

# Where in the World is SHAPE, Belgium



SHAPE Knights



Dear New Student,

We hope that our welcome booklet will help you to get an idea of what SHAPE American Elementary School and the SHAPE community are like. This book was written and compiled by students at SHAPE American Elementary School and editing and layout was done by one of the volunteers from our parent volunteer program. There are several more things we would like to do so that your arrival at SHAPE will go smoothly. Our students made a video of the important things they thought you might like to see and find out about before you get here. To check out a video and have it mailed to you, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to us.

When we receive the form, we will also assign a student sponsor from our school. The sponsor program goes through the 7th grade. If you have an older brother or sister, send information about them and we will be happy to find someone from the high school to write them.

Please address your letter to:

Mrs. Carol Ostrander  
SHAPE American Elementary School  
CMR 451 Box 34  
APO AE 09708

Email address: [101537.2312@compuserve.com](mailto:101537.2312@compuserve.com)

**To contact the school office directly:**

SHAPE American Elementary School  
CMR 450 Box 0005  
APO AE 09708

32 65 44 5718

Email address: [Linda\\_Curtis@odedodea.edu](mailto:Linda_Curtis@odedodea.edu)

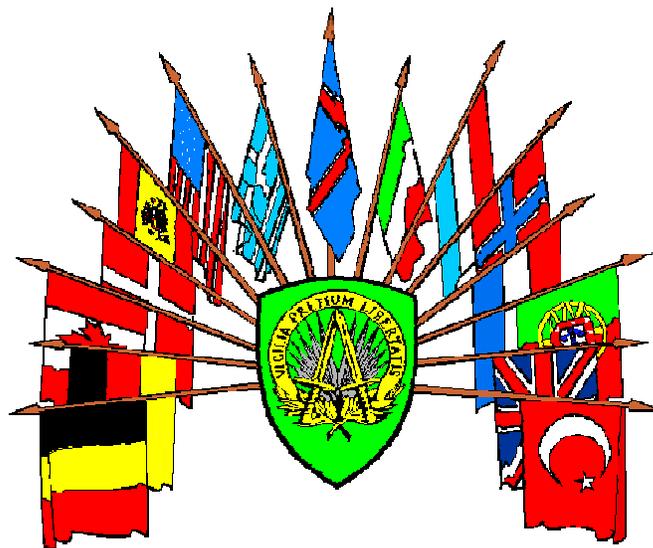
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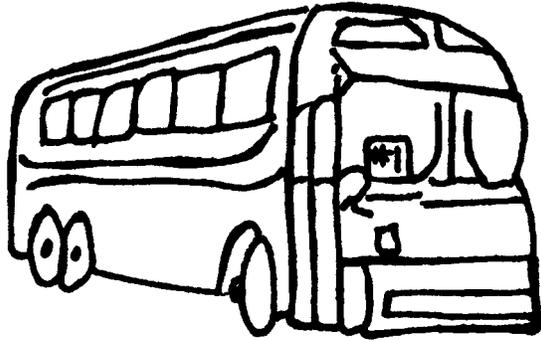
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# History of SHAPE

SHAPE was formed in 1950 when an organization called NATO was established to defend against a possible attack by the Russians. NATO stands for North Atlantic Treaty Organization. SHAPE was first located in Paris, France. The French government did not want to participate in NATO anymore, so they asked the SHAPE soldiers to leave. SHAPE moved to Belgium. There it has stayed for 22 years. When SHAPE first got here, fossils were scattered everywhere and most of the land was mud. At the time, Mons was a very poor town because the coal mines people had used to work at had been shut down for quite a few years. Now Mons is more prosperous, mostly because of SHAPE. Sixteen countries make up NATO. Three new countries have been invited to join: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. SHAPE stands for Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. What a mouthful! Belgium is a very interesting country. We think you will like it here. Belgium is governed by the parliament in Brussels, but they also have a king like in England. There are lots of neat places to visit here. The people here are divided into two major groups called the Flemings and the Walloons. The Flemings live in the north and speak Dutch. The Walloons live in the south and speak French. SHAPE is in the south, so if you meet any Belgians they will speak French to you. Belgium is surrounded by the countries of France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and across the English Channel is Great Britain. They are all exciting places to travel.





