

Harrison senior returns from international choir tour

BY SUE DUCK
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Jordan Steckloff, a Harrison High School senior recently returned from an eye-opening international choir tour.

"We stayed three days in every stop," said Jordan, 17, who sings low bass. "We stayed with families. The first thing I said when I got there was, 'Everything is smaller.' I saw cars the size of dog houses. There were no SUVs."

The group of 100, who had attended Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp at Twin Lake, Mich., visited the Netherlands and Germany. All members had to audition for the June 15-July 7 tour, which cost each of them \$3,500. Rehearsals were held in November, April and May at Blue Lake.

Travelog

Holding an atlas, Jordan described his trip.

His group sang secular and spiritual songs at the oldest Gothic church dating from the 1000s in Magdeburg in East Germany.

"We were part of the church service in some communities, like St. Michael Church in Hamburg," Jordan said.

There they also sang secular songs like, "The Sun in the Morning and the Moon at Night" and "Mr. Sandman." With a local choir in Landau, they sang, "I

Want to be in America," from West Side Story.

He remarked that there was far less security at European borders than at the United States/Canadian border. "There are no border guards," he said. "It's like crossing a state line."

Jordan also remembers a European joke.

"What do you call someone who speaks three languages? Trilingual."

"What do you call someone who speaks two languages? Bilingual."

"What do you call someone who speaks one language? American."

The emphasis on foreign language was just one contrast he observed during his trip.

He remembers the McDonalds in Germany, which served beer. "I called it McBrew," Jordan said.

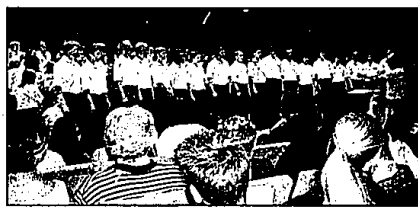
Drinking age there is 16 for beer and 18 for hard liquor, he said.

He stayed with Eva Marie (Christy) Hempel's family, a host family, in Dachau. Hempel is a former girlfriend who was an exchange student at Harrison High in spring 2000. Jordan went to the prom with her.

Different attitudes

Mark Steckloff, Jordan's dad, spoke highly of Hempel and her young Germans who were raised. They confront the fact that the Holocaust occurred.

"They are very sensitive to it," Mark said. "It took a few genera-



Traveling: Jordan Steckloff traveled with the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp International Choir, pictured above during a performance at Ahrensburg, Germany.

tions. Unlike Japan, they have really confronted their past and teach it in public schools. She was very ashamed of what they had done. It was very visceral."

Attitudes have changed since Mark visited Europe in the early 1970s.

"I visited the (concentration) camp myself," Mark said. He remembered that nobody seemed to know the directions to the camp. "They didn't want anything to do with it, it was, 'What camp?' They didn't want to be reminded. It was too much of an open sore."

Jordan's impression during his visit was that Germans want people to know about the Holocaust and be educated. He added he learned about the Holocaust in Sunday School, at Oakland Community College but not in

Farmington Public Schools.

"There's no world history class at Harrison High, Jordan said."

A global studies course will be part of the new high school requirements, said Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield.

Jordan learned more about Nazism and the Third Reich at the family table, Mark said.

"It could very well be," Maxfield said. "It depends on what class he took. It's spotty at best. It's a good concern."

An American history sequence is required. Some American history teachers incorporate the topic into their classes but Maxfield couldn't immediately say which teachers.

"There's dribs and drabs of world history from an American perspective," Mark said. "There's



Sightseeing: Students enjoyed a little free time to explore the places they visited, including Hamburg City Hall.

a continuum. We need to learn how we got here."

Maxfield pointed out that the Holocaust Memorial is located in Farmington Hills. That's another resource for students.

COHA hosts candidate forum July 24

The Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners Associations is hosting a candidate forum from 7-9 p.m. July 24 at the Hills City Hall.

Representatives from the local Farmington newspapers and a COHA member will be asking questions of the candidates running for state representative and 47th District Court judge. The forum will be broadcast live and repeated before the August primary on local cable.

How you treat your lawn could soon become a government issue.

At a recent study session of the Farmington Hills City Council, members discussed the possibility of enacting an ordinance that would require residents to use less environmentally damaging lawn fertilizers.

Hills resident Shari Cohen attended the session and noted West Bloomfield passed an ordinance that requires use of only certain fertilizers deemed less damaging to the environment. Bloomfield Township has an

What lawn products people could or should use could become part of that ordinance, the attorney said.

aggressive educational program for its residents regarding which lawn care products are least threatening, she said.

Cohen thinks it would be a good idea for Farmington Hills to adopt such policies.

City Naturalist Joe Derek said the city has been looking at the issue for the past six years, but noted there are federal and state requirements on the hori-

zon to address storm water run off that harms the environment.

In 2003, the city will have a legal obligation to address this issue, said city attorney John Donohue. He said such rules and regulations to treat storm water contamination are already drafted by the state Department of Environmental Quality. He said the city is working to mirror that policy.

What lawn products people could or should use could become part of that ordinance, the attorney said.

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett said just like the city's bicycle helmet for youth ordinance, limiting which kinds of fertilizers to

treat grass could become a law. However, some council members said policing such a ordinance would likely prove difficult.

Councilman Jerry Ellis asked how the city would be able to make sure lawn improvement companies really use the "safer" form of fertilizer they may advertise.

Cohen, who lives in the Rolling Oaks subdivision near 13 and Drake, said after studying the issue, she's stopped using fertilizers altogether.

She said grass is getting to the point of being impervious to rain and that more people should devote open spaces in

their yards to plants and trees that soak up more storm water. She said that the chemicals used to make lawns look better tend to run off into the storm sewers and make it difficult to breathe.

She said putting an ordinance together before next spring, when people's mailboxes get bombarded with lawn treatment offers, would be a wise move on the city's part.

If homeowners and business knew what the city suggested for safer lawn care products, then demand for those products would increase and stores would be more inclined to stock them, Cohen said.

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