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# REGIONAL NEWS

## UNITED STATES

Dear Readers,

Normally I'm extremely happy about the blooming of trees in our area at this time of the year but I'm having a hard time finding joy. I'm so grateful to live in this wonderful country but the happenings in Europe are on my mind. I would imagine that a lot of you feel like me: shocked, angry, disappointed, sad, all at the same time. Just when we thought that the worst of Covid has passed, we get hit with the next unsettling situation. We are witness to a development that most of us didn't think would be possible – a war in Europe with another power crazed man. Like probably many of you, I've been following the unbelievable happenings and seeing the tragic devastation of the Ukraine people and their country. I'm writing this on day 19 since the first attack and I don't even want to think about what it will look like when you read this issue.

And then there's the issue of "Neutrality" of Switzerland. I noticed that there are and have been a lot of articles written on that subject over the years. One of my information sources is [swissinfo.ch](https://www.swissinfo.ch) <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/the-swiss-fallout-of-putin-s-war/47422916>. They also feature articles from other publications as for example this one first published in the Tages Anzeiger on March 7, 2022.

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/what-putin-s-invasion-means-for-the-future-of-switzerland/47402202>

Obviously, there are many views and opinions, but I leave you with this excerpt from the above mentioned article written by Markus Häfliger, German-speaking editorial team, Tamedia:

"In many wars, it is not very clear who is the perpetrator and who the victim. In the Ukraine war, however, it is legally unambiguous: Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim. Vladimir Putin has violated countless articles of the United Nations charter, while Ukraine is only exercising its right to self-defense. Anyone who doesn't take a stance in such a case is an accomplice of the perpetrator."

Would you like to share a story about relatives or friends who's life has changed because of this war?

The next Swiss Review USA will be published on July 1, 2022. The deadline for submission of articles for the USA insert is May 26.

With gratitude for everybody who helps in their own way and prays for the many people affected by this inexcusable war.

DORIS BERNATH CUNNINGHAM, EDITOR

## Council of the Swiss Abroad

### Are we receiving the Swiss voting materials on time?

As many of us participate in the voting and elections in Switzerland, in the absence of e-voting, one key question is whether we receive our voting ballots early enough to be able to return them on time and have them counted?

The Swiss go to polls at least four times per year to make decisions on various issues. Swiss citizens living abroad, upon registration, can do the same. In the absence of e-voting, this requires that the ballots are mailed from and to Switzerland; early enough for the Swiss citizens abroad to receive them, fill them out, and then mail them back to their canton in Switzerland. All before the official voting weekend, otherwise they won't be counted.

Amongst the delegates on the Council of Swiss Abroad (CSA), we have begun to survey our own ranks as to what we ourselves experience around the world. The samples are small, and every country in the world may have different circumstances; nevertheless, we are starting to see some trends.

For example, we can see that the timing of the original mailing of the ballots by the cantons varies quite a bit more than we thought. The earliest cantons aim to go out 7 weeks ahead of time, or even a bit earlier, if possible, whereas other cantons mail only around 4 weeks

before the voting date. We appreciate that some cantons send only federal ballots, and others also include cantonal ballots. And we acknowledge that often the timeline is defined in cantonal legislation. All that said, it seems to be a relatively easy first action item to adjust the respective cantonal processes so that they all could mail out voting ballots some 7 to 8 weeks ahead of the voting deadline. In a recent meeting with a representative of the cantonal chancelleries, the CSA has expressed this suggestion.

If you and your families are experiencing a very tight timeline or even delays that make you doubt whether your ballots arrive in Switzerland on time to be counted, you could for example write to your canton's chancellery, usually the area responsible for the voting by the Swiss Abroad, to express your concern. I am happy to partner up with you, identify the right contact, and to draft a letter/email to them. Please let me know.

Best,

Jean-Pierre Mittaz

US Delegate to the Council of the Swiss Abroad

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## Florida: Swiss Club of Central Florida

A beautiful spring day was the backdrop for our Annual Meeting which was preceded by a delicious potluck luncheon. About 25 members enjoyed several typical Swiss dishes under the canopy of Cypress trees while catching up with old friends and meeting our youngest members, Elina (5 months) and Aurelia (25 months).



Enjoying a potluck luncheon in the shade of Cypress trees. Another beautiful Florida day!

