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## German lessons captivate third-grade class

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You could call Andrea **Schmuttermair** "unglaublich" and you could say that she does "gute Arbeit" -- that is, if you wanted to say she was "incredible" and that she does "good work."

A group of third graders at Los Penasquitos Elementary School can do just that -- because **Schmuttermair** is teaching them to speak German.

The freshman at the University of San Diego volunteers weekly to teach an introductory course in German to Pam McPherron's third-grade class. This is the second year that she has taught the class, and the response from the students has been overwhelming.

"The kids can't wait for Tuesdays because they know that's 'German Day,'" **Schmuttermair** said. "I feel very strongly that kids should be exposed to languages at a young age because they pick it up so fast. I'm really amazed at how well they do."

As a junior at Mt. Carmel High School, **Schmuttermair** came up with the idea for the classes after seeing a similar course taught at Rancho Bernardo High School, where she was tutoring. She made a proposal and a lesson plan and contacted McPherron, her former third-grade teacher. **Schmuttermair's** lesson plan was for six weeks, but she and the students enjoyed the course so much, she decided to continue throughout the year.

"(The students) absolutely love it; they look forward to seeing her each week," McPherron said. "The response has been so positive."

Now **Schmuttermair** is teaching the course to a new group of third graders. The students learn simple German vocabulary, including foods, animals, phrases, counting and the alphabet. **Schmuttermair** has also taught them some German songs, and they've learned about German culture.

"I know what kinds of things get the kids excited -- just simple things like learning how to say 'Hi. How are you?'" **Schmuttermair** said.

The German lessons have even extended beyond **Schmuttermair's** time with the children. McPherron said that during a recent assignment, one of the students asked if he could use a German word instead of English.

"I am so thankful that Andrea has chosen my class to do this with. They are learning so much," McPherron said.

During the holidays, **Schmuttermair** taught the children how to sing "O Tannenbaum" -- "Oh Christmas Tree" in German. She has also taught the children some songs that her grandparents, who are of German descent, sung to her as a child.

**Schmuttermair** was motivated to study German in high school because her grandparents promised her they would take her on a trip to Germany if she learned the language. They took her on a month-long trip where she was able to communicate with her German relatives.

"I'd love to live there for a while. I really enjoy the culture," said **Schmuttermair**, who plans to study abroad.

Now that she's in college, **Schmuttermair** is able to arrange the 30- to 45-minute class around her own schedule. In high school, she had to rush to the elementary school when she had a minimum day of classes.

**Schmuttermair's** major is not a surprise -- she's studying diversified liberal arts so she can become an elementary school teacher, and she's minoring in German and psychology.

"When she was in my class, you could tell she had a great love of learning and liked to help others," McPherron said.

**Schmuttermair** is also trying to encourage students at her former high school to get involved in this kind of program. Her younger sister also plans to teach a similar course at some point.

"I would love to see some sort of permanent language program in elementary schools," **Schmuttermair** said. "Younger children can absorb the language so quickly."

In the meantime, there's no doubt that **Schmuttermair** will make one "ausserordentlich Lehrerin" (extraordinary teacher).

Do you have a story idea for Rancho Penasquitos? Contact Shay K. McKinley at (760) 752-6795 or e-mail at [shay.mckinley@uniontrib.com](mailto:shay.mckinley@uniontrib.com).

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