

2026 Miss SNPJ Pageant opens for contestant entries

by COURTNEY VALENCIC
Fraternal Director

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The SNPJ Fraternal Department and Miss SNPJ Pageant Commission are pleased to announce that entries are now being accepted for the 68th Miss SNPJ Pageant, which will be held in conjunction with the 43rd annual Slovenefest the weekend of July 10-12 at the SNPJ Recreation Center. The pageant will culminate in the crowning of Miss SNPJ 2027.

Beyond competition, the Miss SNPJ Pageant has long been recognized as a meaningful tradition within SNPJ, offering participants

the opportunity to join a close-knit sisterhood and a respected sorority of former Miss SNPJs who continue to serve as ambassadors of Slovenian heritage, leadership and community involvement.

The pageant competition will take place on Saturday, July 11, starting at noon in The Alpine Room at the SNPJ Recreation Center. The crowning ceremony will follow on Sunday, July 12, also at noon in The Alpine Room.

Eligible entrants must be single females between the ages of 18 and 28 by Slovenefest weekend and must be SNPJ members in good standing for a minimum of three months. There

is no limit to the number of entrants from any individual Lodge, and former contestants are encouraged to participate again.

Contestants will take part in a talent competition, appear before a panel of judges in evening attire, and participate in an interview process during which they will be asked questions. While participation in the talent portion of the pageant is not required, it is strongly encouraged.

An independent panel of judges will award points based on poise and appearance, personality and communication skills, talent,

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briefly

Strabane Lodge 138 meeting schedule change

STRABANE, Pa. — For 2026, SNPJ Lodge 138 will be changing their meeting schedule from monthly to every other month. Lodge meetings will be held on the first Monday of the month at the Lodge 138 Hall in Strabane starting at 6:30 p.m. in February, April, June, August, October and December.

JASON SNIDER
Lodge 138 Secretary

Heritage Center sold out of cookbooks temporarily

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — The SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center is currently sold out of the “Cook Eat Slovenia” cookbooks. We will be ordering more copies in the spring for our opening of the 2026 season in May.

KATHY PAULENICH
SNPJ Heritage Center Director

Lodge 776 schedules a February hockey outing

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 776 is planning to attend the Youngstown Phantoms hockey game on Saturday, Feb. 14. Game time is 6 p.m. If you would like to attend, contact Rich Dombrosky at (330) 360-0011 for more information.

As a reminder, Lodge 776 is now on Facebook. Lodge members are encouraged to follow and like the page so you can receive posts about upcoming meeting and event dates.

RICHARD DOMBROSKY
Lodge 776 Recording Secretary

THE DEADLINE

The next two *PROSVETA* issue dates are March 2 and April 1. All material must be received by noon on Monday, Feb. 16, for the March 2 issue, and by Monday, March 16, for the April 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.



Lucy Jo Lorenzato
Born May 31, 2024
Euclid, Ohio, Lodge 158

Loyalites Lodge 158 members welcome Lucy Jo Lorenzato as the newest addition to the Lodge. Lucy Jo is the daughter of Samantha (Volpe) Lorenzato (158) and Evan Lorenzato (6), and the granddaughter of Laurie and Johnny Lorenzato (6), and Gregory and the late Gina Volpe (158). We welcome Lucy Jo to the Society and extend our best wishes to her family.



follow SNPJ on **Facebook!**

And the winner is...

The \$100 winner of the third quarter drawing in the 2025 SNPJ Recommender Program is:
Susan Zarella, Lodge 277, Struthers, Ohio
Congratulations, and thank you for participating!

Fraternal society members continue their support of community service

by KAREN A. PINTAR
SNPJ National Secretary/COO

IMPERIAL, Pa. — Each year our Lodges are required to submit a report to the SNPJ Home Office, the Report of Local Unit Activity. We collect this information to submit to the American Fraternal Alliance, who combines information from all fraternal benefit societies in the Alliance to show the huge impact that societies like SNPJ make in their communities

and throughout the country.

In 2024 there were 41 fraternal benefit societies with 506,989 members in Pennsylvania. Members of the Pennsylvania fraternal societies contributed 1,866,960 volunteer hours at an estimated value of \$64,951,538. Direct monetary contributions to communities made by fraternal society members and lodges/

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SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance recognizes members, family, friends

by MAURY SINAN (782)
SNPJ Region 1 Vice President

YUKON, Pa. — Get ready for an afternoon filled with music, tradition and togetherness at the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance. This special event is our way of celebrating the members, families and students who keep our Slovenian heritage vibrant and strong.

Join us on Sunday, March 1, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the welcoming Yukon Slovenian Hall for an unforgettable day of fun and fellowship. Setting the perfect tone for the afternoon, Polka Classics

will be performing, bringing the lively sounds and timeless rhythms that are sure to keep toes tapping and dancers on the floor.

Admission is designed to make this a true community celebration. All SNPJ members and students under the age of 17 are admitted free of charge; admission of friends and family of members is a donation of \$5 each—an incredible value for an afternoon of live music, dancing and delicious food.

SEE REGION 1 APPRECIATION
ON PAGE 8



The newly elected officers for SNPJ Lodge 603 in Samsula, Fla., take the oath of office during the installation ceremony.

Florida SNPJ Days highlight the February schedule at Lodge 603

by JEANNETTE HUMPHREY
Lodge 603

SAMSULA, Fla. — SNPJ Lodge 603, located in beautiful downtown Samsula, welcomes everyone to join us for Florida SNPJ Days 2026 at the Lodge 603 Hall on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 20-21.

We will kick off the celebration of our Lodge's 100th anniversary from 4 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 20, when admission is 100 cents (or \$1). Christian Razpotnik will lead the jam sessions for the evening; to date, he has nine performers lined up. Be sure to bring your instrument and join in on the entertainment.

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

We'll welcome the Frank Moravcik Band with Linda Hochevar from Cleveland on Saturday, Feb. 21. The Lodge 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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ON PAGE 4

PERIODICAL MATERIAL

Lodge 581 starts the year with plans for spring activities

by MARCIA KLANCER BLEGGI
Lodge 581 Secretary/Treasurer

ST. MARYS, Pa. — Lodge 581 swore-in the officers for 2026 at the Jan. 11 meeting. We were happy to welcome Robert Mosier from Kane, Pa., as a new auditor. All officers were present at the meeting, with John Troha attending via phone from Vietnam.

The meeting continued with a report from Pat Moore about the Dec. 21 Lodge Christmas party. Pat stated that 75 people attended and enjoyed a turkey dinner and dancing to the music of The Heritage Band from Pittsburgh.

The Slovenian language classes have continued, with eight participants finishing their fourth session and beginning another 10 classes in February. This year, four members of the class traveled to Slovenia where they had an opportunity to practice their Slovenian language skills and meet with their Slovenian teacher.

Plans for our baking class, which will be held March 16 at 311 West Creek Road starting at 10 a.m., have been made. We will be baking potica and apple strudel. Anyone

SEE LODGE 581 SPRING
ON PAGE 8

Go **GREEN...** and help SNPJ save \$\$

Did you know PROSVETA is available online? If you would prefer to read PROSVETA online and help SNPJ save on printing and postage costs, register for the e-mail notifications by sending an e-mail to snpj@snpj.com.

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West Point Lodge 358 members held a fall meeting and pizza party at a local restaurant with new youth members **NATHAN** and **COREY JANIA** joining in the fun.

Donations were a priority for West Point Lodge 358 in 2025

by KATHY LOUDON
Lodge 358 Secretary/Treasurer

WEST POINT, Ohio — Good day from SNPJ Lodge 358 in West Point! We hope your 2025 was a good year.

Last year we were elated to add a few new members, welcoming Nathan and Corey Jania into our Lodge. Nathan and Corey are the grandsons of Lodge members Kathie and Stu Rothman. We're looking forward to the boys adding some energetic fun to our activities. A local restaurant was the location for a fun fall meeting and pizza party with the kids. Pizza can attract both kids and adults!

We started off last year with a Welcome Spring outing to hear a local band, then enjoyed dinner at a nearby restaurant. Sitting around a table with good friends is always a great time.

Our Lodge voted to donate to the children's sock and underwear collection drive again last year. The drive is organized by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The items are given to children in the community as they prepare to go back to school.

We also voted to donate a basket to Oktoberfest at St. Christine social hall. This celebration is the annual fundraiser of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It features authentic German food, locally brewed beer,



A Lodge 358 Oktoberfest basket donation to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul featured comfort snacks and drinks.

and 50/50 and basket drawings. Our basket focused on cozy comfort drinks and snacks.

As spring approaches, make sure you take some time to appreciate those around you. Be thankful for the people in your life now. Cherish those who make you smile or provide a kind word. Help someone. We all need each other.

Our Lodge wishes you all a great 2026!

Election of SNPJ 33rd Quadrennial Convention delegates and alternates

(SNPJ Lodges with less than 75 members eligible to unite for Convention delegate elections)

In order to assist the Lodges with less than 75 members to find a suitable Lodge or Lodges with which they may unite for the 33rd Quadrennial Convention, listed below are the Lodge numbers and the adult membership of each Lodge with less than 75 members. Lodges that find it difficult to unite may apply to the Executive Committee for assistance. It is requested that Lodges which unite to elect a delegate report immediately thereafter to the National President, stating the Lodges involved. This type of combination is not permanent as it relates only to delegate representation for the Convention and must be completed by March 1.