At the Annual Meeting, the membership reviewed and approved



Reto Badraun enjoying a moment with our newest member, grand-daughter Elina

minutes from the last meeting just prior to COVID. An April event of kayaking and bike riding in a local park and playground was suggested to encourage our youngest members to attend. Two new Board Members were installed (Treasurer Marlies Schubiger and Secretary Tae Deprez Harper) as we thanked our outgoing Treasurer Bill Gompel and Director Mary Spirig for their longtime dedication and service. In

absentia, Ida McLuckie, past Secretary, and Susanne Margot, Director, were recognized for their past services.

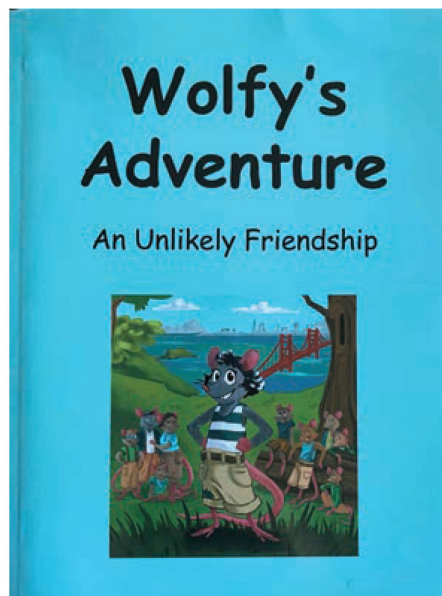
The highlight of the afternoon was a game that our members played which encouraged them to find

Putting together two pieces of the four-piece Swiss photo puzzle.



answers to several questions by searching through our new website. Teams of four were created after everyone selected a piece of several photos and looked for the other members who held the missing pieces to create a whole photo of a Swiss landscape. It was fun to mingle and learn more about our new website, Switzerland, and our members.

LESLIE GAIBROIS SKILLMAN, VP-WEBMASTER  
WWW.SWISSCFL.ORG



Wolfy's Adventure shows how far courage and empathy can bring us. How life-changing decisions can be for the better and that knowledge is power that can give us wings to explore new possibilities. It teaches the reader not to fear diversity but rather to embrace the beauty and possibilities that come with it. In this story the diversity comes in the form of feathered wings and furry paws and their adventurous journey together. The questions posed to the reader will spark dialogue and thinking that helps to open their mind to endless possibilities. Could this be the beginning of an unlikely friendship or the end of everything?

About the Author: Gisela Bengfort was born in Switzerland where she met the love of her life, Joe Bengfort, in 1997. Six months later they were married and living in the USA. During the 2020 pandemic Gisela's granddaughter, Camryn, inspired her to write down the stories Gisela often told on their hikes through the woods. While the stories are fantasy, they capture many events and philosophies of the family and many details about the animals are factual.

Wolfy's Adventure is available in Paperback and e-book  
Available on: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, iTunes, Google play, Kindle  
Published by Fulton Books ISBN 978-1-63710-112-4 \$17.95  
Printed by Ingram USA

What's next?

"Wolfy's Adventure, Away from Home" will be published by Fulton Books in 2022

"Wolfy's Adventure, Lost and Found" is in the making

**Pennsylvania:** New Helvetic Society Pennsylvania Chapter

Best of health to all from the New Helvetic Society-PA Chapter!

148 Members came together during the Advent Season to celebrate Samichlaus with the annual Fondue Dinner Party! What an event it was! Karl Niederer and Marshall Blum with their helpers cooked once



again, a most delicious Neuchateloise Fondue for all their happy guests! Our very dear Samichlaus and his helper enchanted all the kids with the Goodie-Saecklis and brought the Christmas spirit to the Firehall. The Cheese Club, spearheaded by Philip and Monika Hauser, gave all a chance to buy Appenzeller, Gruyere, Raclette or Fribourg Vacherin cheese at wholesale prices and delicious Swiss wines and beer were

sold by our own Luciano Mueller. All that was missing were the Swiss mountains! Guests were also very generous in buying the raffle tickets from the Swiss Benevolent Society of Philadelphia which helps people of Swiss descent that fall on hard times or also supports scholarships for students heading



to higher education. All in all, the evening was fabulous and a big shout-out goes to all the organizers, helpers and volunteers who put big smiles on all who were attending.

The Winter weekend getaway was a blast this year! With 52 members attending, the event included all age groups as well as skill levels. We had children as young as 4 years old and beginners taking lessons for their first time skiing. The ski conditions were great and the raclette get-together Saturday night was the perfect cap to a busy day skiing. Those who didn't ski read books in front of the fireplace, hiked up the very steep hill at Quarry Hills Farms, and played games



with each other. Each evening held a wide array of food and games, including 2 Jass tables interspersed with beginners, as well as experts. Those of you who made it, we had a beautiful time. Those of you who

didn't, we missed you and hope to see you there next year!

