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briefly

Home Office closed for the Society anniversary

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The SNPJ Home Office will be closed Monday, April 6, in observance of the Society’s 122nd anniversary, which we celebrate each year on April 6. Normal office hours, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., will resume Tuesday, April 7.

Convention delegate elections set for Lodge 31

SHARON, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 31 members are invited to a dinner meeting on Thursday, April 23, at Muscarellas, 500 W. Main St., Sharpsville, PA 16150. The meeting will begin at 5 p.m. Members will order from the menu; the Lodge will pay for the cost of the meals.

Election of delegates to the SNPJ Quadrennial Convention will be held and the Lodge’s charitable donations for 2026 will be decided. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP by phoning Barb Bogolin at (724) 347-1197 by April 15.

BARB BOGOLIN
Lodge 31 Secretary/Treasurer

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!

THE DEADLINE

The next two PROSVETA issue dates are May 1 and June 1. All material must be received by noon on Monday, April 13, for the May 1 issue, and by Monday, May 18, for the June 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.

Deadlines for nominations of National Board candidates, proposed SNPJ Bylaws changes

by KAREN A. PINTAR
SNPJ National Secretary/COO

IMPERIAL, Pa. — In accordance with the SNPJ Bylaws, Sec. 12. Eligibility and Qualifications:

“A candidate for the National Board, excluding Executive Committee, shall be elected by the convention from among the members of the Society, whether present at the convention or not.

“A candidate for the National Board, ex-

cluding Executive Committee, must have been a member of the Society for at least three (3) continuous years prior to the convention and have attended at least two of the regular Lodge meetings held in the twelve (12) months prior to the meeting of the election of delegates, and must have signed his or her name in the Lodge attendance book or have otherwise been recorded by the Lodge as in attendance.

“A candidate for the National Board shall

submit his or her name and such additional information as is required by the National Board to the National Secretary’s office no later than 45 days prior to the beginning of the convention. Only candidates that have done so and whose eligibility has been verified by the Executive Committee will be eligible for nomination. No other nominations will be accepted.”

SEE CONVENTION DEADLINES
ON PAGE 5

SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center celebrating its 50th year in 2026

by KATHY PAULENICH (776)
SNPJ Heritage Center Director

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — Spring is finally here, and we’re getting excited about all those outdoor activities opening up.

The SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center Committee has met via Zoom twice to prepare for the upcoming season. We will be opening the museum and gift shop at the SNPJ Recreation Center on Saturday, May 23 (Memorial Day weekend), with hours of operation from 1 to 5 p.m. We hope to have the gift shop fully stocked by that weekend.

For those of you who reside in the Washington, D.C., area, Heritage Center Committee members will be returning to the Slovenian Embassy on Saturday, May 9, to participate in the EU Open House program. Kathy Paulenich, Ed Robich and Patty Candela will represent the Heritage Center with our traveling museum. Come and enjoy the different displays of our Slovenian heritage. EU Open House hours are 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

This year, the SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the grand opening of the first “Heritage Room”

held in 1976.

The history of the SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center began when delegates to the 20th SNPJ Quadrennial Convention – held Sept. 16-21, 1974, in Cleveland – approved a Resolution recommending that a Heritage Room be established at the SNPJ Recreation Center to promote the culture of Slovenia and the history of SNPJ.

A committee of volunteers was formed in March 1975; the balance of the committee was filled in June 1975. The first members of the Heritage Room Committee included Joe Cvetas, John Fabec, Bill Grmek, Ray Klimchuk, Al and Mary Roginski, Doris Sadar, Tony Sensky and Jennie Zaman.

This committee met with the Recreation Center Committee during the summer of 1975 to select a suitable location for the Heritage Room, outline the displays, organize materials and review operations. The grand opening of the Heritage Room was planned for July 4, 1976. However, the grand opening ceremonies were postponed and the Heritage Room finally opened to the public on Sept. 19, 1976.

SEE HERITAGE CENTER
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The SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center, formerly known as the “Heritage Room” at its inception, has welcomed tens of thousands of visitors and numerous dignitaries from Slovenia over the course of its 50-year history. This photo was taken in the mid- to late 1990s when the Heritage Center was located in the lower level of the SNPJ Recreation Center main building.

Spirit, generosity set the tone for the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance

by MAURY SINAN (782)
SNPJ Region 1 Vice President

YUKON, Pa. — *Hvala* (thank you)! With full hearts and deep gratitude, we say *hvala* to the Yukon Slovenian Hall for graciously hosting our SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance. The hall was filled with music, laughter, friendship and the unmistakable warmth of SNPJ pride. It was truly a celebration of heritage, community,

and the spirit that has sustained our organization for generations.

Our deepest thanks go to the many dedicated volunteers who made the day possible: Florence Gradisek, Morgan Sinan, Megan Colleen, Kathleen Kelly Sinan, Pam Gradisek Ianitto and Catherine Samsa. Your time, energy and

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Those in attendance at the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance couldn’t refuse the drawing tickets sold by KATHLEEN SINAN (782) and her daughters, former SNPJ Miss Activity **MEGAN DWYER** [left] and Miss SNPJ 2024 **MORGAN SINAN** [right].

Lodge 581 will honor longtime members at an April 25 lunch

by MARCIA KLANCER BLEGGI
Lodge 581 Secretary/Treasurer

ST. MARYS, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 581 volunteers had a busy and enjoyable day on March 16 baking poticas and apple strudels.

The group started early in the morning to prepare the dough and grind walnuts. The bakers arrived at about 10 a.m. to start rolling the dough, mix the filling, and prepare the nut rolls for baking. Several volunteers served as dish washers and apple peelers for the strudel.

The poticas will be sold to earn money for the Jerry Troha Scholarship Fund; the apple strudels were made for more practice and for our lunch dessert.

While working, the group enjoyed a Slovenian lunch and compared recipes. We all realized that everyone thinks their potica is the best – and that no two are the same. While in Slovenia, we discovered that every potica is a little different, and everyone’s is the best!

SNPJ Lodge 581 members, North Central Pennsylvania Slovene Polka Boosters members, Pennsylvania Cleanways, Friends of Jackson Road, and various volunteers are

SEE LODGE 581 HONORS
ON PAGE 5

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

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Vada Shay Miles
Born July 30, 2024
Strabane, Pa., Lodge 138

The members of Lodge 138 welcome Vada Shay Miles as the newest addition to the Lodge. Vada is the daughter of Albert (138) and Farrah Miles, and the granddaughter of Jim and Karen Maier (138). She loves her family and puppies, and can’t wait to make lifelong friends at SNPJ. We welcome Vada to the Society and extend our best wishes to her entire family.

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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 () _____

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Complete and return to:
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Florida Days open the centennial celebration for Lodge 603

by JEANNETTE HUMPHREY
Lodge 603

SAMSULA, Fla. — The SNPJ Lodge 603 Hall, located in beautiful downtown Samsula, welcomed a full house Feb. 20-21 as Lodge members celebrated the annual Florida SNPJ Days/Samsula Polka Festival. The event, co-chaired by Ruth Benedict and yours truly, marked the start of the 100th anniversary for SNPJ Lodge 603.

Our Lodge was chartered Dec. 1, 1926, with just a few members and has since grown to more than 500 members. At present, plans are to celebrate the anniversary on Dec. 5; we hope you can join us.

Many thanks to Ashley Benedict who took charge of the kitchen during the festival and kept all the great food flowing to festival attendees. She sent out thank you notes to those who volunteered.