**Buses**

but they're still okay.

Kids from all nations ride the school buses together. Our schools are all on the same campus so we all come and go together. The schools let out at 3:30 and the buses leave at 3:45. We're sure you'll like riding these buses.

**\*\*\* BEWARE\*\*\***

**Traffic is not required to stop for school buses in Belgium,**



**Routine**

At SHAPE American Elementary School (SAES), we have grades K through 6. There are separate schools for preschoolers and high school students. Our day begins when we come in from the playground at 8:45 a.m. We go home at 3:30 PM. The lunch period starts at 11:15. We have 50 minutes: 25 to eat and 25 to go out on the playground. Everybody is finished by 12:50.

## Playground

The playground is a fun place to play. It has monkey bars, slides, and a place to play 4-square. There is a place to play football, soccer, basketball, and baseball. There is even an adventure playground that is really neat. All the nations have to use the playground, so we have to take turns using it.

There is a separate playground for the kindergarten and pre-school. It is in an area just for them. Of course, their stuff is a lot smaller than ours.



## Cafeteria

The cafeteria food is OK. Most of it is very good. If you are in the high school, you may go to the Youth Center, Pizza Bowl, or the Rendezvous Cafe to eat lunch. Elementary school kids can only eat in the cafeteria and may only use the hot lunch line unless they have brought their own lunch from home. There is a fast food line in the cafeteria, but that too is only for the high school kids. In the hot lunch line you may pay in BF (Belgian Francs), dollars, or you can use a lunch ticket. You buy the lunch tickets at the school or the Chievres Air Base PX. If you forget your lunch or lunch ticket, you can borrow a lunch ticket from the school. Later, you have to pay it back with BF (Belgian Francs) or another lunch ticket.

## Information Center

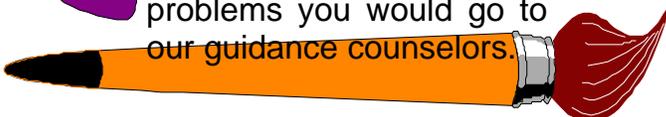
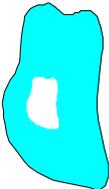
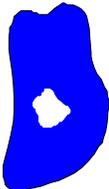


The Media Center has many books for kids of all ages. At the back of the Media Center there is a big area with encyclopedias. It is called the reference room. Classes go there to work. There is another area for computers. There are new Pentium computers and some of them are connected to the Internet. Kids can go on the Internet if they have permission from their parents. Of course, most classrooms have their own computers. Our library club does a lot of work in the Media Center. The kids shelve books and keep stuff in order and



## Special Classes

We are lucky to have a lot of special classes in our school. For specials we have Art, Music and P.E. We also have Host Nation where we learn about Belgian Customs and their language. We have TAG which is for talented and gifted students. There is a class for those who are learning English as a second language. We also have Comp Ed which is for kids who need help now and then. For any other problems you would go to our guidance counselors.



## After School Activities

We have many different after school activities. You can find out more about them when you arrive at our school. For the singing type we have Chorus. For all the future world leaders in our school there is the Student Council (but only for grades 4, 5, and 6). For the brains we have science fairs and the Computer Club.



Life at SHAPE  
from the eyes of the students



"We have books and you can write in them. We learn how to read, but you have to listen first. We have to learn our letters. We get to ride a bus.

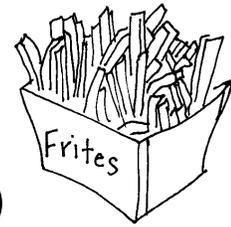
We can play pretend in the kitchen. Only four people can do it at once. We have snack time, but candy is dessert. Apples are a good snack and so is popcorn. We clean up our messes before anything else. We raise our hand if we want to say something. There is no hitting or fighting. When the teacher is talking, we can't talk with our friends, but we can go outside and talk. We walk quietly."

-Kindergarten student

# MONEY



In Belgium, naturally, they don't use US dollars. The money here is called Belgian Francs or BF. If you have 100 BF you're not rich. It is only about \$3.00. It all depends on the franc rate. Everyday the franc rate changes. If it is 40 francs to the dollar, you multiply how many dollars you have (let's say \$15.00) by 40, which would be 600 BF. There is a bank right on SHAPE where kids can go to change their money. Sometimes BF almost seem to be funny money, but you really have to be careful with your BF, because it is often hard to tell whether you are getting a good deal or not. Most kids get part of their allowance in BF or have to change part of it into BF!!



