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# STUTTGART Citizen

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# Happy Holidays

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Dear Stuttgart Military community, it pains me to say it, but I'll be leaving for a new position in Poland this winter. After nearly 15 years as a Soldier and now a civilian working for the U.S. Army, and a lifetime filled with more moves than I have fingers and toes. You would think leaving is easy – it's never easy. I'm literally writing this letter just hours before print, because a part of me just didn't want to accept that fact.

In November, 2020, in the middle of a global pandemic, I thought "hey wouldn't this be a good time for another move," and so I applied for the position in Stuttgart. Somehow I got the job, I'd like to think it was because of my incredible capabilities as a public affairs practitioner, but I know it was because of a fortune cookie at Panda Express I opened the day before my job offer that had a similar disregard to pandemic norms, which said "International travel is in your future."

So I packed my bags from sunny (foggy) Monterey, California, and headed to somewhat less sunny Stuttgart, Germany. Would you believe that Baden-Württemberg coined itself as the 'Sunny Side of Germany.' And people say Germans don't do great comedy.

When I arrived in Stuttgart, I was in awe – of the public affairs team, the city, the garrison team, the community, this magazine I would soon become the managing editor of, everything. The team I joined was unstoppable – the gold standard for the Army.

During my two-and-a-half years in Stuttgart, we've spent 100s of hours on the radio, made a thousand

updates to the app, wrote tons of stories and taken countless photos. We rebuilt relationships across the local community, and have had a renaissance in bringing Germans back to the garrison. We responded to crises with diligence and care, and we acted as advocates for the community, silently working behind the scenes with our various agencies and mission partners to better serve you.

In these very pages we've shared stories of long lost siblings reunited, our legendary lawnmowers of Robinson Barracks (the sheep), a British person's take on the 4th of July, and I even went back to my old high school just up north in Heidelberg and wrote about what it's become since the post closed in 2014. In this issue we have great stories about German Witches, a firefighter competition and even a high schooler's take on being a military brat today (versus mine 20 years ago).

The heart of public affairs is telling the military story, our story, and I can't think of a better venue to fill that heart than the Stuttgart Citizen.

Thank you to the (dream) Stuttgart Public Affairs Team: John, Bardia, Balmina, Rachele, Geli, Peter, and of course the great AdvantiPro folks who lay out this award winning magazine: Marina, Alex and Jenny!

**I'm glad I lived here!**

**MARCUS FICHTL**

The garrison's Headquarters and Headquarters Company hosted German Soldiers and gave them an opportunity to earn American marksmanship badges on Panzer Kaserne, Böblingen on Oct. 18.

Photo by Balmina Sehra, USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs



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**Cover image:**

The Christmas market lights up on Schlossplatz in downtown Stuttgart.  
Photo by Zack Frank, U.S. Africa Command

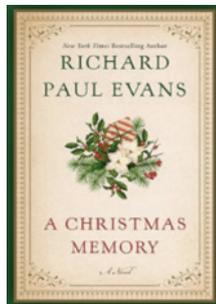
By Kieran Murphy  
SHS Career Practicum

With the days getting shorter, the weather getting colder, and a new season coming soon, there's no time like the present to get into the holiday spirit. Whether you want a book that you can curl up and get lost in, or a movie that the entire family can sit and enjoy, Patch Library has got you covered!

### A Christmas Memory

By Richard Paul Evans

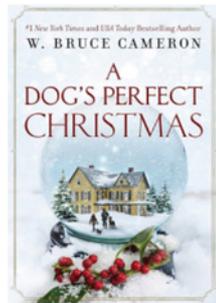
In "A Christmas Memory," Richard Paul Evans delves deep into his childhood memories to take readers back to an age when his world felt like it was falling apart, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, the light of hope can still shine.



### A Dog's Perfect Christmas

By W. Bruce Cameron

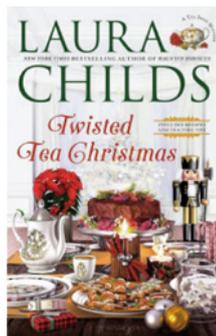
The problems fracturing the Goss family as Christmas approaches are hardly unique, though perhaps they are handling them a little differently than most people might. But then a true emergency arises, one with the potential to not only ruin Christmas, but everything holding the family together. Is the arrival of a lost puppy yet another in the string of calamities facing them, or could the little canine be just what they all need?



### Twisted Tea Christmas

By Laura Childs

Tea maven Theodosia Browning and her tea sommelier, Drayton Conneley, are catering a Victorian Christmas party at a swanky mansion in downtown Charleston. Drucilla Heyward, the hostess, is one of the wealthiest women in town. As the champagne flows and the tea steeps, Drucilla is so pleased with the reception by her

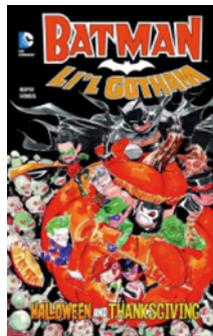


partygoers that she reveals her secret plan to Theodosia. The Grande Dame has brought the cream of Charleston society together to reveal that she is planning to give her wealth away to various charitable organizations. However, before she can make the announcement, Theodosia finds her crumpled unconscious in the hallway. It looks like the excitement has gotten to the elderly woman—except that there is a syringe sticking out of her neck.

### Batman: Halloween & Thanksgiving

By Dustin Nguyen

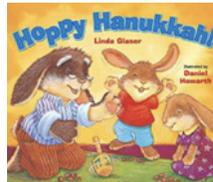
It is Halloween night and Robin is having trouble telling the difference between the costumed children and the real villains—followed by the Penguin interrupting the Gotham Thanksgiving feast.



### Hoppy Hanukkah!

By Linda Glaser & Daniel Howarth

Violet and Simon, two small bunnies, are excited about Hanukkah. Simon is ready to light all the candles and then blow them right out! But Mama and Papa explain how to celebrate Hanukkah by lighting one candle each night at sunset and placing the menorah in the window for all to see.



Grandma and Grandpa come over, too, and there are latkes and presents and a dreidel game. Linda Glaser's simple, cozy story is just right for children first learning about this holiday. Daniel Howarth's charming paintings show a happy family passing on their tradition.

### Christmas Baking

By Joyce & Laura Klynstra

This collection brings together more than 100 Christmas-inspired recipes, from holiday classics like Dark Chocolate Crinkles and Decorated Sugar Cookies to international treats like Krakelingen, Linzer Cookies, and Alfajores. From festive and fancy to quick and easy recipes.

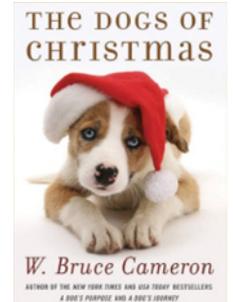


Many favorites will spark fond baking memories, and new flavors will create fresh family traditions.

### The Dogs of Christmas

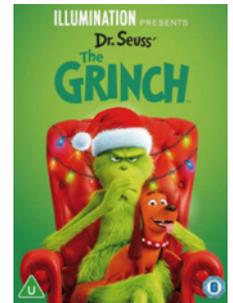
By W. Bruce Cameron

While nursing a broken heart, Josh Michaels is outraged when a neighbor abandons his very pregnant dog, Lucy, at Josh's Colorado home. But Josh can't resist Lucy's soulful brown eyes, and though he's never had a dog before, he's determined to do the best he can for Lucy—and her soon-to-arrive, bound-to-be-adorable puppies. Soon in over his head, Josh calls the local animal shelter for help, and meets Kerri, a beautiful woman with a quick wit and a fierce love for animals. As Kerri teaches Josh how to care for Lucy's tiny puppies and gets them ready to be adopted through the shelter's "Dogs of Christmas" program, Josh surprises himself by falling for her. But he's fallen even harder for his new furry family, which has brought incredible joy into Josh's life.



### The Grinch (2019) (DVD)

The Grinch tells the story of a cynical grump who goes on a mission to steal Christmas, only to have his heart changed by a young girl's generous holiday spirit.



### Kung Fu Panda Holiday (DVD)

As preparations for the Winter Feast build, Po is caught between his obligations as the Dragon Warrior and his family holiday traditions.



### A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving (DVD)

When Peppermint Patty and friends show up at Charlie Brown's on Thanksgiving unexpectedly, Chuck, with the help of Linus, Snoopy, and Woodstock, shows them the true meaning of Thanksgiving.