We were so delighted to have Christian Razpotnik lead our jam sessions throughout the weekend. He arranged to have nine musicians open our celebration. The Lodge hall filled quickly and the music was well received. Christian made a video of our heritage and Lodge history, and it played on the television during the festival.

We welcomed Miss SNPJ 2026 Ellen Koci from California. Ellen arrived very early and her hotel room wasn't available, so Christian picked her up at the airport and she spent several hours sleeping at George and Ruth Benedict's home. Ellen volunteered to assist on both days of our festival by selling drawing tickets and helping to award the winners.

On Saturday we again had a full house and enjoyed the music performed by Frank Moravcik. Everyone enjoys his entertaining music. Frank drove down from Cleveland to perform, staying to play on Sunday for the American Polish Club dance.

On Thursday night, yours truly hosted a dinner and reception for SNPJ National Secretary Karen Pintar, her husband Ken, and some friends from Pennsylvania. Lodge of-

ficers and several members joined us for the welcome dinner. On Saturday, Karen announced that she will be retiring at the end of this year. We, along with the entire Society, will truly miss her and the exceptional service she has provided for SNPJ all these years.

We also welcomed several SNPJ National Board members, and a large group of members and friends from Pennsylvania who come every year to support our Lodge.

Karen presented our Lodge with a check from the Society for conducting cultural/heritage events throughout the year, along with a plaque recognizing the 100th anniversary of Lodge 603.

Special recognition was extended to George and Ruth Benedict for 56 years of volunteer service to Lodge 603 and the Society. George said that when they married, he and Ruth started attending Lodge meetings; since then, they found themselves volunteering all these many years.

George also gave a brief history of Lodge 603 and explained how Samsula became a community of special interests among people of Slovenian descent. At one time there were 58 Slovenian family farms in Samsula. Today we have three small farms that have survived and continue to grow quality produce.

Our Lodge thanks everyone who attended Florida SNPJ Days, and we hope you will continue to support this event for as long as we can host. Lodge 603 is thankful for all who come out to volunteer to help with our events, and for those who donate as well.

We're looking forward to representing our Lodge at the Quadrennial Convention in August. Our delegates to this Convention are Rhonda Tesaro, Ruth Benedict and yours truly.

Lodge 603 has added a new member, Leslie Clark. Timothy Hastings has been recognized as a 50-year member, and Michael Bestic as a 60-year member.

Get well wishes are extended to Rudy Pleterski, Alice Benedict, Vice President Jerry Hafner and George



SNPJ members from Lodges across the country made the trip to Samsula Lodge 603 in February to enjoy the annual Florida SNPJ Days celebration – along with some warmer weather!



During Florida SNPJ Days, held Feb. 20-21 at the Samsula Lodge 603 Hall, a number of musicians performed for the jam sessions arranged by **CHRISTIAN RAZPOTNIK (center)**.

Benedict.

Marcy Galbreath hosted a celebration of life for her brother and sister-in-law, Roy and Judy Galbreath, on March 7. The Lodge hall was filled with attendees, many of whom shared memories of fishing and hunting adventures they had experienced with Roy. He was a champion Mullet fish smoker, and has passed the torch onto Stuart Hughes.

Hannah Jones served as chairwoman for a St. Patrick's Day dinner

dance held March 15. Guests were served a corned beef dinner while listening to the music of Gene Smith and Walter Shave. Hannah extends her thanks everyone who came out to help with the event, and to those who donated the gifts that were awarded. Former Lodge President Joe Benedict won the cash gift and donated it back to the Lodge.

Until next time, we wish all of you a happy Easter and look forward to seeing you at our Lodge hall.

SNPJ Region 1 extends appreciation at March dance in Yukon



Yukon Slovenian Hall/Club Manager **Linda Pocratski** hauls out a tray of strudel served at the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance.



Dancers enjoyed the music of Polka Classics during the SNPJ Region 1 Appreciation Dance at the Yukon Slovenian Hall.

REGION 1 APPRECIATION
FROM PAGE 1

love for SNPJ were evident in every detail. Events like this don't just happen – they are built by caring hands and generous hearts.

Hvala as well for the beautiful basket donations from Eve Wingard Johnson, Herminie Lodge 87, Yukon Lodge 729, Pam Gradisek Ianitto, the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges, and SNPJ Region 1 Vice President Maury Sinan and Kathleen Sinan. Your contributions added excitement and generosity to the day while supporting meaningful causes.

We are sincerely grateful to our Slovenian and polka radio friends who help keep our music and culture alive: Prime Time Polkas with Jerry Zagar, Steve Novosel, and The American-Slovene Hour with Sharon Ujcich. Your dedication ensures that the sounds of Slovenia continue to reach homes and hearts across our communities.

Special appreciation goes to Yukon Slovenian Hall/Club Manager Linda Pocratski and Joann Krance for all of their incredible help. You are truly amazing! Your professionalism and hospitality helped make the dance seamless and welcoming.

We were honored by the support and presence of SNPJ National President/CEO Joseph C. Evanish who attended and shared encouraging words. Leadership matters – and we are grateful for yours!

Of course, the heartbeat of any dance is the music. Thank you to Dink Makowski's Polka Classics for their fantastic performance. Their passion on the bandstand brings everything together and reminds us why polka music is so special. A special call-out to Eddie Rodick for performing with them – what an incredible addition to an already outstanding sound!

A very special thank you to our daughters: Megan, a former SNPJ Miss Activity, and Morgan, Miss SNPJ 2024. Your leadership, grace and willingness to step in wherever needed meant more than words can express. We truly couldn't have run the dance without you.

And to my partner in crime, Kathleen Sinan: Thank you for the homemade strudel, *kremšnita* (Lake Bled cake), potica and Slovenian beans, and for keeping both the kitchen and me moving. Your love and dedication shine through everything you do.

Most importantly, thank you to everyone who attended. You are amazing. You are the reason SNPJ has proudly stood strong since 1904. Because of your support, the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges annual Pretty in Pink fundraiser will receive a special donation, along with Yukon Lodge 729 and the Yukon Slovenian Hall.

Supporting our community and caring for one another is what SNPJ is all about. Kathleen and I say “*hvala*” from the bottom of our hearts.

Up-and-Coming...

A look at events planned by the Slovene National Benefit Society

- 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 Valencic at 1-800-843-7675 ext. 144, or e-mail cvalencic@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

The hidden costs of funeral expenses

Today, the average cost of a traditional funeral in the United States can range from \$8,000 to \$12,000 or more, depending on the services selected. What surprises people is that the costs are made up of several individual items, each adding to the final total. If you are comparing pre-paid funerals to life insurance, there are a few realities about pre-paid funeral plans that many families don't fully understand when they first sit down with a funeral director. Funeral homes aren't being dishonest necessarily, but the downsides are often not emphasized. Here are four important issues people should know:

1. You Are Usually Locked Into One Funeral Home

When you pre-pay a funeral, the contract is typically with a specific funeral home. That means your services are arranged through that location. The problem is, if you later move away to be with family or prefer a different funeral home later... the pre-paid plan may not transfer easily, or at all. Sometimes funds can be transferred, but often the new funeral home may not honor the same pricing or package.

2. Prices Are Locked for Services – Not Always Everything

Funeral directors often say pre-paying locks in today's prices, which is partly true. However, many contracts only lock in their services, not every cost involved with a funeral. Items that can still change include cemetery plot prices, opening and closing of the grave, vaults or grave liners, obituaries, flowers, clergy fees, death certificates, etc. These items can add thousands of dollars that weren't included in the prepaid plan. Families sometimes believe everything is covered, only to discover additional costs later.

