

# WHAT'S HAPPENING?

AUGUST 2011

News and Views from the *Students and Staff*

FREE ~ ISSUE 12

PEOPLE | EVENTS | NEWS | REVIEWS | STORIES | COMMENT | LANGUAGE | OTHER STUFF



Who's that?

**FRANZISKA SCHNELLMANN**  
*Receptionist*

Franziska is 24 and has an older sister and a younger brother. Her mother is from India and her father is Swiss.

As well as working at the school, Franziska is taking a university course in media science and cultural studies. Originally, she wanted to study journalism but, after having a little exposure to the actual life of a journalist, Franziska has decided that it's not for her. Nevertheless, her course offers a lot of scope for other careers in areas such as tourism, event management, and advertising. For now, her focus is on finishing her studies before considering her career prospects.

Between working and studying, Franziska doesn't have a lot of time for extra activities or hobbies, but her one passion is writing, particularly writing books. She's recently completed a murder mystery but has not yet tried to get it published. She's not convinced that the internet is the best vehicle for publishing it, yet she cannot afford the outlay necessary to print the book herself. So, we'll have to wait a little longer, too.

(See over to learn more about Franziska.)

**Top tip**

Listening to interesting stories is great for helping you to speak more fluently. Many classic stories have been recorded and are available as free "Audio Books". You can use the internet to listen to them or to download them to your own computer or mp3 player device.

There are many sites which offer audio books. One is called **BooksShouldBeFree** or [www.booksshouldbefree.com](http://www.booksshouldbefree.com)

**Group Courses**

Group Courses are starting again in September.

Please contact your consultant if you'd like to sign up for either course:

**ADVANCED PLUS \*\***

**GENERAL ENGLISH:**  
Thursdays 19:00-20:30

**UPPER INTERMEDIATE PLUS \***

**BUSINESS ENGLISH:**  
Tuesdays 07:15-08:45

For details, ask your consultant for an Information Sheet.

\* FCE/BECV equivalent  
\*\* CAE/BECH equivalent

**GROUP ACTIVITIES**

by *June Winterflood - Canada*

Good news! We can finally start offering group activity lessons again!

I really like these kinds of lessons because they give you a chance to practise what you have been learning in a freer way, yet still with the support of a teacher and in a fun and lively atmosphere.

To see what activities are available, either go to [www.englishcenterbasel.ch](http://www.englishcenterbasel.ch) and look up the group activities or go to the reception area at the school.

These activities are available on a first-come, first-served basis, so make sure you sign up as soon as possible. You can either sign up at the school or telephone reception.

**THE BARBECUE**

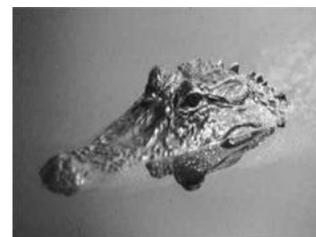
Every August, the school has a barbecue for students and staff, and we welcome their friends and family, too. If the weather is nice, we hold the BBQ on the roof of the school.

We serve drinks and snacks, we grill meat and we provide vegetarian food, too. Everyone brings salads and/or desserts.

We chat together, play music and even dance! It's a time to relax and enjoy a lovely day out.

This year, the barbecue is on Friday, 26 August, starting at 18:00. Please do come!

**Strange but true?**



**URBAN MYTH**

by *Laura Almeida - Switzerland & Portugal*

About forty years ago, in the seventies, people in New York had a strange habit. It was the "in thing" to keep little alligator babies as pets.

Because a fashion wave in America goes by very quickly, the inhabitants of New York soon grew sick of their alligators and wanted to find a way to make them disappear.

One day, a lady, called Mrs. Watson, had a bright idea. She flushed her three alligator babies down the toilet. This news went round the whole city.

Today, it is said that there are hundreds of grown-up alligators living in the sewers of New York.

**A fond farewell**

**JANET WOOD**

HAS RETIRED

Janet worked as a receptionist at the school for many years and had been a regular contributor to What's Happening? However, in April this year, she decided to retire and enjoy the summer. Although she's no longer working at the school, perhaps she'll write something for the broadsheet one of these days! Let's hope!

