



# German American Trade Quarterly

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German American  
Chambers of Commerce  
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**German companies in the US  
respond quickly to COVID-19 crisis**





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The COVID-19 pandemic will go down in history for the great toll it has taken on our communities. It swept in with an unimaginable force.

And if dealing with the threats to our health and well-being isn't enough, this pandemic has the economies of the world reeling. There's no getting around the pain and struggles we're facing.

The human will to persevere and thrive, as always, will carry us through this existential crisis. We are fortunate to be living in a modern age of highly developed science, medicine and commerce which, combined with our unrelenting drive to solve problems, will put us on a path toward restoration.

Throughout this crisis, the GACCs have actively engaged with you, our German-American business community, offering resources and services that can assist in overcoming the obstacles we're facing. This includes creating new platforms and opportunities for our member companies, stakeholders and friends to find the tools they need to keep their businesses operating, while sharing their expertise and experiences to assist those in our community who are struggling.

In the first section of this edition of the GAT, we've curated representative examples of GACC member companies that have been quick to step in with support – whether it's donating products and services or shifting their core operations to produce desperately needed materials – the actions of these companies will help us endure this crisis. They've exhibited great resolve in cooperating with others in and out of their industries to create innovative ways to find solutions.

We commend these companies for supporting both their local communities and the global community.

Our GACCs have dramatically increased the number of online services and events we offer. That includes enhanced digital resource hubs to better meet the needs of our members, stakeholders and friends.

Sincerest THANKS to all of you, from all of us!

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# German companies in the US respond quickly to COVID-19 crisis

Jasmin Welter and James Freeman, GACC

As COVID-19 is spreading across the country, many German subsidiaries have stepped up in their response to the pandemic. For all these companies, the health and safety of employees and customers remain the top priority. At the same time, companies are finding ways to support their clients, customers, healthcare professionals and first responders. Businesses change their production lines to fabricate masks or face shields, donate PPE or money, or innovate to maintain delivery of products and services critical to people and companies around the world. The German American Chambers of Commerce are proud to present some companies from our network that are stepping up and making valuable contributions during this global pandemic.

▶ ICATT Apprenticeship Network Company Mauser, a German subsidiary based in Illinois, works in medical equipment packaging. The company manufactures everything from the bins used to collect equipment after use all the way through the containers that are used to transport large quantities of medicine and equipment and beyond. At the same time, the company manufactures about 90% of the United States' paint containers - many people staying home are using the additional time for home improvement projects.

▶ At the same time, our member Herrmann Ultrasonics is keeping up with medical mask demand. Deemed an essential business, the company

has boosted production to keep up with the increase in demand and a higher volume of orders from clients for various types of medical masks. "Our commitment has always been to provide customers with equipment and products that they need," said Uwe Peregí, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Herrmann Ultrasonics. "As a company, we have always aided in the production of medical masks, but COVID-19 has increased the demand."

Employees throughout the company are working extra hours due to the high demand and first year ICATT apprentice, Konrad Ryk is one of these key employees. "I've been able to receive hands-on training and real-world experience during a global crisis," said Konrad. "It feels good to know the work that I'm doing is making a difference and is helping others stay safe through this."

▶ Similarly, ZF North America, a subsidiary of ZF Friedrichshafen AG, in partnership with Detroit Sewn, has started production of facemasks in Romeo, Michigan and Chihuahua, Mexico to support the fight against COVID-19. Developed for frontline healthcare workers and individuals in the community with high-risk for infection and unable to locate masks elsewhere: Multiple manufacturing



The German American Chambers of Commerce are proud that so many of the companies in our network are stepping up and making valuable contributions during this global pandemic.

lines are in place at both facilities with a shipment of 100,000 face masks expected to be delivered by the end of April.

- ▶ Another great example is our member Klett USA in Illinois. Klett USA is part of the Klett Gruppe, which with 67 companies in 15 countries worldwide, represents one of the leading educational institutions in Europe. Klett USA serves the K-16 educational market and has been offering teachers assistance with transitioning German language courses to online environments, access to free online course content and tools, free webinars, and one-on-one video conference trainings.
- ▶ TRUMPF Laser Technology Center, whose General Manager Ralf Kimmel was just recently elected to the GACC Midwest Board of Directors, is working to aid the COVID-19 pandemic by producing protective face shields in their application centers in Plymouth, MI and Farmington, CT. The first 1,000 units will be donated to healthcare workers, first responders and food banks in their local communities. TRUMPF is also installing laser diodes in 3,500 respirators by the end of May - these laser diodes are being repurposed from their original use for measuring levels of oxygen during aircraft refueling. As the

pandemic continues, TRUMPF is actively looking for solutions to help fight the virus and support their customers.

- ▶ As a response to the crisis, member company KINEXON has adapted its cutting-edge, real-time sensor technology to protect employees, while maintaining the flow of production. The KINEXON SafeZone solution ensures employees are adhering to CDC guidelines by equipping them with a wearable that actively warns them, visually and audibly, as soon as the minimum physical distance to another person is compromised. The simple "plug-and-play" solution requires no infrastructure and is easily scalable.
- ▶ Our member WITTENSTEIN is committed to helping all manufacturers during this time, with a hyper-dedication to support efforts in Food, Medical and Pharmaceutical production. As WITTENSTEIN's products benefit packaging, processing and paper converting in these critical sectors, some employees are required to be onsite. To ensure their safety, WITTENSTEIN has implemented a multitude of protection initiatives, which are monitored diligently. These measures also allow for the company's apprentices' training to continue, and the apprentices are now gaining first-hand experience in a changed manufac-

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**WITTENSTEIN**

**VETTER**





“In production and laboratories, employees are split into groups with different working shifts to eliminate personal contact in the best way possible.”

**Susanne Lemaine, Ph.D.,  
President Vetter Development Services USA**

turing environment. Additionally, the company created an online training forum for their distributors to foster knowledge building and communication. The daily webinars have generated more than 750 customer engagements, and momentum continues at a steady pace. WITTENSTEIN is proud that their customer support continues uninterrupted, as they equipped staff with laptops and implemented additional cyber security measures to facilitate seamless network access from home. “From our customers’ perspective, we may as well be in the office – the support experience

is seamless,” says Peter Riehle, President & CEO of WITTENSTEIN.

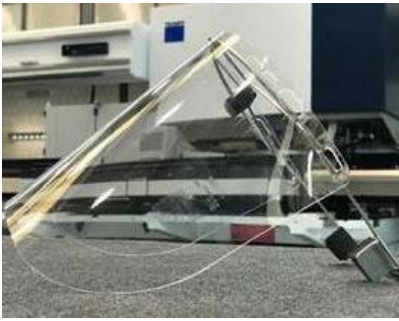
- ▶ According to Susanne Lemaine, Ph.D., President at our member company Vetter Development Services USA, Vetter is working on “the best possible physical separation of employees executing on-site functions. In production and laboratories, employees are split into groups with different working shifts to eliminate personal contact in the best way possible. Also, employees gowning and operating in the manufacturing areas are minimized to only those necessary

for production.” With these and similar measures, the facilities enact measures to minimize risk and negative effects on the employees and customers simultaneously.

- ▶ Our corporate member Henry Schein Inc. announced last month that it will serve as the exclusive distributor in the United States of a second point-of-care rapid test kit that can detect antibodies associated with COVID-19 in as few as 15 minutes. “Henry Schein is committed to bringing essential products to the healthcare professionals who are fighting the pandemic,” said Stanley M. Bergman, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of Henry Schein. “In conjunction with our suppliers, we are determined to make these essential products available.” Working with BD (Becton, Dickinson and Company) (NYSE: BDX), a leading global medical technology company, and BioMedomics, a privately held, North Carolina-based clinical diagnostics company, Henry Schein will make the test kits available to health care professionals as part of the Company’s broad offering of point-of-care rapid tests. Henry Schein is a worldwide distributor of medical and dental supplies including vaccines, pharmaceuticals, financial services. The company’s US headquarters are based in Melville, NY.



*KINEXON physical distancing concept.*



MAUSER face shield

- ▶ Longtime GACC member Roto Frank of America, Inc., based in Chester, CT, has donated surgical masks to the Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, Connecticut. Due to increased demands on Connecticut's health care system, Roto's strong commitment to community support meant that it was eager to donate the masks it received to the medical professionals working tirelessly for the state of Connecticut.

"We are extremely grateful to all the front-line workers, who have been going the extra mile to keep everyone safe," said Chris Dimou, President & CEO of Roto North America. To learn more about how you can help Middlesex Hospital too, please visit: [www.middlesexhealth.org](http://www.middlesexhealth.org).

- ▶ Bäumert of North America shows what can be accomplished when a company has the expertise and flexibility to adjust its business operations quickly during a crisis. A leading manufacturer of special machines, tools and plants used in the foam industry, Bäumert's North American (BOA) division in New Jersey was recently approached by one of its US customers to help it acquire cutting machines needed to produce medical mattresses. Because of the covid-19 crisis, this customer was at overcapacity and

"The quick decisions between BOA customers to help and support the production of mattresses is an excellent example of businesses working together for the greater good during such critical times."

## Uwe Sharfy, CEO of Bäumert of North America

in desperate need of the cutting machines to keep up with production. Jumping into action, BOA immediately switched an existing machine order with the order of another customer (the existing customer that had the machine on order, of course, gave its approval.) This action allowed for immediate delivery of a horizontal contour cutting machine (pictured) to the customer who desperately needed it. The cutter is used to cut foam for hospital beds. Not only was BOA able to secure the cutter, the company's talented New Jersey

team quickly installed the machine leading, in turn, to speedy production and delivery of the mattresses critically needed by hospitals.

"The quick decisions between BOA customers to help and support the production of mattresses is an excellent example of businesses working together for the greater good during such critical times," says Uwe Sharfy, CEO of BOA. "Thanks to our customers and employees, we were able to deliver and install a brand new machine in record time," he added.



Bäumert horizontal contour cutting machine

▶ Last year, the GACC NY marked 60 years of collaborating with Lufthansa in the US. The highly-respected air carrier is now focused on doing its part during the COVID crisis. Lufthansa has flown 17,000 passengers on 80 flights home to Germany from abroad, so that everyone can be at home with their loved ones. The airline is also transporting humanitarian goods to wherever they are needed most: Recently, Lufthansa flew around 30 tons of medical supplies from China to Europe. To transport as much as possible, they are currently utilizing not only their cargo freighters, but also parked passenger aircraft. And they have provided hospitals with 920,000 of their own face masks.