3. If the Funeral Costs Less, the Family May Not Receive the Difference

Another detail many people overlook is what happens if the funeral ends up costing less than what was prepaid. Depending on the contract, the funeral home may keep the difference, funds may only be used for additional funeral services, or the money may not go to the family.

4. Funeral Home Financial Risk

If the funeral home closes or sells to a new owner, the contract can become complicated depending on how the funds were structured. A new owner may not honor the agreement.

The Solution: Whole Life Insurance

Life insurance provides a cash benefit paid to a beneficiary when the insured dies, or even split among more than one person. You purchase a policy and name a beneficiary, and the money can be used for anything. When you pass away, the death benefit is paid directly to them, usually tax-free. There are several advantages to choosing this route instead of a pre-paid funeral.

- 1. Complete flexibility:** Your family can use the money for funeral costs, medical bills, mortgage or debts, travel for family members – all itemized final expenses.
- 2. Family keeps remaining money:** If the funeral costs \$9,000 and the policy is \$15,000, the family keeps the remaining \$6,000.
- 3. Portability:** You can move anywhere or change funeral homes without affecting the benefit.
- 4. Often paid quickly:** Once a death certificate and claim form are provided by the beneficiary, many policies can pay within a week or two.
- 5. Protection against the unexpected:** Heaven forbid you unexpectedly have a terminal illness earlier than expected, the death benefit can be two, four, or 10 times the amount you paid into it. For example, you buy a policy and four years later you pass away. With a pre-paid funeral, you get back dollar-for-dollar paid. But with life insurance, you may have only paid in 25 to 50 percent of the actual death benefit received by your family.

Conclusion: Whole Life Insurance provides more upside than a pre-paid funeral. At SNPJ, whole life policies are designed to provide flexibility in how the coverage is paid for as well. Members can choose options such as paying the policy with a single premium, over 10 years, over 20 years, or until age 65 depending on your current age. Regardless of the payment schedule selected, the benefit itself continues for the insured's entire lifetime. That means once the policy is in place, the protection remains until the day it is needed. The downside? You must be able to qualify for it. It's like a fire extinguisher... once the fire starts, it's too late to go buy one.

For more information on how to plan ahead for your final expenses, or to see if you qualify, contact the Home Office at 1-800-843-7675 or e-mail snpjmarketing@snpj.com.

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



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Wine Act will protect winemakers, vineyards

LJUBLJANA (STA) — In mid-February, Slovenia's National Assembly adopted the Wine Act which aims to help preserve vineyards and establish a comprehensive register of winegrowers and winemakers.

According to Agriculture Minister Mateja Čalušič, "[The Wine Act] is a comprehensive and systemic regulation of the wine-growing and winemaking sector which clearly expresses the country's awareness of its economic, environmental and social importance."

The goal of the new law is to set up a complete and traceable register of winegrowers and winemakers to establish more effective monitoring, risk management and equal conditions for all. "This is not just a normative upgrade, but a clear commitment to implementing the register as a foundational tool for managing the sector," Minister Čalušič said.

The law regulates the planting and maintenance of vineyards, allows for restructuring of already uprooted vineyards, and establishes a transitional one-year period for registration of vineyards planted without a license. It also maintains the quality classifications of Slovenian wines with geographical indications.

"If we want Slovenian wine to remain synonymous with quality, we must have the courage to set clear rules and implement them," Minister Čalušič said, adding that the monitoring provisions are not meant to be a repressive measure, but rather to protect the reputation of Slovenian wine and honest winemakers.

Much anticipated Music Slovenia project launched

LJUBLJANA (STA) — After years of efforts to establish support for the export of Slovenian music, the Slovenian Music Information Centre (Sigic) has launched Music Slovenia. Introduced last August, the project was formally presented during the MENT International Music Festival and Conference held Feb. 18-21 in Ljubljana.

Music Slovenia collects applications from Slovenian musicians. It then offers to partly cover the travel expenses, accommodations and promotions for performances abroad to the artists that make the final cut.

"[Music Slovenia] does not support [musicians'] fees because we want the musicians to earn those abroad. Our condition is that they receive an invitation to perform abroad since this is how interest comes from outside," project director Manca Ogrin explained.

Slovenians who permanently reside in Slovenia are eligible to apply for Music Slovenia funding. The office has received more than 35 applications this year, which Ogrin said was beyond their expectations. Music Slovenia registered 877 concerts performed abroad by Slovenian artists last year.

Although funding from the Culture Ministry currently covers the project's operations from its inception until 2028, the Slovenian Music Information Centre would like to see it continue beyond that.

The annual budget currently amounts to EUR 200,000 (\$235,000). Music Slovenia intends to allocate EUR 100,000 (\$117,000) to support musicians and music professionals, with the remainder going toward administrative costs, promotion and running the office, which employs two people. "We are currently negotiating with other organizations that are important to our music ecosystem to contribute additional funds and thus support Slovenian music breakthroughs abroad," Ogrin said.

During the launch at the MENT International Music Festival, MENT Artistic Director Andraž Kajzer said that Music Slovenia covers all musical genres and seeks to connect various performers on the Slovenian music scene. He expects the results to show returns in the long term.

Fire lab now a Space Agency research station

LOGATEC (STA) — The Department for Fire-safe Sustainable Built Environment at Slovenia's National Building and Civil Engineering Institute (ZAG) was officially granted the status of a ground-based research station by the European Space Agency (ESA) in late February.

The designation, awarded last December, marks a significant step for Slovenia's growing aerospace field following the country's accession to full ESA



membership at the start of 2025. Officials have highlighted ESA membership as a catalyst for growth in both research and enterprise, fostering technological innovation across Slovenia.

The new status places ZAG among the leading research institutions dedicated to battery technologies for space applications. The work will be based at the institute's state-of-the-art fire laboratory in Logatec. Spanning 3,500 square meters (37,700 square feet) and launched in September 2022, the lab is described as "the only facility of its kind in this part of Europe."

Researchers will conduct advanced studies into the thermal stability and safety of batteries designed for spacecraft and orbital missions. In the coming years the laboratory will complete rigorous testing protocols focused on fire safety, reliability, and battery performance under extreme conditions.

"This is an important milestone for the international research community in the fields of fire safety, energy systems and space technologies, as well as for Slovenian science," ZAG wrote in a press release.

The institute believes its new status validates the high level of expertise and research capacity within the laboratory. It also underscores the increasingly prominent role of Slovenian researchers in global networks, opening new avenues for international collaboration, transfer of knowledge, and development of innovative solutions at the nexus of space, energy and safety.

According to ZAG, the rapid evolution of battery technology presents significant safety challenges as the number of electrical devices continues to grow. "Research is therefore essential not only for the operation and safety of space missions, but also for the development of safer battery systems on Earth – in buildings, for transportation, and in the energy sector," the institute concluded.

Cultural heritage institute moves to new premises

LJUBLJANA (STA) — After years of operating at five locations scattered across Ljubljana, the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage moved to new premises in late February. From now on, most of the institute's key services will be based at Gruber Mansion on the banks of the Ljubljanica River, the structure that was vacated by Slovenia's National Archives in late 2024.

"The new premises are not only symbolically important, they will also enable more integrated operations, faster decision-making, improved communication, and cost optimization," director general Jernej Hudolin told the press.

Gruber Mansion, a palace designed in 1773 by engineer and scientist Gabriel Gruber, is now one of three locations where the national institute operates. But as Hudolin said during the opening event, "It has already become the heart of our activities."

As part of the renovation, new electrical wiring was installed, the floors were restored, and the wall finishes refreshed. "A highlight of the renovation was the discovery of the true authorship of the ceiling painting above the oval staircase," Hudolin said.