**JAN NUFER**

HAS RETURNED TO CANADA

The fourteenth of July was Jan's last day as an English Teacher at English Center Basel. Jan had worked at the school for more than two and a half years. On 17 July, Jan flew home. Jan hopes to work for a school in Calgary she used to work for, a school dedicated to immigrants to Canada. We wish Jan all the best for her future life and career.

**AN AMAZINGLY TOUCHING STORY**

FOR THOSE WHO LIKE TO READ ENGLISH BOOKS

by *Mitch von Büren - Switzerland*

As every teacher tells us students to read as many English books as we can, I tried to do that, well behaved as I am.

I first tried to read a crime story by Agatha Christie which was quite readable but, by the way, it didn't do much for me / I didn't enjoy it very much. Next, I tried reading 'The Woman in White' and 'Jurassic Park', because they are recommended reading for the FCE exam. But after a few pages, I realized that neither of these books would become my favourites. I had to look up many words to be able to understand the meaning of the sentences, a procedure which I found rather laborious. Actually, with the level of English I have at the moment, I should be able to read both of these books. But I was not. And this fact was depressing me and the reason why I didn't touch any English books anymore except an adventure-book written for teens. And this didn't make me proud even though it surely brought me a benefit.

And then came Mary. She brought back my confidence in myself - confidence in my qualities in English - because she brought fun back into my life when reading an English book. She suggested that I read a special book which is easy to read but still has an interesting topic. It makes you laugh and it makes you sad, and it gives you the chance to see a life which is so different to our lives. It is a novel about a fifteen-year-old boy with 'Asperger Syndrome'. This boy wants to find out who has killed the neighbour's dog. I can tell you that I read this book in nearly one go. I hated having to stop reading because of work or because my eyes were too tired in the night.

This book is so touching: as a reader, you are so close to this boy's life - it's very impressive! You will miss a lot if you don't read it. I mean: this book is a MUST for everybody who likes to read in English. And for everybody like me who should read as much as he can...! Enough compliments for the writer now. I wish you a lot of fun and intense feelings when reading this wonderful book!

And here comes the title: 'The curious incident of the dog in the night-time' written by Mark Haddon.

**I COULDN'T STOP READING. . .**

by *Lea Bargetzi - Switzerland*

The best fiction I've read this year was a four-volume series about a medieval midwife, called Marthe.

At the beginning of the story, Marthe was 14 years old when she lost her parents, but there was a good, old woman who took her in. This old and experienced woman helped Marthe to stay alive, taught her to be a midwife and gave her a lot of knowledge about plants. After the old lady died, Marthe took over doing the old woman's health work in the village. One day, she had to help the wife of a prince to give birth to her baby. But the baby died. The prince wanted to punish Marthe.

Marthe fled. She was alone; the only thing she had was her basket with plants, creams and cloth to care for ill or injured people. Luckily, she found a group of settlers whose leaders were a strong and proud knight, called Christian, and a funny young "Knappe", called Lukas. They knew it would be very important to have a midwife and a woman in the group who knew about plants. They had a really hard and dangerous journey to the place where they wanted to set up new houses and have a new, better life without a horrible ruler. Most of them reached the new land, but some people died.

Christian and Lukas went to the king of the district. They brought the message that approximately twenty settlers had come with them and had started to work. The king was very happy about this. While the two knights were with the king, a lot of horrible things happened at their settler village.

Four bad knights from another district came to the village. They made the villagers feel afraid. At that time, Marthe was in the forest, looking for new plants. Unfortunately, they found Marthe on her way home; they beat and raped her. Because she was no longer a virgin, Marthe urgently had to marry an old widower, called Wiprecht. On the first night, he raped her and struck her. Wiprecht's son, Karl, who had fallen in love with Marthe, fought with his father. "If you strike Marthe again, I will kill you," he screamed. After that, the old man was sure that Marthe was a witch: it wasn't normal for a son to be against his father. When Christian and Lukas came back, they were really surprised. They couldn't understand why Marthe had married Wiprecht.

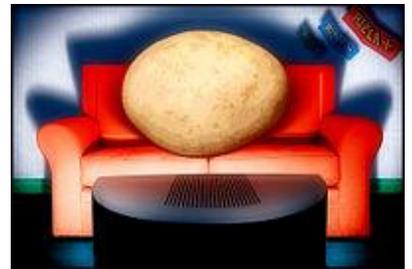
Later, two long-lost friends of Christian and Lukas came back to the settler village. They had been transporting salt from village to village. By chance, they found black stones in the small river next to the growing village. Because these two men had travelled around their whole life, they knew what kind of stone this was: pure silver! Christian and Lukas rode on horseback as fast as possible to the king. The king was more than happy about this news. He said that the most important thing was to mine the silver and bring it to him.