Lodge No.	City/State	Adult Members
Lodge 117	Yukon, Pa.....	74
Lodge 120.....	Gallup, N.M.	66
Lodge 198.....	Willard, Wis.	14
Lodge 719.....	Clairton, Pa.	53
Lodge 745.....	Grass Valley, Calif.....	65
Lodge 757.....	Price, Utah	28
Lodge A18	Baden, Pa.	16



Photo submitted by Kathy Lutz (721)

Sharing a Visit With Santa

Aliquippa, Pa., Lodge 721 youth members had the opportunity to visit with Santa Claus and share their Christmas wish lists at the combined Lodge 721 and Ambridge, Pa., Lodge 33 Christmas party held at Harold's Inn in Hopewell Twp., Pa.

Contestant entries now open for the 2026 Miss SNPJ Pageant



The 2025 Miss SNPJ Pageant contestants and Pageant Committee. Entries are now being accepted for the 2026 Miss SNPJ Pageant scheduled during Slovenefest weekend, July 10-12, at the SNPJ Recreation Center.

MISS SNPJ PAGEANT

FROM PAGE 1

and community service. Additional points will be awarded by the SNPJ Executive Committee for SNPJ-related activity. A Miss Fraternalism title winner will be selected by the pageant contestants, further emphasizing the spirit of friendship and mutual respect that defines the program.

Scholarships will be awarded to the 2027 titleholders as follows: Miss SNPJ, \$2,000; Miss Activity, \$1,200; Miss Talent, \$800; and Miss Fraternalism, \$150. All contestants will receive a \$50 participation award. Contestants who enter the pageant

by May 15 will receive an additional \$50 early entry bonus. The deadline to enter the pageant is June 5.

All entries should be e-mailed to SNPJ Fraternal Director Courtney Valencic at ckoenig@snpj.com. As always, any questions regarding the pageant may be directed to Courtney.

The Miss SNPJ Pageant Booster Fund is currently accepting donations to help offset the costs of the pageant weekend. Checks should be made payable to SNPJ with "Miss SNPJ Pageant" noted on the memo line and mailed to Slovene National Benefit Society, 247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126.

Fraternal society members continue to support service projects

COMMUNITY SERVICE

FROM PAGE 1

branches totaled \$24,198,582.

Throughout the country for 2024, there were 7.2 million fraternal society members who devoted more than 45 million service hours and gave more than \$690 million to community organizations.

As we always say, SNPJ is more than a life insurance company that

offers financial protection to our members. We make a difference in our communities through local volunteerism and philanthropy.

We are the hearts and hands that prepare meals and donate to local food banks, assemble packages for deployed troops, build housing for the less fortunate, clean up community parks and creeks, participate in fundraising for a variety of causes,

work at community centers and volunteer for Meals on Wheels, and donate to Toys for Tots and other worthy causes.

If you are an SNPJ member and you actively participate in any volunteer project, you should let your Lodge secretary know so that they can include your activity in their annual reports. I'm certain that in the fraternal spirit, our members

perform many, many volunteer acts and services that continue to go unreported.

The next time someone asks you what a fraternal benefit society is, you can tell them how we are so, so much more than a life insurance and/or annuity company. We are active and engaged in our communities, and united in providing service to those less fortunate.

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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e-mail: prosveta@snpj.com

Up-and-Coming...

A look at events planned by the Slovene National Benefit Society

- FEB. 13-15 SNPJ Winter Classic Bowling Tournament co-hosted by Sygan, Pa., Lodge 6 and Strabane, Pa., Lodge 138. Entertainment is scheduled at both Lodge halls throughout the weekend.
- FEB. 20-21 Florida SNPJ Days hosted by Samsula, Fla., Lodge 603.
- MARCH 1 SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance at the Yukon Slovenian Hall, Yukon, Pa.; 2-6 p.m. Music by Polka Classics. All SNPJ members and students under 17 admitted free of charge. Proceeds benefit the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges Pretty in Pink fundraiser for cancer. For more information contact Maury Sinan by e-mail to maury@zoominternet.net.
- APRIL 11 California SNPJ Day at the Phoenix Club, Brea, Calif. For event details contact Lodge 786 Secretary Teresa Koci by e-mail to teresamkoci@gmail.com or by phone at (949) 246-1983.
- JUNE 5-7 SNPJ Heritage Center 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.
- JUNE 12-14 SNPJ Young Adult Conference at the SNPJ Recreation Center, Borough of SNPJ, Pa. For registration and event details contact Fraternal Director Courtney Koenig at 1-800-843-7675 ext. 144, or e-mail ckoenig@snpj.com.
- JULY 10-12 The 43rd Slovenefest and the 68th Miss SNPJ Pageant at the SNPJ Recreation Center. For additional information phone the Recreation Center toll-free at 1-877-767-5732 or e-mail snpj@snpjrec.com.
- JULY 26-AUG. 1 Family Week at the SNPJ Recreation Center, Borough of SNPJ, Pa. For more information phone the Recreation Center toll-free at 1-877-767-5732 or e-mail snpj@snpjrec.com.

We've Got You COVERED



by DAVID GOMBKOTO
SNPJ Sales Director

Love is in the air... and so is peace of mind

February is the month of love. Everywhere you look there are heart-shaped chocolates, greeting cards promising forever, and ads reminding us that nothing says romance quite like roses that cost triple what they did in January.

Valentine's Day has a way of putting love front and center. And while we often think of love as flowers, dinners and sweet gestures, the truth is that the most meaningful expressions of love usually happen quietly, behind the scenes.

Because real love isn't just about saying "I love you." It's about showing it – even when no one is watching.

Let's be honest: Most of us don't wake up on Valentine's Day thinking, "You know what would be really romantic? Reviewing my life insurance coverage." That probably won't be trending on social media anytime soon. But if love means caring about the people who depend on us – our spouse, children, grandchildren, or even parents – then protecting their future might be one of the most loving things we ever do.

Think about it this way: When you buy chocolates, they last a day. Flowers? Maybe a week, if you're lucky. But financial protection lasts for years – sometimes decades – and the impact can be life changing.

Life insurance, at its core, is a love letter written in advance. It's the promise that says "no matter what happens to me, you'll be O.K." It helps pay the mortgage, cover final expenses, fund college dreams, or simply allow loved ones time to grieve without financial stress. It doesn't replace a person, but it can protect a family's stability when they need it most.

And then there are annuities – not exactly the stuff of romance novels, but hear me out...

An annuity is like the dependable partner who always shows up. It provides predictable income, peace of mind and long-term security. In a world where markets rise and fall and headlines change daily, knowing you have guaranteed income can be incredibly comforting – especially for retirees who want to enjoy life without worrying about outliving their savings.

You could say annuities are the "slow-burn romance" of financial planning. They're not flashy, but they are reliable, steady, and built to last.

February is also a good time to reflect on who we love and how many people quietly rely on us. Maybe it's a spouse who handles everything while you work, a child who still thinks you can fix anything, a grandchild whose future feels wide open, or even a sibling or parent who might need help someday. Love doesn't always look the same, but responsibility often comes with it.

That's where planning ahead becomes such a powerful act of care.

At SNPJ, we've always believed that protecting families is about more than policies and numbers. It's about community. It's about looking out for one another and making sure no one faces life's hardest moments alone. That's the true nature and original mission of a fraternal benefit society. That belief has been part of who we are for generations, and it's why life insurance and annuities remain such important tools for families today.

So this Valentine's Day, by all means buy the chocolates, write the card, make the dinner reservation. Celebrate love loudly! But also consider the quieter side of love, the kind that plans ahead, protects and provides.

Because true love isn't just about today. It's about tomorrow, next year, and all the years that follow.

And if love is about putting others first, then taking steps to secure your family's future may just be the most meaningful Valentine's gift of all.

For questions about SNPJ life insurance or annuity products, please contact the Home Office at 1-800-843-7675 or e-mail snpjmarketing@snpj.com.



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Site of 60,000-year-old flute a cultural monument

LJUBLJANA (STA) — In mid-December, the Slovenian government declared the Divje Babe Archaeological Park a cultural monument of national importance. The site is best known as the location of discovery of a 60,000-year-old flute made from a cave bear femur, which is widely considered one of the oldest known musical instruments in the world.

Located on the Šebrelje Plateau above the Idrijca Valley in western Slovenia, the park centers on the Divje Babe I cave system. Excavations between 1980 and 1999 revealed the area to be a key site for the Middle and Late Paleolithic periods [300,000 to 10,000 years ago]. In addition to the famous Neanderthal instrument, which was discovered in 1995, the cave is Slovenia's richest source of data on Pleistocene climate, flora and fauna.

The decree adopted by the government ensures the highest level of protection for the Divje Babe site, designating it as an archaeological reserve to strictly preserve its sediments and fossils.

The monument will be managed by the Cerklno Tourism Institute. Under the confirmed rules, public access to the cave interior remains restricted to expert-led guided tours. The Culture Ministry said that this step secures the long-term management of the site and cements its place among the world's most significant Paleolithic sites.

Slovenia supports social media age restrictions

LJUBLJANA (STA) — Slovenia supports initiatives to introduce age restrictions at the EU level and mandatory age verification for users of online platforms such as social networks and gambling sites, the Ministry of Digital Transformation said in mid-December after Australia introduced the world's first social media ban for children under the age of 16.

In a press release, the ministry wrote it is "aware of the many challenges and pitfalls that the use of social networks poses for children and young people, which is why Slovenia supports initiatives to introduce age restrictions at the EU level and mandatory age verification for users of online platforms."