During the restoration work, the signature of painter Martin Johann Schmidt, known as "Kremser Schmidt," dated 1775 was uncovered in 2019. The discovery prompted art historians to further research the artwork, which until then had been attributed to painter Andrej Herrlein.

The institute will also introduce an exhibition area at the palace that will be named for 18th-century scholar Ferdinand Avguštin Hallerstein.

In her address at the opening event, Culture Minister Asta Vrečko said the institute is one of the largest public cultural institutions in Slovenia, and practically the only cultural institution that has regional branch offices across the entire country.

Ljubljana U cracks top 200 ranking for Europe

LJUBLJANA (STA) — The University of Ljubljana ranks 197th in the latest QS World University Rankings for Europe, making it among the top 200 universities on the continent for the very first time.

Earlier this year, the university reported that it had improved its ranking from last year by 24 positions and is now firmly in the top quarter of the university standings, noting that the number of universities included in the ranking had increased significantly. The 2026 QS World University Rankings for Europe includes 958 European universities, 291 additional universities compared to last year's edition. The University of Ljubljana ranked 197th.

This year's result for Europe alone rounds off a successful ranking in the global QS World University Rankings for 2026, in which the university placed 535th, marking its best ranking in the past decade, according to the university.

The University of Ljubljana fared best in terms of employment outcome (i.e. employability of graduates), taking eighth place, and it also ranked among the top 100 in the category of foreign exchange students (97th), gaining 22 spots compared to 2025.

A palatial dormitory for Nova Gorica U students

GORIZIA (STA) — In March, the University of Nova Gorica purchased what is widely considered one of the most beautiful buildings in the central square of Gorizia, Italy – a renovated palace that will be utilized as a student dormitory. According to Nova Gorica University Rector Boštjan Golob, the price was definitely lower than it would have been in Slovenia.

The fully-renovated Paternolli Palace will offer 60 student rooms, including 45 single-bed and six two-bed rooms, and three rooms reserved for students with special needs. Each room has its own bathroom and a kitchenette. The ground floor features a gym and a regional tourist information office. The total surface area tops 1,700 square meters (18,300 square feet), the university noted on its website.

Although the new dorm will be open to all Slovenian and EU students, the students enrolled at the private University of Nova Gorica will have priority. The monthly room fee will range from EUR 180 (\$209) to EUR 280 (\$326), and the university is hoping the fees will be even lower if subsidies based on Slovenian law are obtained for student accommodations.

The purchase price has not been revealed, but according to Rector Golob, the former palace was paid for from previous years' surplus and with a loan. "I can say that the price is definitely lower than it would have been on the Slovenian side [of the border] for a building or student residence of this standard," Golob told the local press.

The new student dormitory, which significantly exceeds the standards of other student dorms, is seen as an important step to creating a cross-border student area of Nova Gorica and Gorizia since the palace has good transportation links with all of the local universities: Udine, Trieste and Nova Gorica. The university will also provide transportation for students to all its locations in Nova Gorica, Ajdovščina and Vipava.

Cycling path now part of a long-distance route

RADLJE OB DRAVI (STA) — The Drava valley in northern Slovenia recently became a part of an international 600-kilometer (373-mile) cycling trail connecting Vienna, the capital of Austria, with Villach, a town in southern Austria, where cycling enthusiasts can continue their journey north toward Salzburg, Austria, or south toward Italy.

The Meridiem Trail was officially launched March 1, running only along existing bike paths. The majority of the trail runs through Austria, making detours into Hungary and Slovenia.

The stage that passes through Slovenia starts in the town of Eibiswald, Austria, taking cyclists over the Radlje mountain pass. It then follows the Drava River upstream, passing through Muta and Dravograd in Slovenia, before crossing the border back into Austria.

Meridiem Trail is accessible online, offering GPS routes for each stage. GPS routes for longer segments are available for purchase on the website and through the RidewithGPS mobile app.

The local tourist board is pleased that the trail crosses into Slovenia, hoping to attract even more cyclists to an area that has become a growing cycling destination.

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

SNPJ fraternal sympathies

BRO. FRANK V. KOLESHA • LODGE 87 •

HERMINIE, Pa. — The members of Lodge 87 sadly report the Nov. 28, 2025, passing of Bro. Frank V. “Buttons” Kolesha, 90, at his home in Herminie.

Bro. Kolesha was born Feb. 8, 1935, in Herminie, a son of the late Frank A. and Jennie (Hutter) Kolesha.

Prior to his retirement, Frank was a plant layout engineer, having worked at Westinghouse Electric in East Pittsburgh, Pa., and Ft. Payne, Ala., for 40 years.

A 72-year SNPJ member, he was also a member of St. Edward Church in Herminie. He enjoyed going to lunch on Thursday afternoons with his church family.

Frank loved living in Leesburg, Fla., for 18 years. His favorite spot was Destin, soaking up the sun. He was an avid golfer. He started his day reading the newspaper, then doing the crossword puzzles.

He had a heart of gold and a special smile to let you know everything was OK. He will be dearly missed by his family, friends, and neighbors near and far.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Janice J. (Kusmirek) Kolesha; two sisters, Wendy Williams and Kathleen “Kay” Hoadwonic; and a brother, Bob Kolesha.

He is survived by his son, Frank M. (Diane) Kolesha of North Huntingdon, Pa.; his daughter, Terri (John) Feltes of Herminie, with whom he resided; three grandsons, Frank (Alexa) Kolesha, Christian (Courtney) Kolesha, and Adam Friez (Mark Hubbard); a great-grandson, Maverick Kolesha; a sister-in-law, Suzanne Kolesha of Virginia; a brother-in-law, Robert (Lou Ann) Kusmirek of Belle Vernon, Pa.; and numerous nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews. He is also survived by his dear friend, Alice O’Toole of Bethel Park, Pa.

A private memorial service

for Bro. Kolesha was held Dec. 5 in the Joseph W. Nickels Funeral Home, Herminie.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 87 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our condolences to Bro. Kolesha’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

BRO. FRANK WILCZYNSKI • LODGE 106 •

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The members of Lodge 106 sadly report the Dec. 10, 2025, passing of Bro. Frank “Ski” Wilczynski, 81, of Hopewell Twp., Pa., at Heritage Valley, Beaver, Pa. He was a 31-year SNPJ Lodge 106 member.

Bro. Wilczynski was born Oct. 7, 1944, in Coraopolis, Pa., the only son of the late Frank and Josephine (LoBianco) Wilczynski. He was a proud U.S. Navy veteran.

The true patriarch of the Wilczynski family, Frank cherished time with his wife, his children and their families. He worked tirelessly to provide for his family. He owned a trucking company, Ski’s Vending, and Ski’s Game Room in Hopewell and Ambridge, Pa.

Frank was a master mechanic, a classic automobile lover, a racing enthusiast, and was known as the “Buick Guy.”

He will be deeply missed by his beloved wife of 62 years, Peggy (Crawford) Wilczynski, who was always by his side through every joy and challenge.

He is also survived by three daughters, Hope (Arnie) Britton, Kimberly McCoy and Rebecca (Ralph) Crumpton; five grandchildren, Brandon (Manisha) Wilczynski, Lauren McCoy, Isabel Crumpton, Natalie McCoy and Emerson Crumpton; his adored great-granddaughter, Elise Wilczynski; his brothers- and sisters-in-law, Jim and Bonnie Crawford, and Bill and Pam Crawford; and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, Frank was preceded in death by his dearly loved son, Frankie

Wilczynski, in January 2018; a son-in-law, Eric McCoy; and a sister-in-law, Delsa Rowe.

