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## The Star-Ledger

### Staying connected to old country

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Marianne and Lothar Edmueller, who moved to America from Ingolstadt, Germany, wanted their daughter Inge to stay fluent in the language of her parents' homeland. So, they enrolled her in the German Language School of Morris County.

When Inge Blazina grew up, she wanted the same for her daughter Grace and enrolled her in the German School. Now, just as her mother did as a child, 10-year-old Grace can connect with her cousins back in Germany.

"They want them to speak the language and relate to the family back home," said Christiane Reves, the school's principal and the mother of a student. "When they spend summers at home, they can speak with their cousins, grandmas and grandpas."

Over the past four decades, the language school, now based in Morris Township, has taught thousands of students. This year, the school celebrates its 40th anniversary of teaching German language and culture to the Morris County community.

The school started at Morristown High School, where it rented four classrooms for its 72 students and 14 adults registered for instruction. As the school grew, it moved to Morristown Beard School on West Hanover Avenue and Whippany Road, where it had more space.

Today, about 100 students in grades K-12 are enrolled at the school. They take classes on Saturdays throughout the academic year in classes of up to 10 students each. Most students are from Morris County, while a small number travel from Bergen, Essex, Warren and Union counties, Reves said.

Lessons are taught in German, supplemented with field trips and activities that highlight German culture. Members of the school community recently walked in the German-American Steuben Day Parade of New York, an annual celebration along Fifth Avenue in September celebrating German culture.

Students in high school concentrate on reading and writing, in preparation for the advanced placement test in German and other language tests used for college instruction in other countries.

The school also provides students with a broader network among the local German community, including those who grew up in Germany and moved to Morris County for career or education opportunities, and Americans who have German ancestry or an interest in German culture.

"They not only get the language but they meet people," said Reves, a German native who moved with her American husband from Berlin to Morris County for her husband's education. "It's not like taking a language class. You are in a German community at our school."

Inge Blazina, a first-generation American, said her parents placed her in the school from 1976 to 1980 to reduce the cultural divide between herself and her German relatives.

"I was able to communicate with my family in Germany," said Inge, whose family traveled yearly from Montville to Ingolstadt, near Munich. "As a result, I have a great relationship with my family in Germany."

And, as a result of those relationships, Inge travels every other year to Germany with Grace, whose fluency has enabled her to build German ties of her own.

"When we go to the playground, she instantly has friends," she said. "Because she knows German, (being American) is a nonissue. When they do find out, it makes her a celebrity."

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