"Age verification is important not only for social networks, but also for providers of sports betting, gambling, and content that includes elements of violence, where responsibilities are currently not clearly defined," the release continues.

Slovenia endorsed the initiative to strengthen the protection of minors from harmful online content and risks at the EU Telecommunications Council meeting held in Luxembourg in June 2025. Slovenia has also joined Greece's proposal for a common EU regulatory framework that would require parental consent for minors to access platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. That initiative has also been supported by Cyprus, Denmark, France and Spain.

Slovenia believes the most appropriate age to start using social networks independently is 16, as scientific research shows that the use of social networks between the ages of 11 and 13 for girls, and between 14 and 15 for boys, is associated with the most negative effects, including increased exposure to addiction, manipulation, mental health challenges and social pressure. Under current Slovenian law, children age 15 and up may use digital services, while those under 15 require consent from their parents or caretakers.

Three Ljubljana buses powered by hydrogen

LJUBLJANA (STA) — LPP, the Ljubljana public transportation company, launched three hydrogen-powered buses in late November as the city plans to make its public transportation carbon-neutral by 2030. Within five years, Ljubljana will have 100 zero-emission buses, including hydrogen-powered models.

"The new buses signal the start of a new era. This is a major milestone that can be compared to the introduction of trams or trolleys in the past. We are actually moving to a completely new way of powering buses," LPP deputy director Rok Vihar said at the inauguration ceremony. The new buses are not just carbon-neutral, but also zero-emission



since they only emit steam.

Vihar admitted it is easier to pursue the goal of carbon-neutral public transportation thanks to national co-financing of such vehicles. "Municipalities were provided with EUR 40 million (\$46.3 million) from the climate fund for the purchase of zero-emission buses and vans in recent years," said Minister of the Environment, Climate and Energy Bojan Kumer.

The colorful exterior of the buses reminds passengers of global warming, with each "climate stripe" showing what is happening to the planet. "The stripes, without numbers or graphs, clearly illustrate the warming trend and serve as a tool for raising public awareness," Minister Kumer added.

New book delves into Slovenia's Iron Age

LJUBLJANA (STA) — A large body of Iron Age artefacts from the Vače archaeological site in central Slovenia has been published for the first time in a new monograph released by the National Museum of Slovenia, offering fresh material from the study of one of Slovenia's most important early settlements.

The book, "Vače II," authored by archaeologist Biba Teržan, compiles and analyzes finds excavated in the late 19th century that have long been held by the Natural History Museum in Vienna. Although the items discovered on Slovenian soil and currently kept by the National Museum of Slovenia were partly published in the 1950s, most objects stored in Austria had remained unseen by the wider research community.

Presenting the book in late November, Teržan stressed the significance of the Vače excavations, which in 1878 became the first systematic archaeological dig carried out on the territory of present-day Slovenia.

The 1883 excavations led by Josef Szombathy, who later served as the first head of the Vienna Natural History Museum's anthropological-historical collection and was a pioneer of professional archaeology in the region, were particularly influential. Szombathy's meticulous field diaries allowed scholars to reconstruct grave groups and burial practices, helping to establish early scientific standards for studying the Hallstatt culture across the former Austro-Hungarian lands. According to Teržan, "Vače played a decisive role in shaping the chronology of Slovenian prehistoric archaeology and remains a key reference point for understanding social structure in the Early Iron Age."

Teržan's newly-published material focuses on a 1970s project that documented Slovenian archaeological finds held in foreign museums. Students drew, measured and described the Vače items stored in Vienna and Graz. The Vienna museum thoroughly studied the collection in 1976, producing detailed ink drawings and tables that were digitized in 2011 and 2012.

"Vače II" is a trilingual publication. The descriptive catalogue is presented in Slovenian and German, while accompanying studies appear in Slovenian and English.

Slovenian paleontologist wins a prestigious award

PORTSMOUTH, England — Researcher Rok Gašparič has become the first Slovenian to receive the Mary Anning Medal, an award that recognizes outstanding contributions to paleontology by those who are not professionally employed in the field.

Gašparič received the award in December for his "long-standing, internationally-recognized scientific contribution to the research of fossilized decapod crustaceans and for his dedication to the field," the jury wrote.

Gašparič holds a PhD in paleontology and has published more than 100 scientific papers on Slovenian fossils, including more than 30 peer-reviewed articles published in leading international scientific journals. His research has contributed to the understanding of fossils of Slovenia and Central Europe, and he has described more than 25 new species, seven genera and one family of fossilized organisms, including the more than 230-million-year-old lobster,

Eopolycheles cornuaureus, found in the Julian Alps.

Gašparič has also played a part in the development of the paleontology community. He organized the seventh international symposium on Mesozoic and Cenozoic crustaceans, and co-founded Slovenia's Institute for Paleobiology and Evolution.

When receiving the award, Gašparič stressed the importance of the openness of the field and the cooperation between professional and non-professional researchers. "Receiving the award, named after Mary Anning, is of special importance to me because her life story reminds us that paleontology is alive because of a broad community – experts and enthusiasts – who use their curiosity, persistence and dedication to discover the stories of life's development written in stone," he said.

The Mary Anning Medal, awarded by the British Paleontological Association, is named for English paleontology pioneer Mary Anning (1799-1847) who made important contributions to the field despite a lack of formal education. Her most significant discoveries included a skeleton of the ichthyosaurs and the first complete plesiosaur skeleton.

A reference athletics center opens in Maribor

MARIBOR (STA) — In December, the Maribor Community Health Centre launched a reference athletics center in cooperation with the Athletics Federation of Slovenia. Officials say it will provide even more accurate, safe and professional support to athletes, and contribute to the development of sports medicine in the wider region.

The new facility is part of the health center's Medical Rehabilitation Department, and in recent years the staff has been gaining knowledge and experience abroad. According to department representative Alen Pavlec, they have also established partnerships that will enable them to further develop their work.

By becoming a reference athletics center, the staff hope to develop further to provide appropriate support to both professional and recreational athletes. "We try to provide the fastest possible care at the highest level, virtually immediately," Pavlec said.

The Medical Rehabilitation Department team consists of three medical specialists, 22 physiotherapists – 12 of whom have recognized specialty skills – and three occupational therapists.

Sebastijan Jagarinec, a representative of the Athletics Federation of Slovenia, said the Maribor Community Health Centre provides sports diagnostics and physical therapy services at the highest possible level. The new center will enable them "to provide athletes with top-notch care, physical therapy and diagnostics."

The Maribor Community Health Centre also features Slovenia's sole paralympic reference sports medicine center, along with one of five Olympic reference sports medicine centers.

Slovenia's Winter Games ambassador is Tina Maze

LJUBLJANA (STA) — Slovenian skiing legend Tina Maze, a two-time Olympic champion and one of the greatest female athletes in Slovenia's history, will be the ambassador of the Slovenia House in Cortina d'Ampezzo during the 2026 Winter Olympics, scheduled Feb. 6-22 in Lombardy and Northeast Italy.

The Slovenia House, which will serve as a hub for participating athletes and will host events related to sports, culture, tourism and business, will open Feb. 8 at Cortina d'Ampezzo, the ski resort widely known for hosting Alpine Ski World Cup events.

When the Slovenian Olympic Committee hosted an Olympics-related event in Ljubljana in late November, they announced that Maze, the gold medalist in the women's downhill and giant slalom at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, would be the ambassador of the venue.

Maze, who addressed the event via video link, said she is "looking forward to representing Slovenia and the Slovenian House at the Olympics as an ambassador," adding that Cortina d'Ampezzo "has always been a special place for me and is practically my second home."

Some 40 Slovenian athletes are expected to compete in six sports at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

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

Loyalites Lodge 158 greets 2026 with elections, Easter Bunny Brunch plans

by DANIELLA VOLPE
Lodge 158 Treasurer

EUCLID, Ohio — How is it February already? So far, this year is flying by, but that doesn't stop the Loyalites. We've got lots of fun things planned this year.

Before those happen, we need to take a look back on some celebrations we missed. First off, a happy belated birthday to Jan Smrdel (Dec. 25), David Srnick (Dec. 31), and Gary Smrdel (Jan. 21). We also missed Jan and Gary's 31st wedding anniversary (Jan. 28).

Two members also welcomed a new addition to the family back in October. Clover Cleary was born Oct. 17 to

Colleen and Cody Cleary. She has the best big sister in Claire.

The Loyalites first event of the year is our second annual Easter Bunny Brunch, scheduled Sunday, March 29, at Dudley Fieldhouse in Wil- lowick, Ohio. Please visit our Instagram and website for more details and/or tickets. This will be a fun-filled day with lots of games and treats from the bunny himself.

With the new year comes new Lodge officers, and while a lot stayed the same, the Loyalites have some new faces in some very important positions. We want to thank anyone who has ever served on our board; we greatly appreciate all your

years of time and effort.

The new officers are Presi- dent/Recording Secretary Elizabeth Smrdel, Vice Presi- dent Colleen Kuhn, Secretary Janet Smrdel, Treasurer/Pub- licity Daniella Volpe, Sergeant-at-Arms Dan Horabik, and auditors Diane Horabik, Sue Srnick, Dave Adams and al- ternate Don Srnick.

As always, we send our thoughts and prayers to all ailing and deceased members and their families during these difficult times, including the family of our very own Marty Hulin who passed on Nov. 25, 2025.