A blessing service for Bro. Wilczynski was held Dec. 16 at Tatalovich Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Inc., Aliquippa, Pa. Private interment followed in Woodlawn Cemetery, Aliquippa.

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

BRO. ALBERT L. POTISEK • LODGE 729 •

YUKON, Pa. — The Potisek family and the members of Lodge 729 sadly report the Jan. 21, 2026, passing of Bro. Albert L. “Leo” Potisek, 97, at his home in North Belle Vernon, Pa.

Bro. Potisek was born May 19, 1928, in Bentleyville, Pa., a son of the late Joseph and Roselyn (Kremzar) Potisek. He was a resident of Belle Vernon since 1975.

A 79-year SNPJ Lodge 729 member, Albert was also a member of the Belle-Fayette Golden Agers, Center on the Hill, and KSKJ Lodge 153 in Strabane, Pa. A U.S. Army Veteran serving in Korea, he was also a member of the former Belle Vernon American Legion Post 659, and was a current member of Charleroi American Legion Post 22.

He is survived by two daughters and a son-in-law, Nancy Moulds of New Eagle, Pa., and Susan and Michael Toporcer of Vestaburg, Pa.; a stepson and stepdaughter-in-law, Roger and Patricia Fustich of Pittsburgh; nine grandchildren, David (Stephanie) Fustich, Krista (John) Fustich, Jeffrey (Adrian) Fustich, Jennifer (Adolph) Hundertmark, Robbie Fustich, Katie (John Jayo) Fustich, Joshua Fustich (fiancée Lucie Levine), Michael Toporcer, and Matthew Toporcer; nine great-grandchildren, Devyn Hundertmark, Haley, Jackie,

A.J., Austin, Alec and Avery Fustich, and Kennadee and Lyla Toporcer; a sister, Frances Mihalik of Youngstown, Ohio; and several nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Madeline Potisek, on April 7, 2013; two siblings, Rose Vaira and Joseph Potisek; two sons-in-law, Richard Moulds and Gregory Markinack; a stepson, Don (Barbara) Fustich; and two nieces, a nephew, and two great-nephews.

A funeral service for Bro. Potisek was held Jan. 24 in Ferguson Funeral Home & Crematory, Inc., Belle Vernon. Interment followed in Olive Branch Cemetery, North Belle Vernon.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 729 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Bro. Potisek’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

SIS. PAMELA K. WALKER • LODGE 6 •

SYGAN, Pa. — The Walker family and the members of Lodge 6 sadly report the Feb. 22, 2026, passing of Sis. Pamela Kos Walker of Irvine, Calif., at Hoag Hospital, Newport Beach, Calif.

Sis. Walker was born April 5, 1949, to the late Frank Kos Sr. and Beulah Mae (Hargis) Kos in Bad Wildungen, Germany, where her father was stationed with the U.S. Army.

She met the love of her life, James Henry Walker III of Wilmington, Del., while they were students at the University of Tennessee. They married June 28, 1969, in Bridgeville, Pa., embarking on an adventure of love, loyalty and laughter for 46 wonderful years until his passing in 2013 from colon cancer.

In addition to her husband and parents, Pam was also preceded in death also by her brother and sister-in-law, Frank Kos Jr. and Ratamanee Kos; her sister, Patricia Kos Cooke; and



Sis. PAMELA K. WALKER (6)

her sister-in-law, Ann Walker Buchanan.

She is survived by her three devoted daughters and two sons-in-law, Diana Walker Funderburke (Chris) of Bowdon, Ga., Carrie Walker Dumm (Joe) of Sharpsburg, Ga., and Donna Marie Walker of Irvine; her brother and sister-in-law, Ronald and Patricia Kos of Woodstock, Ga.; her sister, Margaret Elizabeth Kos Hess of Columbia, S.C.; her brother-in-law, Tony Cooke of Wal-land, Tenn.; her three beloved grandchildren, Jacob Lee Funderburke, Timothy James Dumm, and Allyson Morgan Dumm; along with many nieces, nephews, and extended family and dear friends who will miss her deeply.

Pam will be remembered for her love of the beach and the beautiful scenery of the

outdoors, as well as for her radiant optimism. Her gift for finding silver linings and seeing the best in people earned her the nickname “Pollyanna.” She lived that spirit each day, treating all with compassion, welcoming everyone, and wanting the same for the world.

She enjoyed gathering with family and friends to share love, laughter and kindness, especially over puzzles, games and tiki drinks. She could always be found with a crossword puzzle nearby, and as a longtime member of the SNPJ she especially looked forward to the PROSVETA crossword each month.

She also had a deep fondness for, and bottomless knowledge of, classic films and television, delighting in the timeless storytelling and cinematic craft of Hollywood’s Golden Age.

Her legacy lives on in the family she nurtured, the traditions she cultivated, the laughter she cherished, and the unwavering love she gave so fully.

A service will be held at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date, where she will be interred with her late husband in the Columbarium Court 9.

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

DEATHS REPORTED
For the month of February 2026

LODGE	NAME	DATE OF DEATH	CITY, STATE
A01	Charles S. Melnick	06-19-2025	Renfrew, Pa.
A01	Patricia Glatz	01-06-2026	Aliquippa, Pa.
A02	Irene M. Schanbacher	06-21-2025	Pittsburgh, Pa.
A02	Norman P. Rombach	01-01-2026	Yardley, Pa.
A02	Norma J. Giorgianni	01-08-2026	Sewickley, Pa.
A02	Margaret M. Monroe	01-23-2026	Jeannette, Pa.
2	James P. Spitzmiller	04-28-2024	Oglesby, Ill.
2	Mary Ann Plantan	12-27-2025	Palm Coast, Fla.
2	Janet L. Olson	01-10-2026	Spring Valley, Ill.
2	Wayne F. Videgar	01-24-2026	Orlando, Fla.
6	Raymond A. Galicic	09-22-2023	Canonsburg, Pa.
6	Evelyn Pearl Biondi	10-14-2025	Pittsburgh, Pa.
34	Paul Madden	01-08-2026	Gillespie, Ill.
41	Lois Ann Denning	12-15-2025	Greensburg, Pa.
89	Beverly A. Schwab	08-27-2025	Bulger, Pa.
89	Raymond J. Zalaznik	01-26-2026	Bulger, Pa.
106	Jeffrey A. Butya	02-07-2025	Oakdale, Pa.
106	Ruth Yanek	01-17-2026	McDonald, Pa.
106	Frank Bokulich	01-22-2026	Gibsonia, Pa.
120	Norman D. Kacperski	12-14-2025	Valdosta, Ga.
126	Jeffrey A. Babic	11-25-2025	West Lake, Ohio
138	Elizabeth J. Vulcano	12-31-2025	Houston, Pa.
138	Travis M. Cutright	02-06-2026	Canonsburg, Pa.
153	Dolores Josephine DePietro	08-12-2025	Pataskala, Ohio
158	Mary E. Krocker	10-12-2025	Willoughby Hills, Ohio
158	Martin Hulin	11-25-2025	Mentor, Ohio
174	Elizabeth A. Pribish	02-10-2026	Johnstown, Pa.
223	Roberta A. Minardi	12-06-2025	Charleroi, Pa.
223	Anita L. Copelli	01-10-2026	Latrobe, Pa.
223	Beverly A. Ficco	01-16-2026	Greensburg, Pa.
223	Jean Peters	02-02-2026	Jeannette, Pa.
225	Billy Joe Billiard	12-20-2025	Charlotte, N.C.
225	Jerry W. Buckle	01-13-2026	Girard, Kan.
277	Ronald L. Vandeborne	12-26-2025	Wintersville, Ohio
371	Albert Butkovich	10-06-2019	Portland, Ore.
518	Loretta Brewster	01-07-2026	Troy, Mich.
559	Juanita Rago	01-28-2026	Oak Brook, Ill.
562	Edward J. Stachyra Jr.	06-28-2025	Bridgeport, Ohio
564	Gary F. Murphy	01-05-2026	Sterling Heights, Mich.
584	Elizabeth L. Chos	01-04-2026	Cook, Minn.
584	Zlata Podlipnik	01-28-2026	Kenosha, Wis.
604	George A. Trebets	01-30-2025	Chardon, Ohio
643	Mark A. Popovich	01-25-2026	Youngstown, Ohio
665	Maxine I. Weber	11-30-2025	Monroeville, Pa.
715	Craig M. Kumer	01-04-2026	Lowellville, Ohio
721	Sherman Bruce Allen	01-23-2026	Punxsutawney, Pa.
749	Victoria R. Lermineau	12-21-2025	Johnstown, Pa.
749	John A. Novitski	01-19-2026	Appleton, Wis.
770	Donna J. Mackie	01-23-2026	Riverside, R.I.
782	Judy Atherton	12-27-2025	Butler, Pa.
786	Rosemary J. Mlakar	12-30-2025	Laguna Niguel, Calif.

