

Visiting friends

It's been 4 years of hard work. At last, on April 30th 2007, official documents linking Glauchau, Germany and Lynchburg, Virginia as Sister Cities were officially signed in a great ceremony. During our stay, we also experienced the celebration of the 250th anniversary of "Lynch's Ferry" which led to the founding of this wonderful city.

We felt heartiness and openness, which to me seems typical of American hospitality. Mayor Joan Foster joined us whenever she could and was very interested in all kinds of issues.

We were deeply impressed by this Festival. Historical costumes contributed to the flair of being set back in time. The role of the Native- and African- American citizens was pointed out clearly.

The official signing of the documents was done in an eloquent and emotional atmosphere: The flags of Germany and the USA framed the entrances; The Police and Fire Department in full dress presented the flags of Virginia and Stars and Stripes.

Besides the official speeches, also broadcasted on the local networks, I had the honor to present a statement of the Consulate General of the United States in Leipzig. Without the support of the officials and employees of the Consulate General, this partnership would have been a lot harder to establish.

In the following days we visited the Police Department and Lynchburg College. The quality of the equipment as well as the apparent dedication of our hosts was very impressive.

I firmly believe we can profit from their experience.

There was also time for relaxing: hiking in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, cruising the Smith Mountain Lake by motor-boat or testing some equipment on the police' shooting range. Being hosted by an American family was a great pleasure and gave us a small inside into their life. All of us felt sorry for having to leave again.

One thing is for sure, though: There will be further visits in Glauchau and Lynchburg.

What's in the making?

Our Committee "Friends of Lynchburg e.V." met with the Chief of LPD. Colonel Bennett is interested in getting in touch with the Glauchau Police Department very quickly.

Georg Schwarzmann, professor at Lynchburg College, has already established contact to professor Reinhold – a representative of the Glauchau State Academy.

Almost daily, I answer questions from parents and students who will be visiting Glauchau in a few weeks. By now, these visits have come down to a personal level influencing the students' families as well. These developments make us very proud – they are one of our main goals in this project.

We will continue to provide the basis so ordinary people can experience family life abroad. The success of former visits keeps us motivated. We have experienced that these visits are not a one-time occasion. Guests stay in contact and organize private visits on their own account. My son, who is one of the initiators, will take the opportunity offered by a local company and work in Lynchburg as an intern this summer.

Another company has also offered an internship to a dedicated college student in 2008.

I also want to thank the City Council of Glauchau, who made it possible for me as vice president of "Friends of Lynchburg e.V." to join the official delegation on short notice.

Thomas Schreiter

Translated by Marcus Schreiter