maryland is to preserve and promote the German heritage, language, 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. The German Society of Maryland is a nonprofit, charitable corporation under the provisions of §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are welcome and are fully tax-deductible.*

# German Society of Maryland

## Vereinsnachrichten

*Founded in 1783 and Incorporated by Act of the General Assembly of Maryland Chapter 100, February 3, 1818*

### *President's Message – Amy Unverzagt*

Dear Members / Liebe Mitglieder,

It is difficult for me to believe I am writing this letter as the new President of the German Society of Maryland, one of the oldest German societies in the U.S. To introduce myself, I have been a member for probably close to twenty years now, though I was not very active in the Society until more recent years. I became a board member and then also served as secretary. I also belong to the Society for the History of Germans in Maryland, and the Baltimore Kickers. I was just elected president this past May.



I would like to welcome everyone to the 125th German Festival, and hope you are able to stop by the Society's table. Thank you for coming and supporting the festival, and I hope you enjoy yourself. I know I certainly appreciate all the planning and hard work that goes into having the festival each year. I will be at the Society's table, and I will also be helping at the Kicker's food stand for a few hours on Saturday. I hope to see you!

In the coming year, I hope that we are able to plan and share events that support the Society's mission of promoting and preserving German heritage, language, and traditions through educational, social, benevolent, and cultural programs.



*Students, teachers, and officials from the German Society of Maryland, the American Association of Teachers of German, and the German Embassy at the 2025 Student Awards Ceremony. See page 2 for the full story.*

## High School Students Honored for German Studies

On May 18, the German Society of Maryland and the Maryland/DC Metro Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), conducted their annual Student Awards Ceremony on the campus of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Over 60 Maryland high school students were honored for their excellence in the study of the German language. The event included presentation of awards to the top performers on the National German Exam (NGE), the formal presentation of four scholarships for study in Germany, as well as presentations from past scholarship winners.

Silvia Petzarsky, representative of the Cultural Affairs Section of the German Embassy, assisted Regina Haag, president of the AATG chapter, Steven Harper, then-president of the German Society, and other AATG and German Society board members in the presentation of awards. Dr. Mohamed Esa, Testing Chair for the AATG chapter and Director of the German Society acted as Master of Ceremonies.

### Awards for Top NGE Scores

To encourage the study of German in Maryland schools, the German Society of Maryland gives cash awards to students who excel on the NGE.



*Silvia Petzarsky of the German Embassy congratulates NGE Gold Medal winner Alexander Plumey*

teachers to compare their students' performance with that of students across the United States who are enrolled in the typical 4-year sequence of language classes.

In the 2024/25 school year, 152 students in Maryland schools took the exam. Forty-one received Gold Medals, 20 students received Silver Medals, and 13 received Bronze Medals.

The 55 Maryland students who received Gold or Silver Medals on the Level 2, 3, or 4 exam were invited to the Awards Ceremony. They received certificates and medals from the AATG. These students also received a cash award from the German Society in recognition of their outstanding performance. Students who scored in the 90th to 99th percentile on the test received \$150 and those who scored in the 80th to 89th percentile received \$100.

The NGE is offered yearly by AATG. Each year over 15,000 high school students take the exam.

The NGE is not a proficiency test. Rather, it is designed to enable

### Study-in-Germany Scholarships

Three students were awarded scholarships for study in Germany. Christopher Lidie (Aberdeen High School) won a scholarship from the German Society of Maryland and will participate in a 3-week summer program offered by AATG and the Pedagogical Exchange Service, an agency of the German government. Funding for the German Society's scholarship was provided by a grant from the Edelweiss Club of Baltimore.

Souji Goodso-Miyake (St. Paul's School for Boys) won a Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) Scholarship. CBYX, established by the U.S. Congress and the German Parliament in 1983, enables students to live with host families and attend high school for one year.

Participants are invited to a special event at the German Bundestag (Parliament) and U.S. Embassy in Berlin.