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

PROSVETA 2026 Publication Dates

JANUARY 2026											
				1	2	3					
4	5	6	7	8	9	10					
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FEBRUARY 2026											
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MAY 2026											
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AUGUST 2026											
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NOVEMBER 2026											
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SNPJ Membership Anniversaries
April 2026

80-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
6	James R. Pinter	A01	Carl S. Troy
584	Annabelle L. Alesh		

70-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
89	Frances M. Tamulinas	518	Arlene M. Kent
106	Betsy M. Ergen	584	Arlene R. Lunow
106	Alberta Coughlin	584	Vera Switalski
371	Maynard J. Plahuta	584	Frances M. Sundberg
518	Margaret Dowie		

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
6	James D. Paul	584	Phyllis A. Torrel
6	Patricia L. Davidson	604	Patricia A. Dugach
89	Jeanie L. McGinnis	629	Daniel J. Ristway
158	John Smoggie	723	Linda L. Vidmar
158	Doris L. Smoggie	729	Lynn Nelson
174	Markita A. Kochevar	749	Rosanne McDonald
223	Pearl A. O'Hara	782	Janet Pompe
265	Thomas Gazvoda	A01	Bonnie M. Stancoven
576	Joseph A. Fatur	A02	Howard J. Vey
581	David F. Stermole		

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
5	Stacey McIntosh	223	James E. Myers
5	Melissa J. Dubray	518	James A. Talasis
5	John R. Nykiel	518	Elaine M. Almas
6	Joseph Bomblosky	559	Peggy Hanik
34	Robert Klemen	576	Milena I. Starlein
106	Kathy L. Sudiak	584	Mary J. Bartos
138	Jean E. Urbas	584	William J. Udovich
138	Angela M. Walters	584	Joanne F. Beaudry
138	Regina Z. Crocker	584	Laurie A. Gonzalez
138	Lisa A. Zofchak	643	Mary J. Walker
142	Jean M. Fabian	677	Douglas J. Kelly
142	John M. Perrotti	715	Catherine D. Bonifazi
216	Virginia E. DeMarco	723	Mary M. Taylor
218	James G. Oliver	749	Michael L. Zupan
218	Debra L. Kotulock	749	Lorraine A. Falotico
218	Linda A. Murphy	770	Donald L. Gwin
223	Lana M. Zalakar	A02	Edward R. Kreuzer

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

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!

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.

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Two deadlines approaching for the 33rd Convention

CONVENTION DEADLINES
FROM PAGE 1

Therefore, you must submit your name to the office of the National Secretary by July 3, 2026.

“A member cannot qualify as a candidate for the National Board for any of the following reasons: (1) while he is suspended or expelled; (2) if he has been found guilty of defrauding funds of the Society; (3) if he is on the board or is local Lodge secretary of another fraternal organization; (4) if he is an appointed agent of any life

insurance company including the Society; and (5) if he is an employee of the Society or has served in such capacity in the prior 5 years with the exception of Executive Officers.

“A candidate for the National Board should possess qualifications that reflect the complexity and magnitude of the business and affairs of the Society. These desired qualifications may include experience in the areas of accounting, financial, insurance, legal, business, management and fraternal, among others.

Member-Proposed
Changes to the
Society Articles,
Bylaws and Resolutions

In accordance with Resolution #1 of the Society, proposed changes to the Articles, Bylaws and Resolutions presented by an individual member or members must be approved and signed first by local Lodges or Federations of Lodges before they are presented to the appropriate committee(s).

These proposed changes

must be received by the Executive Committee no later than sixty (60) calendar days prior to the opening of the Convention. So, any proposed changes would have to be in my office by June 18, 2026. In addition, all proposed changes must include a rationale. This rationale should explain the need for the proposal.

Any proposed changes that are not presented sixty (60) calendar days prior to the Convention will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Convention for introduction.

Lodge 581 bakers help fund Troha Scholarship awards

LODGE 581 HONORS
FROM PAGE 1

planning to clean up Jackson Road and a portion of West Creek Road on Saturday, April 11. Plan to arrive at the Troha Camp at 8:30 a.m. for breakfast, to complete some paperwork, and to obtain equipment for the cleanup. Students can earn service hours for their help. Lunch is served at around noon, and the group continues the cleanup after lunch.

Hopefully the weather will be favorable; if not, a rain date is scheduled Saturday, April 18. Contact John Troha at (814) 512-6228 for more information. Two Lodge 581 students, Shawnee and Sundance Troha, are assisting with the planning.

This year, Lodge 581 is hosting a luncheon to honor Lodge members who have reached the 50-, 60- or 70-year milestones of SNPJ membership. SNPJ Region 1 Vice President Maury Sinan and his

wife Kathleen will attend the dinner, during which Maury will present the awards.

The dinner is scheduled Saturday, April 25, in Kane, Pa. Along with a program to honor our members who are planning to attend, our goal is for a day of fun, music and good food, especially a Slovenian dessert.

April is a busy month as we also select the Jerry Troha Scholarship recipients. We have received nine applications and will choose one recipient from each of the high schools in Jerry's hometown.

The scholarship recipients and their families are invited to attend a polka dance sponsored by the North Central Pennsylvania Slovene Polka Boosters, usually in July, to thank the donors and to perform during the band breaks. This has also been a fun way to introduce the recipients to polka music.

The next Lodge 581 meeting will be held Sunday, April



(Clockwise, from left) Cly Hornung, Donna Bjorkquist, Patti Gahn, PAT and JOHN MOORE, and MARCIA and DON BLEGGI get to work on the potica dough.

26, starting at 12:30 p.m. at Wildwoods in St. Marys. Our delegates to the SNPJ Convention in August will be elected at this meeting. A polka dance follows the meeting from 2 to 5 p.m., featuring the Garret Tatano Band. Pat Moore, John

Moore and their committee are in charge of the dance.

For more information about Lodge 581 activities, contact Lodge Secretary/Treasurer Marcia Klancer Bleggi at (814) 335-4983, or Lodge President Pat Moore at (814) 598-2269.

