

Miss SNPJ 2025 crowned during Slovenefest

by COURTNEY KOENIG
Fraternal Director

IMPERIAL, Pa. — Greetings from the Fraternal Department. I hope everyone had a great time during the 41st annual Slovenefest this year – we sure did!

The Miss SNPJ Pageant contestants gathered Friday afternoon at their lodging for the weekend and were then treated to dinner before heading to the Recreation Center to begin practice for the Saturday competition. When rehearsals were completed, the contestants headed outside to enjoy the remainder of the evening, dancing the night away.

The 66th Miss SNPJ Pageant competition took place Saturday, July 13, in The Alpine Room

at the SNPJ Recreation Center, where a large crowd gathered to watch as our five contestants showcased their personalities and talents.

Ouremcee, Miss SNPJ 2020 Daniella Volpe, did a fantastic job as she greeted the audience, and thanked everyone for attending and for their support of the pageant. Daniella also did a wonderful job as she introduced each contestant. I took a moment to greet everyone and speak on the judging format and point system for the pageant.

Miss SNPJ 2024 Morgan Sinan was put to work for her last few official duties. Morgan had the privilege of reading the selected fishbowl question to each contestant. All contestants then exited the room, and each contestant was

brought on stage, one at a time, to answer the same universal question, which was also read by Morgan.

Following a short intermission, the crowd and judges were entertained by outstanding talent presentations from each young lady.

Anna Mack from Lodge 138 in Strabane, Pa., gave a presentation on the Fibonacci Sequence, a mathematical phenomena, and how you can find the patterns in art and in everyday life. Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich from San Francisco Lodge 304 presented a martial arts demonstration focused on how you can quickly defend yourself from an attacker.

SEE MISS SNPJ PAGEANT
ON PAGE 8



All pageant photos
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Miss SNPJ 2025
ERIN LAWRENCE (138)
receives her crown from
Miss SNPJ 2024
MORGAN SINAN (782).



The 2024 Miss SNPJ Pageant field: [from left] **ANNA MACK** (138); **EMILY PATOSKY** (106); Miss Fraternism, Miss Talent, Miss Activity and Miss SNPJ 2025 **ERIN LAWRENCE** (138); Miss SNPJ 2024 **MORGAN SINAN** (782); and **ALEXIS TROUT** (6). Missing from photo: Pageant contestant *Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich* (304).

The SNPJ Heritage Center sets Aug. 31 as the season closing date

by KATHY PAULENICH (776)
SNPJ Heritage Center Director

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — Another successful Slovenefest is now history as we wrapped up number 41 to great crowds all three days.

The Slovenian Heritage Center was quite busy during Slovenefest – in the gift shop and museum, and outside at the Slovenian Marketplace on the patio. We want to thank everyone who visited the museum and stopped in the gift shop. We had many shoppers, and we appreciate your purchases. We received some wonderful suggestions for items to purchase next year, adding them on our discussion list for our next Heritage Center Committee meeting.

Thank you to our presenters on the patio: on Saturday, Sarah Loudon, Mary Jo Hartman, and Kathy Hlad; and on Sunday, Maureen Tuttle and Joe Valencic, with Selena Progar in

The Alpine Room. We try to present Slovenian programs of interest to Slovenefest attendees so they can learn more about their heritage. Check out the Heritage Center on Facebook to view the happenings at Slovenefest.

Congratulations to Erin Lawrence on being crowned Miss SNPJ 2025! May you enjoy your reign and traveling the country to represent SNPJ.

On July 31, the Heritage Center hosted the annual wine and cheese reception during Family Week at the SNPJ Recreation Center. Committee members in the Pittsburgh area will represent the Heritage Center at the American-Slovene Day Picnic scheduled Sunday, Aug. 4, from 2 to 6 p.m. in Strabane Pa. Committee members will have items from the gift shop

SEE HERITAGE CENTER
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briefly

Home Office closed as we celebrate Labor Day

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The SNPJ Home Office will be closed Monday, Sept. 2, in celebration of Labor Day. Regular office hours, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., will resume Tuesday, Sept. 3. We wish all SNPJ members and friends a safe and happy Labor Day!

Lodge 207 merged with Lodge 371 as of Aug. 1

IMPERIAL, Pa. — As of Aug. 1, 2024, SNPJ Lodge 207 in Butte, Mont., has merged into SNPJ Lodge 371, Cle Elum, Wash. The secretary of Lodge 371 is Ivre Kladnik, 815 26th Ave., Seattle, WA 98194; phone (206) 941-4416; e-mail I.kladnik@gmail.com.

We thank the officers of SNPJ Lodge 207 for their dedication to the Lodge and the Society over the years, and we thank the officers of SNPJ Lodge 371 for accepting these members in a merger.

KAREN A. PINTAR
SNPJ National Secretary/COO

Lodge 225 cancels their August meeting

GIRARD, Kan. — SNPJ Lodge 225 officers have canceled the Aug. 11 meeting due to the Arma Homecoming that weekend. The next meeting will be held in September.

LINDA SCALES
Lodge 225 Secretary/Treasurer

Sharon Lodge 31 sets meeting date for Aug. 22

SHARON, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 31 members will hold their next meeting on Thursday, Aug. 22, starting at 6 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Slovenian Hall, 1037 Baldwin Ave. in Sharon. Those attending should walk up the handicap ramp in the back.

Lodge business, member honors and our holiday dinner will be discussed during the meeting. If you have any questions, please contact Barb Bogolin at (724) 347-1197.

BARB BOGOLIN
Lodge 31 Secretary/Treasurer

Lodge 776 plans fishing tourney, picnic in Aug.

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — Lodge 776 is holding their annual picnic and kids' fishing tournament on Sunday, Aug. 11. The fishing tournament is scheduled from noon until 2 p.m. at the SNPJ Recreation Center, and the picnic/quarterly meeting will immediately follow the tournament. All Lodge members and their families are invited and encouraged to attend.

Lodge 776 members will also be attending a Mahoning Valley Scrappers game on Aug. 28 at 7 p.m. If you would like to attend, contact Ed Snyder at (330) 565-6276 or Rich Dombrosky at (330) 360-0011. Please respond by Aug. 21.

RICH DOMBROSKY
Lodge 776 Recording Secretary

THE DEADLINE

The next two *PROSVETA* issue dates are Sept. 2 and Oct. 1. All material must be received by noon on Monday, Aug. 19, for the Sept. 2 issue, and by Monday, Sept. 16, for the Oct. 1 issue. If you're concerned about making the deadline, send an e-mail to prosveta@snpj.com or submit your material via the publications area of our website, snpj.org.



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Call for Candidates SNPJ Recreation Center Committee

This announcement serves as a call to all members interested in serving on the SNPJ Recreation Center Committee. Two positions for terms of three years each will be filled during the Sept. 13, 2024, SNPJ National Board meeting.

- Mileage reimbursement will only be paid up to a 100-mile radius of the SNPJ Recreation Center
- Compensation also includes a \$50 per diem

Resumes for these positions should be forwarded by Aug. 30, 2024, to:

Slovene National Benefit Society

Joseph C. Evanish, National President/CEO
247 West Allegheny Road
Imperial, PA 15126
e-mail: bdull@snpj.com

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website: www.snpjrec.com
e-mail: snpj@snpjrec.com

Have something for
Up-and-Coming?

Lodge/Organization _____

Type of Event _____

Site _____

If a concert or dance, who is performing? _____

Date _____

Time _____

Who to contact _____

Phone () _____

E-mail _____

Complete and return to:
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Photo submitted by Karen A. Pintar (6)

Celebrating a Charter Lodge Anniversary in Sygan
Sygan, Pa., Lodge 6 members celebrated the 120th anniversary of their Charter Lodge and the SNPJ on July 21. Marking this milestone event were [from left] SNPJ Region 2 Vice President **JASON CADEZ** (138), SNPJ National Board Audit Committee member **VINCE “Babe” BASELJ** (6), SNPJ Fraternal Director **COURTNEY KOENIG**, SNPJ National Secretary/COO **KAREN A. PINTAR**, Miss SNPJ 2025 **ERIN LAWRENCE** (138), runner-up to SNPJ Miss Activity 2025 **ALEXIS TROUT** (6), SNPJ National Treasurer/CFO **ROBERT LAWRENCE**, and SNPJ National President/CEO **JOSEPH C. EVANISH**.

SNPJ Lodge 34 members enjoy a Slovenian Statehood Day event

by JERRY WATSON
Lodge 34 Secretary/Treasurer

INDIANAPOLIS — Dober dan! SNPJ Lodge 34 members held their second quarterly meeting on June 22 at the Indianapolis Slovenian National Home (SNH). The meeting took place during the SNH Slovenian Statehood Day celebration; our Lodge donated krofe for the event.

With the participation of Lodge 34 members, other Lodge members and members of the SNH, the celebration was well received and enjoyed by many. Guests were able to taste four different Slovenian soups, sample two different types of sausage, learn how to polka, listen to a Slovenian choir, and learn some Slovenian words. We’re already planning next year’s celebration!

A special “*hvala lepa*” to Alenka Jerak, the former Slovenian Consul General, for the generous donation of all the beautiful flags, pins and pencils.

Lodge member Jozef Watson participated in the SNH golf outing on July 27. Our Lodge proudly sponsored a hole for the outing.

Our third quarterly meeting will be held Saturday, Aug. 31, at the SNH, 2717 W. 10th St., starting at 3 p.m. This meeting will take place during the SNH picnic.



[Above] SNPJ Lodge 34 Secretary/Treasurer **JERRY WATSON** prepares the krofe for service during the Indianapolis SNH Slovenian Statehood Day celebration.

[Below] Lodge 34 members manned a table filled with items donated by the Consulate General of the Republic of Slovenia.



Miss SNPJ 2025 looking forward to an exciting year ahead

MISS SNPJ 2025
FROM PAGE 1

I would like to begin this journey by thanking those who helped me succeed, starting with my wonderful family who have been my biggest supporters. My heart is so full and I am so blessed to have been able to look out into the crowd and see all of your faces.

