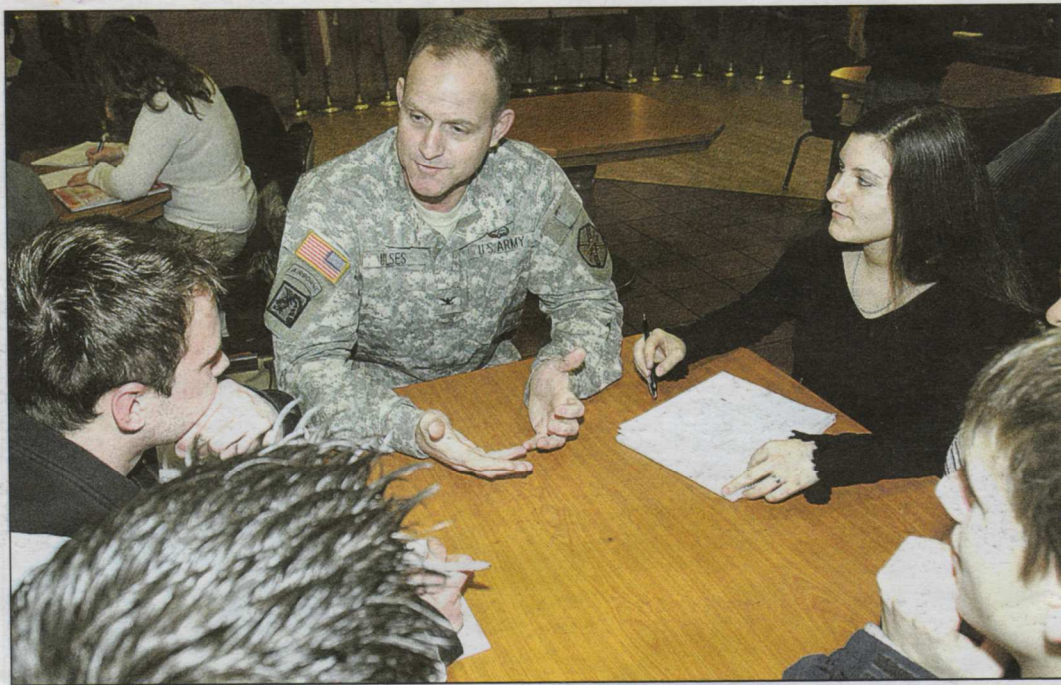


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Through others' eyes



Art McQueen

Heidelberg Garrison Commander Col. Robert J. Ulses speaks with local German students who are working on a multimedia project covering American cultural issues and lifestyles.

German students interview American Soldiers for local multimedia project

By Art McQueen
HERALD POST STAFF

A group of 12th-grade students from a local German technical school will contribute to a multimedia presentation called "The Other America," focusing on American cultural issues and lifestyles, with the assistance of Soldiers from U.S. Army Garrison Heidelberg.

The students from the Carl Bosch Technical Schule in Wieblingen arrived at Patton Barracks Jan. 31 as guests of the garrison equal opportunity office and took advantage of a rare opportunity to interview American Soldiers.

In coordination with the Deutsch-Amerikanisches Institut and the University of Heidelberg, the interviews will be combined into a multimedia presentation to be shown at the DAI from the end of May through September, which will allow military personnel a view of themselves through their host country's eyes.

Margit Veith is an instructor to the mechanical engineering class producing the project. "When I heard about the initiative from the DAI, I thought, why not a technical school?"

The students broke into groups and took turns asking Soldiers about different facets of their everyday lives and the

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Sgt. 1st Class David Green
Equal Opportunity Advisor

impact of race and gender on American experiences.

Although electrical and mechanical engineering, not English, is their primary field of study, they will certainly benefit from the experience, said Veith, adding the students had watched movies like "Crash" and listened to songs in English to prepare for the visit.

But nothing quite prepared them to actually speak to Soldiers, Alexandros Bertzenidis said. "I never had any chance to do things with Americans before."

"We see Soldiers jogging and doing sports," said Sebastian Brose, who has been to a few German-American fests, but doesn't really know any Americans well. "I learned that the Soldier of color I spoke to had more experiences with (racial) stereotypes (than a white Soldier), but that (the stereotypes) aren't as true, or extreme, like in the movies."

The questions the students

asked of the Soldiers were very good, said Sgt. 1st Class David Green, garrison EO advisor said. "They were curious about how Americans, and military folks in particular, deal with race and gender."

Green received feedback from the project coordinator that the impact on the students was greater than he realized.

"She said some of the students initially had negative feelings toward Americans, and particularly the military," Green said. "They were completely blown away by the opportunity to interact with actual Soldiers."

The improvement in understanding between people and nations is worth further effort, Green said. "It was a good opportunity for us to erase some stereotypes the students themselves held," Green said. "I believe we will continue this with other groups."

Visit DAI online at www.dai-heidelberg.de.