Lodge 776 member leading the way in Slovenian military surplus quest

by ANTHONY SNYDER
Lodge 776

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — SNPJ Lodge 776 member Frank Snyder runs the shipping department for one of the fastest growing military surplus shops in North America. Based in Appleton, Wis., the e-commerce company he works for buys up old military gear from the USA and other countries and delivers it by the semi-load to warehouses between Green Bay and Oshkosh, Wis. After items are sorted for quality, condition and size, and then marketed on the website, Frank oversees an entire team of workers whose job it is to package, label and ship it to eager buyers around the world.

Military surplus is a growing trend, projected to increase from \$5.5 billion in 2025 to

more than \$8.7 billion by 2032. Driven by high demand for durable, affordable gear, this market is expanding through online, specialized and vintage fashion channels rather than traditional physical Army-Navy stores.

“It was fairly easy to get items from the United States, and buying trips to Europe produced tons of post-war German, Polish and Soviet pieces, but I really wanted to see Slovenian items added to our inventory,” Frank said.

The e-commerce company Frank works for was started by a group of high school friends in 2021, and as the company grew, so did his employer's connections. Soon, unusual items like Slovenian-made mess kits, MREs (Meals, Ready to Eat), shirts, pants, and even tactical vests in desert camo patterns (used when Slovenian soldiers served in Afghanistan and Iraq) were added to the ever-growing website.

Due to the size of Slovenia's relatively small military (typically only 7,000 active army members at any given time),



FRANK SNYDER (776) shows off a genuine article of Slovenian military surplus to his grandparents, SNPJ Lodge 776 Secretary **EDWARD SNYDER** [right] and **HENRIETTA SNYDER**, during their recent visit to Appleton, Wis. Frank manages the shipping department of a military surplus company started by some high school friends.

the country isn't ordering a lot of military gear, which makes surplus items exceedingly rare. Each new collection that arrives usually results in a social media splash and a fast sellout.

“I never thought I'd be seeing Slovenian military patches here in the Midwest,” said Snyder. “Our team finds items in European and Middle Eastern storage depots, military warehouses, and even Hollywood

prop departments. They are relentless in locating these hard-to-find items.”

Every few days, a never worn or rarely worn Slovenian military shirt leaves the warehouse under Frank's watch, and he says a silent, “*srečna potovanja*” (happy travels) as the carrier takes it away to a consumer somewhere out there where DHL, FedEx and the USPS deliver.

2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center

HERITAGE CENTER
FROM PAGE 1

Initially, the Heritage Room was located in one of the rooms in the Culkar Building where the Recreation Center offices are located today. I will continue with this history of the Heritage Center next month.

Come and celebrate with us the weekend of June 5-7 during Heritage Center Weekend at the Recreation Center. We'll kick off the weekend on Friday, June 5, in the Gostilna with Patty Candela & The Guys performing from 8 to 11 p.m.

Activities on Saturday, June 6, start at 9 a.m. with a balina tournament organized by Denny Brand. Contact Den by e-mail to dhbrand3517@gmail.com if you're interested

in playing.

Back by popular demand, a paint-and-sip led by Sarah Loudon is scheduled at 6 p.m. in the Wine Room. A nominal fee for the paint-and-sip includes the art supplies and snacks. More information about the art project and registration will be available next month. Saturday events close with bingo in the Gostilna starting at 8 p.m.

Our Sunday activity includes a dance in the Heritage Pavilion from 1 to 6 p.m. featuring the Frank Stanger Band alternating with the Western Pa. Button Box Club. Although this is a free-admission dance, donations at the door will be welcomed.

Starting at noon, just prior

to the Sunday dance, the Heritage Center will host a baking demonstration with Julie Wagner from Johnstown, Pa. Julie visits her cousins in Slovenia every summer, and they teach her a new recipe on each visit. During the Johnstown Slavic Festival last year, she volunteered to attend Heritage Center Weekend and perform a demonstration, complete with samples for those in attendance.

We'll also be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the SNPJ Heritage Center that afternoon, serving cake for everyone to enjoy.

Please plan to join us and support our Slovenian Heritage Center Weekend. We're hoping to see you there!

2026 SNPJ Winter Classic Bowling Tournament Results

Tournament rolled Feb. 13-15, co-hosted by SNPJ Lodges 6 and 138

Men's Doubles Event				Name	Lodge	Score	Prize	Team	Lodge	Score	Prize	Women's Singles Event			
Team	Lodge	Score	Prize									Name	Lodge	Score	Prize
*C. Cadez/Ja. Cadez	138	1,437	\$176	Matt Lounder	138	724	\$50	Frightened Turtles	6	2,709	\$100	*Christy Puskarich	138	611	\$67
**J. Waugh/A. Winkler	106	1,556	\$176	Justin Teyssier	6	713	\$48	Roy E	6	2,677	\$84	**Beverly Bozicevich	6	745	\$67
H. Oswald/E. Pelino	6	1,443	\$154	Mike Lucas	138	713	\$48	CadexRx	138	2,653	\$80	Jan Randolph	6	739	\$55
Jeff Cadez/Jess. Cadez	138	1,441	\$126	Tim Taylor	138	706	\$44	Sportshaven/412 Lab	6/138	2,642	\$76	Colleen Bruno	138	710	\$50
J. Knodle Sr./A. Brumbaugh	138	1,424	\$100	John Grottenthaler	6	704	\$40	Martay's Partay	6	2,640	\$72	Lois Downs	138	685	\$44
M. Stimmel/J. Martino	138	1,420	\$92	Jeff Cadez	138	701	\$37					Dana Magdich	6	668	\$40
K. Vogrig/D. Pounds	138	1,397	\$84	Chris Cadez	138	696	\$34					Tamme Vehar	138	665	\$38
T. Podobnik III/J. Gasbarrini Jr.	138	1,392	\$74	Steve Padgelek	6	695	\$32					Peggy Cushman	138	651	\$35
T. Carroll/C. Wolff	6	1,386	\$70	Ross Snow	6	690	\$30					Kelly Teyssier	6	649	\$30
P. Coppola/R. Ward	138	1,386	\$70	Jeff Cummings	6	690	\$30	Men's All Events				Women's Team Event			
T. Taylor/J. Grabiak	138	1,381	\$52	Gary Usnick	6	686	\$29	Name	Lodge	Score	Prize	Team	Lodge	Score	Prize
E. Lorenzato/J. Cummings	6	1,379	\$40	Glen Supinsky	6	684	\$27	*Tony Podobnik III	138	2,104	\$63	*No Balls Just Brains	138	2,193	\$144
J. Grottenthaler/D. Donovan	6	1,361	\$36	Frank Visnikar	6	683	\$26	**Jason Waugh	106	2,341	\$63	**Pin Pals	6/138	2,736	\$144
				Dylan Pounds	138	679	\$24	Howard Oswald	6	2,216	\$52	Shut Up & Suck It	138	2,698	\$104
				Tony Verch	158	676	\$23	Monty Stimmel	138	2,207	\$43	Whoaarr	138	2,673	\$96
				Glenn Spoharski	6	667	\$20	Brian Cain	106	2,176	\$40				
				Terrance Nolan	138	666	\$19	Joe Knodle Sr.	138	2,166	\$35				
				Joe Mixon	6	661	\$17	Chuck Wolff	6	2,139	\$30				
								John Grottenthaler	6	2,134	\$26				
								Rob Curtis	6	2,130	\$23				
Men's Singles Event				Men's Team Event				Women's Doubles Event				Women's All Events			
Name	Lodge	Score	Prize	Team	Lodge	Score	Prize	Team	Lodge	Score	Prize	Name	Lodge	Score	Prize
*J.P. Bevec	138	780	\$105	*PNWho	138	2,605	\$216	*C. Puskarich/T. Maye	138	1,190	\$122	*Christy Puskarich	138	1,865	\$55
**Jason Waugh	106	839	\$105	**Wolff Pack	6	2,825	\$216	**K. Teyssier/B. Bozicevich	6	1,377	\$122	**Jan Randolph	6	2,129	\$55
Monty Stimmel	138	824	\$84	4 out of 6	6	2,740	\$184	R. McNurlen/S. Krulce	138	1,366	\$100				
Howard Oswald	6	791	\$73	Bevec Team	138	2,728	\$140	B. Snow/P. Cushman	6/138	1,343	\$84				
Brian Cain	106	752	\$71	AARP Bowlers	6	2,720	\$116								
Joe Knodle Sr.	138	746	\$62												
Chuck Wolff	6	746	\$62												
Rob Curtis	6	739	\$56												
Nick Verch	158	730	\$52												