Cover images courtesy of publishers

# Chaplain's Corner



Photo by Deamerwha studio/Shutterstock.com



Photo by Erce/Shutterstock.com

By Ch. (Col.) David Curtin  
USAG Stuttgart Chaplain

Who you gonna call when you're down and feeling blue?  
Who you gonna call when you don't know what to do?  
Who you gonna call when life has lost its meaning?  
Who you gonna call when everyone is screaming?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call when your joy is great, unbounded?  
Who you gonna call when you find your fears unfounded?  
Who you gonna call when you have good news to share?  
Who you gonna call when you've had a little scare?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call when you miss that prized promotion?  
Who you gonna call when your life is all commotion?  
Who you gonna call when your kids just make you mad?  
Who you gonna call when your spouse has made you sad?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call when you're looking for communion?  
Who you gonna call when you've had a sweet reunion?  
Who you gonna call when your heart just wants to sing?  
Who you gonna call when your tithe you want to bring?

*Call your Chaplain.*

## "Who You Gonna Call?"

(inspired by the song, "Must Be Santa")

Who you gonna call when you have an SIR?  
Who you gonna call when you don't know where you are?  
Who you gonna call when doubt just plagues your mind?  
Who you gonna call when the answer you just can't find?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call if you think faith's but a joke?  
Who you gonna call if your religion's being woke?  
Who you gonna call if you're a skeptic through and through?  
Who you gonna call if the chaplain's not for you?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call when the battle begins to rage?  
Who you gonna call when you're locked up in a cage?  
Who you gonna call when you come up on the blotter?  
Who you gonna call when they say your profile fodder?

*Call your Chaplain.*

Who you gonna call when the doctor shakes his head?  
Who you gonna call when you're dying in your bed?  
Who you gonna call when the tears begin to flow?  
Who you gonna call when they say it's time to go?

*Call your Chaplain.*

### Epilogue

*And if your chaplain  
can't fit the bill,  
Take a moment and  
be still  
Lift your eyes to the  
God above  
He will shelter you in  
his love.*

*The chaplain represents  
the king*

*The chaplain's not the  
end the thing  
So join your chaplains  
in daily prayer  
Their God does hear  
you, this I swear.*

*Be blessed USAG  
Stuttgart, from your  
Chaplain Section  
God be with you till our  
resurrection.*

*And all God's people  
said "Amen."*

*More information about  
the garrison Religious Support  
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Mechell Martinez poses behind the Star Spangled Banner with her family and Lt. Col. Korneliya Waters, who swore her in.



# A DEVOTED MOTHER AND WIFE FINDS HER CAREER IN THE MILITARY

Mechell Martinez took the plunge and joined the military at 32, encouraging others that it is never too late to change directions when it comes to your career.



Mechell Martinez raises her right arm and swears into the U.S. Army.

Story and photos by **Balmina Sehra**  
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Seizing the opportunity after feeling stuck at an entry-level job, Mechell Martinez was sworn into the military at Army Community Service on Panzer Kaserne, where she worked as an admin assistant until recently.

“I felt lost and stuck in my career. I wanted to have the possibility to find myself,” said Martinez.

After advising with her recruiter, Sgt. 1st Class Richard Ferguson, Martinez is now looking at her new career path in human resources, but now in a green camouflage, and feels like she finally gets a fresh start to her career.

“The most rewarding part is knowing how much the Army will help them accomplish their goals and aspirations.”

“Everyone joins for different reasons,” said Ferguson. “The most rewarding part is knowing how much the Army will help them accomplish their goals and aspirations.”

Equipped with the help and support of her family, Martinez has everything she needs to face the Army’s infamous Basic Training. The ten-week course will take her away from her family life and put her through some of the most vigorous physical and mental training the military has to offer.

“Everybody was really supportive of me joining the military, especially my spouse. My 13-year-old daughter Monica even helped me with the math part of the ASVAB,” said Martinez.

Martinez, who was adopted by her aunt, a military spouse, experienced military life growing up.

She continued that journey as a military spouse herself after marrying her husband, a Sailor.

This time, however, she will be able to experience military life firsthand as an active duty service member.

Martinez is looking forward to the opportunity to learn and grow as a person.

“I can’t wait to be addressed as ‘Martinez’ and receive orders,” she said. “This will be the mark of a new journey for me, hopefully a lifetime journey.”

Her daughter is already looking forward to her mother’s graduation, “I can’t wait to see you in your uniform,” Monica said after her mother was sworn in.

After raising her right hand and being sworn into the military by Lt. Col. Korneliya Waters, the new recruit turned to Waters and said, “I want to be like you one day.”

For more information on how to enlist visit [goarmy.com](http://goarmy.com) or check out more information on the USAG Stuttgart App.



Martinez receiving flowers after being sworn into the military.

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Witches scour the Stuttgart Fasching parade looking for opportunities to make mischief. Photo by Balmina Sehra

# Fantastic Witches

## and where to find them: Germany edition



By Balmina Sehra  
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs



Germany has a long and fascinating history with witches, which can be traced back to the 17th century to the infamous Würzburg witch trials.

This fascination mixed with fear of witchcraft have left a mark on Germany, and you can see these traces in countless fairy tales as well in various different celebrations and festivities people take part in today.

So lets grab our broomsticks and explore where witches are still very much part of German modern life.

### In German fairy tales:

Hunchback, crooked nose, and a mischievous smile are typical features of witches depicted in a lot of German fairy tales. Their characters are also often depicted as evil and sinister, only existing to cause harm to others. One of the most famous and well-known witches is featured in the German fairy tale Hansel and Gretel, one of the stories collected and published by the Grimm brothers in the 1800s.

You may remember the story, of how a witch owned a house made out of candy and lured children into it, fattening them up and then trying to eat them. Legends say that this fear of possible cannibalism stems from the German experience in the Thirty Years' War, when severe poverty and famine raged. Since most of the Grimm stories were old folk tales, it is often hard to know the exact basis of stories handed down over generations via oral tradition. However, the moral of this story is an unmistakable one that is still accurate to this day: don't trust strangers with candy.

### In the German Fasching celebrations:

Another place to seek witches is during the 'fifth season' in Germany, carnival ("Fasching") season. Fasching is a celebration dating back to the 18th century. People believed that winter was a product of evil spirits, so they tried to scare them away by wearing scary costumes and making loud noises.

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The season is traditionally declared open on Nov. 11 and continues until Ash Wednesday the following year, with the celebrations peaking in the days prior.

There are various Fasching clubs in Stuttgart. Some are solely witchy clubs and are based on true historical events related to witches. These include the Birkhe-Bronna Hexa e.V., Narrenzunft Cannstatter Stäffles Hexa e.V.; and the Sudhexen, to name a few.

If you find yourselves a Fasching parade one day, make sure to stay clear of the witches, as it is Fasching tradition to tease the attendees by rubbing black chalk in their faces and taking their hair bands. The witches are known to be a little more crafty and mean, so bear that in mind next time you watch a Fasching parade.

### In the German Hexen Nacht, also known as Walpurgisnacht:

And lastly, you can look for witches at the Walpurgisnacht (Walpurgis Night) on April 30. Halloween and Walpurgisnacht have a lot in common as they both originate from pagan festivities celebrating the changing seasons.

Its name is derived from Saint Walpurga, a British nun, who came to Germany to Christianize the Saxons.

According to legend, it was believed that witches held their Sabbath on April 30, when they would gather around to perform and exercise their witchcraft together, as well as dance. To counteract that, ordinary people would gather together, light bonfires, and make loud noises (similar to Fasching), to ensure that they kept evil spirits away.

The biggest Walpurgisnacht celebration is in the Harz region of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, with more than twenty different events in close proximity. The most prominent are in Bad Grund, Braunlage, Hahnenklee, Sankt Andreasberg, Schierke and Thale.

Although this holiday is still celebrated today, traditions have changed a little, with it serving more as a way to get together and have fun, rather than scaring away any form of evil spirits. People like to celebrate by dressing up in costumes (mostly as witches or devils), lighting bonfires, dancing, and sometimes even playing pranks on each other.



The classic tale of Hansel and Gretel stems back to fears of cannibalism during the Thirty Years War.

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# VANILLA CRESCENTS VANILLE- KIPFERL

If you're looking for a way to plunge wholeheartedly into a sensory Christmas experience, try this recipe! These cookies are a feast for the eyes, smell amazing, and taste wonderful.