*Herrmann Ultrasonics manufactures equipment to make face masks*

At the same time Lufthansa is doing everything it can to rebook as many of its customers as possible.

▶ International Flavors & Fragrances (IFF) in just one day, using WHO guidelines, produced and shipped 2.5 tons of hand sanitizer. This precious cargo is a bit different from the uncommon taste, scent, nutrition and specialty ingredients the company pioneered over the past 130 years, but IFF is just as proud to stamp their name on it. As the crisis grows, IFF recognizes that its sterile manufacturing plants, deemed essential at this time, could serve to do more good, not just for our people and our customers, but for those in need of extra supplies. With the help of Verckridge Chemical in Kearny, NJ, who rushed over a donation of 1,000kg of peroxide, the hand sanitizer headed out to be bottled and distributed to other IFF sites and community based facilities in need. “We have a weekly capacity of about 10,000 bottles and will continue production to send the much needed hand sanitizer to

other first responders and hospitals too,” said Andreas Fibig, Chairman & CEO of IFF.

▶ Our STEP USA alumnus LeanIX has developed a fully functional platform with analytic capabilities, API and mobile app which allows doctors and hospitals to manage COVID-19 patients more efficiently. LeanIX joined thousands of others in responding to a challenge issued by the German government to create digital solutions to combat COVID-19. Hailed as the largest “hackathon” in history, the initiative resulted in 1,500+ ideas to curb the virus’s spread – all of which are now in the process of being reviewed for immediate use. The LeanIX team created a cross-border database to list the available capabilities of hospitals throughout Europe and their current levels of ICU capacity. Up-to-date information on critical supplies like hospital beds and respiratory support can be tracked from within a single dashboard. Further, a variety of filters can be applied to help hospital staff analyze the capacity of neighboring facilities. ■



*ZF Div. Romeo Team*



# The 8th Annual GACC NY Automotive & Mobility Forum

A Q&A with transportation experts Sascha Simon, Jessie Lazarus and Dillon Twombly

Last month, the GACC NY was set to hold its 8th Annual Automotive & Mobility Forum as an in-person panel discussion in NYC. Due to the COVID crisis we, of course, had to postpone the in-person event, opting for a virtual Q&A with panelists who shared their perspectives on autonomous driving, connected vehicles, pedestrian behavior and other latest trends and technology developments in the transportation sector.

In case you couldn't join our virtual discussion, here is a supplemental Q&A with Sascha Simon of Sfara, Inc., Dillon Twombly of Via Transportation, Inc. and Jessie Lazarus of CARMERA.

**Sascha Simon (SS):** How do you see shared mobility impacted by the Coronavirus outbreak in the mid to long term?

**Dillon Twombly (DT):** We are increasingly seeing cities seek to rapidly adapt their existing transportation systems to address the COVID-19 health crisis. Cities are in urgent need of innovative solutions for transporting essential employees, such as healthcare workers, and essential goods, including meals, groceries, and medical supplies. Via's on-demand transportation software and transit solutions are proving to be exceptionally well-suited to cities'

needs during these difficult times. Via is also helping cities redesign their public transit networks to better serve the significantly reduced ridership during the crisis, in some cases replacing underutilized fixed routes with on-demand shuttles.

Via's software is highly flexible and modular, so we can collaboratively work with cities to create and deploy new solutions incredibly quickly, in some cases within a day or two. In Berlin, for example, we converted our fleet of on-demand public transit shuttles into an overnight service that provides free transit exclusively for essential healthcare employees.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, we see public transportation playing a critical role in getting people moving again and reviving cities economically. Budgets of both individuals and municipalities will likely be severely constrained by the pandemic, and we expect there will be a greater need than ever for inexpensive and accessible mobility across the globe. We believe technology, and in particular the technology that Via provides to power on-demand public transportation, will play a powerful role in helping cash-strapped public transit agencies recover from the crisis and provide efficient, affordable, and sustainable transportation to residents in need.



**Jessie Lazarus (JL):** I think it's important to first remember the human cost of COVID-19. CARMERA is co-headquartered in New York and Seattle, so we're seeing first hand the suffering wrought by this virus first—as well as the acts of sacrifice and heroism that will ultimately help see us through this.

In terms of autonomous vehicles, there's been a lot of speculation as to whether the COVID-19 crisis will increase interest in L4+ technology or change vehicle design—I've heard some analysts say we're going to see a renewed interest in low-capacity AVs, like the original Google/Waymo Firefly concept, for example. But the fact of the matter is, vehicle development is inherently a long-term proposition. Our leading customers have decades long product development cycles so a 1 to 2 year disruption is surmountable. This is especially true of cutting-edge technologies where time horizons are even farther in the future. This isn't like the oil crises of the 1970s or the mid-2000s, where automakers could

roll-out compact cars and hybrid vehicles, respectively, in relatively short order. Autonomous driving is in its technological nascency, so I think developers are still working toward that 10-year future rather than our immediate situation.

The bigger question is around short-term development. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed weaknesses in the “digital” supply chain, where the digital effort should naturally transition into real-world testing. It emphasizes the importance of an open

ecosystem, where developers can work with multiple suppliers, using multiple modalities, as opposed to closed, proprietary systems that are at greater risk for disruption.

**SS:** What is your prediction for the future of micro mobility, given recent push backs on e-scooters?

**DT:** Modes of transport like scooters and bike sharing may always have a place as we increasingly move away from private car ownership. People

want options depending on their journey. Much like how we’ve been able to partner with cities to develop on-demand microtransit, micromobility needs to find a balance in the cities where they operate.

**JL:** We have to think about the entire transit ecosystem and not each mode choice in a vacuum. And despite the political pushback in places like New York (where I live), micro mobility options were already becoming an important part of this ecosystem before COVID-19. Of course shared

### About the Participants



**Sascha Simon**

Sascha is the Founder, President and Chief Scientist at Sfara. Sascha started at Airbus in Munich, Germany and after joining Daimler moved to Mercedes-Benz USA. With Sfara he has created a smartphone based edge computing technology bringing situational awareness and safety to everyone promising to bring Vehicle to X (V2X) to all forms of transportation. Sascha holds 19 patents in numerous countries with several more pending. He holds degrees in physics and business administration from the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, Germany and has studied at UCLA



**Dillon Twombly**

Dillon is the Chief Revenue Officer for Via, the world’s leading provider and developer of on-demand public mobility solutions. Before joining Via, Dillon held senior leadership positions at Dataminr, MetLife and a political risk consulting boutique. Prior to joining the private sector, Dillon completed three field tours as an Operations Officer with the Central Intelligence Agency. Dillon is a former Term Member at the Council on Foreign Relations and a founding member of the Ambassador Council at the International Crisis Group. He holds a BA in History from Trinity College in Connecticut, an MBA in Finance from the University of North Carolina, and speaks Turkish



**Jessie Lazarus**

Jessie Lazarus is Head of Business Development at CARMERA, the road intelligence platform specializing in high-definition mapping for autonomous vehicles. She joins CARMERA after serving as Chief Digital Officer for the City of New York, where she led policy and economic development efforts regarding New York’s tech industry. An alum of Harvard Business School and Middlebury College, Jessie lives with her husband and son in Brooklyn.



“Modes of transport like scooters and bike sharing may always have a place as we increasingly move away from private car ownership.”

**Dillon Twombly,  
Via Transportation, Inc.**

micro mobility has unlocked neighborhoods poorly served by fixed public transit for residential and commercial development and encouraged greener commute options, both of which are long-established public policy priorities for most major metro areas. Now, with COVID accelerating demands for delivery and establishing new norms around social distancing, the moment behooves policy makers to integrate micromobility into transit ecosystem planning and consider how the public streets might better accommodate these modalities.

**SS:** Is Level 5 autonomy that type of technology that is always 5 years out in the future?

**DT:** Electric, autonomous vehicles are coming – there’s no doubt about that. AV technology is constantly advancing, but what Via is focused on is how we are going to leverage these expensive assets in the most optimal way. The future of mobility is going to look grim if everyone simply owns their own autonomous vehicle. I think AV companies and cities are realizing that the shared component is almost more important, which is why we’ve already run pilots in California with Hyundai and Australia with EasyMile. Via is looking into how we use AV technology in real mass transportation use cases, where we’re able to utilize every seat.

**JL:** I think the question we should ask is whether Level 5 autonomy is actually something we want, not whether it’s something we can achieve. Let’s remember—under the SAE’s definition, L5 autonomy means the vehicle will perform all driving functions under any condition; and that actually may not be desirable from a policy perspective.

Commercial aviation provides a useful parallel: Despite the reliability of modern autopilot technology, there are still conditions under which we just don’t allow planes to fly, like severe weather. Moreover, there are certain functions that we, as a society, have decided we want pilots to do. Take landings, for example. Many jurisdictions limit the use of autoland, in part because we just don’t want pilots to become reliant on such tools—if worst comes to worst, we want to be sure landing is a skill a pilot has at the ready. I think we’ll see something similar in the world of autonomous driving, where the limiting factor will be more policy-based and not technology-based.

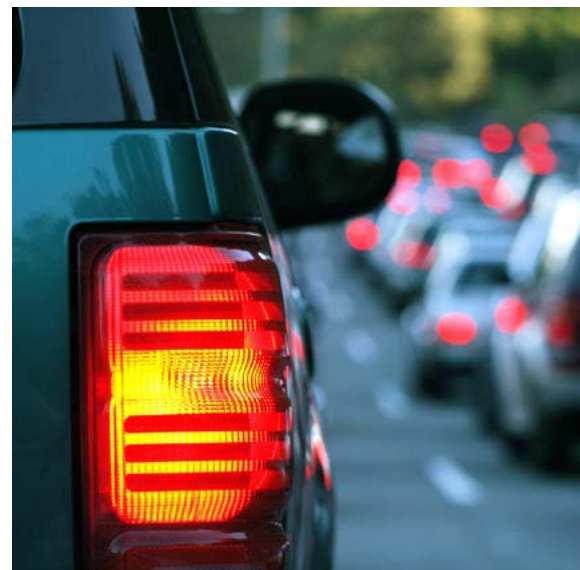
**SS:** If you would look at a global picture, which countries will be fastest on the race to full level 5 autonomy?