Dad, thank you for being such a wonderful father. Thank you for giving me this beautiful nationality that I take pride in every day. Polka dancing with you has been one of my most cherished memories, especially when I used to stand on your feet. Thank you for guiding me into a beloved legacy, the sport of bowling, and helping me to get where I am today.

Mom, thank you for being my best friend and encouraging me through this process. I wouldn’t be the person I am today without you. To my brother, Robert, thank you for your overwhelming support and assistance in turning my passion into an unexpected talent.

To my loved and fantastic Grammy and Pap, thank you for being among my biggest admirers. I have learned so much about my heritage from you, and I cannot wait to continue our legacy of yearly klobase and štruklji making.

And finally, thank you to SNPJ Lodge 138 for loving and supporting me without hesitation. I am forever grateful...

This year’s Slovenefest weekend will forever hold special place in my

heart. A huge thank you to the members of the Pageant Commission and committee for flawlessly executing this pageant as always. I genuinely had the most fun time of my life.

As for the lovely ladies I competed with – Anna Mack, Lexy Trout, Emily Patosky, and Mije Von Merta-Sustarich – it has been an honor getting to know you all. You all hold a special place in my heart, and I’m so happy to say our lifelong friendship has just begun. Each of you did an impeccable job in the pageant, and I am so proud of all of you.

To our previous Miss SNPJ, Morgan Sinan, you have become one of my biggest inspirations. You have served the Society and the Slovenian community well, and I am so proud

of you. I have some big shoes to fill, and I cannot wait to work with you in the future!

To conclude, I would like to take a moment to thank late SNPJ Fraternal Director Kevin Richards. Some of my most precious memories will always be of Youth Roundup, especially singing his special song, “Mountain Dew.” Kevin took pride in his heritage and community, and displayed it to everyone he met. He will forever be one of my biggest inspirations within the SNPJ. He is deeply missed, but his legacy will forever remain.

Being able to represent the SNPJ in this position is such an honor. Doors have been opened to endless possibilities, and I can’t wait to see what the year brings me!

San Francisco Lodge 304 activities include an Aug. balina date, Sept. meeting

by MICHELLE VON MERTA-SUSTARICH
Lodge 304 Secretary

SAN FRANCISCO — SNPJ Lodge 304 is excited to reflect on the events of 2024 thus far and share upcoming plans.

The year began with a successful annual Pust celebration featuring a lively gathering at the San Francisco Slovenian Progressive Home on Feb. 10. More than 150 participants enjoyed the festivities, highlighted by the spirited polka music of SNPJ Region 5 Vice President Fred Mlakar’s band.

Special recognition was given to Miss SNPJ 1989 Teresa Mlakar Koci and Miss SNPJ 1990 Lisa Videgar Lucas, both of whom received new sashes that included their last names after missing out at Slovenefest 2023.

Prior to Pust, we celebrated Slovenian Statehood Day on Jan. 22 at the home of Honorary Consul of the Republic of

Slovenia Tom Brandi. This event was a culinary delight, with traditional dishes such as klobase, cabbage rolls, mushroom chicken, Bled cake, potica and apple strudel enjoyed amidst the camaraderie of Club Slovenia and SNPJ Lodge 304 members. We extend our sincere thanks to Tom Brandi for graciously hosting us.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to announce an SNPJ Lodge 304 balina event scheduled for Aug. 25 and our next Lodge meeting on Sept. 17. Those interested in attending either event are encouraged to contact Lodge Secretary Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich at snpjldodge304@gmail.com for details.

San Francisco Lodge 304 continues to foster community spirit through cultural celebrations and looks forward to an exciting year ahead!



In January, Lodge 304 members joined the Slovenian Statehood Day celebration hosted by Honorary Consul of the Republic of Slovenia Tom Brandi.



Lodge 304 officers at Pust: [from left] auditor **ROBIN TAL-MADGE**, Secretary **MICHELLE VON MERTA-SUSTARICH**, former Vice President **ANA PIRC**, Treasurer **CHRIS SHOBAR**, and current Vice President **JESSICA SHOBAR**.



Miss SNPJ 1990 **LISA VIDERGAR LUCAS** [left] and Miss SNPJ 1989 **TERESA MLAKAR KOCI** with Lodge 304 Secretary and runner-up to Miss SNPJ 2024 **MICHELLE VON MERTA-SUSTARICH**.

Up-and-Coming...

A look at events planned by the Slovene National Benefit Society

- AUG. 11SNPJ Spartans Lodge 576 annual picnic and the third annual Lou Novak Balina Tournament at the SNPJ Farm, Kirtland, Ohio. The doors open at 1 p.m.; music by Joe Novak & Friends from 3-7.
- AUG. 30-SEPT. 1....National SNPJ Days weekend at the SNPJ Recreation Center. For more information phone the SNPJ Recreation Center toll-free at 1-877-767-5732 or e-mail snpj@snpjrec.com.
- OCT. 11-13.....SNPJ National Bowling Tournament co-hosted by Sygan, Pa., Lodge 6 and Strabane, Pa., Lodge 138 at the Sygan Lodge 6 Bowling Center and the Strabane Lodge 138 Lanes. Entry forms available online at snpj.org.

We've Got You COVERED



by GINA WISE
SNPJ Marketing Manager

From raucous to responsible

In the realm of country music, Hank Williams Jr. has carved out a legacy with his vibrant storytelling and the ability to capture the essence of life's transitions. Two of his songs, "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" and "All My Rowdy Friends Have Settled Down," serve as anthems for different stages of life. These songs, while seemingly about the raucous revelry and the subsequent mellowing of age, also subtly reflect the journey of financial planning and the role of life insurance in securing a stable future.

"All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" is a celebration of living in the moment. It's about the joy of youth, the thrill of the party, and the carefree spirit that comes with fewer responsibilities. The song resonates with the energy of those who are just starting out in life, where the future seems distant and the present is all-consuming. In this stage, life insurance may seem like an unnecessary thought; a distant need that doesn't align with the immediate desire for freedom and fun.

However, as time marches on, the wild nights give way to quieter evenings. "All My Rowdy Friends Have Settled Down" reflects this change, painting a picture of a more subdued life where once-rowdy friends now prefer stability and peace. This transition mirrors the shift in financial priorities as individuals grow older. The realization dawns that life is fragile, and the well-being of loved ones becomes paramount. Life insurance emerges as a critical tool in this phase, offering a safety net that ensures the financial security of family members in the event of an untimely passing.

The benefits of life insurance are manifold. Life insurance provides peace of mind, knowing that final expenses are covered, and it replaces lost income, helping loved ones maintain their standard of living. It's a promise of protection, much like the promise of a lifelong friendship celebrated in Williams' songs. Just as friends evolve from rowdy partygoers to settled companions, life insurance evolves from a distant idea to a cornerstone of a well-thought-out financial plan.

In essence, the purchase of life insurance is an act of love and responsibility. It's an acknowledgment that while we all hope for long, healthy lives surrounded by our friends – rowdy or settled – we must also plan for the unexpected. Hank Williams Jr.'s songs capture the spirit of these life stages with poignant accuracy, reminding us that amidst all the changes, some things, like the need for security and the love for our friends and family, remain constant.

As we navigate through life's parties and its quiet moments, let us take a cue from the wisdom embedded in the lyrics of a country music legend. Let us embrace the joy of living while also securing the future.

To obtain SNPJ life insurance for yourself or for a loved one, please call 1-800-THE-SNPJ to be put in touch with an advisor near you.

SNPJ does not provide tax, legal or accounting advice. Consult with a tax, legal or accounting professional regarding your specific situation.



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Slovenia signs full ESA membership agreement

PARIS (STA) — Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob and Josef Aschbacher, director general of the European Space Agency (ESA), signed an agreement in Paris in mid-June under which Slovenia will become a full ESA member at the beginning of 2025. The agreement between the Slovenian government and the agency must now be ratified by parliament, the government noted.

"After this signature, the real work actually begins," Golob said, adding that "Slovenia will actively participate and contribute with its know-how, expertise and innovative approaches," according to a government press release. "If we want to be globally competitive at the EU level, space technology is a key area," the prime minister stressed.

The Slovenian space sector is made up of "brave enthusiasts," according to Minister of Economy, Tourism and Sport Matjaž Han. "I'm confident that we will make the most of our full membership in the ESA and take Slovenia even further into space," said Han, whose portfolio includes the Slovenian Space Office, which has been working toward Slovenia's full ESA membership.

"The signing of the agreement is a key milestone not only for Slovenia, but also for the ESA which, 50 years after its creation, has proven to still be attractive, having been restructured to adapt to current expectations and challenges," Aschbacher stressed. This agreement demonstrates the continued commitment of successive Slovenian governments to space activities. "We are now entering a new era. I wish Slovenia a successful integration into the ESA and the European space supply chain," he said.

Slovenia has been cooperating with the ESA since 2009, when it signed a Plan for European Cooperating State (PECS) with the agency. In mid-2016 Slovenia also signed its associate membership agreement as a step toward full membership. Since then, more than 30 Slovenian partners have signed 114 contracts with the agency, estimated at a total of some EUR 42.1 million (\$45 million). At the same time, the number of companies and institutions registered to secure ESA projects has been growing, with more than 100 registered so far.

Slovenia officially applied for full membership last November, triggering a one-year period during which ESA working bodies examine whether the candidate meets the conditions. Slovenia will become a full ESA member when the associate membership agreement expires on Jan. 1, 2025. Golob signed the agreement based on a mandate granted to him by the government on May 30.

Full membership will enable Slovenian companies to take part in programs which they could not fully join. Full membership also means that Slovenia will have to contribute more to the agency's budget as of next year. In 2025 Slovenia will pay a lump sum, the amount of which is still subject to negotiation, and increase its annual payment to mandatory ESA programs to EUR 1.7 million (\$1.82 million) per year. This amount will replace the current annual membership fee of EUR 500,000 (approx. \$534,000). The ESA currently has 22 member states, which include 20 EU members plus Norway and Switzerland.

Slovenian language finally included in iOS

LJUBLJANA (STA) — iPhone owners in Slovenia will soon be able to use their smartphones in Slovenian, as Apple has announced that their iOS 18 operating system will also run in the Slovenian language as of this autumn, according to two Slovenian sources. Apple presented iOS 18 at its annual developers conference in June.