By Gemma McGowan  
Contributing writer

Photo by Victoria P/Shutterstock.com

## The Best Vanillekipferl

Every first weekend of December our house is filled with the most incredible cookie aroma coming from the kitchen. My German husband makes these cookies every year like clockwork! The recipe is very special because it was passed down to him from his mother, and it is a wonderful way to remember her around the holidays. Every time I share these cookies with friends and co-workers, it is a huge hit! Needless to say, these are hands-down my favorite holiday cookies! I hope you give them a try at your own home, and then enjoy them with your friends and family.

### For approx. 55 Kipferl

- Preparation time: 1 hr
- Cooling time: 30 mins
- Baking time: 20 mins

### Ingredients:

- 200g soft butter
- 70g sugar
- 100g ground almonds
- 250g flour
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 tablespoon rum (or instead milk)
- 50g powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons vanilla sugar
- Extra flour

### Directions:

Mix the butter and the sugar. Mix almonds, flour, and salt and together with the rum, and stir it into the butter until you get a nice smooth dough. Wrap it in aluminum foil or plastic wrap and put it into the fridge for 30 mins.

Mix the powdered sugar with the vanilla sugar on a plate. Set the oven for 190 C (375 F) and lay out 2 baking trays with baking paper.

Take a portion of the dough and roll it on a bit of flour to a roll of 2 inches. Cut each roll into slices of 0.5 inches. From those make bent rolls with the typical pointed tips (looks a bit like a half moon) and place them next to each other on the trays.

The trays go in the middle of the oven (one at a time) and bake each for about 10 mins until they get light brown. Take them off the trays and roll them in the vanilla sugar while they are still hot.

.....  
*Author's Profile: Gemma is a 'A Jersey Broad Abroad' blogger and podcaster living in Wiesbaden, Germany. She is either found spending time with her family or planning her next adventure.*



Photo by Martin Rattenberger/Shutterstock.com

## Road to success paved with persistence, hard work for LRC Stuttgart employee from Cameroon



Patience Fru Fomanka.

Story and photos by Cameron Porter  
405th Army Field Support Brigade

It took the native of Cameroon many years to achieve her personal and professional goals, but persistence and hard work paid off when she received a job offer from the U.S. Army to work at Logistics Readiness Center Stuttgart on Panzer Kaserne in Böblingen as a local national employee.

Patience Fru Fomanka was an accounting assistant for a U.S.-based international company in her home country before moving to Germany. Upon moving, she first took a job at the Panzer Hotel doing housekeeping, and she also worked at the Exchange food court before getting her first job offer with the Army as a dining facility attendant at the Originals Café on Panzer. After a short time there, her accounting experience and education level landed her a position at LRC Stuttgart's property book office as a supply technician.

"I really like the learning environment here at LRC Stuttgart and the property book office. I like expanding my knowledge, which this job certainly affords me," said Fru Fomanka.

"I'm an accounting assistant by profession. I have a national diploma from Cameroon in

accounting, and I worked in the accounting field for about 10 years before coming to Germany,” Fomanka said. Originally from Bamenda, in the northwest of the country, she lived and worked in the capital city of Yaoundé before moving to Germany in 2011.

“I enjoy interacting with and helping our customers. Basically, I make sure they maintain their property books in accordance with all applicable regulations, and I help them with their inventories,” Fru Fomanka said. “We have a wonderful team here at the property book office as well as a very good supervisor. The work environment is conducive, we help each other, and the team spirit is high.”

The road to get to this point was long and hard, though, said the 52-year-old mother of three. Fru Fomanka needed to take care of her son and the two children of her late sister. And her husband – who is also from Cameroon – was living and working in Germany. Initially, they spent much time apart in a long-distance relationship but managed to stay committed.

“We got married while I was still living in Cameroon, and I was coming to Germany to visit him during my holidays. I was traveling a lot,” Fru Fomanka said. “We finally decided that I should join him in Germany, which was absolutely the right decision.”

And accepting a job offer with the 405th Army Field Support Brigade’s LRC Stuttgart was another right decision, she said. In addition to landing her dream job, her son is now studying mathematics and information technology in Heidelberg. Her late sister’s son – whom she loves dearly and considers her own – is now working on his master’s degree in Estonia. And her late sister’s daughter – who is also under her care and love – is currently still in high school in Cameroon.

“I want to thank my team at LRC Stuttgart for helping me and supporting me. I’m really happy the Army gave me and my family this opportunity after a long time struggling. To finally have something like this, I’m very thankful,” Fru Fomanka said.

The LRC Stuttgart property book office, or PBO, conducts cyclic inventories on a quarterly and annual basis as well as sensitive item inventories every month. The PBO also manages and assists units with Financial Liability Investigation of Property Loss, or FLIPL, reports, used when a property book item is lost or damaged.

LRC Stuttgart is one of eight LRCs under the command and control of the 405th AFSB. LRCs execute installation logistics support and services to include supply, maintenance, and transportation as well as clothing issue facility operations, hazardous material management, personal property and household goods, passenger travel, non-tactical vehicle and garrison equipment management, and property book operations. When it comes to providing day-to-day installation services, LRC Stuttgart directs, manages, and coordinates a variety of operations and activities in support of U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart.

LRC Stuttgart reports to the 405th AFSB, which is assigned to U.S. Army Sustainment Command and under the operational control of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command, U.S. Army Europe and Africa. The brigade is headquartered in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and provides materiel enterprise support to U.S. Forces throughout Europe and Africa – providing theater sustainment logistics; synchronizing acquisition, logistics and technology; and leveraging U.S. Army Materiel Command’s materiel enterprise to support joint forces.

.....  
 For more information on the 405th AFSB, visit the official website at [www.afsbeurope.army.mil](http://www.afsbeurope.army.mil) and the official Facebook site at [www.facebook.com/405thAFSB](http://www.facebook.com/405thAFSB).



Patience Fru Fomanka working on the garrison property book on Panzer Kaserne.

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# WARRIOR PRIDE

By William Steddum  
SHS Career Practicum

Since its inception in 2011, the Stuttgart Warrior Pride Challenge has exemplified garrison's dedication to fostering wellness, building social ties, and promoting risk-free behavior for service members in Stuttgart's military community.

Junior service members voluntarily sign up for the SWPC through the Army Substance Abuse Program, pledging to abstain from alcohol while partaking in their chosen Morale Welfare and Recreation events and tours. In return receiving substantial discounts of 50-75% on adventures throughout Europe. This dual commitment reflects a shared dedication to making responsible choices and fostering a culture of pride and camaraderie while saving big.

Bala Fischer, ASAP manager at Stuttgart Garrison, says the SWPC program helps service members "get out of their nest and meet people with common interests" as well as to "learn to have fun without alcohol". Not only does the program incentivize junior enlisted service members to get out of their barracks and discover connections within their community, but it also helps "reduce the stigma" of reaching out for help said Fischer. He describes it as a three-prong approach to reduce high-risk behaviors.

"To learn to have fun without alcohol, to meet their peer group who can have common interests, and to learn about what the garrison's various agencies can do for you," he said.

"The trips are just endless, if you think it, we probably have it", said Tussanee McCombs, MWR Tours coordinator. "Adventure tours such as nature hikes, ziplining, skiing, mountain climbing, and bike tours only begin to describe the vast array of opportunities offered, not to mention leisure tours to cities and areas of interest around Europe."

McCombs said while some are skeptical of the SWPC adventure tours, nine out of ten people come back to her with glowing reviews.

"They tell me 'I really, really love it and I'm gonna make sure that my community knows about it,'" she said.

If you are interested in signing up for the SWPC program, it could not be easier to do so, the only prerequisites being that you must be E-7 and below. First, come into the USAG Stuttgart ASAP office,



Members of the Stuttgart military community prepare for a day of high adventure with MWR Tours.

Photo by MWR Tours

located Bldg 2948, 2nd floor, on Panzer Kaserne, to sign your Warrior Pride Pledge and complete a quick survey. After this, take your SWPC Membership card, which is valid for three months, to the MWR tour office, located Bldg. 2915-312B on Panzer Kaserne, to sign up for any upcoming SWPC event. Once you have selected your desired event, pay the deeply discounted price of up to 75% off on adventure tours and 50% on leisure tours. Throughout the trip, service members have the opportunity to display their integrity by upholding their pledge to sobriety, and as long as this pledge is honored, service members may take advantage of the SWPC-sponsored MWR events on a monthly basis and may indefinitely renew their membership every three months.