**JL:** I think it’s too early to tell. That said, I think there are certain things that can give countries an advantage. Take something simple like the standardization of driving rules and signage. While seemingly so quotidian,



this actually has a big impact on AV development. In South Korea, for example, road rules are set at a national level—autonomous vehicles need to only know how to navigate one type of U-turn, for instance. In contrast, in the United States, road rules are set at the state—and in some cases, even at the county—level. More complexity means more data, more time and more cost.

At the same time, there are huge macro forces at play—government investment, consumer interest, depth and breadth of the existing automotive ecosystem, and so on. So I think it’s too early to be placing wagers.





**SS:** What technology in your mind is missing if any at all to accelerate autonomous driving?

**DT:** Throwing thousands of driverless vehicles on the roads isn't going to solve the increasing congestion and gridlock issues we're seeing all over the world. If autonomous vehicles are going to reach their full potential for providing low-cost, efficient rides, they need to be shared by multiple passengers. Via's already working on a number of AV deployments around the world, and we're excited by the promise of blending the efficiency of on-demand, shared mobility with autonomous vehicle technology.

**JL:** I'd love to be self-serving and say "HD maps," but the truth is—while HD maps are critical to safe autonomy, it's only a single piece in a complex puzzle. There are no silver bullets when it comes to autonomous vehicles. Rather, I think it's more helpful to talk about things thematically, and if we take this macro perspective, I think the thing that really stands out is the issue

of scalability. Today, autonomous driving is very limited—limited in terms of geography, limited in terms of use case and limited in terms of affordability. I don't think we can say we have autonomous driving, if it's limited to sunny straightaways in the American Southwest or if it's technology restricted only to the world's most expensive cars.

In order to achieve this scalability, I think we need to really solve for the major bottlenecks in the AV tech stack—things like reliance on expensive LiDAR scans for map maintenance (which CARMERA is solving) or dependence on expensive proprietary chipsets. The more that we can move to an open ecosystem, with more commoditized components, the closer we'll be to making autonomous driving a reality.

**SS:** Literally every new car in showrooms today claims to have some sort of connectivity already. What is missing from your perspective?

**DT:** The need for a car showroom. Via's working toward a future that should eliminate the need for private car ownership, instead relying on on-demand, shared public transportation that is so efficient, reliable, and cost competitive that it will no longer make sense to drive your own single-occupant vehicle.

**SS:** How do you see electromobility develop over the coming years and what role does it play in your strategy?

**DT:** As a part of our strategic partnership with Daimler, we are taking steps to optimize our shared ride platform for fully electric fleets as we continue to partner with cities that are using more electric vehicles. Right now our priorities include:

- Building dedicated tools and APIs tailored to electric vehicle fleets
- Integrating charging infrastructure into our mapping and routing systems
- Updating our routing algorithm to include EV system considerations when assigning and prioritizing rides

For example, the fleet of our BerlKoenig service in Berlin – the largest public sector on-demand transit deployment in the world – is more than half EVs. In order to efficiently integrate the EVs with the rest of the fleet, we developed sophisticated charge-tracking logic into our algorithms, allowing drivers to see when they'll need to return the vehicle to a charging station, and comprehensive supply planning tools that ensure the service is never undersupplied due to vehicle charging requirements.



We also just piloted our new “eVia” service in Amsterdam, where we currently operate a direct-to-consumer service through ViaVan, our joint venture with Daimler. Through eVia, riders will be able to select a hybrid or fully electric vehicle at no additional charge over a gas-powered vehicle.

**SS:** If you would have an unlimited check size, how would you invest it in regards to your company's goals?

**DT:** We're prioritizing ways to help cities build their digital infrastructure

for transportation to ensure an entirely new generation of public mobility. From optimizing transit networks to provide a much better quality of service for paratransit riders to increasing the efficiency and transparency of school bus fleets, Via will continue to provide cities with a flexible, modular, convenient, and efficient platform from which they can optimize their mobility programs.

**JL:** Doubling down on talent. We're in a battle of the brains—autonomous vehicles are the epitome of frontier

technology, and the companies who are going to succeed are the ones that can really push the boundaries. And to do so, you need people who have that blend of experience, technical know-how and creativity—who know how to both push the envelope and build practical solutions. We've really built our company on talent—getting the best and the brightest from leading mapping companies like Google, Apple and Amazon—and I think with a blank check, we'd want to continue that investment in our people. ■

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# Collonil offers new, effective disinfectant solutions

The Berlin-based company, which is poised to enter the US market, has already made available in Germany a 360 degree disinfectant concept that provides users with an array of hand and surface sanitizer sprays that Collonil claims are highly effective in eliminating COVID-19.

Collonil will also offer retailers a so-called Collonil Restart concept for employees and all customers

who enter shops or businesses. This product package includes disinfectants as well as protective masks in three sizes for the staff. The packages should make it easier for retailers to restart their operations by managing some of the health safety measures being put into place.

Collonil's 360 degree disinfectant concept is called Collonil Bleu, comprised of three disinfectant

elements that work separately or together: a liquid Virus Stop for hand disinfection, a convenient sanitizer spray for solid surfaces, including shoe soles, and a deep-acting foam for cleaning textiles and other absorbent materials. "Virus Stop is effective on all coronaviruses as well as seasonal influenza agents," says Dr. Ulrich Drechsler, Head of Research & Development at Collonil. ■

## COLLONIL BLEU

### For More Information

Visit the Collonil website for details:

>> [www.collonil.com](http://www.collonil.com)



Collonil's 360 degree disinfectant concept is called Collonil Bleu, comprised of three disinfectant elements that work separately or together.





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# The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art

The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art in Buckhead, Georgia is a nonprofit organization with a strong adherence to its mission of providing an opportunity to engage, to learn, and to be inspired through Steffen's life, art, and legacy.

**T**oday, museums are experimenting with more digital and data-driven techniques to propel marketing strategy and exhibition design. The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art is also taking advantage of this business model.

The STMA has various projects in the works such as the digitization of Steffen's art, the creation of a full-length documentary including digitized audio of Steffen, as well as a continuous Education Program for local community schools with trained docents and an education curator. The STMA also presents a

well-curated special exhibitions program, which features the works of contemporary artists; the goal is to create shows that echo concepts in Steffen's art.

GAT had the chance to speak with the Interim Museum Director, Lisa Thomas Conner, for this printed tour of the Steffen Thomas Museum of Art:

"We are living in one of the most difficult times that people everywhere in the world have ever experienced, and it has been heartbreaking for us to have the Museum closed to the public for such an extended time. Steffen Thomas was a communicator who had an uplifting universal message of the brotherhood of humankind that he wanted to share through his art. His art brings joy to those who experience it, and the Museum shares his messages to thousands of school children, families and senior citizens every year. We are eager to welcome visitors to come and experience Joy in Art once again. In the meantime, our staff members have developed new ways to experience the art remotely, so we hope people sheltering in their homes will visit us through our website and social media."- Lisa Thomas Conner

Everyone is amazed when they enter the STMA. The rustic setting sets the



*Steffen Thomas Museum Interior*



“Steffen Thomas was a communicator who had an uplifting universal message of the brotherhood of humankind that he wanted to share through his art.”

### **Lisa Thomas Conner, Interim Museum Director**

tone for the quaint experience that the museum offers. Guests are blown away by the quality of the galleries. And everyone feels welcome. A large part of the museum-experience is the hospitable staff.

In fact, it was a visit to an art museum in Nuremberg, Germany that inspired young Steffen to start experimenting with art. The Greco-Roman sculptures and carvings made a deep impression on him. He wanted to be a sculptor, and his father decided that he would be apprenticed to a stone mason at a monument production company. This way he would be prepared for a

career. Later, however, Steffen attended art school and received formal training as an artist at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich.

Steffen first came to the United States at age 22. During the early years, he completed various projects including copies of classical sculptures for the E.F. Hutton Estate (now Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Club) in Palm Beach, Florida. Steffen also spent time in Alabama but settled in Atlanta, Georgia by 1930. The “Young Bavarian Sculptor”—as he was known—was commissioned to sculpt busts of Southern dignitaries such as Alabama Governor, Bibb Graves.

By 1931, he had established a studio at the corner of Peachtree and 14th Street, where he continued to work for 10 years. In 1933, he married Sara Douglass and, in 1935, became an American citizen. He went on to support his new family by sculpting busts of famous Americans including the noted scientist George Washington Carver and Dr. Crawford Long.

In 1941, Steffen built a home in Stone Mountain, Georgia, where he and his wife raised their four children. There, he worked with a bronze-casting foundry he built himself and produced some of his most recognized public sculptures,



*The Steffen Thomas Family, ca. 1948, mahogany*



*Steffen working on Brotherhood Monument 1963-64*

such as that of Governor Eugene Talmadge, which resides on the grounds of the Georgia State Capitol, and the Alabama Memorial at the Vicksburg National Military Park. Steffen continued to accept commissions until 1955 when he was finally able to follow his muse



*Portrait of wife Sara, ca. 1960, encaustic*



Two central themes in Steffen's art were the brotherhood of man and the mother and child, which reflected his personal philosophy.

and create the type of art that is displayed in the STMA.

Steffen's style was heavily influenced by the modern expressionist movement in Europe. Two central themes in his art were the brotherhood of man and the mother and child, which reflected his personal philosophy. What makes the STMA unique is the variety of media that Steffen knew proficiently. The eclectic collection includes drawing, printmaking, watercolor, oil painting, and mosaic in addition to sculptures. His European background was to great advantage despite the difficult times post-Great Depression. His legacy connects back to his hometown of Fürth, Germany and is intertwined with the South Eastern U.S.



*Homage to Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1986, mixed media*



*Bust of a Young Woman, ca. 1975, mahogany*

After his death, Steffen's wife, Sara Douglass Thomas, wanted to convert the Thomas home in Midtown into a studio museum. This was not possible due to zoning and infrastructure issues, so the family decided to build a 13,000 square foot facility to protect and display the art in a climate-control environment on land owned by the oldest son in rural Morgan County, Georgia.

The museum's location in Buckhead supports its relationship to the nearby city of Madison, a tourist destination known for its antebellum architecture. The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art is one of only fourteen "single artist" museums in the United States.

