

## **GACC Philadelphia's Trip to Frankfurt**

September 23, 2016



On September 23, 18 delegates from public, private and nonprofit sectors departed Philadelphia for an intensive week covering nearly all corners of Germany. This delegation, which was first proposed to the GACC Philadelphia five months ago, set out to complete five main goals. These aspirations were to strengthen the Sister City relationship with Frankfurt, promote PA's energy sector, business development and to learn about Germany's vocational educational training system. Lydia Sarson, Executive Director of GACC Philadelphia, Chris Erb, owner of Erb Law and GACC Philadelphia Board Member, Honorary Consul Ralf Wiedemann, and Mark Vogelbacker of member company Reed Smith were all participants.

On Sunday evening, we were welcomed by the newly formed Frankfurt-Philadelphia-Gesellschaft (Society) before the Monday morning start. On Monday the delegation meet with Lord Mayor Peter Feldmann as well as representatives from City Council, FrankfurtRheinMain and IHK Frankfurt. The delegation learned about the strong business sectors in Frankfurt, as well as the how the City is planning its current expansion as Frankfurt looks to become the new financial capital of the European Union once Brexit is finalized. We then visited Provadis Academy to see how the German school system supports vocational educational training in high school. In the evening Chris Erb presented his "Doing Business in the US" seminar to local companies interested in PA's Energy sector.

On Tuesday, the group split into our more formal tracks with GACC leading the workforce development visits. In Stuttgart we were invited by National Partner Festo Didactic who showed us how as a corporation they invest in their employees' education through the workforce development starting at a very young age. Other participants, including Chris Erb and Mark Vogelbacker, went to Duesseldorf to visit companies interested in doing business in the Philadelphia region or stayed in Frankfurt meeting with

local schools which have interest in starting an exchange with the Philadelphia School District.

In Berlin, on Wednesday, we had a briefing at the US Embassy to inform them of our mission and learn about the work they are doing throughout Germany. Lydia Sarson then led a small group to the Deutsche Industrie- und Handelskammern, the parent company of GACC Philadelphia. There we met with Project VETnet (Vocational and Educational Training Network) leaders to learn how we can start bringing the German educational model to Philadelphia schools and companies. Through member company AHP International and IHK Potsdam, the group met with Brandenburg companies where Chris Erb once again presented his seminar.

On Thursday, Lydia Sarson was joined by Councilman-at-Large Al Taubenberger, Honorary Consul Wiedemann and AHP International representative, David Mook at the IHK-Aussenwirtschaftstag NRW in Bielefeld. Over 1000 participants met to learn about foreign trade opportunities through the IHK/AHK network and listen to both former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and US Ambassador John Emerson's speeches. It was a welcomed surprise when Ambassador Emerson mentioned the delegation in his speech. He stated that "Philadelphia is here to do business!" Emerson's full speech can be found [here](#).

On Friday morning, the Bielefeld and remaining Berlin groups met back in Frankfurt to celebrate with the US Consul General Jim Hermann and Lord Mayor Feldmann German-American Friendship Day. This annual celebration is organized by the US Consulate of Frankfurt - the largest US consulate in the world - and this year included a Hip-Hop Dance Troupe with both German and American students to show that regardless of language barriers and cultural differences, people can come together in many different ways. It was the perfect end to the delegation's very successful week.

As we work to improve upon our Sister City relationship, all members are encouraged to participate in Frankfurt events through Citizen Diplomacy International and GACC Philadelphia. If you are traveling or doing business in Frankfurt, please contact our organizations. All members are also encouraged to attend our 17th Annual Gala on November 11 at the Independence Seaport Museum where we will be celebrating through our "Pirate Ships to Partnerships" theme with visitors from the FrankfurtRheinMain region.

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**Ralf D. Wiedemann**  
Of Counsel  
*Licensed in Pennsylvania*

GREEN AND SPIEGEL LLC  
1524 Delancey St. 4<sup>th</sup> fl. | Philadelphia, PA 19102  
56 Pine St. Ste 3a | Providence, RI 02903

215.948.8121 | [www.gands-us.com](http://www.gands-us.com)  
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