



Photo by C.T. Kruger

Klaus Schöneich of Seligenstadt, Germany, Brookfield's sister city, awaits lineup of the Brookfield Independence Day Parade during a visit to Brookfield back in 2010.

Plans gearing up for trip to city's 'sister' in Germany

July trip is open to all, with a sign-up deadline of Feb. 28

By **GEOFF BRUCE**

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Brookfield residents are invited to join their fellow residents and mayor in exploring the country of Germany this summer.

The Brookfield Sister Cities Committee and the Brookfield International Friendship Association are organizing their bi-annual trek across the Atlantic to join with the people of Germany, and more specifically of Brookfield's sister city, Seligenstadt. The trip is planned for July 10 through 21.

Mayor Steve Ponto has been on two such trips to Germany already and encourages any interested parties to consider joining the convoy.

"It's a really great experience. We travel with a group of Germans who you get to know and you get insight into them and their country," Ponto said.

Ponto specifically notes that traveling with a group that has a connection to a government sometimes gar-

ners opportunities that might otherwise not be available to individual travelers.

"We have a particularly good group. Thorsten Bonifer is the chairman of the sister cities committee in Seligenstadt and he is very knowledgeable and well connected and devoted to making sure we have a good time," Ponto said. "On a Saturday morning he got me into the Christian Democratic Union headquarters in Berlin. I got to sit where Angela Merkel sits."

On each trip to Germany, the Brookfield sister cities committee attempts to explore a different part of the country. This summer, the journey will feature a four-day stay in and around Munich, a tour of southern Germany's Romantic Road, and the trip will culminate with a stay in Seligenstadt for Geleitsfest.

"We'll be visiting a couple of German castles, I'm looking forward to seeing Munich," Ponto said.

Geleitsfest is a festival that takes place every four years in Seligenstadt which celebrates the city's role in history in the merchant trade to Frankfurt. Additionally, this summer,

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Seligenstadt, which was founded in 815 A.D., will celebrate its 1200th anniversary.

Ponto notes that flexibility is available for trip-goers as well.

"We're fairly flexible in that some people may have gone on trips and already been to Munich on their own, so they can do some other stuff but join up with us later," Ponto said.

For tourists looking to further immerse themselves in German culture, Ponto notes that people can choose to stay in German homes with host families rather than in hotels.

The estimated cost for at-

tending the trip is \$3,500 per person, which includes airfare, lodging, bus travel, breakfast, and guided tours. The deadline for reservations is Feb. 28, and a \$500 deposit is required. Ponto also noted that the trip is not limited only to city of Brookfield residents, but is also open to others.

"Typically we have maybe around 20 people go. I think we could accommodate more than that," Ponto said. "We don't anticipate limiting the number."

For more information or to make a reservation, interested parties can contact Patti Schimmel at (262) 787-3525 or at schimmel@ci.brookfield.wi.us, or Harry Farchmin at hjfarchmin@earthlink.net.