“Utilizing our permanent collection of works by Steffen Thomas, works by visiting emerging regional artists, and a mission of public service, The Steffen Thomas Museum of Art strives to foster critical thinking, empathy, community engagement, and to bring visual arts and an authentic museum experience to both children and adults in the rural Georgia community we serve and the greater communities.” - Steffen Thomas Museum of Art

To sum it up, this is what a few visitors have said about the STMA:

“A beautiful drive to get there, then you walk into an amazing body of work by Mr. Thomas. In addition to his work, [the] rotating exhibits are well curated.” - R.L. Hodnett, Google reviewer

“Docents were great and spent as much time as you desire...You are missing out if you don't take the time to explore this hidden jewel!!!!” - Simon Robson, Google reviewer

“This should be seen. This man [is] in the class of Picasso, Matisse and Grandma Moses, Hindrick Kirchner, think of other great ones. Take the kids.” - Richard L., Trip Advisor reviewer

While the museum is physically closed to the public, STMA is still active virtually. Through their

#MuseumFromHome series, they share photos, videos, educational activities and more via social media and website.

“It's unfortunate we can't have guests and have had to postpone some events and programming, but it's also providing us time to improve ways to share what our unique museum has to offer to people all over the world” - Tatiana Veneruso, Education Curator

So far, the museum has shared step by step art projects, video gallery tours, coloring pages, virtual puzzles, podcasts and more. STMA encourages those who enjoy these activities to donate to the museum, as suspending our usual operations has been a financial loss. STMA is also doing a series of monthly raffles to raise funds. Tickets and additional items from the museum shop can be purchased at [steffenthomas.org](http://steffenthomas.org).

The museum is also planning future exhibitions. They have a current open call for Georgia based sculptors for an exhibit titled “Elements: Expression in Wood, Metal and Stone”. This exhibit will connect contemporary artists with Steffen Thomas through the traditional materials he used as a master carver. The deadline for entries is June 1 and full submission details can be found at [steffenthomas.org](http://steffenthomas.org) as well as other future exhibition information. ■



Art activities #MuseumFromHome



### For More Information

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# Why Foreign Exchange (FX) matters even more during COVID-19

By Jason Roof, GPS Capital Markets, Inc.

## Reduce Expenses or Increase Net Proceeds Quickly, Easily through Foreign Exchange (FX)

As internationally-active companies focus on how to counter the effects of the Corona Virus, FX may not appear to be a priority. However, a quick and simple improvement in rates could generate immediate and impactful reductions in expenses or marginal growth in revenues, both of which are now especially important. For example, an improvement of 100 points in the EURUSD exchange rate (0.0100) on EUR 1,000,000 would lower expenses by USD 10,000, or approximately 0.90% ( $0.0100 / 1.1000$ ), simply by trading at more favorable terms. One way to accomplish this is to add an alternative provider of FX trading and risk management. This applies also to the conversion of sales or cash in foreign currencies, which would result in higher net proceeds.

Then comes the question: How would a company use these immediate savings or higher proceeds? Alleviate the effects of a challenging economic environment? Hire an employee who helps the business grow? Invest in software or equipment that improves efficiency, reduces costs, or enables an increase in production?

FX is like other financial components of business operations that are separate and independent, such as insurance, retirement plans, and equipment financing. Companies with developed, formalized FX programs typically maintain at least two FX counterparties in order to create competition for rates, service, systems, and strategies. This is quite easy to do, even for smaller companies. Additionally, for those that hedge currency risk, access to another line of credit for hedging could be beneficial, in case an existing capital provider chooses to limit or not increase exposure. As with other functions of a business, one should evaluate alternatives before adding them, and the existing FX program and provider(s) at least annually.

## Corona Virus and Petroleum: A Perfect Storm for FX Volatility; Hedging Risk

From the first day of trading in March until mid-April, the broadening and accelerating outbreak of the Corona Virus and the plummeting price of oil have caused extreme turmoil in global financial markets. During the period 18-Feb-2020 until 16-Mar-2020, EURUSD traded as low as \$1.08 and as high as \$1.15 (charts below), an extraordinary range, while a measure of volatility in the EURUSD currency pair

(1-month implied option volatility) increased over 150%.

Since March 6th, when the petroleum-rich nations of Russia and Saudi Arabia began to dispute OPEC's plan for production, the price of oil has collapsed (ex. Brent Crude -29%; chart below). This has caused sharp declines not only in the shares of companies in the energy sector, but also in the currencies of nations whose petroleum industries represent a large percentage of their respective economies. For example: the Canadian Dollar has weakened (-5%) against the US Dollar; the Mexican Peso (-23%); and the Brazilian Real (-13%).

As is often the case with FX, such movements can present disadvantages or advantages; challenges or opportunities. A USD-functional company with payroll in Mexican Pesos, for example, might be able to secure very favorable rates on future conversions. Another that sells in a weaker Canadian Dollar might be disadvantaged and want to consider FX Options as a more customizable approach to managing risk, given that they provide certainty with flexibility, although at a direct or indirect cost.

While no perfect formula or method



A quick and simple improvement in rates could generate immediate and impactful reductions in expenses or marginal growth in revenues.

for managing FX exists – even the biggest and most sophisticated companies fall short of flawless execution – following are some considerations and recommendations on how to administer the foreign-currency component of your business:

- After a long period of calm in FX markets, unforeseen events can radically and quickly change the landscape – and a company’s risk profile
- Prepare in advance by formalizing an approach to hedging, even if with a simple, one-paragraph policy
- Consult with an FX Advisor early in the process of writing a hedging policy, budgeting currencies for the fiscal year, or planning for international projects
- Establish more than one provider of FX services, systems and strategies
- If your desired FX rate is worse than the market, there are strategies that can be customized in order to mitigate further risk while maintaining some flexibility to regain what has been lost to date ■

### About the Author



Jason Roof represents GPS Capital Markets from the firm’s Charlotte office, advises companies on Foreign Exchange, and focuses on the international-business community, especially subsidiaries of companies in German-speaking nations.

He has over fifteen years of experience in Foreign Exchange, Global Treasury, International Banking, and Interest Rate Derivatives. Mr. Roof holds an MBA in International Business & German, and a B.S. in Engineering.

### Jason Roof

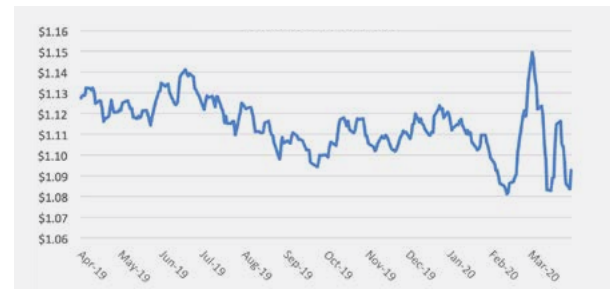
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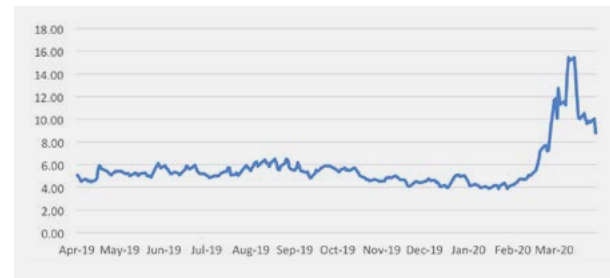
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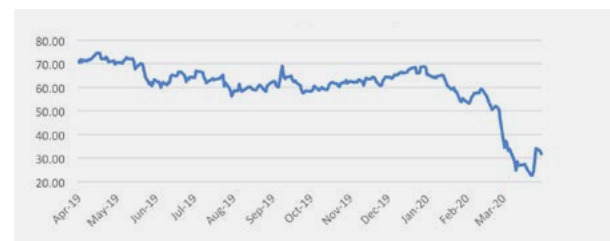
EURUSD Spot Rate

Source: Bloomberg



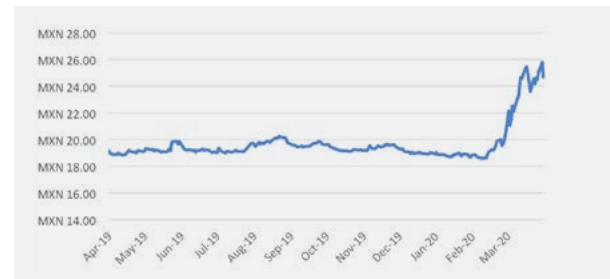
EURUSD 1-Month Implied Volatility

Source: Bloomberg



Brent Crude (Petroleum)

Source: Bloomberg



Mexican Pesos per US Dollar - Spot Rate

Source: Bloomberg

# GACC South Welcomes New President & CEO, Matthias Hoffmann

**M**y tenure as President & CEO of the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Southern US starts at an arduous time not only for the German and American economies, but also for the entire world. These days, we are so well-connected and can get lost in all the information overload. I am proud to say that the GACC South is a team of digital natives, who are working to support our community, members, partners and potential clients in this global pandemic.

I was born and raised in Schwäbisch Gmünd, a city close to Stuttgart, which is an important automotive hub in Germany. Early on, I completed internships at automotive suppliers, and I think my automotive background will be beneficial for my understanding of one of the main industries in the Southern US, namely automotive manufacturing. I went on to study Business Administration with a focus on International Management in Bamberg. After more than 10 years in different positions at the German Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I have experienced a country in strong economic times, during a crisis, and at a restart of the economy in the last two years.

Coming from Greece with the big hospitality of the Greeks, I almost felt I was back there during my short stay in Atlanta. The people are warm-hearted, respectful, polite and open—always with a smile on their face. This makes me confident that I

will have an easier transition to the new environment.

Another point that positively surprised me during my initial visit is the large number of German subsidiaries in the Southern US. I not only travelled to Atlanta, but also to Tennessee and Alabama to visit member companies. I was excited to see our extensive network in person and connect with other representatives of the German American business community.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic brings many challenges to everyone in the German American business community, I am committed to promoting the GACC South as the prime facilitator of German American business in the Southeastern US and supporting my team in their endeavors of providing tailored solutions and services for business partners through our network.

The GACC South team continues to be available to support our members, clients, and community even though we are working remotely. We host webinars every week and our Consulting Services team is still taking on new projects. When things get better, we will be perfectly ready to support companies that would like to pick up speed in their business expansion. We also want to continue to tackle the skills gap with our German-style apprenticeship program, one of the most successful German export products. Additionally, we have a great online platform



*Matthias Hoffmann,  
President & CEO, GACC South*

that member companies can utilize for exchange and networking. The economic situation for 2020 is worrisome, but we are hoping for a quick recovery.

