

As deadlines near, young adults should contact their Lodge secretary to participate in the 2026 conference

by COURTNEY VALENCIC
SNPJ Fraternal Director

IMPERIAL, Pa. — This year’s SNPJ Young Adult Conference (YAC) is scheduled the week-end of June 12-14 at the SNPJ Recreation Center.

The Young Adult Conference is a weekend-long program designed for 18- to 30-year-old SNPJ members to learn about membership benefits, and to voice their ideas, opinions and concerns regarding the Society. It is also an opportunity to participate in a volunteer project during the weekend.

YAC delegates are elected by their Lodges; those interested in attending the conference should contact their Lodge secretary. The Society will pay for delegate transportation, lodging and meals throughout the weekend. The 2026 conference will include a community service project, and a brief meeting is also scheduled. The chairperson for this year’s conference is Liz Smrdel (158).

Eligibility is based on birthdate. All Young

Adult Conference delegates and surrogate delegates must have reached their 18th birthday by June 12, 2026, and can be no older than 30 as of June 14, 2026. Delegates and surrogates must be active SNPJ members with a life insurance or annuity policy currently in force or paid-up with the SNPJ.

Regular delegates to the Young Adult Conference represent their own Lodge, and have a voice

**SEE YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE
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briefly

Home Office closed as we celebrate the New Year

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The SNPJ Home Office will be closed Thursday, Jan. 1, and Friday, Jan. 2, in celebration of the New Year. Regular office hours, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., will resume Monday, Jan. 5. We wish all SNPJ members and friends the very best in the new year!

Policy owners, register to access the SNPJ Portal

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The Home Office staff encourages all SNPJ members and agents to register for access to the online SNPJ Portal. The portal can be used by policy owners to review information about their SNPJ life insurance policies and annuities. Agents can use the portal to check on their existing business, pending policies and updates.

To register for the portal, you must access the SNPJ website, snpj.org, and click on any of the “SNPJ Portal” links. You must be a policy owner or an agent to register for the portal. Once enrolled for the SNPJ Portal, members can access policy information that Home Office staff cannot provide over the phone.

We hope you enjoy your SNPJ Portal experience!

Have you recommended a new member lately?

IMPERIAL, Pa. — Take advantage of SNPJ’s Recommender Program! Every valid referral earns the recommender \$10, plus an entry in the quarterly drawing for a chance to win \$100. Pay a visit to the SNPJ website, snpj.org, to complete an online Recommender form and get a head start on your reward.

THE DEADLINE

The next two *PROSVETA* issue dates are Feb. 2 and March 2. All material must be received by noon on Monday, Jan. 19, for the Feb. 2 issue, and by Monday, Feb. 16, for the March 2 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.



Daisy Bea Cvetas
Born Nov. 15, 2024
Glenshaw, Pa., Lodge 782

SNPJ Lodge 782 welcomes Daisy Bea Cvetas as the newest addition to the Lodge. Daisy is the daughter of Jared and Lily Cvetas (782), the granddaughter of Joe and Jennifer Cvetas (782), and great-granddaughter of the late Joe and Bea Cvetas. She also joins her big brother, Lucas, as a Lodge member. We welcome Daisy to the Society and extend our best wishes to her entire family.



• SNPJ 33rd National Convention • Election of Convention delegates and alternates

In accordance with the SNPJ Bylaws, the 33rd Regular SNPJ Convention will be held this year. The convention is scheduled for Monday, Aug. 17, 2026, at the SNPJ Recreation Center, Enon Valley, Pa.

The Society Bylaws require that delegates be elected in the months of March or April at a regular or special Lodge meeting. Detailed instructions are furnished to the Lodges.

Lodges with less than 75 adult members may unite to elect a delegate, but must unite no later than March 1, 2026. Additional information from the Society Bylaws follows. Lodges may apply to the Executive Committee for assistance.

Sec. 2. Number of Delegates and Alternates. Each Lodge having seventy-five (75) or more members in good standing as of December 31 of the year prior to the election of delegates to the convention of the National Legislative Body shall be entitled to one delegate; each Lodge having two hundred fifty (250) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to two delegates; each Lodge having four hundred fifty (450) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to three delegates; each Lodge having six hundred fifty (650) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to four delegates; each Lodge having eight hundred fifty (850) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to five delegates; each Lodge having one thousand fifty (1,050) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to six delegates; and each Lodge having one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) or more members in good standing shall be entitled to seven delegates; but no Lodge shall have more than seven delegates.

Two or more Lodges having less than seventy-five (75) members each, but whose combined membership shall be seventy-five (75) or more, may unite to elect a delegate, but no combination of Lodges shall be entitled to more than one delegate.

Lodges shall elect at least an equal number of alternates to their delegate or delegates. If the delegate(s) or alternates cannot attend, then the Lodge shall forfeit its rights to representation at the convention. Alternates shall be elected on a basis of order of succession. The first elected alternate is alternate to all delegates and will replace any one delegate who cannot attend the convention. If the first elected alternate becomes a delegate, the second alternate is next in line to succeed the next vacancy in the delegation. Subsequent vacancies shall be handled in the same manner. In balloting for alternates, the first alternate shall be the candidate to receive a majority and a greater number over the majority of votes cast. Each succeeding alternate shall be elected in a similar manner.

Sec. 3. Nomination and Election of Delegates and Alternates. Nomination and election of delegates and alternates to the regular convention of the National Legislative Body shall be held at a regular or special meeting of the Lodges to take place no earlier than the first day of the month five (5) months prior to the month of the convention and ending no later than the last day of the month four (4) months prior to the convention.

Nomination and election of delegates and alternates to a special convention of the National Legislative Body shall be held during a period fixed by the Executive Committee.