The company notes on its website that owners of iPhone Xs and all newer models will be able to download the new operating system free of charge this fall. A trial version is already available, with Slovenian featured in the iOS 18 and iPadOS 18 trial versions, according to *Tehnozvezdje*, a Slovenian website offering news about the latest digital developments.

It had been expected for some time that Slovenian could be included in iPhone interfaces, and Slovenia's members of European Parliament have been making appeals to Apple to take action. However, Apple seems to have decided to act only after the Slovenian parliament changed the law on the public use of Slovenian language in early April, ac-



According to the *Uporabna Stran* website. The law was passed unanimously, setting down use of Slovenian in electronic devices and services, and giving companies a transitional period to adjust. Prior to the revision of the law, Slovenia had no leverage to make developers include Slovenian in their digital language ecosystems, and it was up to them to do so. Windows operating systems have included Slovenian for more than 30 years, but Apple has not "Slovene-ized" its operating systems even though many Slovenians use Apple devices.

Responding to the news, the Culture Ministry said representatives met with Apple in Brussels when drafting the new legislation to present the new requirements. During the meeting, Minister Asta Vrečko said that once the law was passed, support for Slovenian would no longer be just the country's wish, but rather, a legal obligation.

"Apple is the first major corporation to comply with the requirements of the amended law on the public use of Slovenian. We expect that other developers will soon follow suit and that all devices will finally be able to speak Slovenian," the ministry wrote.

Oncology institute joins a cancer care initiative

LJUBLJANA (STA) — At the invitation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in June the Ljubljana Institute of Oncology joined an initiative aimed at increasing access to cancer care worldwide. The hospital, which is the main cancer treatment center in Slovenia, will provide support to its counterparts in the region and beyond.

As part of the Rays of Hope initiative, the institute will be the project's leading "anchor center" in the region, promoting networking and providing mentoring to other oncology institutes over the next four years. "The aim of the initiative is to help IAEA member states in establishing or expanding their radiotherapy and diagnostic imaging capacities," the institute wrote in a press release.

The main goal of the initiative is to provide support for anchor centers, which are described as "cancer centers which have shown resilience through decades of experience working with the IAEA to support their respective region." Their aim is to train students, provide training for health workers, take part in IAEA research projects, promote networking, and assist other cancer centers.

According to Ljubljana Institute of Oncology Director General Andraž Jakelj, "Participating in this project is as equally important for the institute as it is for Slovenia since it reaffirms commitment to progress and innovation in medicine and care for patients' well-being."

In particular, the Rays of Hope initiative focuses on supporting countries with limited or restricted access to radiotherapy and medical imaging.

Slovenians research new vaccine delivery method

LJUBLJANA (STA) — A team of Slovenian researchers, along with their German counterparts, have developed and tested a new method to deliver vaccines using mucoadhesive film that adheres to the cheek mucous membrane. This method could offer greater protection against respiratory infections compared to traditional methods, but further testing is needed.

According to Slovenia's Chemistry Institute, where some of the research was conducted, "The cheek mucous membrane has great potential for vaccination due to easy access and an abundance of immune system cells, which are essential to trigger innate and acquired immune responses."

The film is made of a mucoadhesive layer containing the vaccine formulation, and a protective layer. The protective, impermeable, cellulose layer allows for the mucoadhesive layer to slowly dissolve and swell. The vaccine passes through the mucous membrane to the immune system cells, where it triggers the immune response.

This delivery method offers the advantage of higher vaccine stability and a more efficient delivery to the tissue

that is first to come in contact with the pathogens.

The film can be used to deliver a variety of vaccines, including plasmid DNA vaccines, vector vaccines and modern mRNA-based vaccines in lipid nanoparticles (mRNA/LNP) – the mRNA/LNP vaccines stayed stable and active for several days, the researchers said.

This delivery method could be especially important for booster shots since it is less invasive, and could ensure protection from respiratory infections, such as Covid-19, where a stronger mucous immunity is desired. The researchers estimate that this could help prevent infection in the early stages and reduce the possibility of the disease spreading.

The findings have yet to be tested on humans and subjected to clinical trials.

The study was conducted by Slovenian researchers from the Chemistry Institute, the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Ljubljana, the UKC Ljubljana Hospital and the Golnik Clinic, as well as by German researchers. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Controlled Release* in May.

Koper bell tower reopens after renovation

KOPER (STA) — After months of renovation, the Koper bell tower, which features the oldest bell in Slovenia, reopened to the public in mid-June. The tower's interior staircase and railings, along with the stone walls and ceilings, have been completely renovated. The tower's lighting and electrical wiring are also new, the Koper municipality announced on its website.

"After the renovation, Koper's bell tower has come to life in a refreshed form, as is appropriate for one of the most important architectural monuments and most visited buildings in the city," the municipality wrote.

Apart from fully renovating the staircase and railings, including the railings under the bells, workers replaced all the nets on the bell tower openings, and completely renovated the stone walls and ceilings under the supervision of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

The bell tower also has new lighting and new electrical wiring. The heritage preserved in the tower is showcased in a cabinet that displays the clockwork and weights. The renovated clockwork will be reconnected to the clock hands and the three bells, so the bells will again ring on every hour, the municipality stated.

Guests can visit the 54-meter (177-foot) tower that houses Slovenia's oldest bell, the 14th century Saint Nazarius bell, every day from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Netflix releases trailer for movie filmed in Piran

PIRAN (STA) — Netflix has released the official trailer for "The Union," a spy action comedy-thriller featuring Halle Berry and Mark Wahlberg that was partly shot in Piran, the picturesque Slovenian seaside town.

Directed by Julian Farino, the film is due to be released by Netflix on Aug. 16, but excerpts from several scenes filmed in Piran can be seen in the trailer.

Wahlberg plays a construction worker from New Jersey who is thrust into the world of super spies and secret agents when his high school ex-girlfriend, played by Berry, recruits him on a high-stakes U.S. intelligence mission.

"The Union" was filmed at several locations in Slovenia, mostly in Piran, with a total of 17 days of shooting planned.

More than 340 Slovenian film workers were engaged in the project, comprising more than half of the entire crew. They were involved in the organization, production, set design and on the technical crew, as well as serving as assistants in the costume and makeup, and picture and sound divisions.

Hundreds of extras were involved locally, as well as a number of apprentices. Including the Slovenian and foreign film workers, actors and extras, the cast and crew was estimated to number 1,500 people. The cost of preparation and filming in Slovenia alone was estimated to total EUR 10 million (\$10.73 million).

The shooting of the biggest film project in Slovenia to date was hailed by Culture Minister Asta Vrečko at the time as an important event for the Slovenian film industry.

The articles comprising this feature have been reprinted with permission from the Slovenian Press Agency (STA).

This year, a Saturday date for the annual Polka Hall of Fame Slovenian Sausage Festival

by JOE VALENCIC (5)
Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame
KIRTLAND, Ohio — Saturday is now “sausage day” for the 20th annual Slovenian Sausage Festival hosted by the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame at the SNPJ Farm in Kirtland. Join us as we celebrate on Saturday, Sept. 14, with eight hours of non-stop music from noon until 8 p.m. Attendees can also vote for the vendor whose sausage they

like best. Enjoy polka music’s yummiest dance party! A total of 10 top Cleveland-style polka bands and entertainers will serve up peppy polkas and dreamy waltzes. Eddie Rodick, Don Wojtila, the Zolka family, the Fairport Jammers, Frank Culkar and Al Battistelli will help you burn off those extra calories. Bring your squeeze box or banjo and jam along. Sample a sausage from each

maker and then choose your favorite. Pierogies, strudels and more await you between spins on the dance floor. Each Slovenian sausage (*kranjska klobasa*) is made with cured and smoked pork, along with garlic and a savory blend of seasonings. The 2024 klobasa award winners will be announced at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$12 in advance; \$15 at the gate. Guests 18 and under are admitted free of

charge. The SNPJ Farm is located at 10946 Heath Road in Kirtland, off Chardon Road (Route 6), three miles east of Route 306 and six miles west of Route 44. For tickets, contact the Polka Hall of Fame by phone at (216) 261-FAME. The Polka Hall of Fame, located at 605 East 222nd St. next to Euclid City Hall, is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

So, how do you explain this?

by JANICE ROCKWELL
Lodge 138
BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — At different times, while chatting with friends, the question we voiced – practically in unison while marveling at the goings-on of Slovenefest from July 12-14 – was this: “How do you explain this?” How do you explain Slovenefest to the uninitiated? Sure, it’s an ethnic festival. My elevator speech to non-SNPJers goes something along this line: “It’s an ethnic festival; kind of like a Greek or Polish festival, with three stages of polka bands all weekend, klobase, craft tents, ethnic activities and beer trucks.” If they’re still paying attention, I might add, “And there is a Miss SNPJ Pageant that is a bit like a dairy princess pageant (I live in farm country), but not.” Totally inadequate! What defies explanation is the *feeling* of Slovenefest. It begins Friday night, when everyone is practically bursting at the seams with anticipation of the weekend ahead. Joyful smiles and hugs are exchanged, along

with greetings of “Happy Slovenefest.” Indeed, my children and their friends compare the excitement to Christmastime. The SNPJ trailer court is full, as are the cabins, the tent area, and the RV spaces. So many faces, so many conversations, so much to do. So much catching up. Best of all, everyone is in a good mood! What a welcome respite from our day-to-day world filled with division and tragedy. It is said Slovenians are a happy people. Slovenefest truly bears that out. Perhaps growing up with polkas has something to do with it, but for me, I find it impossible to listen to a polka and not smile. When performed live, on stage, in front of a full dance floor, the energy is contagious. Everyone dances Friday night. Two left feet or Fred and Ginger floating across the floor, it matters not. The music moves you to your feet, and before you know it... look out, you’ve having fun! I drove the Slovenefest courtesy cart on Saturday. For those who have yet to experience Slovenefest, the courtesy cart is the free golf cart service, staffed by volunteers, that transports festival attendees from place to place. I love the chance to see the entire grounds and see activity in every corner of the SNPJ Recreation Center. My parents, Tony and Josie Bole, and so many other early Slovenefest organizers would be brimming with pride! Driving