The core of every chamber should be their members, and, in the second half of 2020, I would like to get to know as many members as possible as well as other German American institutions, businesses, partners in education and partners in the local administration. The GACC South covers a huge area, and I foresee much travelling to get acquainted with the regional differences and business settings. German chambers abroad are a fantastic one-stop-shop and should be *the* first address for any German company entering a foreign market—especially in tough times. ■

# GACC West Welcomes New CEO, Sven Thorsten Potthoff

I am delighted to join the GACC West as CEO. My prior work with the network of German Chambers in Germany and abroad included positions in Saudi Arabia, Berlin, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In early March, my family and I relocated to San Francisco. We are curious to explore and emerge ourselves in the culture, lifestyle and natural beauty of the Western United States. And of course, I am more than excited to get to work in this very unique and inspiring ecosystem.

The proximity and connection to Silicon Valley, the epicenter of innovation, make San Francisco an intriguing and essential location for fostering German American knowledge transfer. With a variety of targeted programs and innovative services, we are making the so-called Silicon Valley Spirit in all its facets, accessible to not only German SMEs but also the network of German Chambers Abroad. Consequently, we see ourselves as a kind of catalyst for digitalization, innovation and entrepreneurship. Our goal is to support organizations exploring out of the box approaches to remain competitive and secure a sustainable future. This puts us in a unique position not only within the network of the GACCs, here in the US, but the AHK network worldwide.

The GACC West is the youngest chamber in the US. This year we are

celebrating our second birthday. While the San Francisco office was established in 2008, the operation has only recently become independent. Together with my team, I look forward to shaping the future of the San Francisco chamber. I believe that my connections, as well as my prior experience within the chamber network, will be a valuable foundation for further developing the reach and impact of our West Coast operation.

My tenure at the AHK San Francisco started amidst the global Coronavirus crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic brings new and mostly unseen challenges for people and businesses worldwide. All of a sudden, there is an incredible amount of added uncertainty and disruption of regular operation for businesses as well as new day-to-day realities for individuals globally. The ongoing international pandemic has brought with it the most significant economic disruption many of us have seen in all our lifetime. This forces organizations and companies everywhere to rethink and innovate to stay in business successfully. Realizing opportunities, reevaluating internal processes, and examining business models is crucial in a time like the present. Supporting businesses, particularly SMEs, is at the core of everything we do. Now, as much as ever, we strive to aid our transatlantic business community by fostering knowledge transfer, delivering targeted input, and



*Sven Thorsten Potthoff,  
CEO, GACC West*

providing guidance.

My team and I are working on expanding our current service portfolio with virtual services to educate and ignite innovation journeys. We are focused on helping companies navigate these uncertain times by providing services that allow to innovate and view this current crisis as empowerment to seize new opportunities.

Serving our stakeholders, German and US companies alike, is our raison d'être, and we are motivated to work on doing precisely that - relentlessly. ■



# US aid package earmarks \$25 billion for construction projects

Article by Ullrich Umann, Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI) · Translation from German by Sandy Jones, GACC

The construction industry is severely affected by the corona crisis. The state is taking countermeasures and is releasing extensive aid for the construction of infrastructure and health facilities.

**T**he economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the US construction industry is enormous, especially since it occurred suddenly and across the board. The construction of single-family houses has declined particularly sharply. House building is one of the most important building sectors of all - almost 100 billion US dollars (US \$) are invested in the construction of single and multi-family houses every year.

## **Commercial real estate construction declining sharply**

But retail (excluding petrol stations,

supermarket chains and pharmacies), leisure and leisure facilities, the hotel and catering trade and large parts of the industry are also in crisis mode. Bankruptcies and vacancies in commercial real estate are increasing.

## **State provides aid**

The construction industry receives financial aid from the US \$ 2 trillion federal aid package: construction companies, architecture and engineering firms that have got into the crisis through no fault of their own can apply for wage subsidies, tax deferrals and bridging loans. For

example, legislators are providing US \$350 billion to support small and medium-sized companies from a wide range of industries.

## **State grants for infrastructure projects**

The construction industry will also receive at least \$ 25 billion indirectly. This takes the form of government contracts to build health facilities, expand the airport and modernize other transport infrastructure, including bridges, roads and railways. For example, the separately reported Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides for spending of up to \$ 10 billion.

## **Municipal development and clinic construction are eligible**

A further US \$5 billion is available for municipal development, including road and path construction and the construction of social housing. The Department of Defense will receive \$1.5 billion to build military hospitals and purchase field clinics.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs can also modernize health care facilities for \$606 million. The department is investing an additional US \$150 million in veteran health and care facilities in the state of Virginia only.





## GERMANY TRADE & INVEST

### **The project executing agency is the public sector**

The vast majority of states, municipalities, airport operators and the state railway company Amtrak will be the clients for infrastructure projects. You have to plan, advertise and call the funds from the federal aid package. Depending on the project layout and the reasons for the application, experts believe that the building grants could be expanded to as much as \$ 43 billion.

### **Curfews affect construction activity**

Julian Anderson from the management consultancy Rider Levett Bucknall is very critical of the current situation in the construction industry: "Because of curfews, developers and architects are required to control projects from their home office. Some of their clients have even canceled projects, others have postponed construction work indefinitely."

### **Clients run out of construction money**

Some of the private builders are affected by the loss of their jobs and rapidly melting savings, which slows down the development of orders in house construction. Goldman Sachs forecasts an increase in the unemployment rate to 9 percent by the end of 2020. In February this year, the rate was still at a record low of 3.5 percent.

Public budgets at all levels of government are in debt to record levels to mitigate the effects of the crisis on the population and the economy. Money for private and public house construction is now only available in a few cases.

### **Small construction companies are particularly vulnerable to crises**

The many thousands of small branch companies that are active in building construction are currently getting into economically difficult waters. This was pointed out by the industry association Associated General Contractors of America (AGC). Even the largest American single-family home construction company, Lennar Corp., is minimizing its spending on building land, project development, and construction due to the economic crisis.

### **Clinic construction almost unaffected**

The construction of medical facilities, such as medium and small size clinics, but also hospitals, is almost unaffected by the crisis. Even in regions where there is a curfew, exemptions are in place for the construction of health facilities. But delays also occur here, as up to 30 percent of the building materials and installations come from China or Italy, where the Corona virus shut down production weeks ago. Heating and air conditioning systems, electrical

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installations, sanitary equipment, dry walls, marble, tiles as well as building glass and steel are affected.

### **Delays in building acceptance**

On almost all construction sites there are delays in the legally required inspections and building approvals. In some cases the officials themselves are affected by curfews, in other cases they are overwhelmed by crisis management tasks. ■

WASHINGTON  
★ UPDATE ★

NEWS FROM INSIDE THE BELTWAY

# Washington's Response to the Corona-Pandemic – An Overview

By Viola Meyerweissflog, Christoph Schemionek, and Kevin Wolfe – RGIT

Washington, DC has come to a standstill. Like in many other parts of the country, stay at home orders are in place across the DC area to slow the spread of the pandemic. Congressional presence on Capitol Hill has been in flux since the beginning of the pandemic. Nevertheless, both Congress and the Administration – in a mostly bipartisan effort – have taken bold steps to fight the pandemic and keep the economy afloat.

## **Actions by the U.S. Congress**

On March 3, Congress adopted the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act as a first step. With US\$ 8.3 billion, the package aims to develop and produce a vaccine and to support health authorities.

The second package (Families First Coronavirus Response Act), amounting to US\$ 100 billion, came into effect on March 18. Of direct interest to the business community, this new law supports specified employers to provide emergency paid sick leave, as well as emergency paid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

The third and largest stimulus package, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed on March 27, provides US\$

2.2 trillion to fund various measures such as grants for distressed companies, increased unemployment benefits, tax benefits, loans and guarantees, and support for the health sector.

Small and medium-sized enterprises with less than 500 employees were able to apply through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for low-interest bridging loans through their house banks. The loans can cover payroll, utilities, and mortgage and leasing expenses. Loans can be forgiven if used only for these expenses and staff are not laid off. Due to massive application volume, PPP funds were originally exhausted by mid-April. However, a new US\$ 484 billion bipartisan deal was reached by Congress and the Administration on April 21. It includes US\$ 322 billion to refill the depleted Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and another US\$ 60 billion for small-business disaster loans and grants.

Companies with more than 500 employees can apply for a deferred income tax payment and a temporary exemption from compulsory tax prepayments. The same applies to social security contributions. The CARES Act includes US\$ 500 billion in loans and government guarantees to industries and

businesses whose survival is at risk due to the pandemic. The aviation sector will receive US\$ 61 billion in assistance.

Furthermore, in order to support the demand side of the economy, the CARES Act includes one-time payments of US\$ 1,200 for adults and US\$ 500 for each child. The payments apply to people with an annual income of up to US\$ 75,000 a year, with reduced payments for incomes up to US\$ 99,000.

## **Actions by the U.S. Administration**

In addition to working with Congress on the stimulus packages, the U.S. Administration has carried out measures on travel and immigration restrictions, invoked the Defense Production Act (DPA), and taken steps to issue some tariff relief.

On February 2, the U.S. Administration enacted its first Covid-19-related travel restrictions, banning entry to foreign citizens arriving from China. Subsequently, entry bans came into place on arrivals from Iran (February 29), Schengen Zone (March 13), and the UK and Ireland (March 16). On March 20, the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico were closed to non-essential travel. On April 22, President Trump issued a proclamation suspending the issuance of new





permanent resident visas (Green Cards) for 60 days for applicants outside of the U.S.

On March 27, President Trump first invoked the Defense Production Act (DPA) to compel the production of ventilators. Exports of medical products have also been restricted under the DPA, particularly Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and N-95 respirator masks. Effective April 10 for 120 days, exports of certain medical products now require approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On April 28, President Trump invoked the DPA again to ensure meat processing plants remain in operation, citing concerns that plant closures due to Covid-19 outbreaks could threaten the U.S. food supply.

On April 20, the Administration issued a 90-day suspension of tariff payments for U.S. importers. The suspension does not apply to tariffs from antidumping/countervailing duties (AD/CVD) and Section 201, Section 232, and Section 301 investigations.