Marty was a big supporter of our Lodge, as well as the SNPJ

Farm in Kirtland, Ohio. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, you could find him working with the crew to help prepare for the Farm picnic season.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn; his daughters, Sue, Jan and Diane; his grand- children, Danny, Rachel, Liz, David, Nick, Anna, Carter and Emerson; and sons-in-law Don, Gary and Dan. Marty will be truly missed by many. We know he is watching over his family, just as he did in life.

Want more information about Lodge 158 events? If you can't wait for these monthly articles, you can check out our Instagram, @snpjloyalites, or our website, snpj158.com.



The 2026 Loyalites Lodge 158 officers: (standing, from left) **DAN HORABIK, DON SRNICK, LIZ SMRDEL, JANET SMRDEL, DAVE ADAMS, (seated) DANIELLA VOLPE, COLLEEN KUHN, SUE SRNICK** and **DIANE HORABIK**.

A change of meeting day, location for Lodge 153

by WILMA VUKOVICH
Lodge 153 Recording Secretary

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — The SNPJ Lodge 153 No- vember meeting was held at Shepherd of the Valley club room in Poland, Ohio.

Our newly elected officers include President Michelle Phillips, Vice President Mary Lou O'Reilly, Secretary/Trea- surer Diane L. Chermely Tan- ner, Sergeant-at-Arms Stephen Pavlich, Recording Secretary/

Reporter Wilma Vukovich, and auditors Stephen Pavlich, Michelle Phillips and Wilma Vukovich.

Happy birthday wishes go out to all members celebrating birthdays in November, De- cember, January and February.

Please mark your calendar for the upcoming Lodge meet- ings in 2026. The meetings will be held at Diane Chermely Tan- ner's office – 945 Windham Court, Suite 3, Boardman,

Ohio – on March 17, May 19, Aug. 18 and Nov. 17.

Please note that the meeting day has been changed from Wednesday to Tuesday. The meetings will begin at 7 p.m. All Lodge members are wel- come and encouraged to attend.

The annual Lodge 153 Christmas party was held Dec. 7 at the Shepherd of the Valley club room. We enjoyed a fantastic dinner followed by homemade desserts provided

by the guests. After the meal was complete we welcomed Santa Claus, who delivered gifts to youth members and Lodge officers.

Drawing tickets were sold, and gifts brought by the guests were awarded to the lucky winners. The party concluded with a few fun games of bingo. Thanks to everyone who helped make this year's Christmas party a huge suc- cess. Happy New Year to all!

Lodge 603 prepares for Florida SNPJ Days in February

FLORIDA SNPJ DAYS
FROM PAGE 1

A brief program is sched- uled at 1 p.m. on Saturday. SNPJ National Secretary Karen Pintar will be bringing a message or two from the Home Office in Imperial, Pa.

During the program, Ruth and George Benedict will be recognized for serving the most years as volunteers at the Lodge 603 Hall. They married in 1969 and have remained active ever since. Special recognition will be extended to several other volunteers who have worked to keep the Lodge 603 Hall active. We are excited to cel- ebrate the 100th anniversary of our Lodge!

The apple strudel and cabbage rolls for the Florida SNPJ Days festivities will be prepared at the Lodge hall on Saturday, Feb. 7, starting at 9 a.m. Everyone is welcome to join in on the fun and learn

how to make both.

Congratulations to new Lodge 603 members Johnny Clark, Catherine Plante, Kim- berly Dekam, Raymond Leslie, Sean Wisenbarger, Thomas Lloyd and Ruthann Na-Tusch. Maverick Max Massey of Edgewater, Fla. – just one year old – has joined Youth Circle 57. His grandmother is Connie Massey, a former president of SNPJ Lodge 603.

Mary Shaw celebrated her 80th birthday during a party hosted by her daughter and son-in-law, Melonie and Mike Fisher, at our Lodge hall. Many family members and friends were in attendance.

Our thanks to Rhee Carter who served as chairwoman for the 2025 Lodge 603 Christmas Tractor Parade. First place was awarded to the float sponsored by the Samsula Woman's Club; the Massey Tree Service float placed third. The parade spon-



A float sponsored by Mizar & Co. and the Razpotnik family makes its way along the parade route during the Lodge 603 Christmas Tractor Parade held in December.

sors were Samsula Corp. and Southern Built Co.

Special thanks to Bobby Quinn who mowed the back of the Lodge hall property in

time for the parade. Thanks are also extended to everyone who participated in the parade and to others who helped with the event.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proud to be Slovenian (even a little bit)

Fifteen years ago our son married a girl of Slovenian heritage. Even though I am known to my family and friends as a geography nerd, I had to do some research on a place I knew little about.

We were immediately ac- cepted into the family and into Slovenian culture. We joined SNPJ, and I have learned some common and useful Slovenian words which I use often. I have even learned how to make *čivapčiči*.

Several Christmases ago my wife gave me an *Ancestry.com* gift certificate. I submit-

ted my sample and waited five or six weeks for the results.

Like many Americans, I have a number of different eth- nicities. The results revealed the ones that I had known about all my life: German, French, English and Irish. Two things did surprise me. I have trace Italian, but the most pleas- ant surprise was I have trace Slovenian.

I am not certain how they determine the difference be- tween groups that appear to be physically similar or located in the same areas, such as Slovenian, Croatian or Serbian,

PROSVETA welcomes letters to the editor from all SNPJ members. All submissions to Letters to the Editor must include a name, address, Lodge and telephone number for verification, and all are subject to editing. The views expressed in Letters to the Editor are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the Slovene National Benefit Society or PROSVETA.

Letters to the Editor submissions should be addressed to SNPJ PROSVETA, Att'n: Letters to the Editor, 247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126. Letters may also be faxed to (724) 695-1555 or e-mailed to prosveta@snpj.com. Not all letters will be printed or individually acknowledged.

or English, Irish or Scottish. I was specifically identified as Slovenian.

So thank you for being such a warm, friendly and interest-

ing community – and thank you for including me.

RICHARD LAUX
Lodge 745 Vice President
Roseville, Calif.

Treat your sweetie at the annual Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame Sweetheart Ball

by JOE VALENCIC (5)
Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame

CLEVELAND — Waltz away your winter blues with an afternoon of dancing and romancing as the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame presents the annual Sweetheart Ball, featuring the music of Frank Moravcik and his orchestra, on Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Willoughby Eagles Hall in Willoughby, Ohio.

Swing your sugar to four hours of the finest polkas,

waltzes and pop tunes in a ballroom setting from 2 to 6 p.m. Frank will put you in the mood with his melodies and button box stylings with Linda Hochevar. Sandwiches, beverages and treats will be available for purchase. Sharon Staiduhar, your Hall of Fame hostess, has surprises in store for some lucky couples – you may even go home a winner!

The Willoughby Eagles Hall is located at 37299 Euclid Avenue, just west of downtown

Willoughby. Phone (440) 679-1420 for table reservations.

Admission is \$15 at the door; guests 18 and under ad- mitted free of charge. Order by phone at (216) 261-3263 or by e-mail to polkashop@aol.com.

Advance tickets, priced at \$12 each, are available through the Polka Hall of Fame, 605 East 222nd Street in Euclid, Ohio, next to Euclid City Hall. The Polka Hall of Fame is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.



Frank Moravcik will perform for the Polka Hall of Fame Sweetheart Ball on Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Willoughby Eagles Hall.

SNPJ Membership Anniversaries February 2026

80-Year Members

Lodge	Member
87	Hilda Clifford

70-Year Members

Lodge	Member
584	Roger W. Butalla

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
5	Cynthia A. Crowley	223	Cheryl A. Petrini
5	Laura H. Gezann	277	Francine M. Appleman
6	Alice J. Luznar		
31	Aleta L. Kudelko	518	Donna M. Jutila
31	Cyril J. Furlan	562	John J. Strauss
34	Jean Davis	562	Karen L. McGilton
89	Ernest A. Colussy	584	John T. Krainc
106	Thelma J. Meacci	584	Victoria L. Koenig
120	Elizabeth M. DelRe	749	Louis R. Ograyensek
138	George L. Simms	782	Diane M. Ham
158	Dean C. Moore	786	Michael J. Boris
174	Kenneth J. Kush		

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Janice W. Anderson	576	Deborah D. Murphy
3	Susan E. Lee	581	Patrick Larson
6	Charles Davis	584	Judith A. Poklar
6	Jeanne K. Eason	584	Catherine R. Dernovsek
31	Alan M. D'Amico		
41	Deborah C. Good	604	Rochelle A. Morrison
41	Samuel V. Bohinc	604	Douglas R. Misenko
87	John D. Anzur	677	Sheryl L. Gray
89	Susan D. Gunnoe	729	Beverly A. McGrath
89	Raymond J. Zalaznik	749	Susan R. Rightnour
106	Ernest Zaloznik	749	Mary A. Strong
138	Joan B. Gaspersic	749	Cheryl A. Pohto
153	Robert A. Pinkerton	782	Deborah L. Berkly
158	John L. Zgonc	A02	Mary Lou Egan
257	Daniel T. Zust	A02	Diane M. Mitsch
559	Joanne VanBalen	A02	Robert F. Mitsch
562	Joseph E. Vucelich	A02	Edward J. Femc
564	Frank C. Gaber	A02	Donna L. Femc

2026 Miss SNPJ Pageant Official Entry Form

Entrants must be between the ages of 18-28 by July 10, 2026, and an SNPJ member in good standing for at least three months.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE () _____

E-MAIL _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

SNPJ LODGE NUMBER _____

PARENTS' NAMES _____

GRANDPARENTS' NAMES _____

I will compete in the Miss SNPJ talent competition
☐ YES ☐ NO

Type of talent _____

(NOTE: Talent is not necessarily proficiency on a musical instrument or singing ability. Creativity is encouraged. Everybody has a talent.)