If you would like to have fun with like minded people, then go to [myswissclub.org](http://myswissclub.org) and sign up for our events, especially during these difficult times!



DANIELA KOVALCIK, PRESIDENT  
NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY - PA CHAPTER  
[WWW.MYSWISSCLUB.ORG](http://WWW.MYSWISSCLUB.ORG)



**Illinois:** Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago

Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno – One for all, and all for one. The Swiss Benevolent Society of Chicago celebrates its 150th Anniversary in 2022 and is committed to using the occasion to focus attention on the broader history of Swiss-American participation in the development of Chicago and the Midwest. Founded as a direct response to the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, the Society was built on a tradition of communal responsibility and solidarity that immigrants from Switzerland carried with and put into practice as they made a life for themselves and their families on the shores of Lake Michigan and in the long and short grass prairies that were eventually turned into farmland in the 19th century.

On Sunday, May 1st, the Society will gather with the Swiss Club Chicago, the Swiss American Business Council, the Lucerne Committee of Chicago Sister Cities and the Swiss Consulate in Chicago at the Great Central Brewing Company to honor the legacy left by the Society’s first Board of Directors. At our kick-off celebration, we will launch our own Swiss Beer, “Hop Swiss!”, which aims to memorialize an early Swiss contribution to Chicago – The Haas and Sulzer Brewery. This first commercial brewery was founded in 1833 by Swiss immigrant Andrew Sulzer and German William Haas. We are proud that we can use this special Swiss-Chicago connection to add to the city’s booming craft beer tradition.

The photo shows the 150th Anniversary Committee Members Thomas Zoells, Marie-Simone Pavlovich, John Paluch, Sonja Manhart, Bjorn Schwarzenbach during an early visit to the Great Central Brewing Company where they were hosted by Andreas Miller, Master Brewer, and Brooke Duncan, Taproom and Event Manager



We look forward to reporting on other co-sponsored activities associated with this year’s 150th Anniversary - including events organized by our Swiss sister organizations and organizations like the Alliance Française de Chicago, the Goethe Institut Chicago, Roosevelt University and Sulzer Regional Library.

We invite you to visit our new webpages where we will be posting registration for our events:  
<https://sbschicago.org/>

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**Colorado:** Swiss American Friendship Society (SAFS)

The members of Swiss American Friendship Society (SAFS) started the new Year with some heart-breaking news. Two member families lost their homes to the Marshall Wildfire, which destroyed 1000 homes and structures in Boulder County on December 30th. Almost immediately, the board reached out to the families in question and kept the flow of information going. Many members sent words of encouragement their way and many pitched in in form of gift cards to lessen the hardship. The Swiss in the Denver area are not only there for each other during the good, fun times but also during the rough periods of life.

Due to unruly weather patterns almost all the Stammtisch-meetings in January and February had to either get cancelled, postponed or attendance was historically low.

Therefore, many members looked forward to the yearly assembly and fondue dinner on February 20th. With Covid still being a concern in the community, the board decided to cap the event at 75 participants.



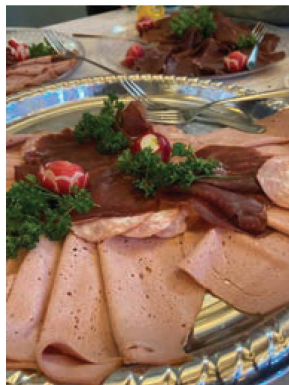
This slight change to the usual protocol didn't affect the overall spirit. At many tables, lively discussions took place. Many stories

centered around how individual members ended up in Colorado, what made one leave picturesque Switzerland, and which products can be found in someone's suitcase after a visit to Helvetian territory.

Our three professional chefs Rudi, Kurt, and Eugene once again created a meal for our Swiss hearts and souls. The charcuterie-boards, the salad and fresh rye bread were mouthwatering and the Fondue was excellent. Between the main course and more deliciousness for dessert, our president Rene Sonderegger and the enthusiastic board presented an overview of the last two years, the society's finances and membership count as well as a preview of the next few events: a snowshoe hike paired with more fondue and a wine tasting on March 6th, followed by an outing to the ski resort town Winter Park by means of the Skitrain at the end of March. The board is also planning a Jass tournament in late April.

The members will have a chance to practice their Jass skills during the Stammtisch-events in the meantime. It was decided that a good Jass will from now on be part of those informal social gatherings, which take place regularly both on the northern and southern end of the Denver Metro area.