Any member who is qualified may be nominated for delegate and/or alternate whether present at the meeting or not, provided valid reason is presented for the absence. Election of delegates and alternates shall be by ballot. The ballot shall contain the names of all those who accepted the nomination and who possess the requisite qualifications for delegates. The president of the Lodge shall appoint three (3) members as tellers for the election, none of whom are candidates for either delegates or alternates. Each delegate and alternate must receive a majority of votes cast to be elected. If no candidate has received a majority of votes cast, the candidate with the least number of votes shall be removed from the ballot until such time as someone receives a majority of votes cast. After a delegate (or alternate) has been elected, voting shall continue, with all previous candidates (including the person or persons who have been removed from the ballot) being eligible for election. This procedure shall continue until all positions have been filled. All delegates and alternates of a Lodge shall be nominated and elected at the same meeting.

**SEE DELEGATE ELECTIONS
ON PAGE 5**

At Lodge 603, the focus is on Fla. SNPJ Days to open the year

by JEANNETTE HUMPHREY
Lodge 603

SAMSULA, Fla. — Plans are underway for Florida SNPJ Days, scheduled Feb. 20-21 at the Lodge 603 Hall in Samsula. This two-day event will serve as the kickoff of our Lodge’s 100th birthday.

Plan to join us on Friday, Feb. 20, from 4 to 8 p.m. when admission is 100 cents (or \$1). Christopher Razpotnick will lead the jam sessions that evening. Christopher reports that Vince Rigler plans to join in the entertainment – be sure to bring your instrument and join in the fun.

On Saturday, Feb. 21, we welcome the Frank and Linda Moravcik Band from Cleveland. The Lodge 603 Hall will open at noon and music is scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m.; jam sessions are also planned. Admission on Saturday is \$15 per person.

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PERIODICAL MATERIAL

Happy New Year 2026



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Have something for Up-and-Coming?

Lodge/Organization _____

Type of Event _____

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Important deadlines for the 2026 SNPJ Young Adult Conference

YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE

FROM PAGE 1

and a vote during the conference. Surrogate delegates will become regular delegates if another Lodge approves them to be their regular delegate, thus gaining voting rights.

All delegates, both regular and surrogates, will receive room and board. SNPJ will pay 100 percent of travel costs (including airfare) for regular delegates, including surrogate delegates who become regular delegates of another Lodge.

The surrogate must receive approval from the other Lodge to serve as their regular delegate. Surrogates who do not have the approval of another Lodge should be prepared to

pay half of their airfare when making their flight arrangements with Travel Search, the Society's designated travel agency. SNPJ will not pay for rental vehicles.

If traveling by automobile, you will be reimbursed for mileage not to exceed 1,000 miles round trip. Regular delegates, including surrogate delegates who become regular delegates of another Lodge, will be reimbursed 100 percent of their mileage.

Surrogates who do not have the approval of another Lodge will be reimbursed half of their mileage unless they bring another surrogate and/or regular delegate with them in the vehicle.

Lodge secretaries received the Young Adult Conference Delegate Election Forms in a recent mailing. There are some important deadline dates that Lodge secretaries and any members interested in attending this conference should be aware of.

Lodges must turn in their Young Adult Conference Delegate Election Forms by April 30. Any eligible member interested in attending the Young Adult Conference must contact their Lodge secretary to ensure that their name is included on the election form. Be sure to provide your e-mail address to your Lodge secretary; correspondence about the conference will be handled electronically as much as possible.

Once the election forms are received at the SNPJ Home Office, all delegates will receive an introductory packet via e-mail. This packet will include a general information sheet, a tentative agenda for the weekend, and a Young Adult Delegate Registration Form.

The registration form must be completed by the delegate and returned to the SNPJ Home Office no later than May 15. Return of the registration form completes the YAC registration process.

All delegates must turn in a Young Adult Delegate Registration Form by the deadline date; otherwise, they may be replaced by an alternate or surrogate delegate.

New officers elected in Dec. to serve Sygan Lodge 6 in 2026

by KAREN A. PINTAR
Lodge 6 President

SYGAN, Pa. — At the annual meeting of SNPJ Lodge 6 held Dec. 8, we honored two of our 50-year members, Beverly Baselj and Ken Pintar. We thank them for their many years of membership and for continuing to be active and involved in our Lodge.

During this meeting, the majority of Lodge officers decided not to run for re-election in 2026. The following members were elected as Lodge officers and will take office on Jan.

12 after the installation of officers: President Bryn Snow; Vice President Ronna Pelino; Secretary/Treasurer Ed Pelino; Recording Secretary Garrett Biondi; auditors Ray Rozycki, Mike Giammatteo and Mike Biondi; and Circle Director Ross Snow.

Much thanks to the outgoing officers for all of your hard work and dedication: Karen Pintar, Vincent "Babe" Baselj, John Baselj, Greg Curl, Joni Curl, Bob Wasky and Christine Wasky Trout.

All Lodge members are encouraged to attend the Jan. 12 meeting.



Two 50-year members of SNPJ Lodge 6, **BEVERLY BASELJ** and **KEN PINTAR**, received their awards at the December Lodge meeting. The awards were presented by President **KAREN PINTAR** and Secretary **JOHN BASELJ**.

Lodge 603 preparing for Florida SNPJ Days as the new year begins

FLORIDA SNPJ DAYS

FROM PAGE 1

Slovenian and American foods will be available from the kitchen both days. Apple strudel is sure to be on the menu, along with klobase and sauerkraut, and a variety of other foods and desserts. The bar will also be open, serving your favorite libations.

A brief program is scheduled starting at 1 p.m. on Saturday. SNPJ National Secretary Karen Pintar will be in attendance, delivering a message or two from the Home Office in Imperial, Pa.

Congratulations to Jack Pleterski of Samsula who was enrolled in SNPJ at just 27 hours old. Jack has a certificate showing when he joined the Society. He was congratulated for his 70th year as an adult member.

Jack was a member of Youth Circle 57 when it established in 1949, and served as Lodge and hall treasurer for a number of years. His grandfather, John Pleterski Sr., was the first president of our Lodge when it was chartered Dec. 1, 1926. He served 16 years as Lodge 603 president.