ENTRIES ACCEPTED BY E-MAIL ONLY

E-mail the completed entry form, along with a clear, color photo, to SNPJ Fraternal Director Courtney Koenig:
ckoenig@snpj.com

In your e-mail, please describe any school honors you have received, and any organizations, clubs and activities you are/were involved with. Be sure to include specific SNPJ Lodge, Youth Circle or Federation activities.

Pageant Entry Deadline: June 5, 2026

For more information contact SNPJ Fraternal Director Courtney Valencic by phoning 724-825-8180

Important figures to consider...

!

29%... people who would purchase more life insurance if they were asked

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

82%... people who are under-insured

If your coverage is over 5 years old, contact SNPJ for a policy review.
1-800-843-7675



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

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
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

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

Cold weather, but some heated competition at the 34th annual Verbick Fraternal Memorial Bowl

by MARY DONOVAN (584)
SNPJ District 6 Athletic Director

MILWAUKEE — The 34th Verbick Fraternal Memorial Bowling event was rolled at Lucky Lanes on Jan. 17. We were thrilled to have nine teams participate from SNPJ, CFU, KSKJ and Sloga Division of CFU.

We switched the event to a 9-pin tap two years ago, and the format has been received quite well. This event is a wonderful time to make new friends and rekindle relationships from years past. It's amazing to look back and think that we've been doing this for 34 years!

Event participants again proved to be very generous with their support of both the 50/50 and prize drawings. We had numerous prizes available for the drawing, and participants anxiously waited their numbers to be called. A huge thank you to our outstanding volunteers who ran the draw-

ings, Eric Donovan, Chris Carroll, Colleen Simonis and Jean Wucinski.

All proceeds will be donated to the scholarship funds of the four participating organizations. A special thank you to Craig Frohna for his additional generous donation to this event. We can't say enough how much we appreciate our participants and supporters!

We did have one big-time bowler, Tim Donovan, who rolled a whopping 288 game. All eyes were watching for the 300 game... maybe next year!

We have inked in our date for next year's event, the third Saturday in January 2027. Keep your bowling gear ready, and let's continue to support the fraternal events of our various organizations.

One last thought from a remembered SNPJ member: "A good time was had by all, and let's keep the golden ale flowing!"

[Above] MARY DONOVAN, BAILEY PHALEN, MICHELE MELTON, and CHRIS and JEFF MEYER; [below] TIM DONOVAN, TOM SCHWEIGER, Sandi Donovan and CHRIS MEYER enjoying the atmosphere of the 34th Verbick Fraternal Memorial Bowling event rolled in January.

JERRY WUCINSKI, CHRIS MEYER, TOM SCHWEIGER, Gordy Gunderson, SAL SANICOLA, JEFF MEYER and Alex Meyer unwind after bowling.

Rec Center Cabin Renovation Donations for the months of November & December 2025

Barbara Taylor (584), Whitewater, Wis. \$150	Joe Gorshe (218) Pueblo, Colo. \$25	Amy Mavrich (138), Canonsburg, Pa. \$25
SNPJ Lodge 31, Sharon, Pa. \$50	Dave & Jeanne Stalcar, Pueblo, Colo. \$25	<i>In memory of Kelsey Likovic</i>
<i>In memory of Lawrence Moler</i>		

Play for your roots. Play for Slovenia.

The Football Association of Slovenia (FAS) is reaching out to girls and young women, from U15 all the way to the senior level, who were born or live abroad but carry Slovenian blood, heart and spirit.

We're looking for talented, ambitious and proud players who want to represent their heritage on the international stage — who dream of wearing the Slovenian jersey, standing tall during the national anthem, and writing history with our national teams.

If you have family roots that lead back to Slovenia,

your story matters! Your connection to Slovenia can become something bigger... *something unforgettable.*

Join our growing community of Slovenian players around the world who are united by pride, passion and purpose. You'll not only find a pathway to top-level soccer, you'll find your home team.

If you believe you have what it takes, reach out to us! By mail: Nogometna zveza Slovenije, Predoslje 40a, p.p. 130, 4000 Kranj, Slovenia; or e-mail wnt@nzs.si.

PROSVETA Crossword

Valentine's Day (#0226) by StatePoint Media

ACROSS

1. Past participle of spit

5. King Kong, e.g.

8. Greek portico

12. Not to be mentioned

13. Congeal

14. _____ cell carcinoma

15. Top of Kilimanjaro, e.g.

16. Periods of time

17. D-Day beach

18. *Holiday the day before Valentine's Day

20. Shade of beige

21. Quantities on doctors' prescriptions

22. Not amateur

23. *Letters to Juliet destination

26. Come to final conclusion

30. *Ultimate Valentine's vow?

31. Purchaser

34. Zelensky's capital

35. Move a plant

37. High-_____, as in an image

38. Tubular pasta

39. Not Visa or MC

40. *Moving Valentine's Day date option

42. "Annie get your _____"

43. a.k.a. ladybird

45. Maximum

47. "Rub A Dub Dub" vessel

48. Suburb of Dallas

50. Skunk's defense

52. *Sweet Valentine's gesture

56. Long stories

57. Rhythmic way of talking

58. Yours and mine

59. Send, as payment

60. The E of B.P.O.E.

61. A bit of water

62. Biblical paradise

63. Elf in

64. Sign of boredom

DOWN

1. Doe's mate

2. One of Three Bears

3. Cain's brother

4. Prom night garb

5. Bird of prey's nest

6. *Make them in advance of Valentine's Day

7. "Or _____?"

8. **"Cupid" singer (2 words)

9. Russia's Terrible one, e.g.

10. Pearl Harbor island

11. Between Fla. and Miss.

13. Ship's floating wreckage

14. Afrikaners' ancestors

19. Group of nine singers

22. For each

23. All over the internet

24. Possible allergic reaction

25. Lassoed

26. *Baby's breath's partner

27. Texting vocabulary, e.g.

28. *Cupid's mom

29. Black tie _____

32. Snob

33. Gymnast's goal

36. *a.k.a. "love hormone"

38. Deck alternative

40. Chicago baseballer

41. Defrauds

44. Explosion

46. Pleasing notes succession

48. At the same time

49. Too much egg middle

50. Newspaper piece

51. Five and _____

52. Staff leader

53. Heavenly glow

54. Think, archaically speaking

55. Sport spectator's TV acronym

56. Before, old English

The solution to puzzle #0226 will run in the March 2 issue.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18					19				20			
				21				22				
23	24	25					26			27	28	29
30				31		32	33			34		
35			36			37			38			
39				40				41		42		
43				44				45		46		
			47			48	49					
	50	51				52				53	54	55
56						57				58		
59						60				61		
62						63				64		

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SNPJ fraternal sympathies

Sis. CYNTHIA E. EMMERLING • LODGE 277 •

STRUTHERS, Ohio — The members of Lodge 277 sadly report the July 3, 2025, passing of Sis. Cynthia Elaine Emmerling, 81, of Wellsville, Ohio, at Valley Hospice Care Center, Steubenville, Ohio.

Sis. Emmerling was born Nov. 26, 1943, in East Liverpool, Ohio, the daughter of the late Maurine E. “Hoss” and Ann (Laidlaw) Williamson.

Cynthia retired from GMP International Union in 1997 after 34 years of service. Finding retirement boring and always looking for a new challenge, she returned to work for Southern Local Schools as a bus driver. She retired in 2009 after 12 years of service.

In 2002 she was appointed to fill an unexpired term of office as Madison Township Clerk. She was elected in 2004 and served Madison Township in this capacity for a total of six years.

Having a deep and abiding love for animals, she also operated her own pet grooming business for many years. She was an avid equestrian who loved and owned horses most of her life.

A member of Yellow Creek Presbyterian Church in Wells-ville, she served as bulletin secretary for many years and as treasurer from 2009 until 2018.

Survivors include her husband, Charles “Pete” Emmerling; her daughter, Sara (Jeff) Koger; a granddaughter, Alexandra (Chris) Koger-Jackson; a grandson, Tyler Koger; and two great-grandsons, Liam and Hudson Jackson. Several cousins, nieces and nephews also survive.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a brother, Jay W. Williamson; a sister-in-law, June Ann Williamson Jr.; and her beloved Arabian horse, Image Maker.

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

Sis. DOLORES J. DEPIETRO • LODGE 153 •

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — The members of Lodge 153 sadly report the Aug. 12, 2025, passing of Sis. Dolores Josephine (Zlogar) DePietro, 93, after a long and full life.

Dolores was a 75-year member of Lodge 153 in Youngstown. Her parents and hersister, Jean (Zlogar) Kohler, were active in SNPJ all their



Sis. DOLORES DEPIETRO (153)

lives. Her mother worked in the kitchen at all Lodge events, and her father was a Lodge officer for many years. Her children and grandchildren are Lodge members, and soon her great-granddaughters and grandsons-in-law will also be SNPJ members.

She was active in Lodge 153, serving the Lodge in several officer roles, including president and Youth Circle Director. She also played piano at the Lodge Christmas parties for many years.

Dolores was born Jan. 23, 1932, in her grandmother’s living room in Struthers, Ohio, a daughter of the late Joseph and Mary (Glavic) Zlogar. Known to her school friends as “Lolly,” she grew up on Youngstown’s West Side and attended St. Brendan Catholic School before graduating from Chaney High School in 1950.

