

# US Fed News

## BERLIN AIRLIFT PROJECT BRINGS U.S., GERMAN STUDENTS TOGETHER

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HEIDELBERG, Germany, April 25 -- The U.S. Army Installation Management Command, European Region issued the following news release:

As the small parachutes floated into outstretched hands of anxious children at Aukamm Elementary School, the scene could have been Berlin in 1948. Only it wasn't Lt. **Gail Halvorsen** dropping candy from his C-54 aircraft.

Nearly six decades after Halvorsen's famous flights, members of the Wiesbaden Fire Department were tossing cloth canopies to German and American students at the Wiesbaden school April 16.

A partnership project between fourth-graders at Aukamm and Grundschule Nauheim (a nearby primary school) brought German students to U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden to work on entries for a special competition commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift. The contest is being conducted by the city of Frankfurt and the American Consulate.

"I grew up with all this history because my parents lived it," said Ute Bopp, Aukamm Elementary School host nation teacher, who organized the get together as a way to bring German and American students closer together and to educate them on their shared history. "This was so exciting," Bopp added, "because so many people had ideas. It grew from the very beginning."

After word on the commemorative project spread, Bopp shared her idea with Aukamm fourth-grade teachers Elizabeth Green and Corinne Voyer, and Nauheim teacher Andrea Buss. After reading "Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot" - an illustrated story by Margot Theis Raven describing a young girl's life during the blockade of Berlin - students in both schools began producing films detailing the book and describing the efforts of Allied pilots to bring needed supplies of coal and other necessities to Berlin's population.

"Earlier this year, classes had been exchanging letters with pen pals in the German school," said Voyer. "We hope to (visit) their school at the end of May."

"The children are all excited about this project," Voyer noted. "Most of them didn't even realize there was an East and West Germany before we started the project. They asked questions like 'Why would you divide a country like that?' Hopefully this project will encourage them to travel more, especially to Berlin."

German students used Playmobile figures and stop action to illustrate the story of "Uncle Wiggly Wings" and his fellow American pilots dropping chocolate by tiny parachutes to the children of Berlin.

"I read the book to the students, and the children found it so great they came up with the idea for the film," said Buss.

The German teacher also explained that with many of her students originally from other European countries like Italy and Turkey, learning about the Cold War years in Germany was a valuable history lesson as well.

After watching both student-produced films in Aukamm's library, the children headed outside for the candy drop, which was followed by lunch.

"I liked how the firefighters dropped the parachutes," said Brendan Hurst, an Aukamm fourth-grader who took part in the project. "I also enjoyed taking the German kids on a tour of our school."

"I thought it was really amazing," said Jackson Brown, a fellow fourth-grader, about U.S. participation in the massive round-the-clock airlift called Operation Vittles and Halvorsen in particular. "I think he did a very important job during the airlift because Germany was just recovering after World War II."

Bopp pointed out that by studying the airlift, the students realized how different life was for young people in the early post-war years compared to today. "It made them realize that (children back then) had other problems - just trying to survive - than we do today."

"I'm glad we were able to support the American school in Germany with this," said Sven Janneck, a member of the Wiesbaden Fire Department. "It (is important) to remember that part of history - how Allied forces supported Germany after the war."

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