Mary Shaw is turning 80 years old, and a birthday party is planned Satur-

day, Jan. 10, at our Lodge hall from 4 to 8 p.m. Come out and help Mary celebrate this milestone.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, Kimberly Schmidt will host the first Lodge 603 "Fight Night" which will be shown on several televisions that were recently installed in the Lodge hall. She plans to open the hall at 5 p.m. Food will be available from the kitchen, along with your favorite libations from the cash bar. This event is open to the public.

We are pleased to report a well-attended performance of the Billy Gilmore Bluegrass Band from Gainesville, Fla., at our Lodge hall. Ruth and Ashley Benedict served sandwiches from the kitchen for this event, while Connie Massey and Paulette Harper volunteered to operate the bar.

The Samsula Woman's Club hosted another successful Christmas Craft Show on Dec. 6. The club raises money for college and continuing education scholarships, for community needs, and for our Lodge. Club president Cheri Smith invites members and prospective new members to attend the Jan. 14 meeting at the Lodge 603 Hall starting at 6 p.m.

Until next time, happy New Year!



KATHY and **BILL KRZISNIK** work on the holiday greeting cards sent to SNPJ Lodge 518 senior members in November.

Lodge 518 closes 2025 designing greeting cards, celebrating the holidays

by BILL KRZISNIK
Lodge 518 Secretary/Treasurer

MELVINDALE, Mich. — For the fourth year, SNPJ Lodge 518 spread holiday cheer by sending approximately 40 holiday greeting cards to members age 80 and older in November.

We continue to receive positive feedback from members on the cards. Several members wrote back, thanking us for sending the cards and including some past SNPJ stories.

Lodge members enjoy reaching out to others with Slovenian greetings – merry Christmas (*vesel Božič*) and happy New Year (*srečno Novo Leto*) – and holiday designs.

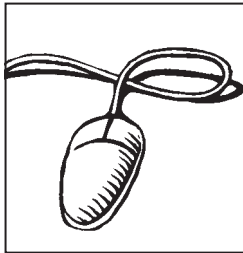
Many thanks to the SNPJ Home Office for updating the membership list so we are able to keep in touch with our senior Lodge members.

Lodge 518 held their final meeting of 2025 on Nov. 16, followed by a holiday-themed dinner at Carrabba's Italian Grill in Southgate, Mich.

During the meeting we elected officers for 2026, selected dates for our quarterly meetings in 2026, and discussed 2026 activities with lead members. In addition to enjoying good fellowship, members were presented with Christmas tree gifts from Mary Beth Krzisnik and exceptional homemade potica from Lodge President Irene Kovac.



To close out the year, SNPJ Lodge 518 members enjoyed a holiday dinner at Carrabba's Italian Grill.



information at your fingertips

Looking for information on your SNPJ life insurance and annuity policies? Visit snpj.org, click the "SNPJ Portal" link, then follow the step-by-step instructions.

Christmas party wraps up the year for Loyalties Lodge 158

by DANIELLA VOLPE
Lodge 158 Treasurer

EUCLID, Ohio — It's 2026? Already?! 2025 really flew by, but it was filled with lots of good times, laughter, and hopefully some memories that will last a lifetime.

A more recent memory for us is our annual Loyalties Lodge Christmas party. The kids had a blast playing games, learning about all types of critters – whether scaly, furry, or even slimy – from Jungle Terry, and of course seeing the Big Man in Red!

We want to thank everyone for attending, and we hope to see even more next year. A huge thank you to everyone involved in the planning, the preparation, and for making the day move smoothly. We are very dedicated to reinvigorating

the youth activities in the Cleveland area.

As always, we send our thoughts and prayers to our ill and deceased members and their families during these difficult times.

We especially extend our deepest sympathies to the Likovic family after the loss of their daughter, Kelsey. She could often be seen hanging out at the SNPJ Recreation Center in Enon Valley, Pa., with her mother and sister, Sammi, or standing side-stage watching her dad and brothers play polkas. She will be truly missed, and her absence will be palpable. Rest in peace, Kelsey.

Want to stay up to date with all things Lodge 158? Be sure to follow both our Facebook and Instagram to keep informed on all things Loyalties.



Always a hit with the kids, **Jungle Terry** never disappoints when introducing his animal friends at the Loyalties Lodge 158 Christmas party.

We've Got You
COVERED



by DAVID GOMBKOTO
SNPJ Sales Director

Page One: The Start of a New Chapter

There is something special about January that no other month can replicate. It feels like opening a brand new book – a book with crisp pages, untouched chapters, and endless possibility. No matter what happened last year, the moment you turn the calendar to January 1 you're offered something rare: a blank page. But unlike the big, loud New Year's resolutions we're all used to hearing about, the first page of a new chapter isn't about grand declarations or temporary promises. It's about intention. It's about choosing what's next in the storybook of your life.

1. Every Great Story Begins with a Strong Foundation

Think about your favorite books; the stories that stay with you. For me, one is "The Traveler's Gift" by Andy Andrews. The book is part story, part life-philosophy, and the lessons are meant to help readers reshape their mindset about responsibility, adversity and purpose. It taught me that even at your lowest, you are one decision away from a better future. These small decisions can even shape a better future for those you care about, not just yourself.

A great book or story doesn't begin with chaos or worry, they begin with a foundation that sets the stage for everything that follows. Your financial life works the same way. Before you can chase new goals, start new projects or take on new adventures, there must be stability underneath you.

Life insurance and annuities – two pillars of SNPJ product offerings – provide this foundation. They ensure that the story continues even if life throws an unexpected plot twist. They protect the characters who depend on you. And they bring peace to the narrative long before any conflict arises.

2. A New Chapter Isn't Just About You, It's About Those You Love

Every compelling story has supporting characters – the people we care about, laugh with, support, and sacrifice for. In your life's story, these people may be your spouse, children, grandchildren or aging parents. They're the ones whose futures are intertwined with yours. As you begin a new chapter this January, consider this: How can I make sure my story strengthens theirs?

When you take steps to secure your life insurance coverage or place money into a stable annuity, you're not only protecting your own financial narrative, you're shaping the future chapters your loved ones will one day experience. It's a subtle act of love that echoes long beyond today.

