

ENGLISH CENTER BASEL WHAT'S HAPPENING?

SEPTEMBER 2011

News and Views from the *Students and Staff*

FREE ~ ISSUE 13

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Who's that?

**ANN
HEIDEKRÜGER**
Teacher

Ann is from New Zealand but lives in Germany and is married to a German, Claus. They have two sons: one who is married and lives in Auckland with his wife and two children and the other who is also married and lives with his wife and son just down the road from Ann in Steinen.

Ann regularly goes to New Zealand with her husband – usually once a year – although there had been periods in her life when she hadn't been able to travel home for years at a time due to time or money constraints.

Unfortunately, Ann's hometown, Christchurch, was recently rocked by a severe earthquake, and has been subject to aftershocks ever since. So far, there have been more than 7000 aftershocks!

Ann's career as an English teacher started just over 15 years ago here at the school. Before that, she was at home, looking after her children, and before her children arrived, she had worked as a baby's nurse and later as a nanny.

When not teaching, Ann works out at the gym four times a week, goes for walks in the nearby forest every day, looks after her garden, and reads avidly. Of course, she also enjoys time with her grandchildren and delights in finding lovely clothes for her granddaughter!

(See over to learn more about Ann.)

Top tip

Reading is so important for building vocabulary and understanding sentence structure. And, it's fun, too! Try one or more of these ideas:

Comic books are fun because the pictures help you understand the meaning and there are not that many words.

Children's picture or storybooks are by nature designed to help you learn.

Bilingual books which offer the same story in English on the left page and in your mother tongue on the right.

Easyreaders with or without Audio CDs are classic and new stories with language just right for your level.

FAMILIES & FRIENDS

by *June Winterflood – Canada*

On 26 August, English Center Basel held our annual school barbecue, and I missed it!

I was in Toronto, about to board my plane. I had booked my holiday before I knew the date of the BBQ. If you missed it too, go to our facebook page to see some photos.

A barbecue is a wonderful way to cater for a large crowd of people, but it's especially nice when those people are your family and friends. It offers a time to catch up and just be around and share a quiet time together.

That's what I cherish about our annual BBQ: sharing time with family and friends and that we all – staff and students – feel part of an extended family. Below are some of the comments written by attendees to the event:

- GREAT BARBECUE!

- Nice people. Lovely atmosphere

- Having fun, enjoying life, meeting people...

- We discussed the difference between "desert" and "dessert". Do you know it? – It was a funny and entertaining barbecue ☺

- It's my second time here. I'm very proud to still be with my friends who, in my heart, are like family.

- Thank you for the great barbecue!

- It was interesting and enjoyable and fun, too! The food was very good!

- A great atmosphere!

Money, money, money



THE SHOPPING TOURIST

by *Elena Wuethrich – Switzerland*

Last week, all around the world, we experienced a new economic crisis. The strong Swiss Franc has created a new tourist and at the same time this has a significant impact on Swiss companies.

Because our products are too expensive, more people are making journeys to Germany or to France to go shopping for goods at considerably lower prices. I, myself, went shopping in Lörrach and I was very surprised to see what we can have for 100 CHF. I think at this time many people and families have the opportunity to see the large price difference for products such as flour, oil, butter, meat, shoes, dresses, | pampers / diapers / nappies, etc. It's amazing to see that the Emmentaler and Gruyere cheese is cheaper in Lörrach than at Migros or Coop in Switzerland. You can see that the exchange rate doesn't influence the price in our country.

Yes, I agree that the people in Germany or France don't have the same salary, but we in Switzerland pay too high prices and taxes. The apartment rents, health care, transport, energy, communications, AHV, etc. are very expensive and are more than 70% of the average monthly salary. The favourable exchange rates don't influence our costs and I find that people can shop where the products are cheaper. The quality of goods in Germany or in France is also as good as in Switzerland but the goods are on offer at bargain prices. That's the global and free market... or not?

Source Picture: Internet Sharahherbertz.blogspot.com



NOTHING CAN BE DONE TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT, OR SO SOME PEOPLE SAY

by *Elisabeth Stoevesandt – Germany*

I can understand that many people feel helpless about saving our planet from ruin even though they behave carefully, but should we be so discouraged?

Of course, the attention of a single person doesn't help much.

However, it seems to me that we shouldn't give up. I'd like to report on two attractive picture books which offer examples of how to reach children, the future generation of our planet.

One of them tells the story of a wonderfully scented lime tree that gets ill from awful-smelling exhaust fumes. People realize the problem and build a street far away from the tree which recovers and will be in the middle of a lovely playground.

The other one starts by showing a clear spring. On its way, the water from the spring becomes dirtier and dirtier from industrial effluent and litter. Finally, the grey water is filled with dead fish. When we read this story to our children and their friends, they had so much pity for the "poor river" that they asked questions about how to help it.

I think it's really effective to educate children to give attention to their environment. Above all, it's better than doing nothing.

In my opinion

WHAT ABOUT YOUR DRIVING SKILLS?

by *Fabiola Sandoval – Venezuela & New Zealand*

One thing that always concerns me here in Switzerland is traffic. For decades, people have been moving around on bikes, trams, motorcycles, buses and, of course, on their own two feet: everything needs to work together, and no one should get hurt.