After graduation, Lolly worked for St. Brendan Church and School as secretary, where she also started the school’s first library and served as a substitute teacher. She kept lifelong friendships from her Chaney days and was instrumental in planning several reunions, including the 50th.

From a young age, Dolores loved music. She took piano lessons for many years, accompanied singers at prominent musical events, and taught students. She later played the accordion, a gift from her grandmother, Johanna (Glavic) Millosin.

She joined the Girard Mixed Chorus and Veseli Slovenci singing groups, where she discovered her passion for the button box accordion. Dolores traveled to Slovenia to buy her first button box, and went on to play with the Mahoning Valley Button Box Group, the Summit Jammers, and Joe Godina’s Sunday Afternoon Group at the Slovenian Home in Sharon, Pa.

Her artistic gifts extended beyond music. Lolly was a talented baker and cake decorator, making hundreds of cakes for family birthdays, communions, confirmations, anniversaries and other occasions.

Her pumpkin pies, potica and pizzelles were family favorites. In her younger days, she also decorated cakes professionally for Walter’s Golden Crust Bakery.

In addition, she had artistic ability in drawing, once creating an outdoor Nativity scene for her parents that won best Christmas display in Youngstown two years in a row.

Dolores was a proud breast cancer survivor, and she lived her life with strength, faith and determination. Her resilience inspired her family and friends.

Her husband of 36 years, Harry A. DePietro, whom she married Nov. 8, 1952, passed away April 4, 1989.

Dolores was also preceded in death by her son, Harry J. DePietro; her parents, Joseph and Mary Zlogar; her sister and brother-in-law, Jean and Andy Kohler; brothers-in-law Charles, Kay and Sam DePietro; sisters-in-law and their spouses, Teresa and Paul Pezdir, Jenny and Mike Capito, Julia and Pat Volpe, Josephine and Felix DiPaolo, Loretta and Nick Panno, and Mary Lou and Carl Fossaceca Sr.; and several nieces and nephews, including Ralph Capito, Jim Oldham, Mary Ann and Ed Maher, Roseann Volpe, Danny Kohler and Carl Fossaceca II.

She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Dolores “Dee-Dee” and Shawn Ansbro; her granddaughters, Mary Kate (Chris) Ansbro-Triplett and Jackie (Brad) Moore; her great-granddaughters, Evelyn and Eleanor Triplett; as well as many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, and great-great-nieces and nephews.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 153 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Sis. DePietro’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

Sis. BARBARA J. VATOVEC • LODGE 34 •

INDIANAPOLIS — The members of Lodge 34 sadly report the Aug. 18, 2025, passing of Sis. Barbara June (Kee) Vatovec, 76, at her home in Marion, Ill.

Sis. Vatovec was born Feb. 25, 1949, in Johnston City, Ill., a daughter of the late Orville and Imogene (Porter) Kee. On April 6, 1968, she married Tony Vatovec, who survives, in Johnston City, Ill.

Barbara was a secretary for State Farm Insurance and worked as a librarian at the Johnston City Library. She loved to write poetry and was a published author.

A 54-year SNPJ member, she was also an active member

of the Lions Club and volunteered for many worthy causes over the years.

She was also a singer-songwriter and musician. She played in a local band, the Por-Kees, and co-wrote the famous hit “The Big Muddy Monster.” She also played in the local group “The Round-Up Gals & Paul,” bringing joy to many people over the years with her talent.

She is survived by her husband, Tony Vatovec; two daughters, Jennifer Vatovec (David Slocavich) of Florida and Julie (Shaun) Hilliard of Johnston City; four grandchildren, Jessika (Zach) Reinert, Jenna Deaton, Alivia Hilliard and Max Hilliard; three great-grandchildren; a sister, Opal Avery; a brother, Jerry (Gayle) Kee; two sisters-in-law; a brother-in-law; and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two brothers, Vernon Kee and George Kee; two sisters, Vera Bishop and Arnetta Whitlock; her mother- and father-in-law; and three brothers-in-law.

A celebration of life for Sis. Vatovec was held Aug. 22 at the Scout Cabin in Johnston City.

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

Sis. VELMA M. KOVACICH • LODGE 218 •

DENVER — The members of Lodge 218 sadly report the Aug. 25, 2025, passing of Sis. Velma M. Kovacich, 94, four days prior to her 95th birthday, at Parkview Hospital, Pueblo, Colo.

Sis. Kovacich was born Aug. 29, 1930, in the small coal mining town of Delagua, Colo., near Trinidad, a daughter of the late John and Margaret Lipitz. Her father was a coal miner. The family moved to Pueblo when she was 10 years old.

Velma married Ed “Drake” Kovacich in the summer of 1947 when she was only 16. Soon after, they bought property near the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) in the Bojon Town section of Pueblo. She lived on School Street for 78 years until her passing.

A 77-year SNPJ member, she was also a faithful parishioner of St. Mary Church in Pueblo.

Velma worked concessions at Pueblo Greyhound Park for 13 years and for Pueblo City Pools before settling into the role of homemaker and grandma the past two decades.

A devoted mother and grandmother, Velma loved spending time with her daughter and grandson.

She was an avid sports fan and enjoyed attending Colorado Rockies and Denver Broncos games, and watching them on television. She also enjoyed working in her puzzle books. She loved family gatherings and became the family matriarch.

She is survived by her daughter, Shirley Kovacich; her grandson, Dylan Kovacich; and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of 60 years, Ed; and her siblings, John and Jennie.

A Funeral Mass was celebrated for Sis. Kovacich on Sept. 4 at St. Mary Church. She was laid to rest next to her husband in Roselawn Cemetery, Pueblo.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 218 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our sympathies to Sis. Kovacich’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

BRO. ROBERT S. SOLOMON • LODGE 776 •

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — The members of Lodge 776 sadly report the Nov. 6, 2025, passing of Bro. Robert Solomon, 86, of Petersburg, Ohio, at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Boardman, Ohio.

Bro. Solomon was born Jan. 20, 1939, in Youngstown, Ohio, a son of the late Peter and Helen (Tovtin) Solomon. Robert was a graduate of Struthers High School, served in the U.S.



Bro. ROBERT S. SOLOMON (776)

Army, and was a member at the Johnson Club.

He was among the charter members of SNPJ Lodge 776 at the SNPJ Recreation Center, having joined on July 1, 1975, making him a 50-year SNPJ member. He enjoyed bowling, going to car shows, and gardening. He also enjoyed polka and county music.

Robert is survived by his wife, Dorothy (Cetor) Solomon; two daughters, Sherri (Brian) Carder and Carol Solomon; his son, Robert Solomon; a brother, Martin Solomon; three grandchildren, Michael Solomon, Bryan Carder and Cassandra Solomon; and a great-grandchild, Liam Jordon.

Services for Bro. Solomon were held Nov. 14 at the Terry Cunningham Funeral Home, Bessemer, Pa. Bro. Solomon was cremated with plans for interment in Petersburg Cemetery at a later date.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 776 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Bro. Solomon’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

DEATHS REPORTED

For the month of December 2025

LODGE	NAME	DATE OF DEATH	CITY, STATE
6	Edward J. Polichnowski	10-23-2025	Washington, D.C.
6	Harold E. Looman	12-08-2025	Steubenville, Ohio
8	Shirley A. Kosic	02-13-2020	Orland Park, Ill.
8	Rose Borngraver	11-12-2025	Chicago, Ill.
31	John W. Mihalcin Jr.	02-03-2020	North Canton, Ohio
89	Michael J. Galbraith	11-18-2025	Mechanicsburg, Pa.
106	Richard C. McKinney	09-29-2025	Valencia, Pa.
106	Clifford Partin	11-21-2025	Oakdale, Pa.
106	Frank Wilczynski	12-10-2025	Aliquippa, Pa.
117	Mary Plassio	12-12-2025	Hutchinson, Pa.
120	John R. Mandril	10-18-2023	Gallup, N.M.
138	Geraldine M. Zeitler	07-25-2025	Erie, Pa.
138	Sharon Lynn Wallack	10-04-2025	Washington, Pa.
142	Dolores R. Furlan	10-29-2014	Euclid, Ohio
142	Louis E. Reho	08-19-2025	Painesville, Ohio
158	Eileen M. Kusar	11-10-2025	Austintown, Ohio
174	Debra J. Feather	11-06-2025	Latrobe, Pa.
218	Sharon Mae Peal	11-14-2025	Clinton, Mo.
371	John D. Crnich	10-10-2025	Butte, Mont.
559	Theresa A. Bolas-Zagore	05-04-2024	Delaware, Ohio
564	Delores M. Pavkovich	11-21-2025	Flint, Mich.
581	Edward Britz	08-18-2025	Pittston, Pa.
581	Josephine R. Cordier	11-29-2025	West Seneca, N.Y.
581	Frank L. Bergman	12-02-2025	Kane, Pa.
584	Robert L. Meganck	11-19-2025	Pewaukee, Wis.
643	Robert J. Sanders	09-13-2025	Girard, Ohio
715	Mary Jane T. Furar	04-04-2025	Pittsburgh, Pa.
721	Daisy L. Suznevich	07-07-2025	Midland, Pa.
723	Frank Roncevic	12-20-2024	Gig Harbor, Wash.
723	Arlene Johnston	10-11-2025	Thousand Oaks, Calif.
729	Robert W. Wojtkowski	08-10-2025	Monessen, Pa.
749	Lillianna S. Woodall	10-30-2025	Toney, Ala.
782	Deborah I. Winger	12-08-2025	Oil City, Pa.

