



# BUILDING COMMUNITY

Texas has long had a German connection, with German settlers in the mid-1800s making their mark in South Texas and around San Antonio. Today, a large German community has developed in the Dallas area. Some are here temporarily for jobs and will eventually return to Germany, while others have immigrated to stay.

Due in large part to the efforts of **Hans Hepe**, a Bonn, Germany, native and associate of Locke, Lord, Bissell & Liddell, L.L.P., a new school in Dallas now provides a place for the local German community, or even those of German heritage who want to reconnect, to send their children for immersion in the German language while in a regular preschool setting. Geared toward children ages 1 to 5, the German International School of Dallas opened its doors Sept. 1.

Although the German people are descendants of many different ancestral tribes, over time, language has united them, Hepe said. "That's one thing we're trying to pick up with the school."

The idea for the school had been percolating for several years, but thanks to Hepe and a core group of friends in the Dallas German community, the school finally has come to fruition.

The school is located in the Dallas home of Malte and Charlotte "Lotte" von Engelbrechten, friends of Hepe's and longtime supporters of creating the school. The von Engelbrechtens bought their house with the hope of providing space for the school, and Lotte, who holds a Master's in special education from the University of Cologne, serves as the principal and teacher.

The school has 12 children attending on various days, depending on parents' schedules. Currently, only six children can attend on any one day, allowing Lotte plenty of time to work with each child at his or her own pace. Hepe, whose 2-year-old daughter attends two days a week, helped write the school's curriculum, which follows the German method that focuses on enhancing children's growth and learning through daily planned lessons and group activities. The cur-

riculum is broken down into separate programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with the eventual goal of preparing children to enter the school system. Lessons are conducted in German and focus on different areas of learning and social development, using language, music, puzzle-solving, and other activities. Because of the young ages of the students, non-German-speaking children can easily be incorporated into the program.

For example, said Hepe, one day might be "Jungle Day" with the lessons all connected to the theme, such as singing songs about jungle animals or identifying and drawing various animals or listening to a story. "All of the senses are engaged," he said.

Hepe originally came to the United States as an exchange student in Tulsa, Okla., and later returned to attend law school at Southern Methodist University.

That's where he met his wife, **Rosario "Chachy" Hepe**, now an attorney with Fluor Corporation's corporate compliance group in Dallas. Hepe, who also holds an LL.D. from the University of Hamburg School of Law, practiced in New York for several years before he and Rosario returned to Texas in 2007. "We're very happy here, and I feel very fortunate to work at Locke Lord," he said.

Of particular benefit has been help from his colleagues in getting the school off the ground. Partner **Stuart Bumpas** helped put together the paperwork to set up the school, which is a not-for-profit organization.

Hepe hopes that the school will continue to grow as word spreads. He also would like to see the school eventually team up with the Dallas International School to enable older students to take math, science, or other classes in German. Currently, the Dallas International School teaches classes only in English and French.

But for now, Hepe is just pleased to have the German International School of Dallas up and running. "Now that it's here, we can build on it," he said.

For more information, visit the school's website at [www.german-isd.com](http://www.german-isd.com).



Hans Hepe

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