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# American Dreams: A new life in the USA

By Marcus Fichtl

USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

More than 1.8 million Germans from what we now call Baden-Württemberg emigrated to the U.S. since the late 17th century. Some would become American icons like Emanuel Leutze from nearby Schwäbisch Gmünd whose 1851 painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, may arguably be the most iconic image depicting America's founding, or Wendelin Grimm who brought with him alfalfa seed that was as hardy and stubborn as any German. Grimm's seeds would turn Minnesota and the United States into a dairy juggernaut.

But many were just ordinary folks looking for a better life, a fulfillment of a dream, be that by finding prosperity, searching for adventure or escaping religious persecution. From Nov. 17, Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg, a museum focused on telling the political history of Germany's southwest, will share the stories of 32 of those 1.8 million immigrants in an exhibit that will be open until next July called *American Dreams: A new life in the USA*.

"We're using this exhibit to explore the larger concept of the American dream in relation to immigration and emigration... and how they contributed to our understanding of the what the American Dream is today," said Dr. Christina Ziegler-McPherson curator of the *American Dreams* exhibit.

Ziegler-McPherson said the exhibit is broken down into multiple components, America as a place of political and religious freedom, a place of bounty and one of opportunity. The stories range from success to ones of failure, but all share a "willingness to take a leap into something that really is unknown."

The stories are supplemented by more than 200 original objects including a golden nugget, Emanuel



Emanuel Leutze's 1861 painting 'The Settlement of Maryland by Lord Baltimore' will be on display at the exhibit.

Leutze's 1861 painting *The Settlement of Maryland by Lord Baltimore*, and Wendelin Grimm's alfalfa chest.

"Grimm brought a at least 15 to 20 pounds of alfalfa seeds in this wooden chest," said Ziegler-McPherson.

Assisting with some of the educational programs for the exhibit, which includes lectures, theater productions, guided tours and even a beer tasting, is

Stuttgart's Deutsch-Amerikanisches Zentrum – an organization dedicated to the mutual understanding of both nations.

"We're excited to cooperate with the Haus der Geschichte for the event and educational programs... and explore the idea of the American dream," said Christiane Pyka, DAZ director.

Ziegler-McPherson said the exhibit also takes a long look at how those migrating clashed with those already there.

"What was a German-American dream was perhaps an American Indian nightmare," she said.

Ziegler-McPherson added that the exhibit examines the German immigrant influence in the Dakota Wars but also how other migrants acted as diplomats and translators in Pennsylvania and California.

When people visit the exhibit Ziegler-McPherson hopes they walk away with an understanding of how real the idea of the American dream is.

"The American dream is not a cliché. It's actually a very complex idea that has very significant meaning to millions of people, and for these Germans a motivation for migration itself," she said.

Today, 46 million Americans claim German heritage.

*The Haus der Geschichte Baden-Württemberg can be found at Konrad-Adenauer-Straße 16, located behind Upper Schlossgarten. The American Dreams exhibit will be open from Nov. 17, 2023 to July 28, 2024.*

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By Paul Hughes

USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

# 10 things you didn't know about Christmas in Germany

The holidays are a wonderful time of year in your host nation. Small twinkly lights illuminate the post-card-perfect Christmas Markets, the smell of Gluhwein, spices and food waft through the air, and the local brass band plays music at your town square.

It's not just the Christmas markets - mimicked, but never bettered anywhere in the world - that make the holidays unique in the land of the Tannenbaum.

## 1. Christmas markets

While the magic of German Christmas markets has spread all around the world, it's a tradition which was first derived from Germany. It's thought the origins of Christmas markets can be traced back to the German-speaking part of Europe in the Middle Ages, and nowadays, nearly every small town and village will have one alongside the much larger cities. There really is nothing better than ice skating, followed by Gluhwein (mulled wine) and a Bratwurst at one of Germany's best markets, like Stuttgart, Tübingen or Munich.

## 2. Only 78% of the people in Germany celebrate Christmas, compared to 93% of Americans

Germany is a largely Christian country, while the Holiday spirit is alive and well, the season identifies less-and-less with its church-going



Locals explore the Stuttgart Christmas Market. Photo by Balmina Sehra



Photo by Olga Zarynska/Shutterstock.com

traditions. A year-on-year decline in people identifying as Christian and declining church numbers means only 10% of those identifying as Christian actually attend church, compared to 41% in the US.

### 3. "Stockings" are opened on 6th December

Children in Germany don't have to wait until Christmas morning to begin enjoying the fruits of their hung-up stockings or more accurately - laid out shoes.

On the night of December 5, the eve of Saint Nicholas Day, children clean and polish their boots, and leave them outside the door before going to sleep. The next morning they'll find their shoes full of candy, gifts and other goodies from St. Nicholas - yes, that St. Nick!

### 4. The Christmas tree (Tannenbaum) is German

Over 400 years ago, in pre-Christian times families often decorated their homes with evergreen branches during the Winter Solstice.

Thought to keep away ghosts and evil spirits, the tradition of a decorated indoor tree has been linked to Martin Luther. The 16th-century Protestant reformer was inspired by the glistening stars after walking home one winter evening. To recreate the scene for his family, he set up a tree, complete with lit candles, in his living room.

To this date, some German households still use candles in place of Christmas lights. While alcohol + candles + flammable trees is a surefire way to spice up the danger on Christmas Day, we recommend you leave the fireworks at the dinner table with your out-of-town uncle.

### 5. The Christmas tree only goes up Christmas Eve

One of the largest departures from other countries' tree traditions is that the tree is around for a lot less time. In Germany trees are put up on December 24th. While this varies more nowadays, it is still tradition in many homes. Meanwhile, the rest of the home is decorated well beforehand - it's just the centerpiece which is saved until last.

### 6. Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve is the day when it ALL happens in Germany. Called Heiliger Abend (Holy Night), it is a day full of celebrations for Germans. As with US traditions, households spend the day decorating the tree (which only goes up on Christmas Eve), preparing food for the family, and sprucing up the home. As soon as the night draws in, households will gather around the tree and sing traditional Christmas hymns, like O'Tannenbaum (Oh Christmas Tree) or Stille Nacht (Silent Night).

In the evening it is time to exchange gifts. Children must leave the room while the 'Christkind' (Christ Child) delivers the presents. After delivery, a bell will be rung, signalling to the children the Christkind's departure, and the time to open gifts. No groggy 5 a.m. Christmas mornings in Germany!

### 7. Krampus Night (Krampus Nacht)

Germans love scaring kids as much as the next country, and why should the children get all the fun? Someone in the 17th century decided to pair

Krampus - a horned, tailed, fanged devil, with jolly old St. Nick.

Krampus - popularised by Hollywood movies in the 2000's - is believed to accompany St. Nicholas to teach naughty children a hard lesson.

In Southern Bavaria, for example, men in incredible Krampus costumes walk the streets on St. Nicholas Night, and are sometimes invited into homes by parents of particularly naughty children.

### 8. Christmas is time for mulled everything

As much as Americans like to add Pumpkin to everything during the holidays, Germans love to mull every conceivable drink. Mulled red wine, mulled white wine, mulled cider, even mulled Tequila.

You will see it popularly and prominently at Christmas markets and festivals by the name Glühwein - literally "glow wine." Nothing will warm you up quicker than these hot spiced cups of wine, which, since you will pay a deposit for the mug it is served in, make nice souvenirs as they are often personalised for that market. For added warmth ask for yours "Mit Schuss" for an extra shot of amaretto, or brandy.

### 9. A post office in Germany will physically respond to letters to Santa

For the last 20 years in the town of Engelskirchen, thousands of letters have been opened from children around the world at Christmas time.

It started in 1985 when post offices began wondering what to do with letters addressed to the Christkind - the person in Germany responsible for delivering Christmas presents. Deutsche Post settled on sending them to Engelskirchen - literally "The Angels Church." During the holidays, they are so inundated with letters, they even rent an office for their team of up to 12 people, who physically answer EVERY letter sent to them.

### 10. The Advent calendar is another German invention

Like many other things in our list, the Advent calendar was also invented here in Germany.

It can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, when German Protestants began marking the days of Advent by burning a candle for the day or marking walls and doors with a line of chalk. It wasn't until the early 1900's when the paper advent calendar as we know it was created. Today many Advent calendars contain chocolate treats behind the paper panels.

And there you have it, ten things you (probably) didn't know about Christmas in Germany. Why not grab one of the ideas above and add it to your holiday traditions as a way to remember your time in Germany.