The right hand of the king, Randolph, was a really bad man. He heard about the silver, and he wanted to kill Christian. He convinced the king to order Christian to fight in a war. The king's wife, Hedwig, was very smart and she warned her husband, but the king didn't believe her. So, Randolph took control of the village from Christian. He was a terrible ruler. All the people were afraid.

Marthe could see into the future, but the people around her didn't know that she could do this, except for Christian and Hedwig, the king's wife. Marthe had saved Hedwig's life, because she had seen that somebody would put poison in her wine but Christian had stopped her drinking it. If Randolph learned that Marthe had the special sight, it would be seen as a sign that she was a witch and he might sentence her to death!

I hope I have been able to give you a view of a very spellbinding book, called "Das Geheimnis der Hebamme".

I really like this book. It's great, because you live with Marthe. She suffers very bad and painful things, but on the other hand, she finds her true love and has very good and loyal friends. I laugh with her and I cry with her. While I am reading, I am in the year 1700 and part of the medieval world.



**A COUCH POTATO**

by *Fabiola Sandoval - Venezuela & New Zealand*

"When I wake up, I don't get up immediately. I turn on the television and watch a children's programme and old movies until about half past ten. Then I get up, go down the stairs and switch on the telly. For lunch, I have biscuits and a glass of milk, and I watch the news.

In the afternoon, I often watch another old film - they're showing some good ones at the moment. In the evenings, I often watch some soap operas or sport and the news again. I like the main news at six o'clock. At nine thirty, if there is a good play on BBC 2, I switch over to that channel and watch it. Then at night, I watch more films, and I usually switch off the telly at about two o'clock. I never watch TV all night. I watch TV for sixteen or seventeen hours a day. I also do some exercise every day. I take Tina, the dog, for a walk every afternoon. I don't go far, of course. I walk to the wall outside my house. I always take my portable telly, and I sit on the wall while the dog walks round in a circle.

Of course, I couldn't live this lifestyle without a good wife. She's not here now, because she's working, but she always makes my meals. We haven't got much money, you know, but we're happy. Sit down, watch the telly - you've got the world at your feet, and, in your hand, the controller. Isn't it great...?!"

I took this article about a sedentary lifestyle from a "DynaSpeak" English book for new immigrants to New Zealand. Although the text is quite funny, it actually shows a slow trigger to the problem for a person who lives like this man. When I was researching this topic, an investigation in China popped up, showing that the lack of any physical activity is actually more dangerous than smoking. It turns out that being a Couch Potato can literally kill you: sitting for hours, reading, watching television and using the most modern technology 'computer'. Not just old people lead a sedentary life but also the new generation play many different kinds of computer games, and can stay at their computers for just hours and hours and have no interest in playing any sport outside the house that would be beneficial for their development of visual or locomotor skills. It is not just the young generation; old people decide to sit because, as pensioners, they feel that when they become old, they don't need to make any effort. This lack of physical activity is one of the leading causes of anxiety, cardiovascular disease, deep vein thrombosis, depression, diabetes, colon cancer, high blood pressure, obesity, osteoporosis, and kidney stones.

So, if you feel that you have become a Couch Potato, it is never too late to get up and start moving. Good luck!

Dear Reader, As a keen promoter of reading, I'd just like to add that reading is fine so long as you make sure that you participate in other, more active activities, too! June, Editor @

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**What's on at English Center Basel in August**

**GROUP ACTIVITIES**  
THERE WILL BE 39 GROUP ACTIVITIES IN ADDITION TO THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL EVENTS

Remember to sign up at reception or telephone us on 061 269 41 41 to reserve your place

**SPAKING PRACTICE APÉRO**  
THURS. 4 AUGUST - FROM 18:00 TO 20:00

**THE ANNUAL BARBECUE**  
FRI. 26 AUGUST - FROM 18:00 UNTIL LATE

**WHAT'S HAPPENING? MEETING**  
WED. 31 AUGUST - FROM 12:00 TO 13:00

**English Center Basel is on facebook**

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