### Reopening the National Economy

As the number of daily new coronavirus cases reported in the U.S. seems to have plateaued since mid-April, the debate about how

and when to restart the economy is starting to unfold.

On April 16, President Trump released [new guidelines](#) for governors to use as they decide when to reopen their states. The guidelines recommend that states meet certain “gating” criteria, such as a two-week downward trend in coronavirus cases, before starting to ease lockdowns. The reopening should happen in three phases:

- **Phase One:** The first phase would allow non-essential businesses to reopen, but with an emphasis on telework and social distancing. Schools currently closed should remain shut and visits to health-care facilities should be prohibited. Bars should remain closed. High-risk individuals should remain at home.

- **Phase Two:** Gating criteria should be fulfilled a second time before moving to Phase 2. Schools can reopen. Nonessential travel can resume, and people can move in public again practicing social distancing. Gatherings of more than 50 are generally forbidden. Larger venues can operate under moderate social distancing rules. Vulnerable individuals should continue to stay home. Employers should continue to encourage

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## Industry groups are also exploring new ways to navigate and inform policies within the various reopening phases.

telework whenever possible and close common areas and consider special accommodations for vulnerable employees.

- Phase Three: Gating criteria should be fulfilled a third time. Vulnerable individuals can resume public interactions but should practice social distancing. Employers can resume unrestricted staffing of workplaces. Large public venues can operate under limited social distancing rules. Visits to healthcare facilities can resume.

The federal government is also working with numerous company, industry, and union representatives in the '[Great American Revival Industry Groups](#)', as well as with a congressional '[Opening Up America Again](#)' group to advise the President on reopening the economy. The congressional group is bipartisan. A full list of all members can be found [here](#).

Meanwhile, state governors have increased their coordination efforts to restore the economy, announcing various state groups. These include partnerships in the [Northeast](#), the [Midwest](#), and along the [West Coast](#) of the U.S. With the federal government having transferred a share of the responsibility for coronavirus testing to the state level, these coordination efforts will prove crucial to reduce states having to

compete against each other for testing kits and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Industry groups are also exploring new ways to navigate and inform policies within the various reopening phases. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, for example, [announced](#) the creation of a joint task force with the Council of State Chambers (COSC) to support federal and state approaches to restore the national economy and ensure greater collaboration between the business community and government at various levels. Additionally, the National Manufacturing Association (NAM) [released](#) its 'American Renewal Action Plan' with recommended actions for the federal government and Congress, including calls to increase collaboration to produce more PPE, improve testing, and clarify loan requirements.

### Reactions of German-Owned Affiliates in the U.S

In these uncertain times, German companies continue to play an important role in the U.S. economy. In total, there are 5,406 German companies in the U.S. Foreign direct investment from Germany stands at \$474 billion. German-owned affiliates employ 773,800 people in the U.S. U.S.-German economic relations play a key role in the broader \$1.3 trillion transatlantic trade relationship. In the current

pandemic, German companies in sectors such as healthcare, logistics, and packaging are supporting America's response to Covid-19 and keeping lifelines in the economy open.

On April 15, RGIT hosted its first "Listening Session" with eight German-owned affiliates in different sectors across the US. Above all else, the companies are prioritizing the health and safety of their employees, shifting quickly to work-from-home arrangements and reducing on-site staff to essential workers. Business disruptions and other financial constraints are nonetheless weighing heavily on operations, particularly supply chain disruptions, reduced demand, and increasingly costly tariff payments. Despite current headwinds, businesses are cautiously optimistic for a possible rebound in the fourth quarter and are preparing diligently for the turnaround. A recording of the session can be found [here](#). ■

This material is distributed by the Representative of German Industry and Trade (RGIT) on behalf of the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and The Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK). Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

# Transatlantic communications and collaboration during times of great crisis:

## How German and American colleagues react in the workplace

By John Otto Magee

**GAT:** The Coronavirus has many people working from home. What impact is that having on Americans and Germans collaborating across the Atlantic?

**John Otto Magee (JOM):** The first immediate effect is the feeling of isolation. Working virtually is nothing new. People working in global companies have been doing it for years. Nor is working from home, from a hotel, a train station, an airport, or even a café anything new.

New is the sustained duration of it. We are social beings. Companies are organisms and not machines. People need contact, interaction, give and take, face-to-face. For many colleagues working from home over

several weeks strains that human contact.

The intercultural question is what are the differences in how Americans and Germans respectively respond to that strain. I'll address that specifically later.

The second immediate effect is periods of down-time. Daily business has become disrupted in a massive way. Companies, organizations, teams large and small, are discussing how best to respond to the situation. It will take a while to get clarity. During that time there will be periods of inactivity, of down-time.

That second effect leads to a third effect, which is anxiety. These are very anxious times. Primarily about health. One's own health. Health of family and loved ones. But right after health comes work, the ability to make a living, to pay the bills. No one quite knows what the short-, mid- or long-term impact of the crisis will be on the economy.

**GAT:** You wanted to address how Americans and Germans might respond differently to the strain.

**JOM:** Well, there are a few pieces to this. Let's take a look at them.

In general, Germans are more self-leading, self-managing, than are Americans. Folks are always very surprised when I make this statement. Conventional wisdom tells us that German leadership logic is more top-down, hierarchical, command-and-control than the American leadership logic.

This, in turn, would mean that German colleagues without close, daily contact to their boss will struggle with working virtually. Frankly, it is the opposite. In many ways, it is the American leadership logic which is more boss- or manager-





driven. But because this is a very complex subject we cannot go into detail here.

On the other hand, Americans are far more comfortable with today's digital tools for work: email, mobile, web-conferencing, producing podcasts and videos. Americans are born communicators and born information sharers. Americans can collaborate in effective and trusting ways very quickly, even with people they have never met in person. Look at all of these tools the world uses today. They're almost exclusively developed and made by Americans. That shouldn't be a surprise.

Germans are very different. They require a higher level of trust and comfort with each other, and with other people, before they are willing to work in a truly open, fast-moving collaborative way. Now, when they do reach that level of trust, they are off to the races exceptionally quickly. We need to be careful about making the statement that Germans can't move as fast as Americans. The topic is far too complex to make that claim.

**GAT:** What would be your advice to Americans and Germans collaborating across the Atlantic?

**JOM:** Well, the first recommendation would be to recognize that any and all cultural differences at play in their collaboration will continue to be at play during the current situation. In fact, some of the differences will exert even more influence on whether their collaboration succeeds or fails.

**GAT:** And what would be an example of that?

**JOM:** Trust. It is extremely important. And I mean it at the deepest level. The term gets thrown around a lot. But in a superficial way. Again, we are living in very difficult times. No one knows how this will turn out or what the consequences will be. But everyone seems to be sure that how we work will be different.

When I mean trust, I mean addressing those things which we fear, what we are afraid of, things which make us act in ways that work against trust. Fear is the major enemy - in all areas of our lives.

**GAT:** What do you mean by fear?

**JOM:** Take, for example, some of the recent cross-Atlantic mergers. See Bayer Crop Science and Monsanto. Praxair and Linde AG. Over the last few years Siemens has acquired all sorts of small- and medium-sized companies in the U.S. Deere acquired Wirtgen not long ago. Concept Laser has joined GE Additive. Infineon is acquiring Cypress. Elanco is acquiring Bayer Animal Health.

Post-merger integration in the best of times means anxiety and fear. Colleagues worry about their jobs, the structure of the new organization, budgets, prestige, power. Fear. It's the dirty little unspoken secret of any integration. It causes all sorts of unnecessary and avoidable problems.

If we have a major economic downturn this will lead to a similar dynamic in any and all global companies, whether the product of a merger or not. Out of fear colleagues

will retreat into the (supposed) safety of their tribes, of their national tribes. People will hunker down, and they will do so together with those colleagues who they know and trust. And those colleagues, in turn, are from the same tribe, the same country culture.

We go into a mode of us-vs.-them. And that is truly deadly. It eats away and eventually kills trust. Once trust is gone, so is any kind of effective cross-Atlantic collaboration.

**GAT:** So what should companies do?

**JOM:** You mean what should people do. Company is an abstraction. Companies are groups of people. Remember, an organism not a machine. Yes, we live in the machine age. However, man makes machines and not the other way around.

So the first step is to acknowledge the problem: fear. The second step is to understand the destruction fear can lead to. The third step is to identify what and where the fears are. The final step is to bring people - colleagues - together in order to discuss their fears.

Merely coming together to address fear will reduce anxiety dramatically. Why? Because fear feeds on itself. It leads to behaviors which work against fear. Fear wants to spread. It does not want to be exposed. It does not want to be forced out into the open. Fear hates light. Shine light on it and fear begins to shrink.

This is a very complex topic. My point

These are very anxious times.  
Primarily about health. One's own  
health. Health of family and loved ones.  
But right after health comes work.

is this: in times of crisis, when fear takes in oxygen, Americans and Germans need to increase, not decrease, their communication, to increase their collaboration, not pull back. And, most importantly, they have to resist any tendencies of circling the wagons - Wagenburg - of going tribal.

**GAT:** Fear is, indeed, a very complex and emotionally intense topic. Are there other topics on a bit of a lighter note that Germans and Americans should pay particular attention to?

**JOM:** There are, indeed. Many. Let me fire off a few. And I promise to keep it less intense.

Communication. Germans speak English very well. Some exceptionally well. But folks, please don't forget that English is not native to Germans. There is always, in every interaction, the potential for the two sides to misunderstand each other. Often it is a question of nuance. But more often than folks realize, it involves real substance. Increase the frequency of your Verständnischecks. Ask each other: "Did I understand you right? Let me repeat what I think you said."

Agreements. The two cultures have different logics when it comes to entering into, maintaining, and fulfilling agreements. One aspect is follow-up. Americans do a lot of

follow-up. It's how they keep an eye on and adjust things. Germans are not big fans of follow-up, to put it mildly. During this crisis they need to stay in close contact about their most sensitive agreements.

Feedback. Another area with significant cultural differences. One aspect: Americans give inflated feedback. "A" grades in schools. Trophies for every team. Inflationary terms like "great", "super", "fabulous". Germans, in contrast, are deflationary: "Nicht geschimpft, ist genug gelobt" meaning "not chewed out, is praise enough." Colleagues collaborating have to be very careful to be in synch in their reading of any given situation. Imagine a sports team (soccer, American football, basketball, etc.) where the players are looking at two different scoreboards.