3. Turning the Page Means Learning from the Chapter Before

Any great story builds from the chapter that came before it. Whether last year brought challenges, triumphs or unexpected changes, each moment contained lessons worth carrying forward. This January, pause for a moment and reflect:

• What did last year teach you about financial preparedness?

• Did you experience moments that reminded you how important stability truly is?

• Are there areas of your financial life that still feel like an unfinished storyline?

• Do you have old policies or outdated plans that need a new direction?

January is an ideal time to review your coverage, revisit your beneficiary choices, examine your retirement timetable, and make sure your plans align with your current goals, not goals from years ago. Your story evolves; your protection should evolve with it.
4. Every Page You Write This Year Will Be Built on January's Choices

January feels symbolic because it is symbolic. It's the month when small decisions create long-term change. The first chapter sets the tone for everything that follows. A quiet conversation with an SNPJ agent today might lead to decades of protection. A minor adjustment to a policy today may save your family from confusion down the road. A small deposit into an annuity today could become income you depend on in retirement. When you look back years from now, you might find that January was the month when the direction of your story shifted in a meaningful way.
5. Write Your Next Chapter with Purpose

As you look at the blank pages ahead of you this year, remember: Your story matters. Your family's future matters. And the choices you make today will shape the legacy you leave tomorrow. At SNPJ, our mission is not only to provide financial security, it's to stand beside you as you write every chapter of your story. We're here to help you protect your family, preserve your values, and plan confidently for the future.

So as you begin this new year, take a moment to think beyond a resolution. Instead, think about authorship. Think about intention. Think about the story you want your life to tell – and the foundation that story deserves. Because page one is here. The pen is in your hand. And the best chapters are still ahead.
-
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Funding in place for national digital mapping

LJUBLJANA (STA) — Slovenia has secured EUR 5.3 million (\$6.18 million) in EU funding for a EUR 9.4 million (\$10.96 million) project to create a detailed, interactive, digital model of the entire country. The “digital twin” is meant to improve spatial planning, resource management and disaster response nationwide.

The project will be carried out by Slovenia's Surveying and Mapping Authority. The mapping process will utilize a range of modern technologies – including laser scanning, aerial photography, artificial intelligence and machine learning – to build the comprehensive virtual model. The central aim is to establish a dynamic virtual replica of Slovenia's physical environment. This will allow for real-time monitoring of events, detailed analysis, and the simulation of potential changes to the landscape, providing a powerful tool for forecasting.

Authorities expect the system to lead to better and faster decision-making across several key areas. Most notably, the ability to run simulations is expected to significantly enhance Slovenia's capacity to respond effectively to natural disasters and other crises.

The project is a key component of the Digital Slovenia 2030 strategy, which identifies the digital twin as a central measure for accelerating digital innovation and improving the efficiency of public services. Government officials believe the project will be a foundational step in the country's digital transformation, providing a modern, data-driven basis for managing and responding to future challenges.

public sector wage reform improved the situation of employees, and he added that new legislation will also bring a gradual increase in funding for higher education. “By transforming into a public university, the University of Nova Gorica will be able to obtain funds for future development, investment in infrastructure, and research equipment purchases,” Papič explained.

The university has reached a point where it is no longer just about developing academic programs. They will also have to tackle student housing, an area in which the university has faced some restrictions because it was not public.

The next step in the process will be drafting documents to give Papič the power to sign an agreement on the transfer of founding rights from both founders. Once that process is complete, the procedure will have to be approved by the National Assembly, which Papič said could happen early in 2026.

University Rector Golob said the letter of intent was an important starting point for a conversation on the future development of the university and its potential transition to a public university. In the three decades of its existence, the university has grown from one faculty into a university with six faculties. It currently has between 600 and 700 students, of whom more than half are foreign students.

Visitors can now tour Maribor on a mini-train

MARIBOR (STA) — Maribor, Slovenia's second-largest city, launched a mini-electric train in mid-November, offering tours with stops at the city's landmarks and interesting information about the city and its history. Four train rides a day will be offered during the winter, tickets for which will also include a fare for city buses.

The little red train with two passenger cars will carry up to 50 people, including persons with disabilities, for a 12-kilometer (7.5-mile) ride with three stops at the city's main sites: the Franciscan Church, the oldest vine at Lent, and at the Three Ponds. Six additional stops are possible at passengers' requests.

During the 75-minute ride, passengers can read interesting facts about the city and its history in eight languages on multimedia screens mounted inside the cars. “After the ride, the train ticket can be used for another 75-minute ride on city buses, so visitors can explore the city on their own a bit too,” said Ranko Šmigoc, director of Marprom, the company in charge of Maribor public transportation.

The mini-train first started running through the streets of Maribor in October, initially transporting only groups of children from Maribor kindergartens. “I'm happy that 1,500 kindergarten children have already experienced this ride, and the other half will in the future. We will continue with this [ride] probably every year, when there are fewer tourists in town, so that young generations, too, will get to experience the town with our train,” Maribor Mayor Saša Arsenovič said.

Jure Struc, the director of the Maribor Tourism Institute, added that the timing of the quiet and environmentally-friendly train was perfect since Maribor carried the title of Green Capital of Europe in 2025. “Some 70 percent of tourists arrive to Maribor by car and then continue on foot. The train will allow them to rest and get tips about what's worth seeing in Maribor.”

According to Mayor Arsenovič, in the future the train – which is yet to be named with the help of residents – is planned to take passengers to the city's outskirts to support local winemakers.

Maribor had previously run a mini-train, but since it was privately owned it was barred from running through the city center. A private boat also transported passengers on the Drava River running through the city, but now the city is hoping to set up public transportation on the river, Mayor Arsenovič said.

Private university works to secure public status

VIPAVA (STA) — In mid-November, the University of Nova Gorica took the first step toward changing its status from a private to a public university as representatives of the government, the university and its founders signed a letter of intent for the transformation.