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

PROSVETA Crossword
SNOW DAY (#0126) solution

E	P	I	C			M	O	B				B	O	A	R			
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PROSVETA 2026 Publication Dates

JANUARY 2026

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27	28	29	30	31			

Publication dates are highlighted in black boxes; deadline dates are circled. The deadline for submissions is noon on the dates circled above. Submissions may be mailed to PROSVETA, 247 West Allegheny Road, Imperial, PA 15126; faxed to (724) 695-1555; e-mailed to prosveta@snpj.com; or submitted via the Publications section of the SNPJ website, snpj.org.

Lodge 142 readies for Valentine’s Day and the Kurentovanje Festival

by KARA MARUSZAK
Lodge 142 Vice President

CLEVELAND — Greetings from Lodge 142! The holiday season is now behind us and spring is only a few weeks away.

Lodge 142 concluded 2025 with a Holiday Lights Tour that featured some of the very best light displays in Northeast Ohio, including the Lunar Family Lights, which won the season premiere of the ABC hit holiday decorating competition “The Great Christmas Light Fight” and the episode’s grand prize of \$50,000. The Lunar Family Lights consisted of more than one million Christmas lights and took more than 3,000 hours of work to put up. It was certainly something to see!

The final stop on the tour was Public Square in downtown Cleveland, which featured an ice rink, a 50-foot tree with synchronized lights set to three original songs by local artists, and a half-million additional lights throughout the Square.

A winter storm didn’t keep attendees away, and everyone enjoyed the lights and festivities. We thank SNPJ Region 3 Vice President Don Srnick and his wife, Sue, for attending, and congratulate them on winning the Christmas trivia quiz.

The Lodge held its first meeting of 2026 on Jan. 18 at Lodge Secretary/Treasurer Carol Bacnik’s home. In addition to the Lodge meeting, Youth Circle 94 members and friends gathered to make

Valentine’s Day cards for the residents of the Slovene Home for the Aged. After the meeting, the adults joined in to help make a total of nearly 100 cards.

The day was filled with crafting supplies, pizza and fraternalism. During the event, the Lodge signed up a new member, Mila Bacnik, and we’re excited to welcome her to SNPJ!

We would also like to congratulate John E. Drobnick for outliving his life insurance policy with SNPJ. John purchased his policy in 1948, and at that time SNPJ was 44 years old, a stamp cost three cents, and a loaf of bread was 14 cents. While a lot has changed since then, the SNPJ remains true.

Looking ahead, Lodge 142 is once again participating in the annual Cleveland Kurentovanje Festival parade, which will be held at noon on Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Slovenian National Home on St. Clair. The parade lines up at 11 a.m. and steps off promptly at noon. We invite everyone to participate and show how much love is in every Slovenian!

Finally, our next meeting will be held Monday, March 23, starting at 5:30 p.m. at Carol Bacnik’s home. We will be electing our Lodge delegates and alternates to attend the 33rd SNPJ National Convention. We also plan to discuss a summer outing. Continue to watch our Facebook page (SNPJ Lodge 142) for updates. We hope to see you at an upcoming event!



Many of the attendees on the Lodge 142 Holiday Lights Tour checked out “Sleigh,” a holiday pop-up bar located in JACK Casino, where Lodge member Mark Maruszak serves as the beverage director.



In January, SNPJ Lodge 142 and Youth Circle 94 members and friends were busy creating Valentine’s Day cards for the residents of the Slovene Home for the Aged.



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 33 rd Quadrennial Convention
Sept. 4-6	National SNPJ Days



SNPJ Lodge 786 and Lodge 723 members, along with their guests, displayed their Slovenian pride during the Jan. 3 Los Angeles Kings hockey game at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

SNPJ members turn out for Slovenia’s NHL superstar Anže Kopitar as his retirement nears

by TERESA KOCI
Lodge 786 Secretary/Treasurer

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. – With the retirement of Slovenian Los Angeles Kings star Anže Kopitar on the horizon, 34 members and guests from Lodge 786, Lodge 723 and Slovenian Union of America Branch #100 gathered for a memorable evening at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on Jan. 3.

Despite a rainy night, the group was rewarded with an unforgettable experience. During warm-ups, members were granted access to an area near the glass, where Anže graciously flipped a hockey puck over the boards to one of our youngest attendees, a member of the Bugar family from Livermore, Calif., who was proudly holding a Slovenian flag. It was a special moment that created an incredible memory.

The evening also included an exciting “tunnel experience,” allowing our group to get up close and cheer on Anže and the entire Kings team as they took the ice against the highly ranked Minnesota Wild. As the arena echoed with chants of “Go Kings Go!,” the Kings’ first goal was assisted by Anže, who delivered a precise pass across the crease to teammate Adrian Kempe.

The game remained close throughout the night, and the Kings ultimately secured a thrilling 5-4 victory in an overtime shootout.

While we didn’t take our shirts off or drink beverages

out of our shoes, the proud display of Slovenian shirts, flags, homemade signs and caps certainly caught the attention of the Kings’ staff. Our enthusiastic presence was recognized when our group was featured on the massive jumbo video board hanging above the ice – an exciting moment that drew cheers from our section and further highlighted the strong Slovenian pride represented in the arena that night.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who attended this unforgettable event. Members traveled from as far as Virginia and Northern California, with attendees ranging in age from just 3 years old and up.

A special thank you goes to Cathy Udovch for recommending this memorable event, assisting with planning, coordinating with the Kings’ organization to arrange the tunnel experience, and securing special collectibles for our group.

Be sure to mark your calendar for the highly anticipated Lodge 786 event, the SNPJ Day Revival, on Saturday, April 11, from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Phoenix Club in Brea, Calif. For more details and reservations, please reach out to Teresa Koci at teresamkoci@gmail.com or call/text (949) 246-1983. An event flyer will be circulated once details have been finalized following the Lodge 786 meeting in January. Be sure to come for good food, music and dancing!



The SNPJ Kopitar fans remained in the stands until the arena was nearly empty.



Slovenian **Anže Kopitar**, the soon-to-be-retired L.A. Kings center, flips a puck to the Bugar family children who were holding a Slovenian flag at the glass during pregame warm-ups.



The SNPJ Slovenian group was featured on the overhead jumbo screen several times throughout the game.



Lodge 786 members **FRED MLAKAR** (left) and **KEN KOCI** donned Kopitar Slovenia hockey jerseys in preparation for the Kings game.

Whodunit?

Supper and suspense, in Gatsby fashion, at Imperial Lodge 106

by DOUG HUGHEY
Allegheny West Magazine

IMPERIAL, Pa. — Flappers and fedoras fluttered into the SNPJ Lodge 106 Club on Nov. 1. Members traded in their Halloween masks for pearls and pinstripes to attend a Roaring ’20s murder-mystery supper worthy of Gatsby himself – if Gatsby had been from [the Imperial area] and knew how to organize a drawing.

The evening’s plot? The untimely demise of a publishing magnate. The mission? Find the culprit. The odds? Well, as organizer Brian Cain quipped, “Could be me, could be you. We don’t know who it is.”

With entertainers from the Murder Mystery Company whispering clues table-to-

table and selecting a handful of unsuspecting guests to play parts, no alibi was safe, and no feather boa went unruffled.

Behind the scenes, a committee of five – Trish Blazer, Terry Cain, Vicky Bozic, John Tuite and Hannah Chauvet – conspired not only to pull off the caper, but to raise funds for the club’s kids’ Christmas party in December. Wine bottles and a football signed by [former Pittsburgh Steelers running back] Jerome Bettis were auctioned off to fund the children’s event.

A sellout crowd, sharp costumes and just enough scandal? Consider the case closed.

Plans are already underway for the next event, and club



photo by Doug Hughey

SNPJ Lodge 106 and club members **Vicki Hatton**, **Tricia Blazer**, **JOHN TUITE** (106), **Terry Cain** and **HANNAH CHAUVET** (106) organized a 1920s-style murder mystery dinner at the club in November. The Lodge 106 Club is hoping to hold similar events in the future.

members say they’re hoping to open up these types of events to the public soon.

For more information about the SNPJ Lodge 106 Club, including upcoming events, visit www.snpj106.com.

This article, originally published in the November/December 2025 issue of Allegheny West Magazine, West Allegheny Edition, was reprinted with permission from Allegheny West Magazine, Doug Hughey, Editor and Publisher, Hughey Publications, LLC.

Out Fontana Way

by PAMELA RICHTAR PANDZA
Lodge 723 Vice President

FONTANA, Calif. — No January fires in Southern California this year! Some rain. Some sliding hillsides where the land was disturbed a year ago.

Where I live, in the Mojave Desert east of Palm Springs, the strong winds have not yet materialized. And since my return to the area in October, the weather had been mainly lovely. As a bonus, due to some well-timed winter rain, there may be a great cactus and wildflower bloom this year.

Having never lived in cold climes, nor experienced snow, ice and frigid temperatures, I see news coverage of the Midwest and eastern U.S. regions and shake my head as to how folks endure such weather.

But if you imagine what it's like in the desert in the summer, you would begin vigorous head shaking. Up to 125-plus degrees Fahrenheit. And as for the old adage, *"but it's a dry heat,"* yes, but it's brutal and relentless. For a sample, put your head in a hot oven for a moment and imagine living in the oven with little relief even after sundown. Then there's a brief period in September when monsoon conditions do bring humidity up from the Gulf of Mexico and, along with it, the infamous odor from Salton Sea, the largest lake in California.