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# Be Safe this Winter!



Graphic by Igor Link/Shutterstock.com

By Rachael Long

USAG Stuttgart Safety Manager

Fall and winter bring unique safety hazards. Some hazards – like winter driving – can vary based on location and severity. Other hazards arise from activities that occur at certain times of the year. These activities, such as attending fests/Christmas markets, changing the clocks back, cooking or stringing holiday lights, can bring hazards that we all should take care to avoid.

## Fest/Christmas Markets

Make a safety plan. Have a transportation plan, whether you're going with a designated driver, the train or a bus. Travel with a buddy and make sure you don't get separated. Establish meeting points in case of separation or emergency. Keep emergency numbers in mind: 110 for police and 112 for fire/medical emergency. Register with the AtHoc Mass Notification Warning System. Pace yourself throughout the events. Stay hydrated and drink alcohol responsibly!

## Winter Tires

In Germany, remember “von 0 bis 0” (from 0 to 0) – which means October until Ostern (Easter). Winter tires are required to display the Alpine-Symbol (a 3-peak mountain with a snowflake in the center). Tires marked with M+S and produced prior to 2018, are still approved until Sept. 30, 2024. The law also apply to motorbikes, trucks and buses. Tread depth should be at least 1.6 millimeters required – best to have 4 millimeters. How to check? Place a one € coin in tread – should not be able to see golden edge.

## Changing the Clocks/“Fall Back”

Daylight saving time for Central European Time (CET) ends on October 29th 2023. Use this time to test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Purge medicine cabinets. Prepare winter emergency kits for vehicles.

## WINTER CAR CARE KIT:

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- Jumper Cables
- Hazard Triangle
- Reflective Safety Vest
- First Aid Kit with Two Face Masks
- Windshield Washer Fluid
- Snow Chain



Graphic by Michael Kraus/Shutterstock.com

## Home Maintenance

If trimming branches, bushes, or other foliage – be sure to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Use caution on ladders. Pay attention to fire prevention. Check fire extinguishers. Develop and practice a fire escape plan. Consider adding fire escape ladders to higher floors.

## Slips, Trips, Falls

Keep walking surfaces clean and dry. Use non-slip mats in entrance areas. When taking the stairs, be sure to use the handrails. Never rush and don't skip stairs. Avoid distracted walking – put the phones away (no texting and walking). Stay focused on surroundings. Wear the proper footwear for the task.

## Motorcycles

If riding this autumn, be sure your prepared for the ride! Wear PPE. Watch for more active wildlife. Beware of poor visibility – wear bright colors and reflective gear. Beware of traction surprises. Frost and leaves can be as slick as ice.

## Holiday Cooking

Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking — keep an eye on the food. Keep floors clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags. Make sure smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button. Keep a fire extinguisher handy (out of cupboard). Ensure its charged and ready for emergencies. Have a home evacuation plan and be sure to discuss it with your guests.

## Holiday Decorations

Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, or candles. Ensure the tree is not blocking an exit. Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use. Replace lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Turn off tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

## Winter Sports

Use suitable equipment, ensure it is in good condition. Take training or refresh skills as necessary. Stay on marked ski trails! Stay hydrated (avoid alcohol). Watch out for others – no earbuds/headphones. Ice skate in official areas only – no rivers, lakes or ponds. Supervise children while sledding. Avoid high traffic areas. Never pull a sled behind a vehicle.

# What to do when SNOW comes to Stuttgart

By Bardia Khajenoori

USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

Baden-Württemberg may be known as “the sunny side of Germany,” but the winter months can bring snowy and icy weather conditions that impact USAG Stuttgart's operating status as we strive to keep community members safe.

Decisions on inclement weather delays or closures are made by the garrison commander based on information and recommendations from staff and mission partners soon after the possibility of potentially hazardous conditions is identified. Official weather reports, anticipated conditions, and the state of on-post roads and snow/ice removal crews are taken into account.

The easiest way to check if a weather-related delay or closure is in effect is by using the “Roads/Weather” button on the main menu of the USAG Stuttgart mobile app. The button opens a page that advises whether normal operations are planned or if there is a reporting delay or Closure.

Aside from normal operations, delays may be issued in which the report times for employees and DoDEA students are pushed back by approximately two hours, or services may be preemptively

canceled. Should the weather take a turn for the worst over the course of the day, an early closure is also possible.

Notifications about closures or delayed reporting are provided via phone, email and text message to personnel registered in the garrison's ALERT! system; StuttgartCitizen.com; the garrison Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/USAGarrisonStuttgart/>); and through the USAG Stuttgart mobile app.

Stuttgart's on-post road condition status is determined by the Military Police based on a set of criteria identified in Army in Europe Regulation 385-55. Changes are updated 24/7 by members of the Installation Operations Center. The current status can be found at <https://home.army.mil/roads/>, which is linked through the 'Roads/Weather' button on the USAG Stuttgart mobile app, or by calling (0)7031-15-3744.

Some activities, such as religious services, do not take place when road conditions are rated Red or Black, regardless of whether a garrison-wide delayed start or early release is in effect. Ultimately, you are responsible for your own safety. Weather conditions can vary significantly across the Stuttgart region, and circumstances near your residence may be better or worse than those assessed by the garrison. If a base-wide delay or closure is not implemented, but you have concerns about your ability to safely travel to



Graphic by Kim Kuperkova/Shutterstock.com

work, you must engage with your supervisor or chain of command.

When it comes to snow and ice on your vehicle, you are required by German law to remove as much as possible before driving – particularly from windows, mirrors and headlights. You must have maximum visibility — no peephole driving — and that your vehicle does not present a hazard to other drivers. If accumulation is heavy, also remove snow from the roof, trunk and hood so that large chunks do not fly off towards other drivers. Police can stop you and impose fines if your vehicle is determined unsafe to you or others.

Unless the contract says otherwise, off-post residents in leased housing and private rentals are responsible for snow and ice removal in their driveways and on public sidewalks bordering their homes. Permitted de-icing products, such as sand and Tiefen-Eisfrei, widely available. For on-post residents, these are available from the Self-Help, or SHIP, stores on Patch and Robinson Barracks. For more information about what Self-Help offers, visit the "Housing" or "Maintenance" menus of the USAG Stuttgart mobile app.

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# From the historian — Rebuilding Through Occupation



Buses drop kids at one of the first American schools in Stuttgart. Photo by U.S. Army

By Col. Christopher Libertini

Office of the Command Historian, U.S. European Command

Near the end of World War II, Stuttgart's kasernes continued to support Nazi Germany's war machine right up until Allied forces literally arrived outside their gates. Soldiers of the French First Army were the first to reach the city's center on April 21-22, 1945, arriving just hours before American soldiers of the U.S. Seventh Army approached Bad Cannstatt from the east. Following Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, the Allies formally established occupation zones that divided Württemberg and the neighboring state of Baden into northern and

southern sections. In keeping with plans developed at the Yalta Conference, both Stuttgart and Karlsruhe were eventually assigned to the American sector. After further administrative reshuffling, the French formally withdrew their troops on July 8, 1945, and the American 100th Infantry Division assumed all occupation duties in the city and surrounding area.

The division's headquarters was located at the Villa Reitzenstein, now the official seat of Baden-Württemberg's State Ministry and Minister-President. Its units occupied former German Army installations including Kurmärker Kaserne in Vaihingen (today's Patch Barracks) and Hindenburg-Ludendorff Kaserne in Böblingen (now Panzer Kaserne). After initial occupation measures were implemented, the Stuttgart Military Community was formally established with its headquarters in Bad Cannstatt, at the small post later known as McGee Barracks. Almost a year later, in the fall of 1946, the garrison headquarters was redesignated as the Stuttgart Military Post, and its staff moved to the Vaihingen kaserne. During this time, it was in charge of all American units located within its boundaries, which encompassed a very large geographic area. Sub-post headquarters were established in downtown Stuttgart and across the far-flung communities of Esslingen, Ludwigsburg, Heilbronn, Schwäbisch Hall, Göppingen, and Ulm.

The mission of the U.S. military in the area was primarily focused on the transition from wartime to peacetime. American combat units that had ended the war here, such as those of the 100th Infantry Division, handed over occupation and policing duties to the newly created U.S. Constabulary and its specially trained personnel. Stuttgart also hosted the U.S. military governor of Württemberg-Baden, who was responsible for overseeing the rebuilding of civil and economic institutions in a region greatly devastated by the war. The many posts across the area contributed to these efforts. They also worked to assist international agencies, such as the United Nations, in supporting tens of thousands of displaced persons, which included former French, Polish, Ukrainian, and other prisoners of war, as well as concentration camp survivors.