The letter of intent was signed by Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister Igor Papič; University of Nova Gorica Rector Boštjan Golob; and representatives of the university's founders, Jožef Stefan Institute (JSI) director Leon Cizelj and Nova Gorica Mayor Samo Turel.

Minister Papič said that the consolidation of higher education was happening now because of better conditions for universities. According to Papič, a

lesser-known areas across the country. Statisticians say this trend could help disperse tourist traffic more evenly and point toward a more balanced development of tourism.

According to the Statistics Office, Slovenia welcomed five million foreign visitors in 2024, accounting for 73 percent of overnight stays. However, the most significant growth has been registered outside traditional tourism hotspots as visitors explore diverse experiences that range from local cuisine and cultural heritage to outdoor activities.

In the mountainous Gorenjska region, for example, the main attractions are now serving as gateways to the wider area. Smaller municipalities like Žirovnica and Jezersko have seen remarkable increases in foreign tourist stays compared to 2019 pre-pandemic levels as visitors seek out pristine alpine valleys and tranquil mountain retreats.

The same pattern is emerging in other popular regions. While the Postojna Cave remains a major draw, tourists are now exploring deeper into the Primorska-Notranjska region, with destinations like Pivka and Cerklja seeing a noticeable uptick in visitors. Similarly, the Karst hinterland behind the bustling coast is capturing new interest.

This trend extends across the country. In the east, the regions known for thermal spas are seeing diversification. The small municipality of Rečica ob Savinji has become one of the top destinations in the Savinja region in terms of the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists.

Further south, the tranquil Bela Krajina region, known for its gentle rivers and rich folklore, has seen a healthy rise in both domestic and foreign tourists exploring Črnomelj, Metlika and Semič, the region's main towns.

Contract offers new life to the Kanin ski resort

BOVEC (STA) — The Kanin ski resort, Slovenia's sole high-mountain ski resort, has been closed for two years, but a step was made toward its revival in mid-November when a contract was signed for the drafting of project documents.

The project documents are required to obtain a building permit, which in turn is a prerequisite for state funding. In June, the government said that it was willing to invest up to EUR 30 million (\$34.8 million) in a new cable car to the resort. The offer is conditional on the municipality obtaining a building permit within a year and transferring it to the state. The total value of the project is estimated at EUR 100 million (\$115.8 million), but talks with private investors could only begin once the contract had been signed.

In addition to the cable car, the project documents will include plans for a new chairlift, the renovation of all four stations, a conceptual design of a parking garage at one of the stations, as well as a service road to the uppermost station.

Bovec Mayor Valter Mlekuž expressed his satisfaction with the contract signing, saying that “this time they were on the right track” to acquiring state co-funding. “I believe we will be able to ski on Kanin soon,” he said.

Ptuj the Best Destination of Cultural Heritage 2026

PTUJ (STA) — Widely recognized as Slovenia's oldest city with a history dating back to the late Stone Age, Ptuj was officially named the Best European Destination of Cultural Heritage for 2026.

The prestigious award, announced in mid-October, came from European Best Destinations, a leading platform for promoting culture and tourism. The organizers highlighted the town's authentic medieval center, its fusion of culture with nature and gastronomy, and its appeal as an uncrowded destination.

The winner is selected based on votes from travelers worldwide, following a pre-selection by a panel of tourism experts and journalists.

The municipality said that voters recognized Ptuj, located in northeast Slovenia, as a town where heritage is not just preserved but is a living part of daily life, experienced through its festivals, cultural events, wine traditions and hospitality. Municipal leaders emphasized that Ptuj “is not an ‘open-air museum,’ but rather a living organism where culture, nature and gastronomy create a complete and authentic experience.”

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

Sygan Lodge 6, SASC celebrate a year marked with community, service, spirit

by BRYN SNOW
Lodge 6

SYGAN, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 6 and the Sygan American Slovene Club (SASC) closed out 2025 with full hearts and a deep sense of gratitude after a year defined by service, teamwork and community pride. From summertime celebrations to fall donation drives, the Lodge embraced its mission of supporting neighbors and strengthening local connections.

The warm months kicked off with plenty of excitement as members joined the fun at South Fayette Township Community Days, sharing in the energy and fellowship that make the event a local favorite. All summer long, the SASC proudly sponsored an adult softball team, the spirited and ever-entertaining “Fighting Slovenians.” The players’ enthusiasm on the field reflected the camaraderie at the heart of the SNPJ.

As autumn arrived, generosity took center stage. Thanks to the kindness of members in the clubroom and the participants at our public bingo events, nearly 500 items were donated to the Bridgeville Area Food Bank, helping families in need across the region.

The Lodge 6 commitment to giving continued into the holiday season as we partnered with the Parkway West Welding and Fabrication Student Chapter for a Jacob’s Heart Toy Drive, ensuring local children experienced the joy of the season.

As 2026 begins, Lodge 6 extends a heartfelt happy New Year to our community and to friends across SNPJ. We look forward to building on last year’s momentum and continuing our efforts throughout 2026. Together, we’ll keep making a difference – one event, one act of service, and one joyful moment at a time.



“Wild Thing,” the mascot for the Washington (Pa.) Wild Things baseball team, rolls a strike at the SNPJ Lodge 6 booth during South Fayette Township Community Days.

Lodge 8 sets meeting, activity schedules for 2026

by TINA RIGLER
Lodge 8 Secretary/Treasurer

CHICAGO — SNPJ Lodge 8 members held a Friendsgiving lunch and their annual meeting on Nov. 16. All officers were in attendance, along with 15 members and two guests.

Secretary Tina Rigler read all communications received from the Home Office, which included the annual report forms to be submitted, and gave a financial report. An annual audit will be scheduled prior to the next meeting.

As a notice to all Lodge members, Lodge 8 will be meeting four times in 2026. The meetings will start at 1 p.m. on the following dates: March 15 (with a Puttshack event in Oakbrook, Ill., following the meeting), July 19, Sept. 20 and Nov. 15. The events schedule will be determined at a later date.