# FOOD

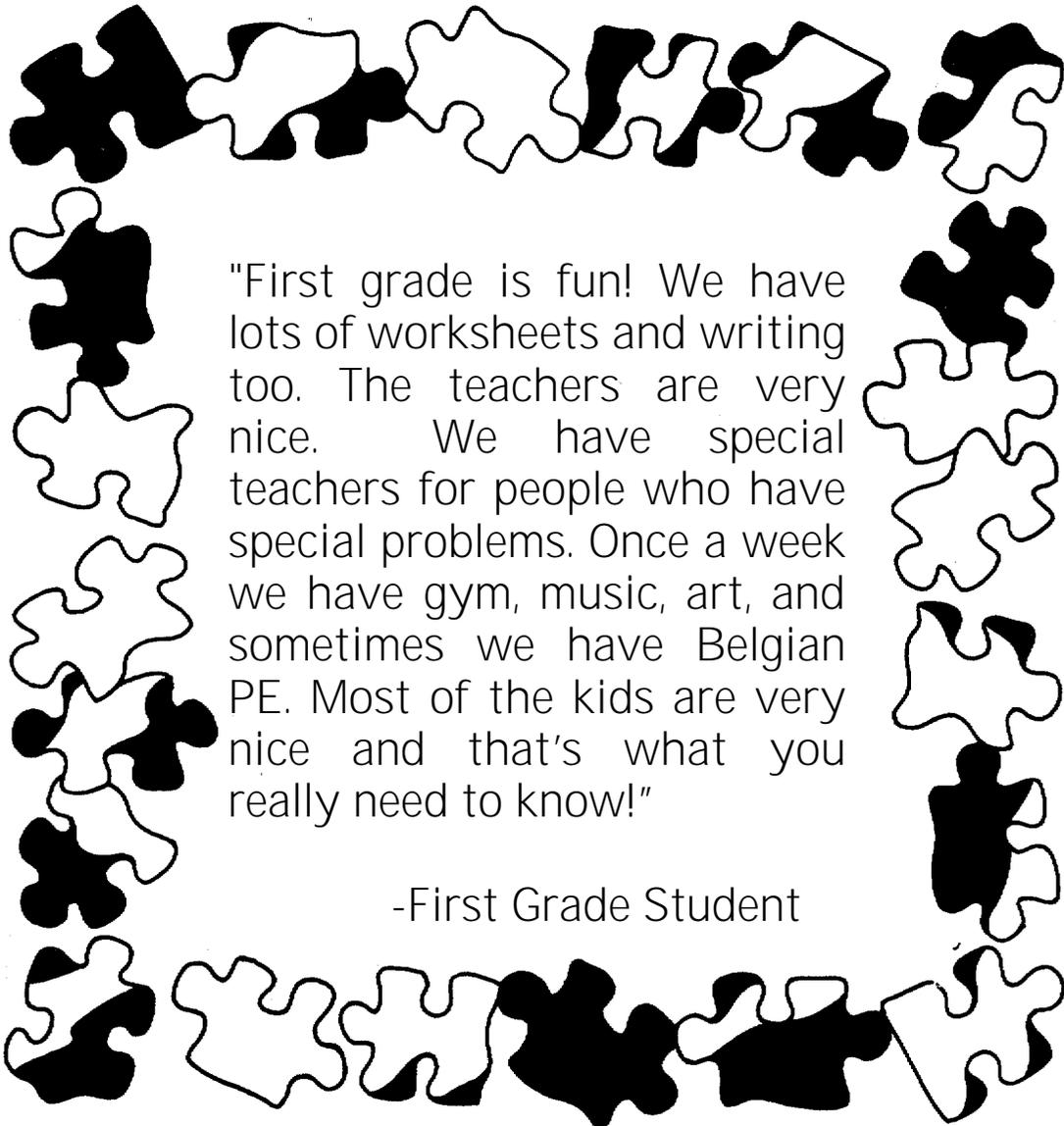
Belgian foods are like American foods in some ways. They have French fries that are called frites. Everybody likes frites. Their ice cream is called glace and is often eaten with waffles. Instead of pancakes they have crepes. They are really thin and delicious and are usually filled with fruit or chocolate. You should see the Belgian waffles!! They are thick and moist inside. They use powdered sugar for the topping. Belgians also make different kinds of chocolate. They are all good. They also make a lot of beer. But that is for adults only! If you are feeling really adventurous, you might try escargot (escargot is actually French, but you can get it in Belgium). Escargot is the French word for snails.