More organizational changes followed in the succeeding years. In January 1948, headquarters for the Stuttgart Military Post moved from Vaihingen to Ludwigsburg, where it occupied the office building of a renowned German housing and loan company called GdF. This shift was made to create room for the headquarters of the U.S. Constabulary, which was moving in from Heidelberg.

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Courtesy Photo

More adjustments came a year later, as the staff of the Stuttgart Military Post moved to Flandern Kaserne, soon renamed as Robinson Barracks; this was where the garrison headquarters would remain for several decades. These local shifts came as bigger changes were taking place across Europe, and as the American government and military were responding to the challenges of a newly emerging Cold War.

A less-remembered turning point during the occupation period was the decision of the U.S. War Department early on to allow family members to accompany American military personnel during their time in Germany. The monotony of occupation duty compared to the intensity of combat that had so recently ended led to sagging morale among many G.I.s. Back on the home front, wives and families were similarly unhappy as they waited with growing anticipation for their loved ones to return from duty overseas once the war was over. Unhappy with the slow pace of demobilization, a group of 20 wives memorably intercepted General Dwight D. Eisenhower in January 1946 as he was heading into a Congressional hearing to report on his tenure as the new Army Chief of Staff. In front of a crowd of news

reporters, they called for their husbands to be sent back home as soon as possible.

Instead, the War Department came up with a different solution that would allow families to join military personnel overseas. It was hoped this action would help to reverse the flagging morale and other such challenges that were seeping into the occupation force. At the same time, it would present a softer, more engaging image of American culture to the German people. Just a few months after the public demonstration that had caught General Eisenhower off guard, the first wave of family "goodwill ambassadors," a group of 379 wives and children, arrived at the port of Bremerhaven in northern Germany. Others soon followed. Within a year, there was a marked improvement in troop morale, as well in relationships with the local populace. Thereafter, the numbers of family members continued to grow until, in 1970, there were 143,932 dependents living in West Germany alone, which accounted for nearly half of all dependents living overseas. The arrival of families also brought about the establishment of dependent schools, community service organizations, and much of the support network that still works to make garrisons like Stuttgart a home away from home.



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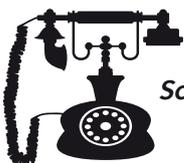
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The second obstacle of the Firefighter Combat Challenge has firefighters hoist a 42 lb. hose five stories.

# Inaugural Firefighter competition sparks friendship

Story and photos by Marcus Fichtl  
USAG Stuttgart Public Affairs

More than 85 firefighters, dressed in their best bunker gear, donned oxygen masks and took on the “toughest two minutes in sports” on Panzer Kaserne during U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart’s inaugural Firefighter Combat Challenge, Oct. 28.

Firefighters from as far away as Berlin joined nearly a dozen German departments from the Stuttgart region, Army teams from Ansbach and Baumholder, and the garrison’s own fire department.

“Today is a great team building event, not only for our own department, but a great opportunity to work together with all the other fire departments in the area,” said Michael Ambacher, USAG Stuttgart Fire Department chief.

Divided into five stations, the challenge kicks off with a five story stair climb with each firefighter carrying a 42 lb. hose. Once they reach the top of the tower, the competitors hoist up another 42 lb. hose roll five stories. After descending the tower the firefighters then hammer a mallet into a 160 lb. beam until it moves five feet. The course ends with a breach and firehose shoot, followed by dragging a 175 dummy 100 feet.



The Rutesheim Feuerwehr cheers on their fellow firefighters.

Thinking about becoming a fire fighter at USAG Stuttgart? Visit <https://home.army.mil/stuttgart/about/employment-opportunities>



The Firefighter Challenge Course seen from the tower.



Firefighters drag 175 lb. dummies 100 ft. to finish the competition.

“I could taste the iron in my blood,” said Torben Petersen from the USAG Stuttgart Fire Department about the stair climb. Peterson, who just joined the garrison this February, was impressed by not only his teammates, but the other German teams.

“The main point of this event, I think, is connecting with the other guys,” he said. “From time-to-time we have to work with them responding to calls, it’s so important to have those strong relationships.”

Throughout the day competitors competed individually – further divided if they were masked up and on air or not, tandem and a five-person relay.

A good time for solos is under 3 minutes, a great time under 2. The top time during the inaugural garrison event was 1:37.83 by Martin Erbe from FCC Berlin.

Erbe’s relay team also took first, but Filderstadt Feuerwehr gave the professional competitors a run for the money, only coming in a few seconds later.

Christoph Wolfinger, a firefighter with Filderstadt Feuerwehr, said he and his teammates reveled in the competition.

“I love those split seconds right before the start of the competition, where your adrenaline is high and you’re comparing yourself to the competitor next to you,” Wolfinger said. “Then you have that release as your racing through the course.”

After the competitions he said he looked forward

to enjoying Panzer Kaserne’s food court and sharing a beer at the USAG Stuttgart Firehouse with his new American friends.

The origin of the Firefighter Combat Challenge dates back all the way to 1975 as a way to validate firefighters, and by 1991 became a full fledged competition. An ESPN broadcast in 1993 would coin it’s “toughest” catch phrase.

The origin of the Stuttgart’s event, however, began with a chance conversation over whiskies between then-garrison commander Col. Matt Ziglar and Ambacher in the Panzer Firehouse’s Keller – the recently renovated old community bar beneath the station.

“He said, ‘wouldn’t it be cool if we did a firefighter combat challenge,’ I said yea not thinking too much about it... a month goes by and I get a call from my boss asking about this firefighter competition we’re doing,” Ambacher laughed, “I thought we were just joking, but then he told me ‘you’re doing it.’”

And this October they did.

“It was 100 percent worth it,” Ambacher said. “We hope to do it again next year.”



A USAG Stuttgart firefighter prepares to breach and shoot with the firehose.

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# Upcoming Family & MWR events

By **Makaela Johnson**

USAG Stuttgart Family & MWR

As fall fades into winter, we can't help but look forward to all that's coming this season! From Christmas Markets to football games, there's so much to enjoy this winter in USAG Stuttgart. Get out those calendars, so you don't miss these events!

## TGIF with ACS on Robinson Barracks

Army Community Service will be providing services and classes on Robinson Barracks! Get to know the ACS program managers and participate in a fun, educational activity once a month at 4 p.m. at RB Zentrum. Afterwards, stick around to grab dinner at the food truck! Here's what's coming up in the next few months: Nov. 17 - Insider Tips to Federal Resume Applications; Dec. 8 - The Whole Self and Emotional Agility; Jan. 10 - Family Thrival: Insights on Parenting Styles.

Call ACS at 09641-70-596-3362 to register for these events.

## Army Family Action Plan

The Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) is your platform to voice quality-of-life issues and suggestions for improvement. It's the best way for Soldiers, Army Civilians, retirees, survivors, and Family members to let Army leadership know about what works, what doesn't, and how you think problems can be resolved both locally and Army-wide. You can submit issues using the AFAP QR code or in-person at Army Community Service (ACS), located in Building 2915 on Panzer Kaserne. The information you submit gives Army leadership insight and helps foster a satisfied and resilient Army community.



## CYS Winter Sports Registration

CYS Winter Sports registrations are open through Nov. 10. Sports offered include Basketball (Ages 5-15, \$60; Ages 3-4, \$25), Bowling (Ages 6-18, \$75), Cheer (Ages 5-15, \$60), Wrestling (Ages 6-14, \$60), Fitness (Grades K-8, free) and Mini Tennis (Ages 2-4, \$25). Make sure to get your children signed up for these fun winter sports!

Contact Parent Central Services to register at (0)9641-70-596-7480/7488/7483 or register online via WebTrac.

## Thanksgiving Meals

When you're counting your blessings this Thanksgiving, these tasty dinners are sure to be on your list!

### Thanksgiving at the Stuttgart Golf Course

Enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving Buffet on Nov. 23 at the new Bella Swing Restaurant located at the picturesque Stuttgart Golf Course. You can expect all your favorite Thanksgiving specialties, including turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, various vegetables, and of course, desserts. Each guest will also receive a complimentary welcome drink. Price per adult is 35 Euro, children ages 5-12 are 10 Euro, children under 5 are free. Choose between 2 meal times: 11 a.m.-3p.m. or 4 p.m.-10 p.m.