A special 50-year member presentation also took place. President Justin Rigler presented a 50-year certificate and SNPJ pin to Edward Dabrowski. Congratulations! Edward is the current Lodge recording secretary and serves as president of the Chicago District Federation.

Election of officers was held with the following officers elected: President Justin Rigler, Vice President

Meredith Maresh, Recording Secretary Edward Dabrowski, Secretary/Treasurer Tina Rigler, Sergeant-at-Arms Lanie Maresh, and auditors Jan Maresh, Carmella Smidl and Alenka Rus. Kevin Kovack conducted the swearing-in of Lodge officers.

Lodge representatives to the Chicago District Federation include delegates Vince Rigler, Tina Rigler, Justin Rigler and Carmella Smidl, and alternates Edward Dabrowski, Meredith Maresh, Lanie Maresh and Alenka Rus.

Lodge members decided to hold their four activities for 2026 on the same dates as the regularly scheduled meetings if possible. Our first activity is planned March 15 at Puttshack in Oakbrook, Ill.; the July activity will be an outdoor picnic and pool party; in September we will arrange a volunteer service project and card bingo; and in November we’ll hold a Friendsgiving luncheon.

Tina Rigler reported on the Chicago District Federation meeting held Oct. 18 and the plans to hold a Christmas luncheon at a local restaurant on Dec. 6. All Lodge members and friends were invited.

Tina also reported that she attended the September SNPJ National Board meeting. Following the meeting, she and



[Above] During the November Lodge 8 meeting, President **JUSTIN RIGLER** presented **EDWARD DABROWSKI** with his 50-year certificate and SNPJ pin.

[Below] At the conclusion of their meeting, Lodge 8 members enjoyed a Friendsgiving meal.



several other Board members attended a reception marking the visit of President of the Republic of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar to Cleveland.

Edward Kovack and Jan Maresh won the meeting awards.

After the meeting, members enjoyed a delicious Friendsgiving dinner. Members brought side dishes which included cheesy potatoes, a green bean casserole, sweet potatoes, olives, cranberries, and pizza;

the Lodge paid for the main entrées, Italian beef and sausage. There were also plenty of beverages, and desserts of potica, pumpkin pie, cream cheese pumpkin pie and kolaczki.

I wish all members a happy and healthy 2026, and look forward to seeing our members at our next meeting which will be held Sunday, March 15, starting at 1 p.m. with golfing to follow. Please call Tina Rigler at (708) 257-8312 regarding the location of the golf outing.

SNPJ Membership Anniversaries January 2026

80-Year Members

Lodge	Member
562	Florence Delbridge
786	Rose Taylor

70-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
5	Richard T. Tomsic	723	Frances H. Zampedri
643	Frank J. Macek	749	Mary A. Knipple
721	James T. Batchen		

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
8	Joseph Savor	562	Mary DaRe-Dyer
34	Josephine K. Dwyer	562	Shirley M. Reynolds
41	Frank M. Soltys	576	Mary A. Hunker
138	Martha J. Luketich	584	William R. Smith
138	Donna L. Olian	604	Linda M. Zelenskaskas
142	Patricia Zdrojewski	715	Dennis M. Kumer
174	Matthew E. Utnik	A01	Donna M. Chakravarty
265	Leonard A. Slugo		

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
5	Margaret M. Gravier	216	Sue A. Hoffman
5	Merle L. Weitzel	223	David S. Marven
5	Susan Martin	225	Cynthia D. Grinolds
6	Barbara J. Grady	225	Karen J. Heronemus
6	Kenneth L. Cramer	225	Ronald E. Snell
6	Kenneth A. Flisek	225	Jerry R. Wilson
6	Raymond J. Weikel	225	Edith L. Giordano
41	Cynthia Shuster	225	Mary B. Couch
87	Judith A. Napper	277	Robert J. Stoklosa
89	Michael G. Bokulich	559	William F. Culkar
89	Janet M. Forney	584	Anna Zeller
138	David B. Terpin	584	Mary E. Gerovac
138	Ronald D. Cianelli	584	John D. Blaguski
138	Catherine Leader	584	Pamela Joffe
142	Breck T. Platner	723	Michael C. Benedict
142	Scott K. Prileson	729	Lori O. Drzenovich
158	Denis A. Lust	749	Guy K. Magagnotti
158	Ronald A. Frank	776	Catherine A. Kalenits
174	David J. Horvath	A02	David H. Yockel

Lodge 559 toy drive helped ensure happy holidays

by MELANIE MATIASEK
Lodge 559 Secretary/Treasurer

CHICAGO — Happy New Year! I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season. Winter is upon us here in the Chicago area.

Lodge 559 held our annual meeting and a toy drive in November. We donate toys annually, this year to the LaGrange American Legion Post.

Our officers were re-elected to their positions: President/Recording Secretary Kaitlyn Chiappetta, Vice President Jennifer Matiassek, Secretary/Treasurer Melanie Matiassek, Sergeant-at-Arms/Auditor Geri Matiassek, and Auditor Mike Vidmar.

Since almost all of our birthdays fell between our November meeting and our upcoming meeting, we all celebrated our birthdays as well as the Thanksgiving holiday.

In December, Lodge members attended the Chicago Federation Christmas party. This year the group held a luncheon for members and guests at the Honey Jam Café. It was a fun change up to our usual Christmas celebrations, and we enjoyed celebrating with members from all the Chicago-area Lodges. SNPJ Region 4 Vice President Tina Rigler gave all attendees Christmas gift bags; thank you, Tina!

As for 2026, our meetings



Lodge 559 members conducted their annual toy drive during the November meeting, delivering their donations to the American Legion Post in LaGrange, Ill.

will be held on the following Fridays starting at noon at McCook Family Restaurant: March 13, May 8, Sept. 11 and Nov. 13. If you plan to attend, please let our secretary know so that a reservation can be made.

We hope everyone keeps

warm and has a great start to the year. We’ll see you at our next meeting on March 13 when we will be holding a food drive for our local community pantry at St. Cletus Church. All non-perishable items are welcome.

