

For Immediate Release: July 6, 2009

‘Danke schön’

Foundation helps offer German language, culture in schools

CHARLOTTE, N.C., July 6, 2009 – Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools students are traveling the world as they become globally competitive, thanks to more than \$14,500 in scholarships and support from the German Language and Culture Foundation, formerly known as South End Jazz. Donations included \$7,250 in scholarships for five students to study in Germany or German-speaking countries, a \$5,000 donation to Smith Academy of International Languages to support the school’s German-immersion program and \$ 2,500 for sending a CMS teacher to a German Language conference in Germany.

“There are more than 200 companies in the Charlotte region that are from German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland),” said Kurt G. Waldthausen, founder of the German Language and Culture Foundation. “These companies are all interested in hiring German-speaking students, so the foundation is committed to supporting a strong German-language program in CMS.”

Waldthausen started the foundation in 2005 as SouthEnd Jazz to support German-American educational exchange through American jazz. The foundation presents the SouthEnd Jazz festival every year, which features American jazz performed by German jazz bands, flown in from Germany courtesy of Lufthansa German Airlines. Funds raised from the festival support the foundation’s mission.

“We want to make sure CMS students have the opportunity to learn the German language and to learn about our culture so they can excel in their future careers,” Waldthausen said.

Smith Academy is the only school in CMS offering a German-immersion program. Smith Academy Principal Ynez Olshausen says support from the German-speaking business community is necessary for the program’s success.

“We want to develop students who are proficient in other languages and confident in dealing with people from other cultures,” said Olshausen. “The German community’s support for the German-immersion program underlines its commitment to our students being globally competitive.”

Olshausen said the financial contributions were particularly helpful now, when CMS resources

--more--

Page Two: Foundation helps offer German language, culture in schools

are being stretched. She plans to use the \$5,000 to support exchange programs for elementary and middle school students.

“We have to open doors to the world so our students can travel and study abroad,” Olshausen said. “We must create the belief at a very early age that, ‘the world is open to me and I can compete in another culture. I can use my language skills.’ Making this possible for students before they get to high school is so important.”

The German president named Waldthausen Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany. In this volunteer position, Waldthausen represents Germany in North Carolina. His role includes helping German citizens living in North Carolina, helping relocate German companies to North Carolina, and organizing cultural exchanges. Last year, he helped plan the German ambassador’s visit to Smith Academy. The ambassador donated \$15,000 Euros (about \$22,000) to the school – a gift from the German government.

“That was an incredible gift,” Olshausen said. “We were able to purchase new instructional materials for our students, as well as provide staff-development opportunities for our teachers.”

This year, the foundation partnered with UNC Charlotte to bring “Friends Always: The Berlin Airlift Traveling Museum Exhibit” to Charlotte. Waldthausen presented the story of the airlift to more than 700 CMS high school students and teachers.

“It is important that students in the United States and Germany hear this story,” he said. “So many times they hear about things that go wrong. They hardly ever hear about foreign-policy successes.”

The foundation also worked with CMS’ Global Studies, World Languages and Study Abroad programs to develop an exchange agreement between CMS and schools in Berlin.

“This is an ongoing partnership that demonstrates the powerful impact that community support can have to enhance the education we provide students to ensure they are globally competitive,” said Kelly Price, director of Global Studies and World Languages for CMS.

[Click here](#) to learn more about CMS’ language-immersion programs. [Click here](#) for more information on the district’s study-abroad opportunities. [Click here](#) for more information on the German Language and Culture Foundation and SouthEnd Jazz.

###

For more information, please contact:

Cynthia Robbins

980-343-1081 Phone

704-634-5136 Cell

980-343-3647 Fax

Kathleen Johansen

980-343-0472 Phone

704-506-1731 Cell

980-343-3647 Fax