## ID Cards

If you are 9 years old or older, you need to have a SHAPE ID card. It's really easy to get. Here's how. Go to the SHIPPS building. Your mom and dad have to bring some special paperwork that tells who you are. Then they take your picture. The ID card is made while you wait. You will need to have your ID card when you go into any of the stores on SHAPE. Take care of it and don't lose it because it's a lot of trouble for your parents to replace it.

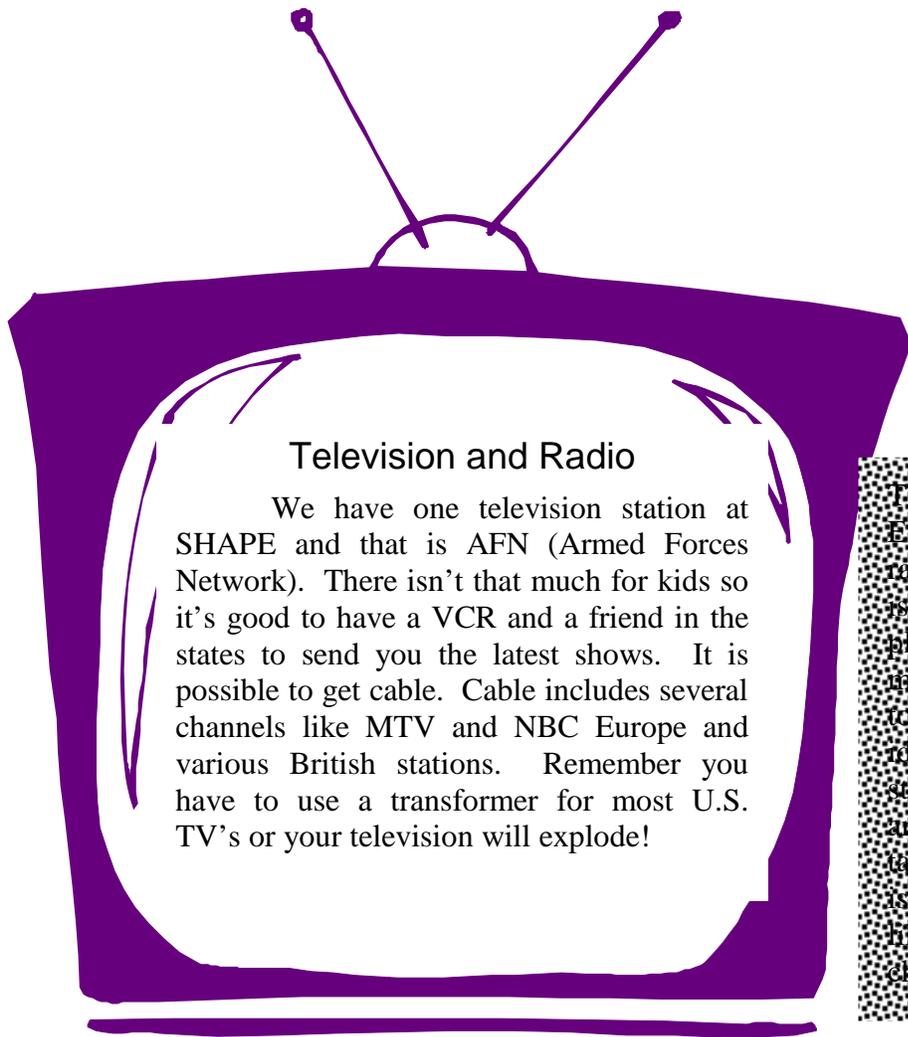
You also need an American Military ID card if you don't already have one. It is made the same way at another building. You will need it to enter the Chievres Air Base where the PX and Commissary are found. It's not near SHAPE and it is only for Americans and Canadians.

