

KUTZTOWN FESTIVAL TO AWARD COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS IN PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN STUDIES, CRAFTS, AGRICULTURE

The Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival will award college scholarships to students with strong interests in Pennsylvania German studies, traditional crafts, and agriculture starting in 2006.

“In this way we are reflecting the educational mission of the Festival and its commitment to preserving the Pennsylvania German culture, including the crafts which are an important part of this culture. It has been the present board’s intention since we assumed operation of the Festival to raise funds for scholarships for students in our region,” Festival Board President Russell Hinnerschitz said.

“Our region was settled by Pennsylvania Germans, and farming was a way of life here for over two centuries. Through some of these scholarships we recognize the continuing important role of agriculture to our state and nation, and encourage students to pursue agricultural studies,” added Richard Dry, President of the Kutztown Fair Association and Chairman of the Festival Board Scholarship Committee.

The Festival Board has designated \$15,000 for scholarships for Kutztown University students enrolled in or with a strong interest in its Pennsylvania German Studies program or in traditional crafts. Another \$5,000 in scholarship funds will be for students pursuing college or university level studies in agricultural science or related areas.

Dry said that the criteria for awarding scholarships and the number to be awarded will be decided and announced within the next few months. Hinnerschitz said that the Festival Board is committed to awarding the scholarships annually to talented students.

An annual folklife festival in Kutztown dates to the summer of 1950 when a group of farmers and educators banded together to produce an event that was unlike anything done before – a festival that would explain the life and customs of the Pennsylvania Germans (“Pennsylvania Dutch”) and that would also provide some wholesome entertainment for visitors. They chose the fairgrounds in Kutztown, PA as the site for their festival – then a modest size show with just four tents of exhibits, held over a period of five days, and at first attracting only several hundred curious people.

Since 1996 the Kutztown University Foundation and the Kutztown Fairgrounds Association have been partners in producing the Festival, which now regularly draws well over 100,000 visitors annually. The Festival has a national reputation for its crafts, quilts, and presentations of Pennsylvania Dutch customs and folklore.

The Kutztown University Foundation raises funds to benefit the university. The university offers a program in Pennsylvania German studies and operates the community-based Kutztown University Pennsylvania German Heritage Center with a year-round program centering on Pennsylvania German culture. The Fair Association owns and operates the Kutztown Fairgrounds and sponsors the

Kutztown Fair, a summer event that historically has emphasized local agricultural activities. The original bylaws of the Association promote agriculture and horticulture. This year the Fair Association celebrates its 100th anniversary.

The Kutztown Festival's mission statement emphasizes education as well as entertainment. It reads, "The Kutztown Festival is dedicated to promoting and preserving the Pennsylvania German ("Pennsylvania Dutch") traditions of eastern Pennsylvania and to providing programs, exhibits, and wholesome entertainment that reflect these and other related early American traditions"

The 2005 Festival will be held from July 2 to July 10 at the Kutztown Fairgrounds.

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