

Press Release | EU Language Festival | ELF 2016

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, DC

ELF 2016

European Language Festival to Be Held in the D.C. Region

On Sunday, May 22, 2016, over twelve Saturday Schools from the D.C. metropolitan area will jointly host the third European Language Festival (ELF 2016) at Bradley Hills Elementary School, near the Old Georgetown Road Exit of the Beltway, from 10.30am to 2.30pm.

The festival will be an opportunity for families to enjoy a great day with friendly team matches and demonstrate to their children how many other children maintain or learn a European language in our area offered.

The event is part of the European Month of Culture. It is hosted by local Saturday Schools and is supported by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States of America.

The term "Saturday Schools" refers to language schools that provide instruction for a certain language in a school setting outside of regular weekday schools.

The main objective of these schools is to provide international families with a means to maintain one or several of their native languages and thereby preserve or open up additional educational and professional options for their children.

The ELF 2016 organizers hope that the festival will encourage visitors to learn more about how the Saturday Schools can help them prepare their children for the growing opportunities that maintaining an extra native language brings with it in today's interconnected and globalized world.

According to Rudi Matuschek of My French Classes Saturday School in Bethesda, Md., who grew up with multiple languages himself, the Elementary and Middle School years are essential for acquiring fluency and ease in a language. The fundamentals acquired during these formative years lay the groundwork in order to be able to later become fully functional in that language in all aspects of life. "With a limited but continued effort, it is possible to fully develop a language, even if most of the environment operates in a different language," says Mr. Matuschek, adding that "we called the French Saturday School 'My French Classes' to indicate that the objective is to create an environment that guides our students towards integrating our language into their lives and adopt it as their own. We recognize that language learning is not simply studying words and grammar, but developing each student's access to a whole universe."

Kerstin Hopkins, Head of German Language Courses (GLC) in Potomac, Md., has been bringing children (and adults) up to the desired language levels in her Saturday school. She knows from her more than 20 years of experience in this field that there are many reasons to study a foreign language, "It is a big plus on your resume or college application, and it keeps your brain young and fit. Many companies nowadays have an international presence with European outlets. Moreover, it is essential to keep your native language at a native-fluency level to be able to return to or enter a European school system if needed."

Karen van Loon of the Dutch Saturday School in Bethesda brings the ethos of Saturday Schools to the point when she says that, "of course, for the students coming to the classes on Saturday morning it is much more than simply learning Dutch words, grammar and spelling." When asked to describe the essence of the interest for the students, she explains that, "this is where the students meet their Dutch-speaking friends, where they learn what it means to be a part of the Dutch community and where they discover how incredibly cool and useful it is to speak another language and also be part of another culture!"

At the Bulgarian Saturday School, this May will mark the first graduation of High School Seniors. Throughout their attendance over the years, these seniors have gained not only mastery of the Bulgarian language, but also a deep understanding of Bulgarian and European history, geography, and culture. Kristina Cronin, the school's director, describes the students' and their families' experience by explaining, "Kids growing up being instructed in two cultures and two languages build their self-confidence and self-awareness. Our school helps them to build a good understanding of who they are and they also learn to appreciate other peoples' cultures and backgrounds in light of their own experience."

Among the European languages represented at the festival are:
Bulgarian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Swedish and more.

Friendly soccer, basketball, tennis and badminton games will take place between different teams. All games will be played within different age groups and parents are encouraged to play as well.

The event will be further publicized as part of the [EU Open House](#) festivities on May 14, 2016, and through the cultural and educational counselors of the respective European Union countries.

For more information about ELF 2015, please visit www.saturday-schools.org/go/elf

Contacts:

Rudi Matuschek

Phone: 301.358.5050

Nadine Robert

Phone: 301.358.5500

My French Classes - French Saturday School

Email: contact@myfrenchclasses.org

Web: www.myfrenchclasses.org

Kerstin Hopkins

Phone: 301.767.3824

German Language Courses (GLC) - German Saturday School

Email: glc@dswash.org

Web: www.dswashington.org/glc

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