Chicago Federation celebrates the holiday season

by TINA RIGLER (8)
Federation Secretary/Treasurer

CHICAGO — Members of SNPJ Lodges 8 and 559 of the Chicago District Federation gathered Dec. 6 for a Christmas luncheon at the Honey Jam Café in Countryside, Ill. Everyone dressed in Christmas attire and enjoyed their choice of breakfast or lunch. It was nice to get together and socialize.

As SNPJ Region 4 Vice President, I handed out a goody bag to all in attendance. Though the weather was very cold, we all had a great day.

The next Federation meeting is scheduled Saturday, March 21. This will be the annual meeting for the Federation; events for 2026 will be discussed.

Here’s wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year!

A festive holiday season for Lodge 786 members

by TERESA KOCI
Lodge 786 Secretary/Treasurer

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — Bells jingled from the rooftop of the Laguna Hills Village Clubhouse as Santa arrived, carrying his highly anticipated packages. He was welcomed by more than 50 attendees at the Orange Coast Lodge 786 holiday party, potluck and meeting.

Guests joined us from every corner of Southern California. It was wonderful to see Shirley Alteri from Santa Monica after such a long time, as well as visitors from San Diego, Jack Levic from North Hollywood, and many friends from our neighboring Lodge 723 in Fontana.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Frank Rote and Eric and Phyllis Wood for making the trip into Orange County and sharing their talents, which truly enhanced the celebration. The entire Joe Udovch family was present as well. Joe’s daughter Cathy is our newly elected sergeant-at-arms, and Christi has graciously volunteered to serve as one of our financial auditors.

Of course, we were delighted to welcome our very own Miss SNPJ, Ellen Koci, accompanied by her dear friend

Michelle Von Merta-Sustarich from SNPJ Lodge 304 in San Francisco. They, along with many others, helped decorate the clubhouse in festive colors.

Thank you as well to everyone who helped set up and stayed afterward to clean up. As we Slovenians like to say, many hands make light work – and we always leave a place better than we found it.

The gathering felt like one big family reunion, with familiar faces we hadn’t seen in a while and new ones we hope will return again. The afternoon began with those wonderful old Slovenian tunes performed by Frank Rote on his Mervar accordion and our local radio polka king, Skip Sampson, on bass, creating a warm and nostalgic atmosphere.

President Fred Mlakar brought the meeting to order, and the officers efficiently worked through the agenda. Meeting highlights include:

- California SNPJ Day is scheduled Saturday, April 11, at the Phoenix Club in Brea. Fred, Frank and friends will once again provide music for dancing or listening while guests enjoy the Phoenix Club’s delicious food.
- Fred presented a summary of his experience representing



Santa (**JOHN GOVEDNIK**) is surrounded by **EVANDER LAWSON, ISAIAH LAWSON, ANNIKA LAWSON**, and guests **Dakota** and **Wesley Burns**.



Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI, CATHY UDOVCH** and **MICHELLE VON MERTA-SUSTARICH** (304) help with the holiday party set up and decorations.

SNPJ at “Taste of Slovenia” hosted by Chef Alma Rekić, a Michelin chef from Slovenia, at Metro Café in El Segundo, emceed by former Consul General of Slovenia Jurček Žmauc.

- The next Lodge meeting will be held at Fred’s home in Irvine on Sunday, Jan. 25, starting at noon and featuring a potluck (the main dish and beverages will be provided).
- All three Lodge auditors – Don Milek, Christi Udovch and Ellen Koci – are needed for the annual audit of the financials at the January meeting. Thank you to Don for guiding our newly elected auditors.
- The primary purpose of the January meeting is to plan our 2026 events.
- Elections were completed during the meeting. We extend our sincere thanks to John Govednik for his years of dedicated service as Lodge vice president. Due to increased responsibilities at home, John stepped down, and Mike Bajc accepted the nomination to fill the role.
- We thank Christi Gott-dank and Ellen Koci for accepting their nominations as auditors. In addition, we certainly appreciate Cathy Udovch stepping up to take the sergeant-at-arms position.
- Officers elected to serve another year: President Fred Mlakar, Secretary Teresa Koci, Recording Secretary Marie Bajc, Circle Director Krista Lawson, and auditor Don Milek.

When the meeting adjourned, Fred summoned Santa with a few classic Christmas jingles. Suddenly, the children’s eyes grew wide as Santa burst into the hall from his long

journey from the North Pole. Thank you, John Govednik, for your enthusiasm and dedication in bringing Santa to life each year. It’s always amazing (and maybe a little surprising!) how much Santa knows about each child.

A special thanks also goes to Santa’s helper and Circle Director Krista Lawson who knew exactly what each child would want from Santa. Krista also organized an art and craft activity for the youth during the Lodge meeting.

The celebration continued with Raddell’s sausage from Cleveland, sauerkraut, and an abundance of delicious appetizers and side dishes brought by members and guests in attendance. We hope everyone got a taste of the potica, along with many other sweet treats from the dessert table.

The day lingered with lively conversations, holiday cheer, and those beloved old Slovenian tunes from Fred, Frank and Skip, followed by the long, warm Slovenian goodbyes we all know so well.

And finally, we are thrilled to share that our amazing members and guests donated a few hundred pounds of food! St. Timothy’s Catholic Church Pantry was absolutely delighted by the delivery Ken Koci made. Thank you to all who donated to the cause!

Save the date: Sunday, Jan. 25, for the potluck, meeting and social at Fred’s home starting at noon. We look forward to seeing everyone there as we begin planning for another wonderful year. For more information, contact Teresa Koci by e-mail to teresamkoci@gmail.com or by phone at (949) 246-1983.



Orange Coast Lodge 786 officers for 2026: [from left] Vice President **MIKE BAJC**, President **FRED MLAKAR**, Auditor **CHRISTI UDOVCH** (rear), Recording Secretary **MARIE BAJC** (front), Sergeant-at-Arms **CATHY UDOVCH**, Auditor **DON MILEK**, and Secretary **TERESA KOCI**. Circle Director Krista Lawson and Auditor Ellen Koci are missing from the photo.



