

Enthusiastically the schoolchildren of 3b show the letters, that they received from America.
Photo: Frank Czilwa

Pen pals across the Atlantic

The Peace School is building contacts with schoolchildren in the American town of Beaverton

TROSSINGEN (fawa)- The schoolchildren of Class 3b of the Peace School have received mail from the USA: Each child received a personally addressed letter from children in the German-American town of Beaverton, Oregon, Trossingen's sister city in the USA. And the best thing about this: all letters are written in German. "This is the first letter exchange of our school with America", says Rector Lotte Lehmann. As the class's teacher, Sandra Heizmann, was already in Beaverton once, she agreed spontaneously to take part with her class in the transatlantic letter exchange. The letters were handed over yesterday by the mayor of the town, Clemens Maier, and his assistant Susan Sauter, who lead the project in Trossingen. With a song in no less than 4 languages the guests - Mayor Clemens Maier, Susan Sauter, Rector Lotte Lehmann and the press - were welcomed by 3b in their classroom. This shows that in the Peace School multi-linguality and internationality are valued. For two hours a week the children are being taught in English.

Education in German language in Beaverton

Even more intensive is the German education in the German-American school in Beaverton: here children are being taught in German for several hours every day. Several subjects are even being taught entirely in German. Some of the children have come from Germany, others have German parents who live and work in the USA. Others, however, come from American families. "They are mostly children from rich families", knows Susan Sauter, who visited the school.

Susan Sauter no longer works in the mayor's office in Trossingen, she is after all also an internationally renowned harmonica-virtuoso. As such she was also three times in Beaverton, where she performed with the choir ISing, amongst others. Mayor Danny Doyle had the honour to introduce her in a school there as well: in a Spanish speaking school and also in the German-American school of Portland in Beaverton. On this occasion Mayor Doyle asked her if she wouldn't be interested in starting and managing a pen pal correspondence.

The letters from America were already received by the schoolchildren in Trossingen. Now it is up to the pupils of the Peace School to start answering them. When Susan Sauter again travels to Beaverton for 2 weeks in May, to perform together with the ISing Community Choir, she will hand over the answer letters by the Peace School children personally.

On Mayor Maier's wishes the class teacher Sandra Heizmann already read from one of the letters yesterday: "Dear Vanessa, we are class 3 at the German-American school..." In the letter the writer from faraway America explains how things are going in their school, how the boys like to play American Football and the computer games, but the girls like playing soccer. "Do you also have a school mascot?" - Of course this raised the question in class 3a: "Why is it that we don't have a school mascot?" At least a class mascot, proposed Sandra Heizmann, and the class 3a could choose from several proposals.

Apart from the newly formed friendships via letters at the Peace School, the Gymnasium in Trossingen also has regular contact with Beaverton: every two years pupils fly to the American sister city - alternating with Helena, Montana.