

Stefan Doege

June 05, 2005

Speech before the City Commission of Bay City, Michigan on June 6, 2005

Dear Mayor of Bay City,
Dear Members of the City Commission,
Dear inhabitants of Bay City,

I have been a high school exchange student at Central high school this school year. I came here in early August of 2004 and I will be leaving on June 30 this year. With this little speech I want to say thank you for the warm welcome and for the great time I had while going to school here, living with my host family and being part of the community.

This past year has truly been a wonderful cultural experience for me. I will take home with me many memories of events like the River of Time and the St. Patrick's Day Parade, which was really awesome to experience. Another big event I got to be part of was the election campaign last year. Thanks to my government teacher, Robert Kullberg, and the staff at the Democratic Party headquarters I got to experience grass-roots democracy.

However, the main part of the exchange was attending high school. American high schools are in some ways different from the ones back home in Germany. For example sports are a big deal over here and so I joined Central's soccer team in fall. Thank you coach Karoly and team. In spring I was part of Central's rowing crew and I enjoyed it even though we only went to two regattas. I also want to thank my very committed rowing coach Scott Hardy and crew.

All of Central's teachers really care about the exchange students and try to make them feel as comfortable as possible. Knowing that I can't name them all, I want to thank Central's teachers and staff altogether and just mention a few of the teachers who have had the most impact upon me.

First of all Mr. Karoly, a wonderful soccer coach and always somebody I could talk to. His literature classes were worthwhile life lessons.

Mr. Boon, my first semester history teacher, always greeted me with a smile and a "How's it going, Stefan?" in the hallway, which always lightened me up.

Lastly, my government teacher Mr. Kullberg, who is still curious to hear about the progress I make and about my experiences.

A big thank you, as well, to the great Science Olympiad team which made it to the State Competition this year for the first time ever.

Thanks also to 1st Ward Commissioner Chris Hennessy, who reinforced my interest in politics and hooked me up with a lot of interesting people in Bay County.

I also want to mention a group of people really important to me, my friends. People who took me to great places to see, hang out with me, and wanted to know more German than just "Gesundheit" and "Oktoberfest".

In order to end my speech, I want to thank the people who were most vital to my stay here in Bay City – my two families. A big thank you to my host family, the Stratton family, who really cared about me and did a great job letting me be a part of their life for the past year. And also thanks to my parents and grandparents back in Germany for making it possible for me to come over here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your time and have a good evening.