Make your reservation today by calling 0711-9955-0447.

## BOSS Thanksgiving

Single, unaccompanied, and single-parent Service Members are invited to BOSS Thanksgiving at the Galaxy Bowling & Entertainment Center on Panzer Kaserne! This delicious traditional Thanksgiving dinner will be provided by ShaWINGz free to BOSS members and will be the perfect complement to an evening of free bowling! There's even a chance to win one of several awesome door prizes! Join BOSS on Tuesday, Nov. 21 at 5 p.m. No registration necessary!

For questions about the BOSS program, call 09641-70-596-3151.

## MWR Christmas Market Tours

One of the highlights of living in Germany is all the beautiful Christmas

Markets! MWR Tours is taking you across the continent so you can experience the magic that awaits. From the ice-skating rink in Budapest to the beautiful streets of Esslingen, these tours cover destinations near and far.



### Nov. 25 - Budapest Christmas Market.

This beautiful city transforms into a winter wonderland, complete with an ice-skating rink!

Register by Nov. 20.

### Dec. 2 - Cologne Christmas Market.

With 130 stands, this impressive market sits at the base of the Cologne Cathedral. Register by Nov. 27.

### Dec. 3 - Ravenna Gorge Christmas Market.

Situated beneath the 40-meter high railway of the Höllentalbahn, this Christmas Market puts the "gorge" in gorgeous! Register by Nov. 27.

### Dec. 8 - Esslingen Christmas Market.

Drop the kids off at school, then jump on the bus for a day trip to the not-so-far-away Esslingen to enjoy the beautiful Medieval Christmas Market. Register by Nov. 29.

### Dec. 9 - Colmar Christmas Market.

Explore 6 Christmas Markets spread across the city, each with a different theme. Register by Nov. 29.

### Dec. 16 - Strasbourg Christmas Market.

One of the oldest and largest Christmas Markets in Europe, the Strasbourg Christmas Market boasts over 300 chalets spread over 10 sites in the city. Register by Dec. 6.

### Dec. 17 - Dresden Christmas Market.

This beautiful market is the oldest Christmas Market in all of Germany. Register by Dec. 7.

### Dec. 30 - Prague Christmas Market.

Enjoy the beautiful city of Prague covered in the beauty and magic of this famous Christmas Market. Register by Dec. 20.

### Dec. 30 - Salzburg Christmas Market.

The combination of its historic setting, festive decorations, delicious food, and unique gifts make this Christmas Market a must-see. Register by Dec. 20.

Contact MWR Tours to register for these and other great tours. Registration is available in person, over the phone at 09641-70-596-2104, or via WebTrac. Even if the registration deadline has passed, there might still be space! Contact the MWR Tours staff to see if there's still availability.

## Army vs Navy Flag Football Game

The generations-long rivalry of Army vs. Navy comes alive here in USAG Stuttgart. For years, Team Army has captured the win. Will we see the underdog end up on top this year, or will the reigning champs bring home the title once again? "The Army Navy Game is a fun one for our team to host," said Caitlin Oblaender, Supervisory Sports Specialist and Action Officer for this game. "There is good-natured rivalry, beginning the moment teams are built."



Hoping to get in on the action? Interested players can write to [cailtlin.b.oblaender.naf@army.mil](mailto:cailtlin.b.oblaender.naf@army.mil) to sign up.

Whether you're team Army, team Navy, or just team fun, come out and cheer on the athletes at this free event and enjoy concessions provided by BOSS.

.....  
 Catch all the action Dec. 1 at the Panzer Fitness Center Turf Field at 5:30 p.m. For questions, or for more information, call (0)9641-70-596-7136.

**Frosty Fest**

After a short break, the much-loved Frosty Fest is making its big comeback! On Friday, Dec. 1, join Family & MWR in the Galaxy Bowling & Entertainment Center parking lot, starting at 2:30 p.m. for an evening full of festive fun. Enjoy holiday music provided by community members, as well as the Garrison Tree Lighting, and even an appearance by Santa himself! Highlights of the event include a ski simulator, snowboard simulator, mountain climb, sleigh ride, cookie decorating, and so much more! Patch Arts & Crafts will have a Ugly Sweater Decorating station, so you'll be geared up and ready for the Ugly Sweater Run the next morning! Food, Glühwein, and Kinderpunsch will be available to purchase. Don't forget to take a short walk across the street and catch the action happening at the Army vs. Navy Flag Football game. "I am excited to bring back this event after several years' break," said action officer Clare Reid. "This is my family's favorite event, and I love being involved in it." This free event is sure to get you in the holiday spirit!

**Ugly Sweater Run**

"Falala" your way through this 5k on Patch Barracks! Don your ugliest sweater and get ready to sing "oh what fun it is to run" as you hit the pavement on December 2nd at 9 a.m. In the spirit of *Fitmas*, there's even a special gift for the runner with the ugliest sweater and participation medals for the first 250 runners! Pre-register at any USAG Stuttgart Fitness Center or via WebTrac through Nov. 30 (\$20), but same day registrations are also welcome (\$25). Fitness Coordinator Anne-Marie Harcrow says, "Don't miss USAG Stuttgart's jolliest run of the year!"

.....  
 For questions or more information, call (0)9641-70-596-7136.

**Theater Performance: The Sound of Music**

Join the award-winning Stuttgart Theatre Center on Kelley Barracks for their latest production, *The Sound of Music*! This much-loved classic tells the tale of Maria, the high-spirited, former postulant turned governess as she grows rapport with the seven children of a widowed naval captain. Watch as she gradually captures the heart of the stern captain, and see their life transformed amidst the invasion of Austria as they flee to Switzerland.

**Performance Dates: Dec. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, and 16 at 7:30 p.m. | Dec. 3, 10, 17 at 3 p.m.**

.....  
 Ticket reservations can be made by calling the Stuttgart Theatre Center Office at (0)711-729-3055 or online at [stuttgart.armymwr.com](http://stuttgart.armymwr.com)

**Photos with Santa and Friends**

Santa Claus is coming to town! There are so many opportunities for your little ones to meet Santa and give him that gift list. You might even get to sneak a peek at the Grinch or some of Santa's friends. Photos are free and a great opportunity to create lasting memories. For more information, call (0)9641-70-421-2519.

• **Santa Claus**  
 Dec. 2, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2 p.m.- 4 p.m. at Patch Arts & Crafts Center



Dec. 16, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1 p.m.- 3 p.m. at Patch Arts & Crafts Center

• **The Grinch (and friends)**  
 Dec. 9, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1 p.m.- 3 p.m. at Patch Arts & Crafts Center

• **Sensory Santa**  
 Meet Santa in a sensory-friendly environment. Dec. 2, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

.....  
 Call ACS at (0)9641-70-596-3362 to register starting Nov. 1.

**Create to be Free - A Journey of Healing Through Art**

Join Patch Arts & Crafts for this six-week class that will help you discover a transformative journey towards emotional healing, empowering you to embrace life wholeheartedly in all its dimensions – be it physical, relational, social, professional, or recreational.

Meets weekly on Thursdays from 5:30-7 p.m. at the Patch Arts and Crafts Center starting Jan. 11. No prior art experience is necessary!

.....  
 Sign up at the Patch Arts and Crafts Center, over the phone at (0)9641-70-596-5270, or via WebTrac.

**"Be Strong, Be You" Incentive Program**

Looking to start those New Year's Resolutions off on the right foot? Join the 'Be Strong, Be You' incentive program! Learn the fundamentals of resistance training in this twice a week class through the month of January. Your \$40 registration fee covers 8 classes, a foam roller, shirt, and the opportunity to win amazing prizes. Register before Dec. 31 at any USAG Stuttgart Fitness Center or on Webtrac. For more information, call (0)9641-70-596-7136.



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 For the most up-to-date event and program information, please visit: [www.stuttgart.armymwr.com](http://www.stuttgart.armymwr.com) or [facebook.com/familyandmwr](https://facebook.com/familyandmwr). Scan the QR Code to register online via WebTrac for Stuttgart Family & MWR Events.

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# Lost in Translation?

## Fear Not! ACS Host Nation Tour Has You Covered in Stuttgart

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Wyatt

AFN Stuttgart

After pausing due to COVID-19, the USAG Stuttgart Army Community Service is resuming its commitment to seamless transitions by relaunching the host nation tour program. The tour is specially designed to provide individuals transitioning to the Stuttgart military community an unparalleled opportunity to gain invaluable insights into their new host nation.

