

On October 1, 2010 at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the University of Delaware's Academy of Lifelong Learning, James F. Weiher received the Federal Republic of Germany Friendship Award. Honorary Consul Barbara Afanassiev made the presentation. The Friendship Award is given by the German Ambassador, Dr. Klaus Scharioth, to recognize outstanding Americans who in their respective fields of academia, politics, media, culture and other areas, have had an impact in fostering positive German-American relations.



The award has been in existence since 1981 and is given every year by the German Ambassador to thank extraordinary citizens for their outstanding commitment in promoting excellent relations between our two countries. These individuals come from all walks of life but they have one thing in common – their desire to create mutual understanding and to continue the international exchange of thoughts and ideas.

Dr. Weiher co-ordinates the Foreign Language Curriculum at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Delaware in Wilmington and since 1996 has taught German thereby providing opportunities for members to experience the German language and culture. During his tenure as Foreign Language Coordinator the extent of courses and number of instructors in the core curriculum (German, Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, ancient Greek) has increased as well as new courses in other languages added, e.g. Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Yiddish. One of his interests is the introduction of new technology in teaching foreign languages to mature adults and he is gratified to see more and more instructors exploring and using such techniques and recognizing their benefits.

For his own German courses he laid down and follows a number underlying principles:

- Strive for a distribution of participants with language abilities from intermediate learner to native speaker to provide as much of an immersion experience as possible.
- Use new material each semester that is interesting to both native speakers and language learners as well as being instructive for all.
- Include diversified audio and video material on cultural and language topics with German texts available the week before to stimulate discussion and provide information.
- Keep all instruction, conversation and written material in the German language as much as possible.
- Include word games and other activities to stimulate participation and thinking in German.

In response to receiving the Friendship Award he remarked:

“Little did I know what was in store for me when I joined the Academy in 1995 and the late Dr. Peter Bauchwitz urged me to establish a German Stammtisch so that German speaking members and those learning German might have a friendly and convivial atmosphere in which to converse in German. That venture quickly morphed into my first class, The German Seminar, in 1996 and then into a second and third course so that Wednesdays could be an immersion experience for those desiring that.

When in 2000 a German mother was overheard to exclaim »Ein Wunder ist geschehen, mein Sohn kann lesen« (a miracle has occurred, my son can read), I decided what was so exciting for Germans might work for our students as well. That summer a small group of my German students read the successful German translation of the first volume of the Harry Potter series, »Harry Potter und der Stein der Weisen.« That experiment was so successful that we have continued every summer since, reading each time a different German book.

I continue to be excited to be one of our many foreign language instructors. We are all different, coming from different backgrounds and teaching different languages. Although the methods we use might be different, we use that with which we are comfortable, that which works for us, and more importantly, that which works for our students.

We may be different, but we have in common our enthusiasm and dedication. We are not motivated by a paycheck, but do what we do out of love of our target language, celebration of its culture and the joy of sharing those with others. I often joke to others who do not know the Academy, »I am not paid to teach, I pay to teach.«

I am proud to accept this Friendship Award from the Federal Republic of Germany and for the opportunities here I thank the University of Delaware, the Academy, now renamed the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Delaware in Wilmington—*boy what a mouthful!*—and the Curriculum Committee. Most especially I want to thank the many students who over the years who have so enthusiastically and actively participated in my German programs. It was they who made the programs successful and who made it all worthwhile. Thanks to you all.”