the cart affords you the opportunity to meet the gamut of fest attendees – former Miss SNPJs, musicians, children, seniors, families, 100 percent Slovenians (it’s always a thrill to find another one), and first timers. It’s an honor to be an unofficial ambassador for their visit. What took me a bit by surprise, despite having attended every Slovenefest except one, was how heartwarming it felt to connect, even if briefly, with people I knew. Almost every turn brought a familiar face – and sometimes after a few stammers, the name to accompany it. Happy faces from my Slovenia trip last year re-convened at the Valencic trailer. How fun it was to run into them throughout the festival and reminisce about our trip. This winter I took an on-line Slovenian class and met up with a classmate in person for the first time, and saw others I already knew. More happy memories as I ran into Family Week attendees. (Incidentally, Family Week is one of SNPJ’s best-kept secrets. This unassuming week delivers a vacation that, for reasons which defy explanation, will be treasured always.) I saw a couple I met at the pool years back as we both taught our kids how to swim. Now we both were holding our grandbabies! I saw some of my parents’ friends – always a joy seeing them and listening to their stories that bring my parents

back to life. I saw friends from school days and SNPJ’s magnificent trailer court contingent. By far best of all, I got to share this experience with my daughter and her husband, my son and his girlfriend, and my new granddaughter, Sophia Josephine, who sported a “My First Slovenefest” onesie. Slovenefest has seen its share of changes over its 41-year history. No longer do the buses come pouring in on Sunday, filled with pensioners. The disappearance of the buses may make it seem like the Slovenian population is diminishing. However, Slovenian heritage probably runs through more American families than any time in the past. Kids have kids have kids, etc. What has changed is each generation removed from the 20th century immigration wave faces escalating demands on their time and as many options for weekend entertainment as shopping on Amazon! Yet, Slovenefest continues to draw crowds. Maybe it’s America’s renewed interest in ancestry or simply this, this... (how do you explain this?)... feel-good factor that is “Slovenefest.” P.S.: It’s never too late to join the fun. Whether you just learned of your Slovenian ancestry, are just now paying attention to it, or have friends who talk about “this polka place,” come check it out. It won’t be long before you’re in the fold of this positive community. *Se vidimo!*

SNPJ Scholarship Fund Donations for the months of April-June 2024

Karen Campbell (5), High Bridge, Wis.... \$1,002.36
In memory of Carolyn Holvatz
Dennis & Sandra Clugston, Deer Park, Texas..... \$100
In memory of Don Scales
Members of SNPJ Lodge 174, Krayn, Pa..... \$100

Ken & Kim Zakraysek (174), Elton, Pa. \$100
Dan & Mary Jones (6) \$100
In memory of Sally Just
Michael & Becky Baker, Farlington, Kan. \$50
In memory of Don Scales

SNPJ Lodge 31, Sharon, PA \$50
In memory of Verna Weyer
SNPJ Lodge 31, Sharon, PA \$50
In memory of Thomas Duda
SNPJ Lodge 782, Glenshaw, Pa. \$50
Robert Arko (218), Trinidad, Colo. \$25

SNPJ Membership Anniversaries August 2024

80-Year Members

Lodge	Member
87	Tillie M. Fertig
604	Frank M. Sajovec
A02	Elizabeth E. Joos

70-Year Members


Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Paul E. Sterbenz	584	Joan Kayfes
8	Rosemary K. Ihle	729	Betty A. Tirpak
126	James Adams		

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Nancy A. Videgar	218	Dorothy L.
6	Dorothy S. Barufaldi		Hribar-Creed
6	Judy R. Bourg	218	Linda A. LaSavio
34	Randolph F. Stanfield	218	Janet P. Martinez
34	Norma J. Stefanciosa	257	Sandra M. Boysen
87	Amelia L. Macerelli	277	Alberta J. Wukotich
138	Donna C. Cope	584	Glorian J. Benson
138	Winifred J. Dillman	721	Carole C. Benko
142	Barbara M. Tercek	749	Carol J. Lampel
142	JoAnn Vasil	749	Lillianna S. Woodall
158	Frank E. Penko	786	John S. Siskar
207	Sandra A. Jaksha		

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Mark L. Grlic	207	Elizabeth Arrigotti
5	Nancy Lyczkowski	218	Deborah M. Santi
5	Robert Lyczkowski	218	Donald J. Zordel
5	Allan J. Pestotnik	225	Albert T. Babich
6	Bernadette Bischak	257	John D. Bidlenscik
6	Joyce A. Kramzer	257	Julianne Everett
6	Cynthia M. Mitchell	257	William G. Schweda
6	William R. Nadeja	358	Herbert J. Chuck
6	George Shepos	371	Vickie M. Bergstrom
8	Adrienne L. Enright	518	Karen M. Krzysnik
8	Gregg H. Mysker	559	Edward A. Doerk
34	Richard G. Canalas	559	Marcia A. Ferlin
41	Linda A. Fleischmann	562	James A. Godez
87	Deborah L. Asbee	562	Christine
87	Michael T. Balego		Stinard-Waters
87	Frank J. Muchnok	581	Deborah Ashford
87	Joseph M. Yurkovich	603	Denise Jensen
89	Gary W. Lamb	604	Laura J. Elofson
89	Alice F. McWreath	604	Michael B. Nolan
120	Susan L. Howard	665	George P. Bubash
138	Deborah K. Gasper	729	Kathryn L. Smartnick
138	Karen J. Lewandowski	749	Albert R. Klopsic
142	Jeannette A. Elish	776	Brian D. Denmeade
153	Mark A. Kuhn	782	Robert F. Jergel
174	Betty A. Bizjak		



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City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Number of copies _____

Make check or money order payable to **SNPJ Heritage Center**

PROSVETA Crossword

Back to School (#0824) by StatePoint Media

ACROSS

- *Medical school entry requirement, acr.
- *Atlas image
- Hula dancer’s necklace
- German money
- Ready for picking
- Nerd
- Like many Brothers Grimm stories
- Month of Purim
- *Some exams
- *Laptop and books container
- Fastens a fly
- Licorice-like herb
- *Teacher’s favorite
- Like hot lava
- Cassava, pl.
- Chapter in history
- Deadly
- DEA agent
- Second person singular past of “do,” archaic
- Greet, to a dog
- Be in harmony
- Inwardly
- Opposite of pluralism
- Even, to a poet
- *Academic planners
- *High predecessor
- Passé

- Barnyard honker
- Rooftop contraption
- *Meal container
- Emerald or aquamarine, chemically speaking
- Trans-Siberian Railroad city
- Venus de Milo’s are missing
- *Plural of #51 Down
- Comments from prompt box
- Do like Ella Fitzgerald
- *PE in school
- Make a choice
- Piece of cake

DOWN

- Actress Ryan
- Larry David’s “_____ Your Enthusiasm”
- Bizet’s “Habanera,” e.g.
- Tabby’s mate
- King with a golden touch
- Rapidly
- _____ up, to become more cheerful
- Spring
- Morays
- Abdominal pain cause, acr.
- Plunder
- Dirty one
- *One of 3 Rs in grade school

- Genuflected
- Letter-writing friend
- *M in LMC, educationally speaking
- Circular gasket
- Big Dipper’s visible shape
- Biblical gift-givers
- Propelled a boat
- Angler’s basket
- Part of an act
- Rare bills
- Chewbacca’s sidekick
- *Word in thesaurus, e.g.
- Mennonite’s cousin
- *Gym class prop
- *Art class cover ups
- Old fashioned contests at dawn
- Lower value, as in currency
- Plug a pipe, e.g. (2 words)
- Beginning of ailment
- Exceedingly
- Bob of boxing world
- Bonkers
- Shamu, e.g.
- Dec. holiday
- Capture
- Porky’s or Petunia’s home

The solution to puzzle #0824 will run in the Sept. 2 issue.





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With Slovenefest weekend, the start of a new chapter for Miss SNPJ 2024

by MORGAN SINAN (782)
Miss SNPJ 2024

GLENSHAW, Pa. — As I stood before everyone for one final day as Miss SNPJ 2024, I was filled with a mixture of emotions—gratitude, nostalgia and, while it might not have seemed like it from all of the

tears, optimism. This past year has been a whirlwind of experiences, growth and cherished memories. So many things have happened in my life, and each moment has contributed to the person I am today. It's easy to view this as the end of a significant chapter in

my reign and other areas of my life. However, I've realized that what we often see as endings are opportunities for new beginnings. We tend to focus so much on the conclusion of one period that we forget to embrace the promise and potential of the next. As Mr. Rogers reminds us, "Often, when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

So, yes, my time as Miss SNPJ 2024 has ended... but this marks the start of new adventures and opportunities. Like for our Miss SNPJ 2025, Erin Lawrence! This is your new adventure, and I know you will take advantage of this new beginning to the fullest and make your mark on the Miss SNPJ legacy.

This past year has taught me the importance of maintaining a positive outlook no matter the circumstance. Instead of lamenting the close of this chapter, I want to celebrate the experiences I've gained and look forward to the exciting new beginnings ahead for me and everyone in my life.

Thank you to all the Lodges, organizations and areas I had the privilege of visiting, creating new memories and friendships: Strabane Lodge 138, Yukon Lodge 87, Cleveland Lodge 604, the Westmoreland Federation, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and the National

Polka Hall of Fame.

Each visit brought new connections and lasting memories. I will always cherish the Duck Race in Strabane, the American Slovene Day dance in Yukon, and the Polka Hall of Fame Thanksgiving weekend. Each event, each person and each story has left an indelible mark on my heart.

Thank you to the Young Adult Conference delegates and my fraternal friends. Your support and involvement have been instrumental in shaping this experience. The energy, ideas and enthusiasm you bring to every event are genuinely inspiring, and I am proud to have been a part of such a dynamic group. You are why I keep coming back, and how I know this Society will be in great hands in the future.

Now to the Lodge that matters the most. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my home Lodge, Glenshaw Lodge 782; to Sygan Lodge 6; Youth Circle 36 and former Circle Director Ruth Wright; and Herminie Lodge 87. These Lodges and the Youth Circle were the bedrock of SNPJ in my childhood and have always been pillars of support. Their efforts and dedication have given me some of the best memories of my youth, and I am deeply grateful for that.