Life at SHAPE  
from the eyes of the students



"First grade is fun! We have lots of worksheets and writing too. The teachers are very nice. We have special teachers for people who have special problems. Once a week we have gym, music, art, and sometimes we have Belgian PE. Most of the kids are very nice and that's what you really need to know!"

-First Grade Student



## Television and Radio

We have one television station at SHAPE and that is AFN (Armed Forces Network). There isn't that much for kids so it's good to have a VCR and a friend in the states to send you the latest shows. It is possible to get cable. Cable includes several channels like MTV and NBC Europe and various British stations. Remember you have to use a transformer for most U.S. TV's or your television will explode!

There are a couple of English speaking radio stations. AFN is one of them. They play all types of music, from country to rap. It's a good idea to bring your stereo or tape player and lots of CD's and tapes because if there is a song you don't like you can't really change the station.



## Clothes

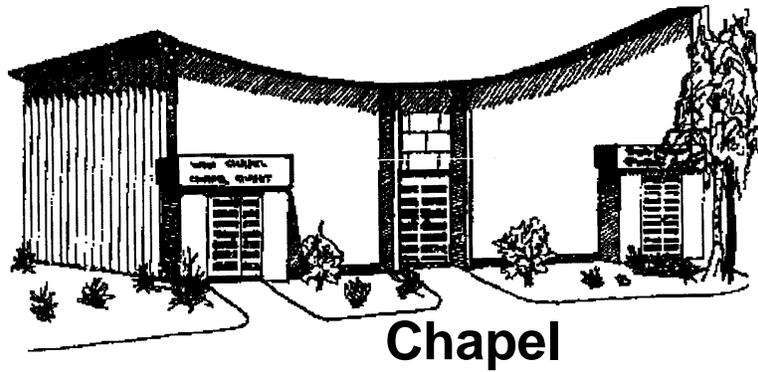
The selection of clothing here is not great but there is usually enough. You can go to the PX which is no mall, but that is usually where we buy our clothes. Of course there is always catalog shopping! When you come, bring along a lot of warm clothes. It is not freezing here but it's not very warm either. Winters are usually mild, but they are very damp. We wear a lot of layers and take them off or put them back on as the day gets warmer or colder. A raincoat and umbrella are an absolute must. It's probably cheaper to buy

Life at SHAPE  
from the eyes of the students

Second grade is fun. You get to do activities, read books, go on field trips, go to field day and go to specials. There are lots more things to do like Media Center and computer lab. We also get to take animals home and write about what we did with them.

-Second Grade Student





The SHAPE Chapel holds several staggered church services and Sunday school programs at various times every Sunday morning to accommodate the needs of various denominations. The general Protestant worship service begins at 11:30. Sunday school is held at 10. The Catholic service starts at 9:30 and CCD commences at 10:30. The Anglican service is held between the two. Jewish children have religious education from 10-12 on Sundays and activities for Jewish teens are held on Friday night after services. There are also large Mormon and Baptist denominations at SHAPE, but their services take place at chapels off SHAPE.

There are lots of fun things to do at the chapel. The Joyful Noise Youth Choir meets after school on Wednesdays to practice. For teenagers, there is the Youth Group, Club Beyond, which meets on Tuesday evenings.



Because of the drawdowns in Europe, there is no longer an actual hospital at SHAPE. What now remains is actually a medical center where basic and even moderate injuries and illnesses can be taken care of. However, if you have a serious illness or injury or need surgery, you must go to a Belgian hospital. At the medical center, there are British, Canadian, Italian, Belgian, Greek, German, and American doctors. They are always there when you need them. The pediatrics clinic is on the second floor and is very easy for kids to find. The dental clinic has also been drawn down, but you can still get everything you need done. We also have a full-time orthodontist. We recommend making important dental and orthodontic appointments well in advance.

## SHAPE Library



The SHAPE Library is in the SHAPE Community Activity Center. One thing that is unique about the library is that they have books from every nation here at SHAPE. They also have filmstrips, records and tapes that you and your parents can check out. There are also several computers you can work on and you can even get on the Internet. Anytime you need help there are different librarians to help you.