**GAT:** Are you optimistic that this crisis will lead to better cross-Atlantic collaboration between Americans and Germans?

**JOM:** Well, I've been raised to be an optimist. It also comes naturally to me.

Anyone can be a pessimist. To be an optimist is much more difficult. It is to be strong, hopeful, creative, inspired, trusting, prayerful, focused, diligent, self-critical, open. The optimist is also intimate. Optimists open themselves up to others. To the situation. To the

#### About the Author:



John Otto Magee is an American who has lived in Germany for 25+ years. He was a senior-level staff member of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag from 1995 until 1999, advising its leadership on the relations between the United States and Germany. He was a consultant for Siemens AG from 1999 until 2002 supporting the post-acquisition integration of Westinghouse Power Corporation. Since 2002, John has been an independent consultant, advising global companies on cross-border collaboration.

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difficulties. Optimists are not afraid. They face fear. They look fear in the face, directly. By the way, fear loathes that.

I am an American. Always have been. Always will be. And I have lived in Germany for thirty of my sixty-one years, almost all of my adult life. I have enormous respect, admiration and affection for the German people. They, like Americans, are a very strong people. There is no way that we, as two great peoples, will not come out of this crisis stronger than ever. I, for one, will do everything I can to make my contribution. ■

# Insight Architects

## Five Questions for Kristina Held

**GAT:** You are the first certified Passive House Consultant in Charlotte, NC. How would you describe Passive House and your relationship to your clients?

**Kristina Held (KH):** Passive House is an internationally operated performance-based energy certification program with a goal of minimal energy consumption. The first Passivhaus was founded in Darmstadt, Germany. Our goal is to build a structure that is adapted to climate, energy-efficient, affordable and with ultimate comfort. More importantly, there is a human component to the Passive House. We want to incorporate natural processes and systems; nature is a stress-reliever and makes people feel appreciated and happy.

**GAT:** How does your European background in architecture support your daily practice?

**KH:** I began with architecture in Belgrade, Serbia and then continued my education in Germany, where I completed an architectural engineering degree. Later, I completed another master's program in the U.S.—where my focus was organic architecture and early German expressionism. One typical phrase from early German Expressionist architecture that has resonated with me is: “the goal of architecture is to evoke the feelings of nature.” This is spot-on as we create designs that will make people feel closer to nature.

From a technical standpoint, the Germany energy code standards are

basically to Passive House standard. We have many German clients, and our bilateral understanding of the design and building practices puts us in a unique position to bridge the gap and serve as a guide and translator for the client.

**GAT:** The focus of your practice is sustainable design. This term is ubiquitous, so what does it mean to you and how does it relate to architecture?

**KH:** That is true—we hear this term a lot. For us, sustainability isn't just about energy efficiency. It is foremost about people, and the equilibrium between the benefits and burdens of building sustainability needs to be achieved in every project. Sustainability entails hiring local trades, using commonly-known materials and methods, creating public spaces, working with the climate and being socially responsible. A holistic approach is crucial in creating good sustainable architecture..

**GAT:** Insight Architects, focuses on designing learning, working, and living environments. How does this apply to environmentally conscious architecture?

**KH:** We believe that architecture can improve the quality of life. We spend 90% of our time indoors in



*The Eisenring Residence, A Passive House Proposal in Asheville, North Carolina*



# insight

ARCHITECTS

the places where we live, work and learn. These are the places that can create better communities. There is a want for these spaces to relate to nature as opposed to the theater or cinema. Our work revolves around daily spaces that are constantly a part of everyone's lives.

**GAT:** What would you like to accomplish a year from now?

**KH:** As a company, we would like to complete our current projects and have many more in the coming year. We would like to talk to as many people as possible who are interested in building a sustainable building or making their existing buildings and future additions and renovations more sustainable. In this process, the clients should know that sustainability is not only about energy efficiency. We will assess the way their company functions and their office culture. In the end, we would like to see a project that works for the client and for nature, and all this within budget. ■

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## Kristina Held

Principal and Partner of  
Insight Architects



Kristina Held is Principal and Partner of Insight Architects, a company established in 2003 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Insight Architects envisions each project as a new opportunity to discover innovative concepts that can enhance the human experience and add value to a project, business, or community.

Kristina is a zealous representative of design connected to nature and sustainable strategies. She has been involved in designing many unique buildings in the Charlotte area and has acted as a sustainability consultant and designer on LEED-certified projects and, recently, on Passive House-certified projects. She sees sustainable architecture as a mediator between places and people to serve a healthier way of living.



*Pester USA new Headquarters and Operations, Huntersville, NC in construction, completion mid-May 2020*



# Towards a bright future:

## A Parent's Perspective on Apprenticeships

By Elizabeth Czapski, GACC

Joy VanDeKerkhove reflects on her daughter's MAT<sup>2</sup> experience: "We are extremely proud"

**W**hen Hannah told her mother she was interested in the MAT<sup>2</sup> Apprenticeship Program, Joy VanDeKerkhove didn't have any experience with apprenticeships. But she did have a lot of questions: How does a work-study program like this really work? What opportunities would this hold for Hannah's future?

Joy knew that her daughter was an analytical thinker and had a strong interest in robotics. Despite her initial uncertainty, Joy learned

more about the program and imagined it could be a good fit. "It looked like a great way to get a debt-free associate degree under your belt, especially in an area Hannah was interested in. I said, just check out what MAT<sup>2</sup> and the participating companies have to offer," Joy said. "And from there it just took off for Hannah."

Hannah interviewed with several MAT<sup>2</sup> companies and was most impressed by Dürr, a mechanical and plant engineering firm in Southfield, MI and a subsidiary of Dürr AG based in Bietigheim-Bissingen, Germany. Hannah said she was drawn to Dürr because of their robotics work and because they are a company with international opportunities.

"Dürr was really well-invested in the apprentices' success, ensuring they receive the best education and training," Joy explained. "We went with Hannah's gut instinct."

That instinct paid off. Hannah began her MAT<sup>2</sup> apprenticeship at Dürr, with classes at Oakland Community College, in August 2016 and graduated in summer of 2019. Now working as a robotics programmer at Dürr, Hannah gained important skills as an apprentice that she can use to build a long-lasting career. Upon completion of the program, she received a Mechatronics Certification from the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK). When she traveled to Germany for three months as part of her apprenticeship training, she was struck by how well-received apprenticeships were there.

"It was really cool to see that a whole other country has been doing this successfully for years," she said.

Throughout the program, Hannah found the work interesting and challenging, and she developed essential skills for her future. "MAT<sup>2</sup> allowed me to take charge of my own education," Hannah said.

"Dürr has opened up a lot for her career-wise, for growth, for educa-



Hannah VanDeKerkhove (center) took classes at Oakland Community College in Auburn Hills, MI, and worked at Dürr to complete the MAT<sup>2</sup> program.

Thanks to the apprenticeship, her daughter's future is full of possibility, says Joy VanDerKerkhove.

tion – she's not limited at all. So it's been a true blessing," Joy said.

One of those blessings is graduating with a debt-free associate degree. "Starting work with no financial debt is huge," said Joy. "This is an enabler for 401k investments at an early age. Also considering the purchase of a house or additional schooling with a great income is on the horizon for our daughter."

Hannah also greatly values being able to graduate and work full-time without student loan debt. "It's helped my parents save money towards putting my younger siblings through education, and in general for me, I just have a whole other sense of financial independence," Hannah said.

Joy's advice for other parents whose children are considering an apprenticeship? Ensure that they are committed to the opportunity. "Make sure your child has a serious interest in it. And know there's a lot of hard work and dedication on their part," she stated. "Apprenticeship training and education is just as rigorous as a four-year university."

Hannah encourages others taking on an apprenticeship to "find people, whether it's mentors or friends in class, who are really willing to help you and push you to

be your best. It really helped during the days when I was feeling flustered or not good enough – they help remind you who you are and that you are definitely capable of doing this."

Her daughter's experience, Joy said, has done away with any hesitations she had as a parent at the beginning. "Hannah's MAT<sup>2</sup> apprenticeship opened our eyes to the education that she's received, and the skill set she's obtained is useful in other industries, not just in manufacturing. It's been overall amazing."

#### About MAT<sup>2</sup>

Michigan Advanced Technician Training Program (MAT<sup>2</sup>) is an innovative, industry-driven approach to education. Developed in conjunction with global industry technology leaders to combine theory, practice and work to train a globally competitive workforce, MAT<sup>2</sup> addresses two critical issues facing the manufacturing and technology industries: a widening skills gap and an aging workforce. This is an apprenticeship program where students alternate between classroom instruction and on-the-job training, gaining the necessary hands-on skills and real-world experiences for them to become a successful and productive member of the skilled workforce.

Learn more at  
[->> mat2apprenticeships.com](http://mat2apprenticeships.com)

Joy said her and her husband are "extremely proud, very happy. Everyone wants to see their kid do well and succeed. It is over and beyond that for us right now. She has built so much confidence, especially as a woman in a male-dominated industry. It's been really a great ride seeing it all unfold." Thanks to the apprenticeship, her daughter's future, Joy said, is full of possibility. ■



Hannah VanDerKerkhove (left) graduated from MAT<sup>2</sup> in 2019 and now works as a robotics programmer at Dürr. Her mother Joy (right) said the program has been "a true blessing."



# Success Stories

The GACC is proud of the many startups it has mentored and supported in their efforts to enter and thrive in the in the US market as well as their home countries. Following are a few recent STEP alumni success stories.

## PerAGraft

STEP alumna PerAGraft in 12th place on Germany's 2020 Top 50 Startups!

**P**erAGraft develops patient-specific implants for the treatment of complex aortic aneurysms. This novel manufacturing process consists of a continuous digital process chain and an innovative textile manufacturing method. The automated production process enables the delivery of individualized implants in the shortest possible time. The PerAGraft platform technology will be successively extended to further fields of application. For example, the customized implants enable precise therapy that is specifically tailored to the patient. ■



## INERATEC GmbH

STEP alumnus INERATEC join forces with Sasol by combining INERATEC's innovative reactor technology with SASOL's highly efficient Fischer-Tropsch catalyst

**W**ith the innovative chemical reactor technology of INERATEC and the highly efficient Fischer-Tropsch catalysts from Sasol, INERATEC has managed to broaden the range of applicable areas for the Fischer-Tropsch process and extends the international Power-to-X and Gas-to-X market, making it more sustainable.

