

“Portable Roots” – the 11th annual Donauschwaben Jugendfreundschaftslager

The Cincinnati Donauschwaben Verein was home to 45 Jugendgruppe members from six different cities the last weekend of June.

On June 27, Jugendgruppe members and their chaperones from Kitchener, Toronto, and Leamington, Canada as well as from St. Louis, Detroit and Cincinnati arrived late in the afternoon and set up a tent city by the playground. By dinnertime everyone was hungry and ready to get the weekend started. Thursday evening activities included a simulation on immigrating into a new “land,” and building *Ulmer Schachteln*, that carried the campers down the Danube River. The evening was capped off with an ice cream sundae bar.

On Friday, the campers woke up early and dressed in their orange shirts. Then, they began their day-long adventure. The first stop was at Union Terminal where we learned about the importance of this train station to the Donauschwaben who moved to Cincinnati. The next stop was a walking tour of the “Over-the-Rhein” historic district of Cincinnati. Here we heard interesting stories of the buildings that were important to the Donauschwaben as well as about the strong German influence on this area and on the city of Cincinnati. The afternoon was spent enjoying a picnic lunch and a swim at Sunlite Pool. We traveled to Smale Park for a beautiful view of the Ohio River and an all-you-can-eat pizza dinner. We walked along the riverfront to the Reds’ baseball ballpark, where we saw the Reds beat the Chicago Cubs and had a front row seat for Fireworks Friday.

Saturday was set aside for our cultural day. The campers spent the day immersed in activities that taught us about life in the “Heimatland.” Our group grew, when even more members of the Cincinnati Jugendgruppe joined in the activities for this day. A special “Kindergruppelager” took place this day as well. Patty Butterfield and Catherine Dehne designed activities for the day that shadowed what the Jugendgruppe was doing. The younger members joined us for lunch and the history lesson.

After a filling breakfast, the campers were split into groups based on their ages and then rotated through a series of five activities. Katy Abt taught several songs to each group, including *Wahre Freundschaft*, *Kehr ich ein zur Heimat Wieder*, and the *Donauschwaben Hymn*. Jen and Johna Stolze explained the significance of the *Wappen*, which we painted on clay Christmas ornaments. Lisa Spraul had the groups busy making *Spaetzle* for dinner. Megan Spraul taught each group an upbeat dance that was created by members of our own Jugendgruppe.

Barb Waldeck, Cathi Weissmann and Marty Kunkle worked with the groups to mix, bake and ice a lot of *Honig Bursl* cookies as well as roll and dip “Buckeyes.” Many participants were interested in Joe Abt’s demonstration of the various steps involved in making Oktoberfest chicken.

A very personal and touching presentation was given in the afternoon by Barb Waldeck, Cathi Weissmann and Marty Kunkle. These women spoke of their memories of life in the *Lager* in Austria, life as immigrants to Cincinnati and finally of their new life. It was a marvelous way to tie together the theme of Portable Roots, the information the group learned on the Over-the-Rhein tour and the central role that the Donauschwaben club played for these women when they were immigrant teenagers. The artifacts brought from Europe by the families of these women held a special interest for the Jugend. There were plenty of questions related to these items and topics that followed.

After a delicious dinner of Oktoberfest chicken and *Spaetzle*, we enjoyed a closing ceremony and a night of dancing to music provided by DJ ED, Eddie Tullius.

After breakfast on Sunday, the groups found it hard to say good-bye. There were plenty of pictures taken and promises made to keep in touch. Everyone is already looking forward to the Labor Day festivities. Everyone left “Proud to be Donauschwaben”.

**Cincinnati wants it to be known that this was the first Jugendfreundschaftslager in eleven years to have NO rain.

Debi Tullius, Cincinnati Donauschwaben Jugendleiterin.