To the Miss SNPJ Pageant Commission and the extraor-

dinary ladies I had the honor of running with last year and this year – Anna Mack (138), Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich (304), Alexis Trout (6), Emily Patosky (106), and Erin Lawrence (138)—your spirit, enthusiasm and camaraderie made this journey unforgettable. I am grateful for the friendships and the shared moments that have enriched my reign.

And to our lovely Fraternal Director, Courtney Koenig, your dedication and support – and your passion for SNPJ and this event – have truly been inspiring. Thank you for being a shoulder to lean on and for providing a listening ear.

I am also grateful to the SNPJ National Board, especially Joe Evanish, Karen Pintar and Bob Lawrence, for their continued support of the pageant and me. I have known them for a long time and have always been treated like family because of their unwavering support over the years.

And finally, I want to give the greatest thanks to my family. They have been my most incredible supporters, and I have enjoyed all the times we have shared all these years. To my sisters, who have served as role models throughout the most formative years of my life, thank you for guiding me in the right direction.

I am incredibly grateful

for my parents, Maury and Kathleen. I only sometimes enjoyed our annual restocking and sticking in the SNPJ Heritage Center, but I didn't mind because I knew we would go to the Gostilna afterward for some fantastic wings (extra crispy, of course!).

My fondest memories are from SNPJ, and it is only because of my parents that I have all these memories to treasure. Mom and Dad, your love and encouragement have been my foundation. From the early mornings to the late nights, you have been there every step of the way. Dad, your wisdom and quiet strength have guided me through the most challenging moments. Mom, your unwavering belief in me has given me the courage to pursue my dreams. Each of you has been pivotal in my journey, and I am forever grateful.

As I end my reign, I encourage you to adopt this perspective: When one door closes, another opens. Every ending we encounter is simply a precursor to a fresh start; a chance to redefine ourselves and our journey. So let's not dwell on what is ending, but rather, be enthusiastic about what's beginning.

Thank you for sharing this incredible journey with me. Here's to new beginnings and the endless possibilities they bring!

SNPJ National Bean Bag Toss Tournament
MEN/CO-ED: Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024, starting at 3 p.m.
WOMEN: Sunday, Sept. 1, 2024, starting at 3 p.m.
at the SNPJ Recreation Center, Borough of SNPJ, Pa.
Select Entry Division:
Men's/Co-ed ☐ Women's ☐

Name	Lodge No.
1. (Team 1 captain)	
2.	
1. (Team 2 captain)	
2.	
Team 1 captain's name, phone number & e-mail address:	
Team 2 captain's name, phone number & e-mail address:	

Entry Fee: \$10 per two-man team
Return this form, along with entry fees, to:
SNPJ Recreation Center
270 Martin Rd., Enon Valley, PA 16120
Phone: 1-877-767-5732
Make checks payable to SNPJ
Tournament Secretary:
Jason Cadez, SNPJ District 1 Athletic Director
e-mail: cadez138@gmail.com
The SNPJ Home Office will verify all memberships.

80th SNPJ National Golf Tournament
at Black Hawk Golf Course
644 Blackhawk Rd., Beaver Falls, PA 15010
Phone: (724) 843-5512 • www.blackhawkgolfcourse.com
Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024
Tee times start at 8 a.m.

Individual Event	
Name	Lodge No.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Team Event	
Name	Lodge No.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Entry fee for team and individual events is \$63 per member. For individual event only, entry fee is \$58 per member. Entry fee includes greens fees, golf cart, prize fund.	
Return this form, along with entry fees, to: David Sankovich, SNPJ District 3 Athletic Director P.O. Box 485, Bessemer, PA 16112 e-mail: david.sankovich@aol.com Make checks payable to SNPJ ENTRY DEADLINE IS AUG. 17, 2024 The Home Office will verify all memberships. Complete tournament rules are available by contacting the SNPJ Home Office, 247 W. Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126	

Wisconsin golfers raise nearly \$3,500 for charity

by MARY DONOVAN (584)
District 6 Athletic Director

MILWAUKEE — Golfers enjoyed a perfect day for the SNPJ Badger Lodge/Lucky Lanes outing. If you could order the weather, this is what would have been requested!

The Saturday morning outing encompassed a full slate of 80 golfers. Best ball was the method of play to keep things moving along so that we could return to Lucky Lanes and

enjoy our rotisserie chicken dinner and the drawings.

Golfers had the opportunity to participate in optional charity holes, from which all proceeds went to the Wisconsin Breast Cancer Showhouse that supports research for breast and prostate cancer.

In addition to the charity holes, SNPJ supported the challenge on hole 9 for a hole-in-one to win \$5,000. Unfortunately, nobody won,

but what a fun opportunity to go for the money! Thanks to SNPJ for their support.

Our thanks to all of the volunteers who assisted with the charity holes and drawings: Michele Melton, Bailey Phalen, Diane Demshar and her friend Jean Wucinski, Tim Donovan, Tony Mlinar and Mary Donovan. A huge thank you is extended to Tom Schweiger who coordinated this event and the dinner afterward.

We are proud to say that this event raised almost \$3,500! Thanks to all for your generosity and support.

This event is slated next year on June 14 (the day before Father's Day). Mark the date on your calendars – once we have our 80 golfers registered, we will be good to go.

As a longtime SNPJ member used to say, "A good time was had by all," which truly summarizes this event!

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62%... people who own coverage, but don't know what they have or why they have it

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Heritage Center season closing with National Days

HERITAGE CENTER
FROM PAGE 1
available for purchase and will set up our traveling museum display. As summer is starting to wind down, the Heritage Center museum and gift shop is open Saturdays in August from 1 to 5 p.m. Our final day of the season is Aug. 31, the Saturday prior to Labor Day,

during National SNPJ Days. For National Days, the entertainment in the Gostilna on Friday, Aug. 30, features KTB from 8 to 11 p.m. On Sunday, Sept. 1, the Joe Grkman Orchestra and Klancnik & Friends will be alternating in the Heritage Pavilion from 1 to 7 p.m. Enjoy the rest of your summer – it goes so fast!

SNPJ RECOMMENDER PROGRAM

1. **Recommending a new SNPJ member could be worth a total of \$110***

2. **Recommending a new SNPJ member could be worth a total of \$110***

3. **Recommending a new SNPJ member could be worth a total of \$110***

4. **Recommending a new SNPJ member could be worth a total of \$110***

The SNPJ Recommender Program provides an opportunity for adult members to encourage family, friends, children and acquaintances to join the Slovene National Benefit Society and take advantage of SNPJ's competitive products and numerous fraternal benefits. Not only will you be helping a friend and strengthening our Society, you'll also be receiving benefits yourself.

Recommender Benefits

- Receive \$10 for each valid referral submitted.
- Every valid referral earns the recommender one chance in the Quarterly Drawing for an opportunity to win \$100.

By submitting one valid referral, you have the opportunity to earn a total of \$110 in cash prizes!

I would like to introduce _____ for SNPJ membership

Please contact: _____ (Parent or guardian if under age 18)

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

Indicate Preferred Agent _____ (Optional)

My Name: _____

My Lodge Number: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

e-mail _____

Each individual must be informed that an agent will contact him/her and the referral must have some interest in SNPJ in order for the recommender to be considered valid.

Complete this coupon and return to Slovene National Benefit Society
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SNPJ fraternal sympathies

Sis. GERTRUDE A. HALE • LODGE 6 •

SYGAN, Pa. — The members of Lodge 6 sadly report the Feb. 7, 2024, passing of Sis. Gertrude “Tootie” Hale, beloved mother and the heart of her family, in her home.

Sis. Hale started her career as a clerk for Snowden Twp., Pa., now South Park Twp., in 1958, and rose to the position of township manager, retiring in 1996 after 38 years of service. While raising five children, she went to school to become a court reporter but decided to stay with the township so she could be close to her children.

A 72-year SNPJ member, she was a very devoted member of St. Joan of Arc Church in South Park. She served as chairperson (“festival queen”) of the church festival – which was acclaimed to be the best in Pittsburgh’s South Hills – for 10 years, raising more than \$1 million dollars to benefit the school and church.

Tootie was an avid Pittsburgh Penguins fan, and had the pleasure of not only being in the locker room after a Stanley Cup victory, but to also drink from the Cup. She and her late husband, Ted, enjoyed traveling, their favorite spots being Las Vegas and Aruba. In her spare time she enjoyed playing tennis and painting, and she really loved the casino.

She was a loving mother to her children, Karen (Rick) Schreiber, Nancy (Bob) Schmidt, Ted (Jeanne) Hale, and Rick (Maria) Hale; loving grandmother of eight; and “GiGi” of 10.

She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Gertrude Bellan; her beloved husband, Ted; her dear daughter, Mary Catherine; her sister, Janet Strimlan; and her brother, Ronald Bellan.

She was an amazing friend to many, and will be forever missed and treasured.

A Funeral Mass was celebrated for Sis. Hale on Feb. 10 in St. Joan of Arc Church.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 6 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our condolences to Sis. Hale’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Sis. SANDRA M. GASTGEB • LODGE 106 •

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The members of Lodge 106 sadly report the March 28, 2024, passing of Sis. Sandra May (Zaloznik) Gastgeb, 72, of

Canonsburg, Pa., formerly of Bridgeville, Pa. She was a 54-year SNPJ member.

Sis. Gastgeb was born May 14, 1951, in Pittsburgh, a daughter of the late Ernest and Frances (Augustine) Zaloznik. Sandy was a retired employee of Kmart, where she worked for many years in the Human Resource Department. She volunteered for the Washington County Food Bank, as well as maintained Speer Cemetery in Canonsburg, along with her husband Larry.

She enjoyed the outdoors, and loved hiking and vacationing at Cape Cod. She adored her grandchildren and never missed a school activity or sporting event. Every Thursday, she and her close friends gathered together for “happy hour.”