Recently, I found a job that put me in the centre of the situation: *Velo taxi Rikshaw Basel!* I learned how to be around traffic, take care of the people who enjoy a trip with me and safely return my *velo* to the garage at the end of the day's work. I have the rare fortune to possess driving licences from Venezuela, Denmark, New Zealand and Switzerland. These are countries where you need to be skilled in the road and not to be surprised by the sudden appearance of cars – sheep, cows, horses – or balls, because behind a ball, there are always children...not to forget blind spots in the back of the car.

About my job, I enjoy it because it is environmentally friendly, and it is easy to move around. Some people may think that is quite slow, but after sitting inside the rikshaw, everyone is surprised that it is quite fast. I have observed that every time people ride with me, everyone says hello to us, as if we were celebrities, and I think that, for our self-esteem, it is good to get this attention. I am really happy to taxi people from Basel and other countries. I can improve my skills in German or comment on Basel and many of the historical places, museums, and restaurants, or discuss the news about the world. In the end, I like to see you smile: that is my personal gratification.

About your driving skills, an effective driver, despite the basic physical tasks required, must be able to control direction, acceleration and deceleration. This knowledge needs to be sharp because in today's world, there are millions of people who drive, and the simple concept of rules can be different in everyone's mind. I believe that my driving skills are no different to the rest: I make mistakes too, but sometimes, people react quite arrogantly and irresponsibly when a simple thing like using the indicators could make everything easier for whoever is driving behind them. It is quite nice to stay a few meters away from the back of the car in front of you just to feel relaxed in case an accident happens. What about parking a car? You can find that some people don't practice enough parking a car in different situations. It looks like a puzzle, how long, too short, and the petrol runs and runs. People don't seem to care that the skill of parking really well could save time and money.

Another detail about new technology like cell phones: some people believe that their skills of driving are really good, so they feel able to take a few seconds to take a phone call. When you are quite late, but you want to look responsible, then you send a txt message. Distractions can compromise a driver's mental skills.

Driving is a mental skill, making good decisions based on factors such as road and traffic conditions, manoeuvring, hand placement and seating position. Understanding vehicle dynamics means also learning to be responsible and to respect the rules: an indicator light is not a decorative part of the car, it is something to use when you drive any type of vehicle. Anyway, be safe on Basel's roads!

HOW TO REMAIN CALM AND SERENE IN DAILY LIFE

by *Shalini Sairam – India*

Once, Lord Buddha was walking through the forest with his disciples. The long walk made him tired and he decided to rest under a shady tree. As he was thirsty, he asked one of his disciples to fetch him some water to drink. The disciple bowed before the teacher and hurried off with a jug to a nearby pond. While he was collecting water, a horse carriage passed through the pond – splashing water all over him and making the pond water muddy.

The dejected disciple walked back to his teacher empty handed. When probed by the teacher, the disciple told him the cause of his sadness. Buddha looked at him with a smiling face and asked the disciple to sit next to him. The disciple felt better.

After a while, Buddha requested the student to go and bring some water from the same pond. The student laughed to himself at his teacher's idiosyncrasy but did not dare to disobey him. The disciple walked to the pond and observed that the water was clear and fit to drink. It was incredible. The astonished disciple filled his water jug and returned to his teacher. Handing over the water jug to his teacher, the disciple described his experience to him.

The teacher said: When the muddy water remained untouched for some time, all the mud settled at the bottom leaving pure, drinkable water at the top. Similarly, negative and impure thoughts do enter a person's mind. Left alone to themselves, these thoughts soon subside and the mind becomes pure again.

If we apply the same analogy to our day-to-day life, we will be very successful. This is because we will be able to remain calm and serene irrespective of our circumstances.

Next time you are sad, angry or frustrated, just try this simple technique. Be with yourself for a few minutes without judging, analyzing or criticizing your thoughts and yourself and then see the miraculous results.

Why not write an article for

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Possible topics for the October issue

- What's your experience of the Swiss railway system?
- How will our current economic problems affect us 10 years from now?
- Send in the recipe of your favourite dish
- Write a review of an exhibition at a museum
- Autumn is knocking at the door: what things are you anticipating?
- Tell us about an artist you admire

DEADLINE for your writing: 21 SEPT 2011

Please e-mail the editor:

JUNE_WINTERFLOOD@YAHOO.COM

Exam Preparation & Group Courses

September is a busy month, because a number of new exam preparation classes as well as group courses start. It's not too late to sign up for some of them. For details, please call your consultant on 061 269 41 41.

What's on at English Center Basel

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Group activities are extra (*free*) teacher-led lessons which give you a chance to practise your speaking, listening or writing skills and give you more help in building vocabulary or in understanding grammar. See the list of activities on the school's website (www.englishcenterbasel.ch) or ask at reception for the month's programme.

Each week, sign-up sheets for the following week's lessons are posted in reception so that you can sign up for a lesson appropriate to your level. If you cannot come into the school to sign up, you are welcome to phone or e-mail the reception team and we will book you in. If you are not sure of your level, please ask a receptionist, a teacher or your consultant.

Remember to sign up at reception or telephone **061 269 41 41** to reserve your place at any of the group activities or at the following special events:

**WHAT'S HAPPENING? PRODUCTION MEETING
TUES. 27 SEPT – FROM 12:00 TO 13:00**

**SPEAKING PRACTICE APÉRO
THURS. 6 OCT – FROM 17:00 TO 19:00**

English Center Basel is on facebook

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