INERATEC's manufacturing concept combines serial production and a numbering-up approach to deliver cost-efficient technology.



Greenhouse gases can be recycled and a fast market ramp-up of renewable chemical products and fuels for a sustainable future is possible.

INERATEC is an award-winning clean tech company that provides modular chemical plants for Power-to-X and Gas-to-Liquid solutions for the production of sustainable fuels and products. The modular chemical plants are equipped with sub-millimeter structured chemical reactors. ■

## Kumpan Electric

STEP Alumus E-scooter Maker Kumpan Electric Gets 3M Euro for Expansion

InnoEnergy is investing around three million euros in e-bility, the manufacturer behind the German electric scooter brand Kumpan Electric. The goals of the cooperation are the further development of e-bility's product and service range and faster market launch in other European countries.

Through the partnership with EIT InnoEnergy, an EU-funded innovation institute based in Berlin, e-bility gains access to its partner ecosystem and other extensive resources – from technology development to market launch support and the financial resources mentioned above. ■



To read more about our Startup & Entrepreneur program STEP and their featured success stories, please visit:

>> [www.stepusa.io](http://www.stepusa.io)

## Merula GmbH

STEP Alumus Merula Cup awarded highest score in ÖKO-TEST

The “Merula Cup strawberry (pink)” menstrual cup from the Rhineland-Palatinate start-up Merula GmbH received the highest score of “very good” published in the trade journal “ÖKO-TEST” April issue.

A total of 15 different menstrual cups were tested. The products were tested for their ingredients, resilience and other defects. The “Merula Cup strawberry (pink)” received the highest score of “very good” in all categories and also in overall assessment. ■



# GACC Pittsburgh Chamber Awarded \$250K Grant from Pennsylvania Labor Department

Great news involving the GACC's apprenticeship / workforce development programs: The Pennsylvania Dept. of Labor & Industry just officially announced that our Pittsburgh chamber has been awarded a PA Smart Registered Apprenticeship Grant in the amount of \$250,000!

The grant recognizes the GACC PIT's outstanding efforts in addressing skills gaps in south-western Pennsylvania advanced manufacturing workforce through the dual apprenticeship program.

PAsmart Apprenticeship grants provide funds to help build a diverse talent pipeline in the building and construction trades; expand registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship in non-traditional industries with an emphasis on health care,

manufacturing, and information technology; and to support registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship through ambassador networks across the commonwealth.

Throughout the commonwealth and the nation there are numerous grant and financial aid resources

available that can assist individuals and organizations in meeting their goals.

Congrats to Rachel Mauer and her German American Chamber of Commerce, Pittsburgh Chapter team for their dedicated work in fostering apprenticeship programs in the US. ■



Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf

## Welcome, New Members!

**AD-SHOT LLC**  
www.ad-shot.net

**Analyze AG**  
www.amalyze.com

**American Progress Group**  
www.progress-group.info/en

**art&knowledge corporate**

**AssuredPartners MCM**  
www.assuredpartnersmcm.com

**Bartlett Tree Experts**  
www.bartlett.com

**Bayer 04 Leverkusen Fußball GmbH**  
www.bayer04.com

**Berkshire Hathaway Home Services New York Properties**  
www.bhhsnyproperties.com

**BillFront GmbH**  
www.billfront.com

**Black Engine Aerospace UG**  
www.blackengine-aero.space

**Brooks Kushman PC**  
www.brookskushman.com

**Bucher USA Inc.**  
www.bucher-us.com

**Denver Real Estate Professionals**  
www.denverrealestatepro.com

**Eunomia Consulting**  
www.eunomiaconsulting.com

**Forward Engineering North America, LLC**  
www.forward-engineering.com

**FRAMEN GmbH**  
www.framen.io

**FreiLacke USA Inc.**  
www.freilacke.com

**Grothaus Traffic Doors**  
www.grothaus-trafficdoors.com

**Heinemann Saw Company**  
www.heinemannsaw.com

**Huntington National Bank**  
www.huntington.com

**HydroWerks**

**Lamy Inc.**  
lamyshop.us

**M-B Companies, Inc**  
www.m-bco.com

**miha bodytec, Inc.**  
www.miha-bodytec.us

**Ondeso GmbH**  
www.ondeso.com

**Outsmart.ai**  
www.outsmart.ai

**San Francisco - Kiel Sister City Committee**  
www.stkiel.org

**SCHIEDERMAIR Rechtsanwälte**  
www.schiedermair.com

**shape me GmbH**  
www.shapeme.com

**Twinvays GmbH**  
xantus-drinkcheck.de

**Vistra International Expansion**  
www.vistra.com

**VPD 2020 GmbH**  
www.vpd2020.de



## Matthew Hoppe

Manager of Membership Engagement, GACC Midwest



### What is your role at GACC Midwest?

As the Manager of Membership Engagement, my main role is to identify, meet, and engage with prospective and existing members. Since GACC Midwest offers so many different benefits and caters to so many different industries,

I connect with all of our new members directly to get to know their business in depth. This way, our team can learn exactly what the company does in order to maximize their membership and leverage our vast network optimally. It's also always my goal to connect members with one another – that is a key component to the success of the diverse business community we serve.

### How have you managed the challenges COVID-19 brings to your department?

Of course the value of engaging in-person with our members is greater than ever in times of crises. Given the circumstances, we have introduced new digital platforms to maintain that engagement and are continually reaching out to our network to find out what their needs are and how we can be of assistance. Our priority is to provide helpful information and connection for our members. So far, we have been able to execute and our members have expressed gratitude in this!

### How does your background elevate the Membership & Events department?

I've built a background driven by engagement. I have experience in capital markets, foreign exchange, sales, and international banking. Now in the Membership department, I'm using the skills I fostered in my past work. I've also served as a member of the German American community in Chicago through the DANK Haus, where I initiated public introductions to push engagement for new members. I'm looking forward to putting this all together and bringing that to GACC Midwest.

**Interests:** I like to play golf and go downhill skiing. I am also a member of a schützenverein – a German-style marksmanship program here in Chicago.

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## Franziska Hennig

Coordinator of Events and Membership, GACC Midwest



### What is your role at GACC Midwest?

I am the Coordinator of Events and Membership here at GACC Midwest. I primarily organize and execute all the events we offer, from our reoccurring Business Luncheon Series to signature events, such as the German American

Business Awards. Our top goal for these events is to engage our community and provide meaningful networking opportunities. With the circumstances of the Coronavirus, my main priority has been translating all our planned events to a virtual platform, in order to remain engaged with our members and provide continuous service to our network.

### How have you managed the challenges COVID-19 brings to your department?

Our Membership & Events department places the needs of our network at the forefront. We are personalizing our virtual events and including interactive features – whether through polls, Q&A platforms, or roundtables – in order to give our members the feeling they are sitting in the same room as us. Our network is responding well to these changes, as event participation increases and the feedback is such that our members are appreciating the content and resources our events provide.

### How does your background elevate the Membership & Events department?

I interned in the Christkindlmarkt department of GACC Midwest years ago – some say I'm a boomerang with GACC Midwest! I appreciate having that experience because I understand the mission of our organization and have interacted with our members and partners before – so I know their needs and how GACC Midwest can assist them. Overall, I have an industry-diverse background. In addition to my 15 years of experience in events and hospitality, I have worked with German companies and delegations, which definitely helps foster networking opportunities. I am happy to be back with GACC Midwest – it feels like I have come home to family.

**Interests:** Traveling and coffee! I could tell you where the best local coffee shops are in any city.

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# GACC facilitates placement of first two J-1 interns at Daimler Trucks North America

The great benefits that transatlantic youth exchanges reap can be exemplified by two German interns who are currently gaining valuable work experience at Daimler Trucks NA in Portland Oregon. Here is their success story:

Our names are Steffen Laicher and Vincent Permentier and we study industrial engineering in cooperation with Daimler Truck AG as part of a dual study program in Germany. Within this program, we got the chance to spend one of our practical phases in a part of our company outside of Germany.

As both of us have not been to the US before, we tried to find teams in the US that we could join for about three months. We each found our team in the Freightliner Headquarters in Portland. Steffen worked for the development department of the e-vehicles and Vincent in Aftermarket Purchasing.

A fellow student recommended the GACC to us as sponsor for our J1-Visa. Cindy Klarwasser helped us to get our Visas without any troubles and in a compressed timeline. We are very thankful for her great support and her availability for any questions. As you can see in the picture,

she even visited us in Portland. We were happy to show her where we work and explain to her our company structures, products as well as our own projects.

Both interns gave a presentation on their current projects, their background as “duale Studenten” with Daimler Trucks in Germany and Cindy was given a tour of the facility and Daimler’s e-mobility projects. For both interns it is their first visit in the US. Both turned 21 while on their program and took advantage of their time to explore the west coast explore, which included some skiing and lots of sightseeing. ■



From Left: Vincent Permentier, Cindy Klarwasser and Steffen Laicher



# J-1 interns thrive at host companies in Silicon Valley

**B**MW Group's Technology Office in Mountain View, CA is the sight for another group J-1 Exchange Visitors sponsored by the GACC.

J-1 interns Leo Thieroff, Marc Mennekes and Carolin Meier were excited to be working right next to Google headquarters.

Another major German car manufacturing company is just a short ride away in Sunnyvale: Mercedes Benz Research and Development is also hosting J-1 Exchange Visitors Baybora Guelec, who is writing his Master thesis

during his second US internship (he took part in a previous internship in Redford, MI). Meanwhile, Anastasia Kozlova and Konstantin Wacker. Are hoping to extend their internship programs at Mercedes.

The J-1 interns found some time for a little networking at the first Club J-1 Silicon Valley "Stammtisch." Participants from SAP, Porsche, Mercedes Benz, BMW and Bosch convened at a local restaurant to share their experiences. All confirmed that an internship in California was inspirational, innovative and unique. ■



From Left: Carolin Meier, Cindy Klarwasser, Marc Mennekes, and Jonas Müller



From left: Cindy Klarwasser, Baybora Guelec, Anastasia Kozlova, Konstantin Wacker.



J-1 interns at the first Club J-1 Silicon Valley "Stammtisch."



German American

# TRADE

## QUARTERLY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE GERMAN AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

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