She was the beloved wife of Larry Gastgeb; loving mother of Wendi (Jon) Duffill and Tim (Amy) Gastgeb; devoted grandmother of Nikolas Krieg, Aidan Krieg, Lily Duffill, Mason Gastgeb and Addison Gastgeb; and sister of Arlene Zaloznik and Ernie Zaloznik.

A celebration of Sandy’s life was held April 4 at Napoli Restaurant, Collier Twp., Pa.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 106 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Sis. Gastgeb’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Bro. ROBERT G. WILLIAMS • LODGE 749 •

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — The members of Lodge 749 sadly report the April 11, 2024, passing of Bro. Robert G. “Bob” Williams, 90, of Davidsville, Pa., at Laurel View Village.

Bro. Williams was born Aug. 14, 1933, in Johnstown, the son of Percy and Amy (Murphy) Williams. Bob was a welder and machinist by trade, having worked for Miller Picking and Penn Machine before retiring in 1995.

At a young age, Bob went to work to help support his family, and he carried this work ethic throughout his life. He was a selfless provider for his family and always led by example, instilling his work ethic in his children. His projects always became teachable moments to build their skills to carry with them throughout their lives. He was always willing to lend a hand to family and friends.

Bob was an avid gardener, but his favorite pastime for many years was bowling, the

highlight coming when he rolled a 300 game at Westmont Lanes in Johnstown. For decades he bowled with his same group of friends, was a member of several local bowling leagues, and traveled with his friends to many bowling tournaments.

A 51-year SNPJ Lodge 749 member, he was also a member of St. Anne Catholic Church in Davidsville and Knights of Columbus St. Andrews Council 11308.

He is survived by his children, Lynn (Dan) Gray, Alayne (Gary) Boratko, and Roger (Lisa) Williams; nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of 69 years, Angela D. (Dill) Williams, on March 23, 2024; a son, David Williams; three grandchildren; and five sisters and four brothers.

A Funeral Mass was celebrated for Bro. Williams on April 17 at St. Anne Catholic Church. A committal service followed in St. Anthony’s Cemetery, Geistown, Pa.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 749 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our condolences to Bro. Williams’ family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Sis. ROSE BANJAVCIC • LODGE 34 •

INDIANAPOLIS — The members of Lodge 34 sadly report the April 23, 2024, passing of Sis. Rose Marie (Spudich) Banjavcic, 94, of Staunton, Ill., formerly of Livingston, Ill., at Staunton Health & Rehab Center.

Sis. Banjavcic was born June 11, 1929, in Livingston, a daughter of the late Stephen and Anna (Kostadin) Spudich. She married John “Sheepy” Banjavcic on Sept. 1, 1951, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Livingston. John preceded her in death on May 6, 2017.

Rose worked at Cassens Transport, Olin Corporation, and then as a bookkeeper for Calcarci Distributing and Beierman Distributing until her retirement.

A 76-year SNPJ member, she was also a member of St. Michael Catholic Church in Staunton, the Croatian Fraternal Union and the Staunton VFW Ladies Auxiliary.

She is survived by numerous nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was preceded in death by five sisters, Barbara Spudich, Dorothy Schank, Ann

Inboden, Caroline Vertovsek and Mary Spudich; and two brothers, Stephen Spudich Jr. and Thomas Spudich Sr.

Funeral services for Sis. Banjavcic were held May 4 at Lesicko Funeral Home, Livingston. Interment followed in Sacred Heart Cemetery, Livingston.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 34 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Sis. Banjavcic’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Sis. NONDIS A. KIGER • LODGE 277 •

STRUTHERS, Ohio — The members of Lodge 277 sadly report the May 6, 2024, passing of Sis. Nondis A. (Boyd) Miller Kiger, 88, of Glenmoor, Ohio, at East Liverpool City Hospital following a lengthy illness.

Sis. Kiger was born Aug. 8, 1935, in Coshocton, Ohio, the daughter of the late Blake E. and Kerene K. Overholt Boyd. She was a member of the East Liverpool High School class of 1953 and attended St. Luke’s University in Cleveland. Nondis was a registered nurse associated with East Liverpool City Hospital and Ohio Valley Home Health Services for many years until her retirement.

In addition to her SNPJ membership, she was a longtime member of Trinity Presbyterian Church, where she was a Sunday school teacher and a member of the Faith Circle. She enjoyed square dancing with the Crosstrailers and the Tri-State Squares. She also loved to travel – across the country with her first husband, Keith, on a motorcycle, and she and Joe loved to take cruises all over the world.

She was preceded in death by her first husband, R. Keith Miller, in 1998; a granddaughter and a grandson.

She is survived by her husband, Joseph Kiger; three children, Abbie (Bob) Milner of New Cumberland, Ohio, Clark (Lynn) Miller of East Liverpool, Ohio, and Craig (Mary) Miller of Canfield, Ohio; and six grandchildren.

A funeral service for Sis. Kiger was held May 9 at Dawson Funeral Home, East Liverpool. Burial followed in Spring Grove Cemetery, East Liverpool.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 277 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Sis. Kiger’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Sis. MARY L. PROGAR • LODGE 138 •

STRABANE, Pa. — The members of Lodge 138 sadly report the May 21, 2024, passing of Sis. Mary L. “Marie” Progar, 94, of Canonsburg, Pa., in Kane Community Living Center, Scott Twp., Pa., where she had resided for the past 15 months.

Marie, as she was known to her family and friends, was born Aug. 5, 1929, in Canonsburg to Gaetano and Josephine (Como) Campana. On Nov. 26, 1949, in St. Patrick Church, she married her husband, Edward E. Progar, with whom she would spend the following 56 years until his passing on April 29, 2006.

A 68-year SNPJ Lodge 138 member, she was also a member of St. Oscar Romero Parish and KSKJ Lodge 153 in Strabane.

During her working years, Marie was employed with the Continental Can Company, RCA Corporation, and Sarris Candies.

She was a very strong woman who was able to recover from bladder resection surgery at the age of 90. She was a consummate caregiver, as evidenced by her dedication to caring for her mother as she recovered from breast cancer surgery, and later her husband Ed as he dealt with an atypical form of ALS. A loving “Gram,” she provided daycare for her beloved grandchildren as well. And she always made sure her son, Eddie, had plenty of prepared frozen meals to take back to Cleveland with him after visiting.

Marie, who enjoyed cooking and baking, was best known for her potato salad, Italian wedding soup (which were always requested for holiday gatherings and family events),

and her anise-flavored pizzas, of which she made many dozens around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. During her later years, she was ably assisted at the pizze iron by her daughter and youngest granddaughter, Abby, in maintaining this cherished family tradition.

Marie was an avid Pittsburgh Steelers and Pirates fan, no doubt influenced by her exceptionally athletic husband, Ed. When she was able, an occasional trip to the Meadows Casino was not out of the question. But her favorite times were the annual holiday gatherings and the occasional vacation with close and extended family.

Surviving to cherish Marie’s memory are her son, Edward A. Progar of Cleveland; her daughter, Kathleen M. (Stephen) Anderson of Canonsburg; a sister, Anna Kolaczynski of Washington, Pa.; sister-in-law Rose Marie (Robert) Lawrence of Strabane; grandchildren Zachary, Rachel, Thomas, and Abigail; and great-grandchildren Grayson and Asher; along with many nieces, nephews and good friends.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by three sisters, Venzie Campana, Lucy DeTemple and Madeline Mazza; and several other relatives and friends by whom she was no doubt greeted with open arms.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sis. Progar on May 25 in St. Patrick Church, Canonsburg. Interment followed in St. Patrick Cemetery.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 138 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our sympathies to Sis. Progar’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

DEATHS REPORTED
For the month of June 2024

LODGE	NAME	DATE OF DEATH	CITY, STATE
6	Lawrence J. Kish	03-22-2024	Pittsburgh, Pa.
6	Tina M. Karnicnik	03-26-2017	Orlando, Fla.
6	Rebecca L. Smith Johnson	04-21-2024	Greensburg, Pa.
6	Gertrude A. Hale	02-07-2024	South Park, Pa.
6	Judy A. Gould	06-15-2024	Bridgeville, Pa.
8	Nicholas T. Bubalo	03-10-2024	La Porte, Ind.
31	Donna Mae Gereb	01-21-2021	Greensboro, N.C.
31	Floyd B. Tonks	06-16-2024	Charleston, S.C.
34	Patricia A. Pavletich	05-09-2024	St. Louis, Mo.
87	Zane W. Mitchell Jr.	04-27-2024	Waynesburg, Pa.
87	Darel L. Flesik	11-28-2022	Greensburg, Pa.
106	Gail A. Ulager	02-05-2024	Moon Twp., Pa.
106	John A. Ursic	12-18-2023	Imperial, Pa.
106	Beverly Trusnovic	05-07-2024	Oakdale, Pa.
138	Shirley M. Gibson	02-21-2023	Weirton, W.Va.
138	Mary L. Progar	05-21-2024	Canonsburg, Pa.
138	William A. Cushman	04-30-2021	Raleigh, N.C.
218	Steve Mattivi	07-28-2015	Pueblo, Colo.
223	Betty Z. Gerle	05-16-2024	Harmony, Pa.
277	Robert E. Susany	05-18-2024	Lowellville, Ohio
304	Stuart R. Curtis	04-03-2024	Penn Grove, Calif.
559	Julie Kuchar Wynn	05-28-2024	Richmond Hill, Ga.
564	Joseph Yurich	04-29-2023	Canton, Mich.
564	Paul J. Bilski	05-22-2024	Royal Oak, Mich.
576	Anne J. Krantz	12-15-2019	Willowick, Ohio
584	Jeanette Korsman	09-19-2021	Virginia, Minn.
584	William Potochnik	05-29-2024	Gurnee, Ill.
584	Joseph R. Januzzi	09-08-2023	Brookfield, Wis.
584	Frank A. Bolka	06-09-2024	Goodyear, Ariz.
584	Renee G. Diedrich	06-13-2024	Sturgeon Bay, Wis.
604	Paul S. Sibenich	07-19-2023	Cleveland, Ohio
689	Henry A. Skerl	04-19-2024	Price, Utah
745	Sherry L. Stocks	03-24-2022	Silver Springs, Nev.
749	Thomas Reed	05-09-2024	Johnstown, Pa.
776	Gerald W. Carr	12-30-2023	New Castle, Pa.
			KAREN A. PINTAR National Secretary/COO

