

Local language instructor can teach French, German, Italian  
By: Brendan McGarry  
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Saratoga Springs - Waltraud "Trudy" Flynn certainly can teach adults a foreign language.

After all, her list of clientele includes an FBI agent who learned French for an assignment in Canada, a psychologist who learned Italian for collaborative work with a mental hospital in Sicily and a chief executive officer of a company in Glens Falls who learned German in order to give a speech at the company's annual conference in Germany.

She is also teaching two seniors Italian in preparation of their trip to Italy to meet relatives. "They are very ambitious," she said, explaining how they learn numbers by playing Bingo. "It takes a lot of discipline to continue."

But, as she herself will attest, Frau Flynn (as her students call her) much prefers the company of children. "I enjoy teaching the children the most because it is very easy to convey the language," she said. "It's funny, when you teach a young child, they will never have an accent."

Frau Flynn has taught foreign languages at a variety of schools in the region, such as the Spring Hill Waldorf School (now the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs), St. Mary's and St. Alphonsos Regional School in Glens Falls and the Saratoga Springs school district before she "went out on her own," she said.

Around four years ago, the native of Innsbruck, Austria started the European Language Connection, an independent language school located at 320 Broadway, to offer more developmentally-appropriate instruction. In addition to private lessons, she offers small classes in French, German and Italian to children ages 4-14 that meet weekly.

"By age 10, it's already too late," she said, explaining how introducing middle school students to a foreign language is difficult. "It's harder for the brain to take it in."

Frau Flynn uses songs, videos, games, puppet theater and even nature walks in nearby Congress Park to introduce language. "There was always music in my house, and I carry it to the children," she said, explaining how her mother was a student of the world famous Maria Von Trapp at a monastery in Salzburg, Austria.

Frau Flynn recently returned from a two-and-a-half week trip to her home country, where she visited family and, like always stopped by local schools to "see what's new." She said she observed general curriculum changes but mostly purchased new books and materials for her classes.

Commenting on the political climate, Flynn said she was surprised to see such widespread anti-American sentiment in a country that traditionally has supported American foreign policy. "People are so anti-American now over there," she said. "I was absolutely stunned."

As a trilingual interpreter in Austria, Frau Flynn has worked for the Innsbruck Tourist Board and was selected to act as the Queen of England's personal interpreter during her trip to Innsbruck. She was also one of only four Austrians to represent her country during the Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France.

Frau Flynn teaches French from 4 to 5 pm Fridays or 2:15 to 3:15 pm Saturdays; German from 4:30 to 5:30 pm Fridays or 11:30 to 12:30 pm Saturdays; and Italian from 5:30 to 6:30 pm Thursdays.