Salton Sea was formed inadvertently in 1906 when the Colorado River, swollen by floods, breached an irrigation canal built by the California Development Company, pouring into the dry Salton Sink basin for two years. The company had begun diverting water from the Colorado River through the Alamo Canal to support agriculture in the Imperial Valley.

The "sea" persists today as a terminal lake receiving water from agricultural runoff and local rivers, making it a saline environment with no natural outlet.

When I was young, it was a resort-style location and a boating and water-skiing mecca. Now it is surrounded by the remains of nostalgic billboards from the period, and some areas are still favored by specific character types who form unique communities. No swimmers and few boats can be seen, though shorelines are stopovers for some migrating birds. The saline content of Salton Sea is very high and a minimum of life manages to survive in the water. Development has edged westward toward Palm Springs.

Many retired folks from this region live elsewhere during the summer, my husband and I included. We spend most of the summer period in Croatia and Slovenia. But come November, desert life beckons.

This year in Europe we finally explored the Soča River Valley of Slovenia. I thought maybe the praise I heard was over amplified. No! It is absolutely breathtaking scenery. I urge you to visit, especially if you are still fit to hike, kayak, and enjoy other vigorous sports. If you are a sports spectator at this point, still go visit. Beautiful to experience.

When everyone's summer adventures wrapped up in 2025 and October began, Fontana Lodge 723 held its first meeting of the season at the Ronald McDonald House. Those attending were updated on financial matters, members' milestones, and news of several current and former members who had passed away.

The final meeting of 2025 was held Dec. 7 at Napoli's Restaurant. A detailed report of financial business was made, along with an update on the mission to clear up the issues that had arisen.

The officers for Lodge 723 were nominated to again serve in 2026. They agreed to continue their work. Action was taken to share sponsorship of California SNPJ Day with the Orange County Lodge. The date is set for April 11 with more information to come.

The first meeting of the current year was held at Napoli's on Jan. 11. We were happy to see the usual attendees and the return of Joanna Farrar (née Plese), thanks to Marcia Leathers' encouragement. We missed Fran Ooms who was scheduled to attend.

The highlight of the meeting was a surprise announcement by President Sherri Black that the financial issues with Chase Bank were satisfactorily resolved. A few details to allow us to fully move forward need attention, but the big roadblock was removed as an obstacle for the clear status of our Lodge. A toast was made to the results of long, hard work by Sherri, Frank and Diana to reach this point.

Regular reports were made regarding funds, donations, the SNPJ Young Adult Conference in June, the SNPJ National Convention in August, and other upcoming events. The 95th anniversary of SNPJ Lodge 723 this year was announced and applauded.

Calendars were dispersed with the photo of Ellen Koci gracing the pages. Ellen is the fifth "California girl" to be named Miss SNPJ. Others were Nancy Skiba (1966), Mary Ann Racic Vucinic (1987), Teresa Mlakar Koci (1989, and the mother of Ellen Koci), and Lisa Videgar Lucas (1990).

Lodge 723 associates who joined with other California Lodge members at the Kings hockey game in Los Angeles in January reported on that event. Anže Kopitar from Jesenice, Slovenia, the captain of the team, is scheduled to retire at the end of this season after 20 years with the Kings.

Our group participated in the "tunnel experience" which allowed us to cheer the players on as they exited the locker room for the ice. To make the day more memorable, the Kings won the game after a tie following overtime led to a shoot-out, which is always exciting.

Kopitar and the Kings have supported our other Lodge meeting location, Ronald McDonald House, with a hockey-themed room for young patients and their families to enjoy.

Following the meeting, Frank and Diana Rote took a big collection of aluminum tabs and a check for \$1,000



With a toast of "Cheers, to the future of Lodge 723!," Fontana Lodge members recognized their Lodge's 95th anniversary in January.



The 2026 SNPJ Lodge 723 officers installed at the January meeting: (from left) auditors **ANGELA LEATHERS, MARIA SEGO** and **MARCIA LEATHERS**; Treasurer **FRANK ROTE**; Secretary **DIANA ROTE**; Vice President **PAMELA PANDZA**; President **SHERRI BLACK**; and Sergeant-at-Arms **JESSE LEATHERS**.



Lodge 723 officers **FRANK** and **DIANA ROTE** presented a pop top certificate and a \$1,000 check to the Ronald McDonald House in Loma Linda, Calif.

from Lodge 723 to the Ronald McDonald House in Loma Linda, Calif. We have been happy to support this worthy charity that allows families to have accommodations near the Loma Linda Children's Hospital during a child's treatment period.

The next Lodge 723 meeting will be held Sunday, Feb. 22, starting at 1 p.m. at Napoli's. Lodge Secretary Diana Rote asks that you let her know in good time if you plan to attend so we can have proper arrangements at the restaurant.

Make sure to also watch for more information about the California SNPJ Day on April 11 at the Phoenix Club, and don't forget the Pust celebration (Slovenian Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras) in San Francisco on Feb. 28.

Additionally, check out our Lodge Facebook page which includes information about local activities and events, traditions, and experiences in Slovenia and with the Slovene diaspora population around the world. Our dedicated administrator, Bojan Savric, is always happy to have photos, videos, and accounts of Lodge and Slovene Hall events to add to the historical collection.

The Winter Olympics this February will be held in the Northern Italy area around Milan, not really so far from the Slovenian section of the Alps. You can watch for Slovenians' success in Alpine

skiing, snowboarding, biathlon and cross-country, and Nordic (especially the Prevc ski jumping family).

Finally, in the arts, Slovenian guitarist Mak Grgić has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance. The album "Slavic Sessions" is a collaborative project with Polish guitarist Mateusz Kowalski. The awards ceremony is scheduled Sunday, Feb. 1, in Los Angeles.

Your Lodge 723 leadership team wishes all in SNPJland a productive and rewarding year ahead. We look forward to your presence at the Feb. 22 meeting. There should be no snow squalls to impede your way to Napoli's in Loma Linda. You're sure to find a tempting item on the menu and you won't even have to load the dishwasher, let alone do any scrubbing.



SNPJ Lodge 581 officers for 2026: (from left) auditor **JOHN MOORE**, President **PATRICIA MOORE**, Secretary/Treasurer **MARCIA BLEGGI**, and auditor **ROBERT MOSIER**. Absent from photo: auditor John Troha.

St. Marys Lodge 581 sets a spring activity schedule

LODGE 581 SPRING
FROM PAGE 1

interested should contact Marcia Bleggi or Pat Moore to register. Bring a rolling pin and an apron.

Jackson Road will certainly be needing a clean-up by spring. Plans are scheduled for April 11 with a rain date of April 18. If you want to come and help in any way, just show up at the Troha's Camp on Jackson Road in St. Marys.

We serve breakfast and lunch, and help is needed at the pavilion to prepare the food. Others walk and clean up, or drive to pick up the crew. Students get credit for school service hours. PA Cleanways will provide gloves, vests and garbage bags. Special thanks to John, Shawnee and Sundance Troha for organizing this activity.

We're also planning to hold a dinner in April to honor Lodge 581 members who have reached the milestones of 50, 60 or 70 years as an SNPJ member. More

information will follow.

Lodge 581 will hold three more meetings this year, and we're looking forward to members attending the meetings which are held on Sundays at 12:30 p.m. A dance follows each meeting from 2 to 5 p.m., sponsored by the North Central Slovenian Polka Boosters. The public is invited to these dances, which are scheduled nearly every two weeks in 2026.

Lodge meetings are scheduled April 26 and Aug. 30 at Wildwoods in St. Marys, and on Nov. 29 at the Kersey Firemen's in Kersey, Pa.

Lodge 581 shares our excitement as the new year begins! Hopefully you will be able to attend our activities and give us some ideas for new activities. Enroll new members by recommending they purchase SNPJ insurance and annuities.

Contact Lodge Secretary/Treasurer Marcia Klancer Bleggi at (814) 335-4983 or President Pat Moore at (814) 598-2269 for additional information.

SNPJ Region 1 extending appreciation while raising funds for Pretty in Pink

REGION 1 APPRECIATION
FROM PAGE 1

Speaking of food, come hungry! A wide variety of traditional Slovenian favorites will be available for purchase, including savory pork with sauerkraut and potatoes, hearty Slovenian sausage sandwiches, beans that eat like a meal, comforting *haluški*, and classic Slovenian potato salad.

Be sure to save room for dessert, featuring beloved treats such as *kremšnita* (Lake Bled cake), flaky strudel and homemade potica.

To round out the experience, refreshments will be

available, including beer, wine, mixed drinks and soda, ensuring there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Whether you come to dance, dine, or simply reconnect with friends old and new, the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance promises a warm, joyful afternoon celebrating community and culture. Mark your calendar, bring your friends and family, and join us for a truly festive Slovenian gathering – you won't want to miss it!

Proceeds benefit the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges Pretty in Pink fundraiser for cancer.

Lodge 776 members elect officers, enjoy holiday festivities in December

by RICH DOMBROSKY
Lodge 776 Recording Secretary

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — Lodge 776 members held their annual Christmas party on Dec. 7 at the SNPJ Recreation Center. A total of 23 people were in attendance and welcomed our newest member, Raegan Trosky. Welcome, Raegan!

New Lodge officers were also elected. George Trosky was elected as the new vice president; all other officers remain the same as in 2025.



SNPJ Lodge 776 members welcomed **RAEGAN TROSKY**, the newest addition to the Lodge, during their holiday party and meeting in December.



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