To use the library, you need a library card. To get a library card, your parents must fill out some forms and bring them back to the library with their SHAPE ID card. It's a great place to get comfortable and read your favorite books or just to do your homework.

## Girl Scouts

The North Atlantic Girl Scouts are for ages



## SHAPE SEALS

SHAPE has an Olympic size indoor swimming pool. If you like to swim competitively then you should probably join the swim team. You can be from 8-18 years old and still be a SHAPE Seal. The fee is 3000 BF for the first person in the family and 2,500 BF for each additional member of the family. The Seals travel to swim meets all over Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. You can sign up at the SHAPE pool office.

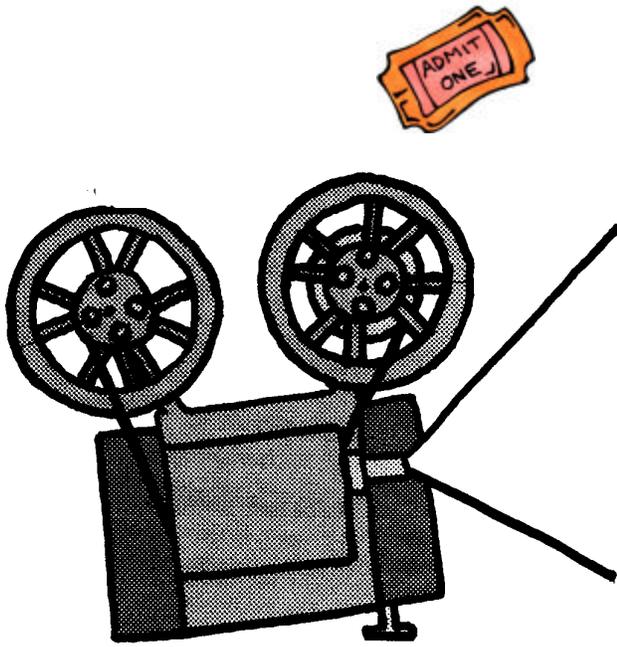


## SHAPE Youth Sports

If you like sports, you'll find much to do at SHAPE! Youth Services has many athletic clinics and leagues where you can learn a new game or play your favorite sport. There are plenty of soccer/football fields at SHAPE as well as tennis courts, a swimming pool, baseball fields, and a running track.

Contact Youth Services to find out about signing up for a league or buy a new football at the SHAPE Sports Shop and start your own team!

THE SHAPE Sports Shop is located in the Shopping Center and has athletic clothing, shoes and equipment.



## Movie Theater

We have one movie theater at SHAPE. It costs 75 BF for a child's ticket and 100 BF for adults. A movie is usually shown every night but Wednesday. Sometimes there is a matinee on Saturday. The selection of movies is good but the movies are usually six months behind what is playing in the states. There is a place in the lobby for snacks and drinks. This is the same theater where we hold our assemblies because it is close to the school. There are other theaters in Mions, such as Imagimons, a big theater.

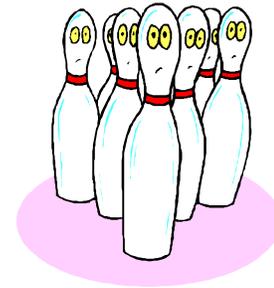
# Youth Services

Youth Services is an organization in the SHAPE community for youths, ages 6-19 years. Through Youth Services you can take instructional classes, play on a sports team, join a day camp, or spend time in the Youth and Teen Centers.

The Youth and Teen Center are located side by side. The Youth Center is a special place for ages 6-12 years. You will find pool tables, table tennis, air hockey, video games, a homework room, a movie room, and a snack bar. The Youth Center plans an activity for every day! You are able to borrow board games, balls, jump ropes, and other sports equipment while you play at the Youth Center.

The Teen Center has pool tables, table tennis, futsal, darts, a big screen television, and a CD player to play your favorite music. There is also a kitchen where you can learn to make some tasty treats. You will find a Teen committee room where teens plan special events and create activity clubs. You won't run out of things to do at the Teen Center.

The Youth Center and Teen Center are located across the GB shopping center and next to the Pizza Bowl. Become a Youth Services member right away!