KEN KOCI delivers the Lodge 786 food donations to the St. Timothy’s Catholic Church Food Pantry.

SNPJ Recreation Center 2026 Fraternal Events Schedule



June 5-7	SNPJ Heritage Center Weekend
June 12-14	SNPJ Young Adult Conference
July 10-12	SLOVENEFEEST 2026
July 26-Aug. 1	SNPJ Family Week
Aug. 17	SNPJ 33rd Quadrennial Convention
Sept. 4-6	National SNPJ Days

SNPJ Winter Classic Bowling Tournament February 13-15, 2026

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

MEN
Doubles & Singles Events
at Strabane Lodge 138
269 Latimer Ave.
Strabane, PA 15363
Club: (724) 745-9860
Lanes: (724) 745-9775
☐ Friday, Feb. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Shift limited to 32 bowlers
☐ Saturday, Feb. 14, Noon
Shift limited to 40 bowlers

WOMEN
Doubles & Singles Events
at Sygan Lodge 6
540 Third Ave.
Bridgeville, PA 15017
Phone: (412) 221-9862
☐ Saturday, Feb. 14, Noon
Shift limited to 40 bowlers

MEN
Team Event
at Sygan Lodge 6
540 Third Ave.
Bridgeville, PA 15017
Phone: (412) 221-9862
☐ Sunday, Feb. 15, 9 a.m.
☐ Sunday, Feb. 15, Noon
☐ Sunday, Feb. 15, 3 p.m.

WOMEN
Team Event
at Strabane Lodge 138
269 Latimer Ave.
Strabane, PA 15363
Club: (724) 745-9860
Lanes: (724) 745-9775
☐ Sunday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m.

Doubles & Singles Entry fee \$32 per person Friday/Saturday Only	Lodge No.	Highest Average 2024-25	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 2024-25
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 \$6 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 FEBRUARY 1, 2026

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

PROSVETA Crossword

Snow Day (#0126) by StatePoint Media

ACROSS

- Larger-than-life
- Capone’s family
- Wild swine
- “You’re not allowed,” to a baby
- Deal with it
- Cunningly
- Shower with affection
- Allege
- City in Belgium
- *Snow Day exercise?
- Poet Pound
- Ovine sign of the zodiac
- Tasseled hat
- All together (2 words)
- Military College of South Carolina, with The
- For every
- a.k.a. association football
- *All-day Snow Day garb?
- Delete
- Crude fuel
- Read-only disc
- Good’s counterpart
- Popular flowering shrub
- Female ancestor
- Two heads are better than one, e.g.
- Bering Strait state
- Rudolph’s Clarice, e.g.

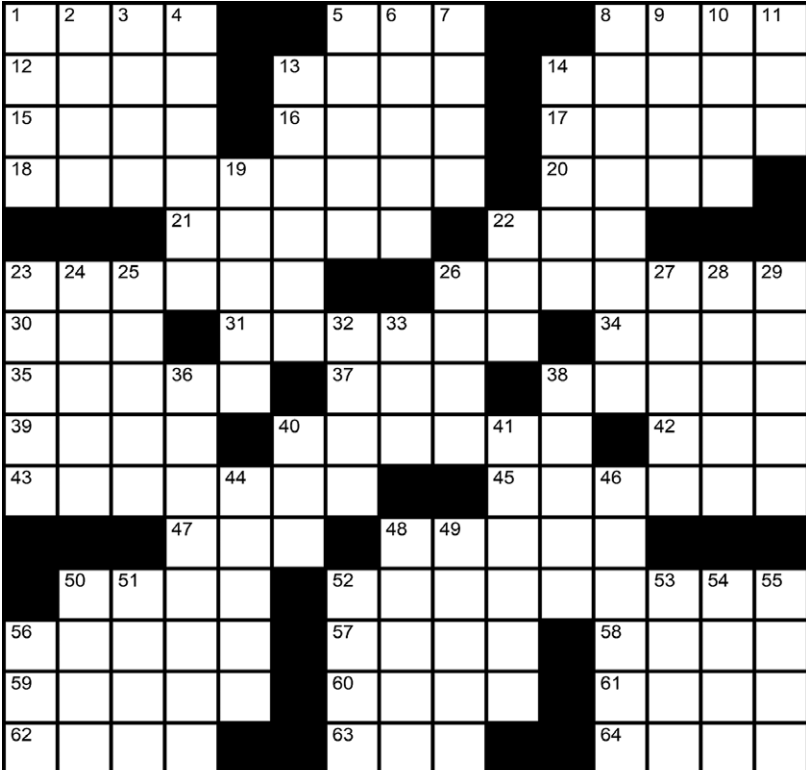
- Like thick smoke
- Fountain option
- *No two are alike, sing.
- Surround (2 words)
- Tangerine plus grapefruit
- *Like a river, with over
- #51 Down, pl.
- Heidi’s “Magic Wooden Shoe”
- Olufsen’s partner
- Sound of a bell
- Not him
- Surfer’s stop

DOWN

- Odds’ partners
- Tubby little cubby
- “He’s Just Not That ____ You”
- Of the same period
- *Popular Snow Day pastime
- Some tournaments
- Zugspitze, e.g.
- *Severe weather
- Deed hearing
- Algae, sing.
- Marble bread
- ____ Jack, English pirate
- *As opposed to rain
- Irregular

- Type of conifer
- Musketeers’ swords
- High-strung
- Cerebellum location
- Unit of life
- Students’ dwellings
- *Snow Day reading choice
- Helping theorem
- *Like soft pj’s
- Intelligence org.
- *Slope fun
- Shorter than California
- Number of years
- No, it doesn’t crawl in one’s ear
- Horse of certain color, pl.
- Spontaneous additions
- Obtuse one
- Tom Cruise’s “The ____ of Money”
- Highway hauler
- Bad sign
- Of a particular kind
- Smoothie berry
- Superman’s last name
- Part of a seat
- *Like chocolate on a Snow Day

The solution to puzzle #0126 will run in the Feb. 2 issue.



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