PROSVETA Crossword
INDEPENDENCE DAY (#0724) solution

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PROSVETA 2024 Publication Dates

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The SNPJ Farm 2024 Picnic Schedule

SNPJ Farm, 10946 Heath Road, Kirtland, Ohio
off Chardon Road (Route 6), three miles east of Route 306
Visit www.snpjfarmkirtland.com for schedule changes

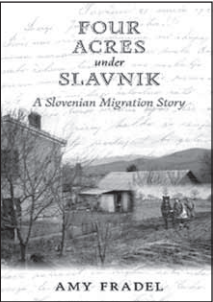
Aug. 11	SNPJ Spartans Lodge 576 Picnic and Lou Novak Balina Tournament Joe Novak & Friends and Patty C & The Guys
Aug. 25	Penn-Ohio Polka Pals Picnic Bill Bevec Band & more TBA
Sept. 2	Labor Day Holiday Dance Frank Stanger Orch. & Eddie Rodick Orch.
Sept. 14	Slovenian Sausage Festival hosted by the Polka Hall of Fame
Sept. 22	SNPJ Farm Slovenian Grape Festival Annual parade/music by Tony Fortuna Band
Sept. 28	SNPJ Lodge 142 Clambake Picnic Clambake requires reservations/music TBA

Gates open at 1 p.m. rain or shine. Sunday dinners are served starting at 2 p.m. Sunday music and dancing from 3 to 7 p.m. Sunday picnic admission is \$8 per person. No outside food or beverages permitted. No pets. The SNPJ Farm is a cash-only venue; there is no on-site ATM.

Four Acres Under Slavnik: A Slovenian Migration Story

Available at your local bookstore or Amazon

The year was 1913. Marija Fabjančič waved to her brother Jožef from the deck of a New York bound steamship, expecting that she would return to Primorska in two years. The letters that they exchanged tell an epic story of Slovenia that spans two wars, the Italian occupation, and the migration experience of those who left and those who stayed.



AMY FRADEL, recipient of the 2022 Slovenian Union of America literary award, writes a well-researched work of non-fiction that both serious historians and those interested in the real experiences of their immigrant ancestors will appreciate.

Search “Four Acres Under Slavnik: A Slovenian Migration Story” on amazon.com

Support the Rec Center Cabin Renovation Project



by JOSEPH C. EVANISH
SNPJ National President/CEO

IMPERIAL, Pa. — SNPJ members have enjoyed the unique and remarkable place that is the SNPJ Recreation Center. Countless memories that have been made there are treasured by thousands. The Recreation Center is now going on 60 years old and thus, wear and tear has taken its toll.

The large upper cabins, situated opposite the lake, are some of the first structures built on the property. A few years ago the renovation of Cabins #1 and #2 were completed. The 12 motel units were also completed. During the offseason of 2023-2024, Cabin #15 was renovated with plans to complete Cabins #3-#7 before the 2024 season.

The cabins will be wrapped in a vapor barrier and vinyl sided. New windows and doors will be installed. On the interior, new flooring will be installed throughout. The bathrooms will have larger showers with new toilets and sinks. The kitchen sink area will be re-designed. A power vent will be installed at the roofline to draw out the heat, and wall air conditioners will be installed for those 90-degree, hot summer days.

There are 24 cabins, which leaves

16 more to do. The budgeted cost to complete one cabin exceeds \$30,000; thus, much more in the way of donations is needed. Since this is not a cultural or educational (scholarship) cause, but rather, recreational in nature, contributions are not considered tax deductible.

We encourage Lodges, Federations, members, friends and other organizations to contribute. Several have already contributed. While we do offer “Club Level” recognition, all donations will be listed in *PROSVETA*.

Donors at the following Club Levels will receive their name on a plaque: Bronze Level, \$1,000; Silver Level, \$5,000; Gold Level, \$10,000; and Platinum Level, \$25,000.

Donation checks can be made payable to “SNPJ.” Please indicate “Cabin Renovation” in the memo area. Provide your name and address, and the acknowledgment name and address if the donation is made in memory of someone.

Send your donation to Slovene National Benefit Society, 247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126. All donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your support!

Rec Center Cabin Renovation Donations for the months of May & June 2024

Club Level Donations		
Silver Level		
SNPJ Lodge 274, Dunlo, Pa.....	\$5,000	
Josephine Bole Celebratory Balina Tournament collection		\$330
SNPJ Lodge 564, Detroit.....	\$150	
In memory of Eddie Adamic		
SNPJ Lodge 2, La Salle, Ill.....	\$100	
SNPJ Lodge 33, Ambridge, Pa.....	\$100	
In memory of Betty Pendel		
Ken & Kim Zakraysek (174), Elton, Pa.....	\$100	
Members of SNPJ Lodge 174, Krayn, Pa. ...	\$100	
Clint, Mary, Francesca and Helena Messenger, Erie, Pa.....	\$100	
Nicole Shields (family & friends of Eddie Adamic), Chesterfield, Mich.	\$70	
In memory of Eddie Adamic		
SNPJ Lodge 782, Glenshaw, Pa.	\$50	
Ronald & Kara Maruszak (142), Eastlake, Ohio	\$20	
The following donations were made in memory of Ken Anderson:		
Hanna Tavalire and Andrew Astells	\$250	
Fred Mlakar (786), Irvine, Calif.....	\$200	
SNPJ Spartans Lodge 576, Cleveland	\$100	
Muriel Hucal, Royal Oak, Mich.	\$50	
David & Peggy Cushman (138) Houston, Pa..	\$25	
Terri Halaburda (158) and Darryl Valencic (138)..	\$20	
The following donations were made in memory of Martin Kumer:		
Marlene & Thomas Dean (715), Monroeville, Pa.....	\$200	
Mary Bonczak (6), Bridgeville, Pa.	\$100	
SNPJ Lodge 31, Sharon, Pa.	\$50	
Evelyn Dimpfl (749), Johnstown, Pa.	\$25	

Spartans Lodge 576 readies their picnic at the Farm

by CHRISTIAN THOMEY
Lodge 576

CLEVELAND — Happy summer 2024, Spartans Lodge members! I hope everyone is staying cool and having fun in the hot sun.

On behalf of the Lodge officers and members, I welcome Sal Caronite to Spartans Lodge 576. We are happy to have you

as part of our Spartans family.

We would also like to congratulate Miss SNPJ 2025 Erin Lawrence. Erin is the niece of Spartans member Annie Lawrence and cousin to youth members Mikey, Amelia and Anthony Lawrence. We are so excited for your reign – you will be amazing!

Save the date for the Spar-

tans Lodge 576 annual picnic and third annual Lou Novak Balina Tournament. The picnic and tournament will be held Sunday, Aug. 11, starting at 1 p.m. at the SNPJ Farm on Heath Road in Kirtland, Ohio.

The picnic will feature live music from Joe Novak & Friends. We will be serving cabbage rolls, Slovenian

potatoes, Slovenian sausage, krofe, and more. We will also be holding a 50/50 drawing, and we'll have many baskets for you to take a chance on.

For more information regarding the balina tournament, contact Karen Novak at (216) 965-3181 or Linda Gorjup at (216) 650-1279. We hope to see you there!

SNPJ 86th National Bowling Tournament October 11-13, 2024

co-sponsored by SNPJ Lodge 6 and SNPJ Lodge 138
and SNPJ Athletic Districts 1 and 2

MEN		WOMEN	
Doubles & Singles Events at Strabane Lodge 138 269 Latimer Ave. Strabane, PA 15363 Club: (724) 745-9860 Lanes: (724) 745-9775		Doubles & Singles Events at Sygan Lodge 6 540 Third Ave. Bridgeville, PA 15017 Phone: (412) 221-9862	
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday, Oct. 11, 6:30 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, Oct. 12, 9 a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, Oct. 12, 2 p.m.		<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, Oct. 12, 9:30 a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday, Oct. 12, 2:30 p.m.	
MEN		WOMEN	
Team Event at Sygan Lodge 6 540 Third Ave. Bridgeville, PA 15017 Phone: (412) 221-9862		Team Event at Strabane Lodge 138 269 Latimer Ave. Strabane, PA 15363 Club: (724) 745-9860 Lanes: (724) 745-9775	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, Oct. 13, 9 a.m. <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, Oct. 13, Noon <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, Oct. 13, 3 p.m.		<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, Oct. 13, 12:30 p.m. <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, Oct. 13, 3:30 p.m.	

Doubles & Singles Entry fee \$32 per person Friday/Saturday Only	Lodge No.	Highest Average 2023-24	All-Events \$5 per person YES/NO
1.			
2.			
1.			
2.			

Submit bowlers' names by position in lineup		
Four Person Team Event Entry fee \$64 per team Sunday Only	Lodge No.	Highest Average 2023-24
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Team name _____
Team captain's name, phone number & e-mail address: _____

The entry fee for each event is \$16 per bowler, \$9.25 of which shall be used for prizes and \$6.75 for bowling. An extra \$5 is charged to all who desire to compete for handicap All-Events prizes. The Slovene National Benefit Society adds \$7 per member to each prize fund except All-Events.

Return form, along with fees of \$16 per person, per event, to:
Jason Cadez, Tournament Secretary
179 Alexander Ave., Strabane, PA 15363
e-mail: cadez138@gmail.com • Phone: (724) 299-1138
Make checks payable to SNPJ Lodge 138

ENTRY DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 20, 2024
The Home Office will verify all memberships. Complete tournament rules are available by contacting the SNPJ Fraternal Department, 247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126
Entries will be posted online at snpj.org



Heritage Center Weekend Balina
[From left] The team of **JOE FIUMARA** (277), **BRIAN SPIELER** (782), **MEGAN SPIELER** (782) and **AMY MAVRICH** (138) took honors in the 2024 SNPJ Heritage Center Weekend balina tournament held June 8 at the SNPJ Recreation Center Balinarena.