A visit to Samsula Lodge 603 for Fla. SNPJ Days offers a mid-winter break

by TINA RIGLER (8)
SNPJ Region 4 Vice President

CHICAGO— Taking a break from the cold winter weather, my husband Vince and I made a quick trip to Florida to take in the warmer temperatures and the Florida sunshine. We had the pleasure of attending Florida SNPJ Days held Feb. 20-21 at the Lodge 603 Hall in Samsula. The two-day event also served as a celebration of the SNPJ Lodge 603 100th birthday. Congratulations to the officers and members for keeping up the longevity of your Lodge through all your hard work and efforts.

On Friday evening the hall was filled with many members and friends. It was nice to meet up with many friends, and we also had a chance to chat with Miss SNPJ 2026 Ellen Koci who was in attendance from San Diego.

Musicians from various parts of the country came together to provide the music on Friday evening. Lodge 603 member Christian Razpotnik put together the button box jam, and everyone enjoyed listening and dancing to the music. Admission to the Friday event was only \$1 in recognition of the Lodge's 100th birthday. The kitchen crew was busy serving delicious food and desserts.

We returned on Saturday afternoon for the second day of Florida SNPJ Days festivities. All of the tables were filled, and everyone enjoyed the music provided by the Frank Moravcik Band from Cleveland, as well as the button box jam. The kitchen was open again, serving a variety of delicious meals.

A short program was emceed by Jeannette Humphrey. Jeannette introduced Ruth and George Benedict who have done a lot for the Lodge since the day they were married, became active Lodge members, and have continued to volunteer for events ever since. Jeannette also introduced Miss SNPJ Ellen Koci, SNPJ National Secretary Karen Pintar and her husband Ken, and Region 4 Vice President Tina Rigler. Secretary Pintar was the main speaker, and she enlightened us with some interesting facts about Lodge 603 and how many years both she and Ken have been attending this event. Drawing and door prizes were then awarded to many lucky winners.

Also in attendance from the SNPJ National Board were Region 1 Vice President Maury Sinan and his wife Kathleen, and Region 2 Vice President Jason Cadez with Danielle Jacobson. It was nice to be able to socialize with everyone on a beautiful, sunny day while listening to polka music.

From the Chicago area, Lodge 8 members Carmie Smidl, Anelle Eorio and their friends were also in attendance. We enjoyed a visit with Magda and Joe Razpotnik while having a great time and enjoying the festivities.

The temperatures were starting to drop before we left Florida, and before you know it we were back home to the same temperatures that we had in Samsula. We're already looking forward to next year's Florida SNPJ Days!



[Above] SNPJ Lodge 603 Secretary/Treasurer **RUTH BENEDICT** (right), who along with her husband George were recognized for their many years of volunteer service at the Lodge 603 Hall, was assisted by Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI** and **JEANNETTE HUMPHREY** (center) to select the drawing winners during the Florida SNPJ Days festivities.

[Below] SNPJ National Board members attending Florida SNPJ Days at Samsula Lodge 603 in February: (from left) Region 1 Vice President **MAURY SINAN**, National Secretary **KAREN PINTAR**, Region 4 Vice President **TINA RIGLER**, and Region 2 Vice President **JASON CADEZ**.



PROSVETA Crossword

VACATION DESTINATIONS (#0326) solution

L	A	M	P			S	K	A				T	A	P	S		
E	V	I	L			A	M	E	N			P	A	L	E	O	
S	O	D	A			B	E	L	T			A	N	G	E	L	
S	W	I	S	S		A	L	P	S			T	Z	A	R		
				M	I	S	T	Y			P	E	A				
A	B	L	A	T	E					M	A	N	N	I	S	H	
S	E	A			A	D	D	S	U	P			I	N	T	O	
S	A	T	Y	R			O	P	T			C	A	T	E	R	
E	C	H	O			A	V	A	T	A	R			R	E	D	
T	H	I	S	T	L	E					E	U	R	O	P	E	
				E	V	E			K	A	R	M	A				
		A	I	M	S				C	A	R	I	B	B	E	A	N
E	R	N	I	E				E	Z	R	A			B	A	L	E
S	C	O	T	T				P	O	O	L			I	S	M	S
T	O	N	E					S	O	W				T	E	S	T



Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI** (786) and Region 4 Vice President **TINA RIGLER**, pictured with Samsula Lodge 603 member and former Lodge officer **JEANNETTE HUMPHREY**.

PROSVETA Crossword

Desserts (#0426) by StatePoint Media

- ACROSS**
1. Like some champagnes
5. Undergarment
8. Dashboard acronym
11. Poison ivy woe
12. Took to court
13. Milan's La ____
15. Afresh
16. Globes and such
17. SNL's forté
18. *Ladyfingers+coffee liqueur
20. Grammy of sports
21. Jeweler's unit
22. *Like walnuts on ice cream
23. *Thin Mint or Carmel deLite
26. *Apple dip
30. Nelson Mandela's org.
31. Profoundness, pl.
34. Frost-covered
35. Ticket leftovers
37. Pathet ____
38. Lazybones
39. Samoan money
40. A in AU, Alabama
42. Heidi Samuel ____ Klum
43. Contaminating punch
45. Flammable anesthetics
47. a.k.a. acid
48. Military group
50. Jezebel's deity
52. *Espresso+gelato
56. Forgo
57. Palo ____, CA
58. Sacred image
59. Southern cuisine pods
60. Show the guns
61. Small stream
62. "The Star-Spangled Banner" author
63. Toni Morrison's "____ Baby"
64. Adeline or Addison, for short
- DOWN**
1. Troublesome child
2. Jasmine of "Aladdin," e.g.
3. Olympic cast-out
4. Smack
5. Anatomical sac
6. Overthrow by argument
7. Marketing creations
8. Wild onion
9. Clever tactic
10. Spanish sea
12. Evening party
13. See-through
14. *Eggs+milk+sugar
19. Old ____, or unpopped popcorn kernels
22. Be, singular past tense
23. Uses a fishing reel
24. Like beer at a kegger (2 words)
25. Round openings
26. Cabbage, in France
27. "The House at Pooh Corner" author
28. African chieftain
29. Ancient Greeks' harps
32. Socket counterpart
33. Bar bill
36. *Filo dough+nuts+honey
38. Book opener
40. Uniting conjunction
41. Robin Hood in Disney's "Robin Hood" (2 words)
44. Keys
46. Mecca to Medina exodus
48. Type of lily
49. Happily ever when?
50. *Make Alaska
51. Gossamer
53. Vinegar or lemon juice, to a chef
54. Communicated
55. James Bond's "For Your Eyes ____"
56. Asian cuisine pan
57. Astern

The solution to puzzle #0426 will run in the May 1 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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