The Alabama Germany Partnership held it’s 21st Annual Dinner on March 7, 2019. Regions Field was an outstanding venue, allowing for enjoyable networking and a large silent auction prior to our seated meal. The event was a sell-out once again and our speakers for the evening were exceptional.

Mayor Randall Woodfin welcomed the crowd and shared his excitement for Birmingham’s future as well as its commitment to training its citizens to be more competitive in the present and future job markets.

Next, Alabama’s Honorary Consul General, Michael Johnson, introduced Dr. Ursina Krumpholz, the Minister-Counselor and Head of the Economic and Business Section of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. Dr. Krumpholz shared her observations of the current climate of the business and trade relationship between Germany and the USA, with specific perspectives on Alabama’s role in the relationship.

Our gracious exclusive sponsor, The Alabama Community College System, was well represented by Jeff Lynn, its Vice Chancellor of Workforce and Economic Development. Jeff shared the efforts and successes of the Alabama Community College System in preparing students for industry through their numerous apprenticeship programs and ready-to-work initiatives. He then introduced our keynote speaker for the evening, Mr. Jonathan Porter, Cahir of the 2021 World Games to be held in Birmingham.

Mr. Porter, along with Ron Froelich, a founding member and the Permanent President of the International World Games Association, excited the crowd with a slide show and stories of the World Games and set everyone’s expectations for the 2021 World Games.

Next, The Barbara Fischer Education Award was presented to a very deserving Dr. Traci O’Brien, an AGP board member and Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Auburn University.

Greg Canfield, Secretary of Commerce for the State of Alabama was our next speaker, sharing great insights into the multifaceted efforts and successes our state is involved in. Alabama is a significant trading partners with Germany and our connections have run deep for many decades. With Alabama’s and Greg’s efforts, this will continue and most certainly increase in the future.

After acknowledging and thanking 11 German-based companies that have expanding their investments in Alabama, we came to the most-treasured segment of the evening, the Rainer Bauer Award. The iconic Elmer Harris heralded the contributions that Rainer Bauer and the night’s recipient made throughout their careers to secure Alabama’s relationship with Germany, especially with the attraction of Mercedes Benz USI. Our recipient of this cherished award was Governor Jim Folsom, who tearfully accepted this award and briefly shared his memories of working with Rainer Bauer, Elmer Harris, Billy Joe Camp and so many others to accomplish such a significant partnership.

Our 21st Annual Dinner concluded with warm farewells of friends old and new. We look forward to next year’s Annual Dinner which will be held at the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville.

The following morning, we held the AGP Business Forum in the Birmingham Business Alliance Auditorium. Again, the event was sold-out. This was due to an outstanding slate of speakers and panelists for the 4 hour event. Speakers Dr. Ursina Krumpholz, Jeff Lynn, and Rolf Wrona (VP of Human Resources for Mercedes Benz USI) shared very insightful and informative perspectives. Our diverse and experienced panelists discussed topics including apprenticeships, workforce readiness, industry-based employment needs and challenges, and efforts by industry and agency alike to train and prepare our next generation of workers to have a positive impact on industry in Alabama. The interactive audience asked many questions, shared challenges and promised to communicate in the future to further address the continuing workforce needs of our state.

In all, our 21st Annual Dinner and Business Forum was a tremendous success. We are so appreciative of our members and hope to see you all in the near future as we continue to expand across the state to better serve your needs, promote German culture and facilitate long-lasting relationships.

With gratitude,

Bobby Ingram, Chair