SNPJ Trailer Court Balina Tournament
In the SNPJ Trailer Court balina tournament, played June 22 at the SNPJ Recreation Center, the team of [from left] **CHUCK DAVIS** (6), **WENDY KINNEY** (106), **DAN BOSEK** (564) and **LISA BRAND** (6) captured the champions title for 2024.

St. Marys Lodge 581 hosts Aug. annual picnic

by MARCIA KLANCER BLEGGI
Lodge 581 Secretary/Treasurer

ST. MARYS, Pa. — It's difficult to imagine that we're already in August!

On Sunday, Aug. 25, SNPJ Lodge 581 and the North Central Pennsylvania Slovenian Polka Boosters will co-sponsor our annual picnic from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Kersey Firemen's Club in Kersey, Pa. Music will be performed by Frank Stanger from Doylestown, Ohio.

Admission to the picnic is \$15 for members, \$25 if you're not a member of the Polka Boosters. The price includes

the dance and a meal. Contact John and Pat Moore at (814) 558-1457 by Aug. 18 to register. Be sure to bring something for the Chinese auction!

Lodge 581 members will hold their next quarterly meeting on Sunday, Aug. 18, beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Kersey Firemen's Club. Following the meeting, The Polka Classics from Pittsburgh will perform for a dance that starts at 2.

For more information about Lodge 581 activities, contact Secretary/Treasurer Marcia Klancer Bleggi at (814) 335-4983.

SNPJ Recreation Center
2024 Fraternal Events
Schedule

Aug. 30-Sept. 1 National SNPJ Days

Uncle Sam wants your
money... and it's up to you whether
you pay now or pay later.

SNPJ offers **Roth IRAs** in addition to our regular IRAs and annuities to help build a safe financial future for you and your family. We've helped build secure futures for our members for over a century. Phone **1-800-843-7675** and we'll be happy to help you too.

2025 Miss SNPJ Titleholders

Miss SNPJ ERIN LAWRENCE (138)
Miss Activity ERIN LAWRENCE
Miss Talent ERIN LAWRENCE
Miss Fraternalism ERIN LAWRENCE



Miss SNPJ 2025 ERIN LAWRENCE (138)
with SNPJ National President/CEO Joseph C. Evanish



Miss Activity 2025 ERIN LAWRENCE
with SNPJ National Secretary/COO Karen A. Pintar



Miss Talent 2025 ERIN LAWRENCE
with SNPJ Finance Committee Chairman Rick Hervol



Miss Fraternalism 2025 ERIN LAWRENCE
with SNPJ Fraternal Director Courtney Koenig

The Society’s newest Miss SNPJ crowned during Slovenefest weekend

MISS SNPJ PAGEANT FROM PAGE 1

Alexis Trout from Lodge 6 in Sygan, Pa., penned a beautiful poem that moved many to tears. Emily Patosky from Lodge 106 in Imperial, Pa., played “Roadside Polka” on her button box. Erin Lawrence from Lodge 138 in Strabane showed off her bowling skills with an informative explanation of the various bowling oil patterns. There was such an impressive array of talents by these young ladies!

We’d like to thank the judges: Dr. Marissa Ulmer, performing arts teacher at Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School Choruses; Christina Marth, Chief Master Sergeant with the United States Air Force and a Pennsylvania State Trooper; and Betsy Shuttleworth, director of Dance Extensions PAC. The judges awarded points to each contestant in the categories of poise and appearance in an evening gown, personality and communication, talent, and extracurricular/community service.

The contestants were also awarded points for SNPJ activity by the Executive Committee upon review of Miss Activity forms submitted by the young ladies and through personal interviews. I would like to thank National President/CEO Joseph C. Evanish and National Secretary/COO Karen Pintar for their expertise in the activity division.

I would also like to thank the following for

their help to ensure that the pageant weekend was a success: SNPJ Recreation Center Director David Jones for providing snacks, lighting and the flowers for the contestants; Tim Cimperman of Cimperman & Co. Photography for capturing so many wonderful Miss SNPJ Pageant and Slovenefest memories; R.J. Likovic (158) for assisting with our audio needs; and Miss SNPJ 2020 Daniella Volpe for serving as a wonderful emcee.

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank some pretty astounding former Miss SNPJs who took time to assist with various needs during the weekend: Miss SNPJ 2006 Shannon (Fetcko) Muraco, Miss SNPJ 2013 Kristen (Cushman) Barnot, Miss SNPJ 2016 Julie (Rockwell) Moeslien, Miss SNPJ 2019 Liz Smrdel, and Miss SNPJ 2023 Madison Sinan. You ladies helped in so many ways, and I am truly grateful for the assistance from each and every one of you.

On Sunday, July 14, the pageant crowning ceremonies opened with Vince Rigler (449) performing the Slovenian and U.S. national anthems. We do our best to catch any former Miss SNPJs in attendance so they can be recognized, and this year 17 former Miss SNPJs were called to the stage by Miss SNPJ 2024 Morgan Sinan.

Morgan then had her moment to deliver her funny but tear-jerking farewell address

and wished the contestants good luck as we all awaited the announcements of the award winners. Morgan was, and will continue to be, a fantastic goodwill ambassador, representing our Society for years to come.

Following Morgan’s farewell address, National President Joseph Evanish addressed the crowd, recognizing Consul General of the Republic of Slovenia Alenka Jerak for her many contributions to the Slovenian culture here in the United States. Consul General Jerak was presented a crystal plaque from the SNPJ Home Office, along with a gift bag from the SNPJ Heritage Center. This was her final appearance as Consul General before returning to Slovenia. We all wish her health and happiness as she embarks on her new career.

As many of you are aware, the Miss Fraternalism title isn’t based on points awarded by the judges, but rather is based on votes from the contestants themselves. On the final day of the pageant weekend, each contestant selects which of her peers best exemplifies fraternalism and camaraderie. I had the honor of starting the announcements for the award winners by presenting the title of SNPJ Miss Fraternalism 2025 to Erin Lawrence (138).

SNPJ Region 2 Vice President Jason Cadez announced a tie for runners-up to SNPJ Miss Talent, Emily Patosky (106) and Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich (304). SNPJ Finance Commit-

tee Chairman Rick Hervol announced the title of SNPJ Miss Talent 2025, awarded to Erin Lawrence (138).

The runner-up to SNPJ Miss Activity, Alexis Trout (6), was announced by SNPJ Finance Committee member Tracey Anderson. SNPJ National Secretary/COO Karen Pintar announced Erin Lawrence (138) as SNPJ Miss Activity 2025.

SNPJ Region 4 Vice President Tina Rigler announced Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich (304) as the runner-up to Miss SNPJ. Then the moment we all were patiently awaiting had come: SNPJ National President/CEO Joseph Evanish rounded out the announcements by introducing Miss SNPJ 2025 Erin Lawrence (138).

We are extremely proud of all five contestants who entered this year’s Miss SNPJ Pageant. They should all be proud of the hard work they put in to get up on stage and present their personalities and talents to our Society. Congratulations to all of our contestants and the titleholders. We wish Erin all the best as she starts her reign; I’m sure it will be a very memorable year!

Finally, we extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the 66th Miss SNPJ Pageant. We appreciate your donations to the Miss SNPJ Pageant Booster Fund, as well as your attendance and support during the 2024 Miss SNPJ Pageant program. We couldn’t do it without you!



The 2024 Miss SNPJ Pageant contestants and members of the Pageant Committee:

[Standing, from left] Miss SNPJ 2020 **DANIELLA VOLPE** (158); **ANNA MACK** (138); Miss SNPJ 2024 **MORGAN SINAN** (782); Miss Fraternalism, Miss Talent, Miss Activity and Miss SNPJ 2025 **ERIN LAWRENCE** (138); **EMILY PATOSKY** (106); **ALEXIS TROUT** (6); and Miss SNPJ 2023 **MADISON SINAN** (782).

[Seated, from left] Miss SNPJ 2013 **KRISTEN CUSHMAN BARNOT** (138), Miss SNPJ 2006 **SHANNON FETCKO MURACO** (138), Miss SNPJ 2004 and SNPJ Fraternal Director **COURTNEY PABIAN KOENIG** (138), and Miss SNPJ 2019 **ELIZABETH SMRDEL** (158).

Missing from photo: 2024 pageant contestant Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich (304).



Miss SNPJ 2025

Miss SNPJ 2025 ERIN LAWRENCE is a member of SNPJ Lodge 138 in Strabane, Pa. She is the daughter of Robert and Jan Lawrence, and the granddaughter of Robert and Rose Lawrence.

Since graduating from Canon-McMillan High School in 2022, Erin now attends Robert Morris University in Moon Twp., Pa., where she is an upcoming junior studying criminal justice while completing a certificate in business. Her growing passion of bowling that began in her early years of Youth Circle 19 has continued onto the RMU Women’s Club Bowling team – on scholarship!

In her years at Canon-McMillan High School, Erin was involved with the S.A.D.D. (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Club, French Club, and Campus Life/Youth for

Christ. She was awarded leadership roles including CM Leads (freshman mentoring), National Honor Society, and Student Leader for Campus Life. Erin has served for the monthly Free Community Spaghetti Dinners at First United Methodist Church and has volunteered her time packing snack bags for military families of the Fisher House in Pittsburgh.

Growing up in the SNPJ community has provided Erin with years of activities. In her youth she participated in many holiday parties, Youth Roundup, the Lodge 138 Duck Races, the Canonsburg Fourth of July parade, the Youth Circle 19 bowling league, and SNPJ Family Twosome Tournaments. For most of her life she has attended the annual Slovenefest and National SNPJ Days celebrations. Erin grew to become an assistant to the Circle 19

directors when needed, and as soon as she was old enough she began attending Young Adult Conferences. She looks forward to attending Slovenefest, Young Adult Conferences and the Duck Races every year.

In her spare time, Erin has picked up several hobbies that have turned into passions. She had bowled with the Youth Circle for as long as she was able. Bowling is a family legacy that has been passed down for generations, and she has been very blessed to have her father teach and guide her toward the sport. She is grateful to have received a scholarship to bowl for RMU and hopes to continue the legacy.

Erin also loves to bake Slovenian recipes with her grandmother (her favorite recipes are for potica and štruklji) and to assist her grandfather when he makes klobase.