The SAFS is dedicated to fostering and advancing friendship and goodwill between the people of the state of Colorado and Switzerland. Our president Rene Sonderegger also happens to be the Honorary Consul of Switzerland and therefore fulfills this role in good old Swiss fashion with excellence. Rene can be reached at 303 378 4577 or [rene.sonderegger@renaisys.com](mailto:rene.sonderegger@renaisys.com). Visit our website at [www.safs.us](http://www.safs.us) to stay in touch with our events and join our club if you live here in Colorado.






Written by Regula Grenier, a proud member of the SAFS.

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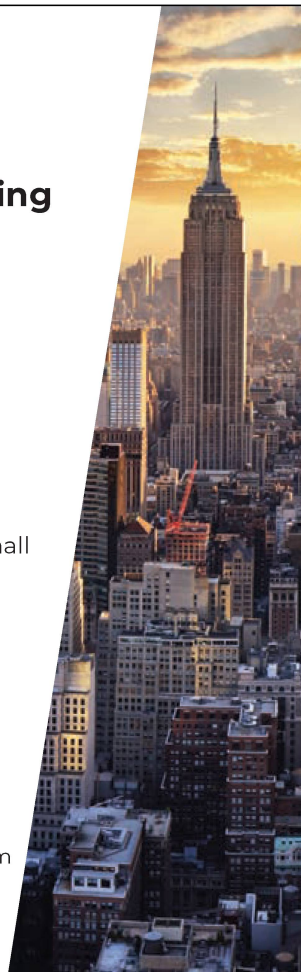
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## Florida: Swiss Club Miami

The New Year started with a bicycle tour to the Shark Valley on January 9th which has nothing to do with sharks, but with alligators! A total of 33 people signed up, but only 26 showed up because the grey clouds probably scared them off. But the no-shows did not know Florida because although it looked like a rainy day, within one hour it changed to a perfect bicycle day with only some clouds here and there. After two hours



of cycling a well deserved picnic was ready. Kudos go to Diana (7) and Leon (6), the kids of Christian, who organized this great event. They cycled the entire trail of 13,5 miles! Everyone went home recharged with fresh air and energy. The alligators are very calm and used to people. According to the Park Ranger no incident ever happened since the park opened in 1947.

On February 2nd we had our Annual General Assembly at Fritz & Franz Bierhaus and 23 members joined us that evening. The Swiss Club Miami was represented by all Board Members and all changes including the new Board Members were voted on by the club members. A Goodbye and a Thank You to Roland Bandelier, our former Vice President, for his outstanding support to the Club during the past 6 years. The new board members have been selected, the meeting was adjourned and the 'Züri Gschnätzlets' was ready.



Diccon Bewes - travel writer, chocolate lover and Englishman in Bern

I have the pleasure to announce the visit to Miami of Author Diccon Bewes on May 26th, 2022, presenting two of his books 'Cartographica Helvetica' and 'Swiss 52'. Diccon Bewes is a true Ambassador for Switzerland and will tour eight cities in the US. We are so proud to welcome him here in Miami.

Some background information about Diccon: He grew up in (old) Hampshire but left as soon as he could. An 18-month world trip set him up for a career in travel writing, though he took the scenic route via book-selling. He has spent the last 17 years in Switzerland, where he has been grappling with German grammar and tasting as much chocolate as possible. His first book 'Swiss Watching' became a No 1 bestseller and he recently published 'Cartographica Helvetica', his eighth book on Switzerland.

For more information on his books and his complete schedule of his book tour in the U.S., please visit his web site [www.dicconbewes.com](http://www.dicconbewes.com)

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**Northern California:** Peninsula Swiss Club

The Peninsula Swiss Club has been busy planning our events for 2022! For winding down 2021 we had our first event in 1 1/2 years. In November, we had an outdoor Herbstfest luncheon at our local Swiss Park. We served Fleischkäse with some nice sides. We had over 65



attendees and offered music as well. The interim Swiss Consulate General joined us as well. We were happy to have an event together.

In December we offered our Samichlaus event where we had Santa walking down a tea lit path where the kids could visit and take pictures. Members enjoyed the Glühwein and hot chocolate with some little Swiss treats on the side.

For 2022, we decided not to have our indoor Fondue event. However, we have decided to add an outdoor hike in March with wine



tasting and will also have our Easter event transformed to an outdoor event. Our semi-annual BBQ in June will happen as it is outdoors as well. We are looking forward to a bright and positive 2022 for our club!!