Ashton Veld, who studies German in the Saturday-morning program offered by the German International School Washington, won both an AATG summer study scholarship funded by the German government and a CBYX scholarship.



*NGE Gold Medal winners from Centennial High School (Howard County) and their teacher, Will Funk-Heiser*



*Souji Goodso-Miyake, CBYX Scholarship winner (left), and Ashton Veld, AATG Summer and CBYX scholarships winner (right), with their teachers Antje Krueger and Kerstin Hopkins*

## Christopher Lidie Awarded German Society of Maryland Scholarship

Christopher Lidie, a rising junior from Aberdeen High School, is the 2025 winner of the German Society's Summer Study Scholarship. Christopher was selected from among 10 applicants from Maryland high schools who competed for the scholarship.



*Christopher Lidie, winner of the German Society's Summer Study Scholarship, with his German teacher Heather Cachola and German Society President Steven Harper*

The summer study scholarship is presented annually by the Society. It enables a high school student to participate in the summer study program conducted by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) and the Pedagogical Exchange Service, an agency of the German government. The application for the 2026 scholarship will be available on the Society's website in the fall.

Participants in the 3-week program live with a family, attend classes at a German high school, and travel with other participants to nearby cities.

Christopher is a top student in his high school German class taught by Ms. Heather Cachola. Christopher's interest in German language and culture is heightened by his family history. The first member of the Lidie family arrived in North America in 1727, having come from Heilbronn, now in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

In late June, Christopher flew to Germany and is currently living with a host family in Öhringen in his family's German homeland, Baden-Württemberg. He is the first Lidie to return to Germany in 300 years.

Besides German, Christopher's interests include debating, hiking, and playing video games.

## German Society holds Annual Business Meeting

The Annual Business Meeting of the German Society took place on Friday, April 25, 2025, at Zion Church of the City of Baltimore. Twenty-eight members and two guests attended the event.

Prior to the meeting, Society members enjoyed a light German-style supper of wurst, cold cuts, cheese, bread, salads, and German beer and wine. The meal concluded with desserts supplied by members.

President Harper reviewed briefly activities undertaken in the last year, including the Maryland German Festival, tour of the Baltimore Immigration Museum, tour of the Schifferstadt Museum in Frederick, the Oktoberfest in Germantown, the Anniversary Dinner, and the St. Martin's Day celebration.

He reported that because memberships include spouses, counting households is a useful metric of the Society's membership numbers. Currently, there are 274 member households, representing 399 members.

Education Committee Co-Chair, Brigitte Fessenden, introduced Christopher Lidie, winner of the Society's Summer Study Scholarship (*see adjacent story*). Christopher, a student member of the Society, attended the meeting with his grandfather, Matthew Lidie.

Finance Committee member James Schaub reported that the Society's investment portfolio is currently valued at approximately \$773,000, with 65% invested in equities and 35% in fixed income assets. Mr. Schaub noted that the value of the portfolio fluctuates with the stock market.

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Kraig Dean presented Steven Harper for reelection for another 3-year term as Director. Mr. Harper was unanimously reelected.

The membership also ratified a bylaw change previously adopted by the Board of Directors. The change reduces the length of time someone needs to be a member of the Society before election to the Board from three years to one year. The bylaws change is intended to facilitate the recruitment of Board members.

## Election of Officers

### Amy Unversagt New President of the Society

New officers of the Society were elected by the Board of Directors at a meeting on May 29th. President Steven Harper was not eligible for a successive third 1-year term. William Kommalan also stepped down from his position as First Vice President.

The Board elected Amy Unversagt as president and Mr. Harper as First Vice President. Zachary Butt and Anton Smoot were returned to their posts as Second Vice President and Treasurer respectively.

