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## **German Society: Beware the low-flying elk Toss is fun, even if causes it helps are serious**

By Karen Blackledge  
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MOORESBURG -- Robbie Klingermann whirled the elk over his head a couple of times and tossed it.

"It was easier this year to get a grip because it isn't that cold," the Danville man, in Lederhosen\*, said. "I'm kind of winded after that performance," he said.

He was among about 70 competitors who entered the annual elk toss, which was part of the Danville German Society's annual gathering Saturday.

Though not really an elk, they tossed a replica made of burlap with wooden legs and wooden antlers.

The tossing and sometimes falling and wobbling around of the entrants was all in fun and for a good cause. They paid an entrance fee for that event and others all of which go to charities.

Van Wagner, host of the event outside of Danville, fell as he gave it his all in throwing the elk. Wagner, also sporting Lederhosen and a traditional German hunting hat, wasn't the only one slipping around. Another guy spun around and fell with the elk lumbering only a short distance into the air.

"This is the biggest ever and with serious competitors who seem to have been working out," said Wagner, who is president of the society, along with Karl Shellenberger, of State College.

Shellenberger's wife, Pam, ran around in a circle before she threw the critter.

Two other women competed in the elk toss. State College resident Ann Clements, dressed in the traditional Bavarian dirndl, thought she threw the elk better three years ago. Saying Shellenberger was a good thrower, she predicted, "Pam will out toss everyone."

Clements has been attending for four years. "It's run by some great people and for charity. It's great this age group, in their early 30s, puts something like this on. It's fantastic that they are willing to give back to the community and I will do what I can to support them and the community," she said. The third woman entering was Alicia Rowe, of Summit, N.J.

Last year's champion -- Dan McGovern, of Lancaster -- also entered.

The winner was Chaz Wall, of State College, who threw the elk 51 feet 9 inches. Mike Wilkinson, of Lancaster, took second place with a toss of 49 feet 4 inches.

This year, the society received an authentic bull elk rack, donated by Elvin Stoltzfus, of Lewisburg, which organizers paraded around overhead before the tossing began.

"I think this is our biggest year ever," Wagner said in terms of money raised for charities. Proceeds from an auction, led by Wagner and Todd Summers of the State College area, also goes to this year's designated charities. They are the Gatehouse shelter for the homeless near Danville, Heart to Hand Ministries, the Montour County Summer Concert Series, The Women's Resource Center of State College and the Milagro House in Lancaster. Those attending also brought canned goods and nonperishable foods for the Danville-Riverside Food Bank.

Preliminary totals indicate the auction and other events brought in slightly more than \$2,300, Karl Shellenberger said.

Last year's auction raised \$2,000 for nonprofit organizations, said Pam Shellenberger, who also won the scrap iron toss held earlier in the day. "I had to throw the iron and hit another piece of iron," she said.

A salad toss, of old lettuce, was also held with Joe McMonagle, of Lancaster, and Gina Arnone, of Philadelphia, winning. "This was our second year competing. We used small pieces of lettuce to toss onto an empty plate and tossed it back and forth with us having the most on the plate in the end," said McMonagle.

While many of the usually 200 attending throughout the day are from the area, others are from out of state and with roots in other countries.

Laura Jenkins, originally from Zimbabwe; Chris Luckhurst, a Kenya native; and Megan Owen, from South Africa; attended last year for the first time. "We heard about it from organizers in State College. We came back for the elk toss," said Jenkins, who now lives in Hoboken, N.J. Luckhurst also lives in Hoboken while Owen is a Brooklyn, N.Y., resident now.



"Chris tossed last year and nearly won. We're here again," Jenkins said.

Chris also bought a giant stainless steel stein at the charity auction. "It keeps my beer cold and my hands warm," he said.

Two years ago, Tim Conlon, of New York City, went to the event for the first time. "I have a friend in the band (Slimfit) that plays tonight, and I support them as much as I can," he said. Last year, he was living in Ireland and couldn't make it. Slimfit played at The Pub II, which was the end of the group's tour of Danville Saturday night.

"It's a great affair, but I miss the snow this year. Everyone has a good spirit, is in a good mood and you meet a lot of interesting people," he said.



\*The Danville German Society corrected the spelling of Lederhosen in several locations in this article. The correct spelling is Lederhosen (leather pants), not liederhosen (singing pants).