## Bowling Alley

There is a bowling alley on SHAPE next to the Movie Theater. The bowling leagues are for adults only. However, there is nothing to stop you from bowling with your friends or your family. You will enjoy the great snack bar at the bowling alley called the Pizza Bowl. There are also video games that you can play.

# Chievres

Chievres is an American military air base. In order to get in, you must have a military ID (not a SHAPE ID). The base is about 20 minutes away from SHAPE. It has a PX, Commissary, Shopette/Four Seasons store, barber shop, beauty shop and food court. At the food court you can get *Anthony's* pizza, *American Eatery* hamburgers, and *Taco Bell* burritos, tacos, etc. The PX has clothes, shoes, Nintendo games, CD's, and school supplies. A lot of times, things go real fast and you don't get what you want or your size is all gone. Be sure to bring catalogs or tell your parents about the big PX's in Germany. People at SHAPE often go to the PX's in Germany to shop because of the greater selection available. The Four Seasons has toys and sports stuff. Don't count on them having the right kind of glove, racket or size you need in sports equipment. It's really better to bring things like that from home. When your parents go shopping, you can go to the playground next to the commissary.

# The GB

The GB (Grand Bazaar) is like an international K-Mart with things from all over the world. It is only about a block away from the school. In order to buy anything, you have to have a SHAPE ID card. School supplies are near the area where toys and games are sold. Before you buy notebooks, you should look inside because some of them have graph paper instead of lined paper. Half of the GB is food: canned, frozen and fresh. There are a lot of kinds of fruits, cookies, and candies from different countries that are new to us. We really like them. There is also a special section in the GB where they sell computers, CD's and cosmetic products. The GB has more stuff than the PX, but it is more expensive when the BF rate is low.

There are also several other shops in the same area as the GB. There is a small restaurant and video store called the Rendezvous Cafe, a liquor store, cleaners, a bank, a household appliance store, a sports store, a flower shop, a beauty salon, bookstore, an eyewear shop, and a post office.



Do you have a VCR? If so, you will be happy to know that at SHAPE you can rent videos at the Rendezvous Café. They have a big selection of movies. You have to be careful though because the Europeans use a different kind of VCR than Americans. A European tape will not play on an American VCR. So when you go



# Mons

is a town very near SHAPE. In Mons there are lots of things to do. In the middle of Mons there is a big open area called the Grand Place. All the neat places are right around this big area. They have a small brass monkey that we all go to rub his head for good luck. Mons has a large cathedral called Ste. Waudru. Our high school seniors graduate from Ste. Waudru. It is very big and cold inside. There is also a house in Mons where the painter Van Gogh lived. There are many interesting stores in Mons. Sometimes there are venders selling waffles or frites. On Fridays they have a big market in the center of Mons. At the market they sell flowers, Belgian foods, turtles, birds, fish, cats, and many other animals. They sell almost everything. As summer nears, people sit outside at tables and eat and drink. One weekend they have the dragon festival. The town gets very rowdy then and it's not very safe for Americans. Mons is a very exciting place with lots for kids to see and do. Here is the address for a Mons web site you can check out: [www.mons.be/](http://www.mons.be/). For SHAPE try: [www.shape.nato.int](http://www.shape.nato.int).



# Brussels

is the capital of Belgium and is a very large city. If you thought there were a lot of things to do in Mons, then wait till you get to Brussels! Brussels is about an hour away by car, but you can also get there

by taking the train from the Gare in Mons. In Brussels there are various museums and famous buildings to be seen. There are many shops, most of which are very expensive. But if you are going to Brussels, one place you must go is Kinopolis. It is one of the largest movie theater complexes in the world and it shows most of the current movies that are in the states. The seats in the theater are really big and comfortable and there is a big candy stand before you go in just like in the states. Right next to Kinopolis is the Oceanade, a large water park, sort of like White Water in the states except it's all indoors. There is also a Mini-Europe park and the Atomium (and a Pizza Hut) right next door! You could practically spend an entire day there. Near Brussels, there is also an amusement park called Wallabi. It has roller coasters and a water park. It is sort of like Six Flags but not quite as good. There is so much to do in Brussels so if you ever get bored in Belgium, beg your parents to take you there.