The primary objective is to guarantee that each participant, whether they are newly arriving service members, DOD civilians, or even service members who have been in Stuttgart but have never taken the



New service members and civilians from the USAG Stuttgart community learned about Stolpersteine, commonly known as 'stumbling stones,' as they walked along the cobblestone passageways. These Stolpersteine are small yet powerful memorials, consisting of concrete and brass cubes inscribed with family names and dates, integrated into the pavement in front of former residences.

tour, can enjoy a seamless and hospitable experience.

The program was temporarily suspended in January 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in early June 2023. Furthermore, the tour is undergoing significant updates. Previously, the tour was included as part of the two-week in-processing into the community, which involved tasks such as taking the German driver's license test. However, the current arrangement requires participants to take the tour separately.

"One of the major benefits of attending the host nation tour is the opportunity to learn about German customs and culture firsthand," said Sonja Schoenharting, Relocation Readiness Program Manager with Army Community Service. "By immersing themselves in the local way of life, participants can foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of their new surroundings."

The host nation tour is open to all Department of Defense (DOD) ID card holders, and participation is completely free of charge. The tour takes place every other Tuesday, running from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., with the starting point conveniently located at the Panzer Kaserne front gate.

Starting at the Stuttgart City Hall, a symbol of post-war functional architecture since 1956, the tour offers an intriguing glimpse into the city's history. Notably, the clock tower stands tall at nearly 61 meters tall and features an impressive glockenspiel. Inside the town hall, visitors have the opportunity to marvel at one of the rare remaining functioning paternoster lifts, and even take a thrilling ride on it.

"First and foremost, the host nation tour offers newcomers the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture. Participants will learn about German customs and culture, gain insights into the efficient public transportation system, and even pick up some basic German phrases," explained, Claudia



Basckai, host nation tour instructor with Army Community Services.

The tour acts as a gateway to understanding life in Stuttgart, offering participants a comprehensive overview of the city's key features. From historical landmarks to recommended dining and shopping spots, the host nation tour covers it all.

"The tour encompasses various aspects that make Stuttgart unique. We delve into the history of the city, highlighting its significance and sharing intriguing stories. Additionally, we guide participants through the public transportation options and offer recommendations for local dining and shopping experiences," added Basckai.

Moreover, this ACS program effectively aligns with numerous DOD and United States European Command lines of effort, prominently including the core objectives of caring for people and nurturing a highly motivated team of dedicated patriots.



“This tour is a fantastic opportunity to explore and discover things you wouldn’t typically learn on your own,” said Heather Cruz, tour participant. “With knowledgeable professionals as guides, it’s a chance to gain unique insights. Looking back, I wish I had this opportunity when I first arrived—it would have boosted my confidence to venture out on my own and truly experience the town.”

During the tour, the participants were told an intriguing fact about Stuttgart and Germany in general – most stores and businesses, remain closed on Sundays. However, there are a few exceptions, such as certain bakeries, gas stations, and restaurants, which do operate on this day.



New service members and civilians from the USAG Stuttgart community enjoy an immersive ACS host nation tour near the Stuttgart city center on July 11, 2023. This carefully curated experience aimed to provide each participant, whether they were newly arriving service members, DOD civilians, or even long-time residents yet to explore the city, with a seamless and hospitable introduction to the cultural richness of their new host nation.

This widespread practice is rooted in the German cultural appreciation for Sunday as a day of rest and family time. It’s also the law.

One particularly poignant moment during the tour involved the participants learning about Stolperstein, commonly known as ‘stumbling stones,’ as they walked along the cobblestone passageways. These Stolperstein are small yet powerful memorials, consisting of concrete and brass cubes inscribed with

family names and dates, seamlessly integrated into the pavement.

These unassuming cubes hold a profound significance as they serve as memorials to the Jewish lives tragically lost during the Nazi extermination. By encountering these Stolperstein firsthand, the participants gained a profound understanding of the historical impact and a solemn reminder of the need to remember and honor those who suffered during that dark period.

“Having been here for some time, I must admit that this tour has been an eye-opening experience, unveiling a plethora of fascinating facts previously unknown to me,” said Cruz. “I wholeheartedly endorse this enriching experience for our military community, as it not only offers young and old Soldiers a chance to step out of the barracks but also ensures newcomers a rewarding and fruitful exploration.”

Visit <https://stuttgart.armymwr.com/programs/acs> for how you can join the next tour.



New service members and civilians from the USAG Stuttgart community enjoy an immersive ACS host nation tour near the Stuttgart city center on July 11, 2023. This carefully curated experience aimed to provide each participant, whether they were newly arriving service members, DOD civilians, or even long-time residents yet to explore the city, with a seamless and hospitable introduction to the cultural richness of their new host nation.

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# Life of a military brat: Not as easy as it looks

By Ava Harris

SHS Career Practicum

The military brat's high school experience is already famously different to your average American high schooler's, but as a member of the class of 2024 living in Germany, my high school experience has been particularly unique. First, my freshman year felt like it was not real— I moved across the country from Virginia to California at the height of COVID. Starting high school online, and only having friends via FaceTime made everything difficult. I felt lazy, unmotivated, isolated, and had lost virtually all my social skills by the time school reopened. In tandem with being at a new school and being a freshman or more affectionately called, "fresh meat," I went through frequent bouts of feeling lost or hopeless. For many seniors this year, this was our reality beginning our high school lives.

After freshman year, I had about one year of quasi-regular high school life as a sophomore. I went to school dances, with a mask, played sports, with a mask, and eventually made some friends. That was, until one of the most dreaded times in a military kid's life came around: PCS season. My parents thought this move would be our last, so they were really pushing for one back to Europe. I was born when my parents were stationed at Ramstein and we had lived in Stuttgart while I was in grades three through five. Despite this, I did not want to come here at all. I wanted a normal, American high school experience from road trips with friends to Chick-fil-a. I wanted to live near the colleges I planned to attend, be able to go to stateside summer camps, and get my first real job. But, of course, my dad received an assignment for Stuttgart, and I had to cope with the fact that I would not only have to adjust to another new school but also live a 6-9 hour

time difference away from my friends and family. I was nervous, but also excited about all the traveling and events I was never as keen on as a kid. It may have helped that I knew I was of legal German drinking age.

Now, I've been back in Stuttgart for over a year and the best word I can use to describe how it's been is: different. I've gotten the opportunity to see places I have never been before, and revisit places I can now appreciate, but I still often long for the small comforts of living in the U.S. I have a running list in my Notes app titled "imissamerica" with a multitude of things I miss about the States. While many of them are fast food restaurants, others are mundane cultural things like American public pool snack bars or "going literally anywhere on a Sunday."

What all of those seemingly unimportant things really represent, though, is the familiarity that comes



Ava Harris hanging out with friends at the local Christmas market. Courtesy Photo

with being in the States as an American. This is what most overseas military brats mean when some of us say we "hate" living here. We don't really – we just miss home. Many of us are reminded (constantly) how lucky we are to be living here at our ages. We know. And I am forever grateful for everything I've had the privilege to do here, but it often goes unacknowledged by the adults around us how difficult it can be to deal with the weird headspace that comes with being a teenager. The sports, tough classes, and extracurriculars, and living in a place where it can frequently feel like we don't belong. On top of all of this, many seniors have to go through the college application process an ocean away from the colleges we want to attend. College tours that normally would be a day trip turn into a week-long endeavor packed with multiple colleges or virtual tours for the select schools that actually offer them. I myself, having done the week-long college tour trip and currently finishing six college applications, can say that this whole process is mentally exhausting. While being in Europe has its perks, I often wish I could go back to the American simplicity of the States.

Adults often underestimate the amount of stress teenagers are under. All we can ask for now is understanding and empathy, especially for our seniors.



Ava Harris and her mom pose for a picture.

Courtesy Photo



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# The Big Question: What side dish completes your holiday meal?



**Verena,**  
doctor

"Red cabbage, a typical German side dish and it goes well with everything."

**Sheelu,**  
vendor

"Potatoe puree, I think I make the best one, everybody says I'm a good cook. I love creating recipes in my head and tend to just go with the flow when I cook."

**Samuel,**  
Exchange

"Sweet potato pie with crisp marshmallows."

**Diane,**  
manager

"Mash potatoes, I make it myself with sour cream, milk, butter, chives and a little bit of garlic."

**Moses,**  
Air Force

"Candied yams, I have a special way of making them."



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