## Save the Date: Banquet Set for Nov. 1

The German Society of Maryland will hold its 242nd Anniversary Dinner on November 1, 2025, at 6:00 pm. The Banquet Committee is still finalizing plans for the speaker and entertainment. Tickets priced at \$100 per person will be available for purchase in early September.

The dinner will take place at Matthew's 1600 Restaurant located at 1600 Frederick Road, Catonsville.

## Birthday Congratulations

The German Society extends congratulations to two longtime members, Dr. Christel van der Berg and Dr. Armin Mruck, who celebrated their 100th birthday since the publication of the last newsletter in October 2024. Both serve as Emeritus Directors of the Society.

Last November, Dr. van der Berg was honored with flowers and apple strudel at the monthly luncheon of the German Society's Frauenverein (Ladies' Auxiliary).

Retired from Towson University, Dr. Mruck was feted by the university at a birthday celebration in June. Society President Amy Unversagt and several directors of the Society attended the event. To honor Dr. Mruck, the Society is making a \$200 donation to the Dr. Armin and Marlene Mruck Endowed Scholarship. This scholarship fund was established by Dr. Mruck and his wife in 2005 and provides scholarships to students at Towson University who excel and study abroad.

## In Memoriam

The German Society notes with sadness the deaths of two prominent Directors of the Society: Judge Gerald Wittstadt, who passed away on December 3, 2024, and Gerhardt Meinzer, who died on February 17, 2025. In addition to having been honored by the German Society at our annual banquets, both received many awards for their contributions to the German-American community.

In 1989, Judge Wittstadt was honored by the Federal Republic of Germany as a Distinguished German American and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which is the highest award the German Government can award a civilian.

Mr. Meinzer, an immigrant from Germany, received two awards from the German government: The Order of Merit of the Federal Republic (Bundesverdienstkreuz) and the Friendship Award of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition for his service to German-American organizations and his encouragement of friendships between German and American citizens.

Additional information about Judge Wittstadt and Gerhardt Meinzer is available on the Society's website.

## Welcome to New Members

Andrea Z., Charles D., Christopher L., Davney S., Deborah S., Diego P., Dirk S., Dorian S., Gabriela R., Gaby P., Georgy K., Jake U., Jennifer W., Jennifer W., Jerry M., Kalina K., Karen & Clint B., Karla M. & Christian G., Ken W., Laura C., Linda M., Lisa & Michael M., Madison H., Magnus J., Margrit & Vincent W., Paige M., Pamela M., Peter & Hedda B., Sofia C., Stefan T., Talke M., Thierno D. & Lisa H., Thomas A., and Valerie & Jeffrey W.

## Become a Member

For membership information, visit  
germansociety-md.com.

Annual dues are just \$25 per year.

Dues for teachers are just \$15.

Students may join for free!

## Officers of the German Society of Maryland 2025/26

President:	Amy Unverzagt
1st Vice President:	Steven R. Harper
2nd Vice President:	Zachary Butt
Treasurer:	Anton G. Smoot
Secretary:	vacant

## Directors of the German Society of Maryland 2025/26

Shelley Dolch Arnold (L)	W.H. Kommalan (2026)
John K. Aymold, Jr. (E)	Dr. Armin Mruck (E)
Linda Butt (L)	Betty Niemann (E)
Zachary Butt (2026)	H.J. Siegfried Otto (E)
Dr. David A. Denisch (E)	Paul Gerhard Otto (L)
Kraig Dean (L)	Bernard Penner, Esq. (L)
Lynette Dean (2027)	Shirley Santora (L)
Dr. Mohamed Esa (L)	Dr. James D. Schaub (L)
Brigitte V. Fessenden (L)	Anton Smoot (L)
Steven R. Harper (2028)	Amy Unverzagt (2026)
Dr. Maureen Helinski (L)	Christel van der Berg (E)
Eva M. Kelleher, President, Frauenverein ( <i>ex officio</i> )	

L=Lifetime; E=Emeritus;

Year indicates end of term for elected directors

## Contact Information

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