ERIC SONNBERGER, PRESIDENT  
 PRESIDENT@PENINSULASWISSCLUB.COM  
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**Florida:** Swiss American Club of Sarasota

January arrived with a bang in Sarasota! Our warm climate was assailed by a chill with temperatures dropping to the 40s, and a few nights with lows of 37° ... definitely not what we Sarasotans are used to. Give us the sun and we are happy.

Many of our members are coming back from Switzerland and from the colder northern states to enjoy the warmer weather and all that Sarasota has to offer. The historic Sarasota Opera Festival opened its 2022 season with La Tosca by Giacomo Puccini and The Van Wezel, Sarasota's Performing Arts Hall, welcomed dance groups, Broadway shows and iconic performers of dance and music. Every Saturday, the Farmers' market downtown continues to delight locals and visitors alike with the freshest produce, fruits, fish and meats from local producers. Traffic, with the 'snowbirds' flocking back, is quite a challenge.

The Club is slowly resuming activities and on Sunday, February 2nd, members met for brunch at the Peridia Country Club giving everyone a chance to reconnect. On that occasion we also had the opportunity to wish farewell to longtime members Stan and Alma Abshier who will be moving permanently to Valley Forge, PA, to be closer to their daughters. They leave us with many happy memories. For many years, Stan and Alma were an important part of the Swiss-American Club – Alma was a past President (1993-1995) and Stan served on the Board for over 10 years as Event Chairman organizing



Stan and Alma Abshier



many successful gatherings. They will be missed and we wish them a fond "Adieu" and much happiness in their new home.

Our picnic season will begin on March 6 and we will be touching on that new phase of our activities in the next issue. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Doris Bernath Cunningham and the Swiss Review for their role in showcasing the Swiss Communities in the United States ... they are the bridge to our roots.

IMELDA EGG, VP COMMUNICATIONS  
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**New York:** The New York Swiss Gymnastic Society



*We are back ...*

With Covid hopefully fading away, we finally thought it safe to get together for our General Meeting combined with a luncheon at a conveniently located restaurant in White Plains, NY. In the course of the meeting, after a short discussion it was decided to hold our Swiss Jass Championship once again. It will be the 23rd time that this tournament takes place. The winner gets his or her name engraved on our Swiss Cup Trophy. We also made plans for more opportunities to meet again throughout this year. During and after the luncheon the time was spent with lively conversations, reminiscing about old times and debating ideas for the future of our Society. At the end of the afternoon, all the members present, felt relieved and happy to have had the opportunity to see our friends after such a long period of staying away from each other. Will do it again soon



For more info contact [nyswissgs@gmail.com](mailto:nyswissgs@gmail.com)

PETER GERMAN  
NEW YORK SWISS GYMNASIC SOCIETY (NYSGS)

**Pennsylvania:** Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh

Evelyn Baker Ruffing needed something red to wear to the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh's August 1st picnic. She found the perfect pair of red Liz Claiborne shorts at either Horne's or Kaufmann's, Pittsburgh's two big department stores. She can't remember which store, but that's understandable, since this was way back in 1977.



Evelyn has worn the same red shorts to the August 1st picnic just about every year since then. They are decades old but look new since they are only worn once per year. Another S-ASP member, Nancy Flury Carlson, has been admiring those shorts ever since she heard their history. At last



year's picnic, Evelyn decided to formally transfer the shorts to Nancy, who is fortunately the same size. Evelyn quipped, "I'm not getting any younger!" Though Nancy is now the custodian of the shorts, the two agreed Evelyn will get first dibs on wearing them to the annual picnic.

After graduating from Susquehanna University in 1956, Evelyn Baker Ruffing studied Germanics at the University of Zurich and subsequently completed an advanced degree in ethnology, working with the noted European ethnologist Richard Weiss. This was a challenging course of study for a non-Swiss. To meet the requirements of the ethnology program, she had to concurrently become fluent in the Swiss-German dialects and work as an intern in diverse sectors of the Swiss culture, including teaching, serving in the military, and working in a hospital. Through her studies she developed a deep love for Swiss culture, and when she moved to the Pittsburgh area in 1976, she was happy to find and join the local Swiss group that has been an important part of her life ever since.

Aside from her academic expertise in ethnography and language, she has extensive knowledge of Early American architecture and traditional Swiss architecture. She was an essential subject matter expert on architectural issues as a member of the Swiss Nationality Room Committee as we worked toward the design and construction of the Swiss Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh (<https://www.nationalityrooms.pitt.edu/rooms/swiss-room>). The room was dedicated in April 2012.

NANCY FLURY CARLSON  
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