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SNPJ making a promise for your financial future

by DAVID GOMBKOTO
SNPJ Sales Director

IMPERIAL, Pa. — At SNPJ, our mission has always been simple: provide our members with financial security, stability and peace of mind. Since 1904, that promise has guided everything we do. Today, we're excited to build on that legacy with the introduction of something new — our SNPJ Promise Annuity Series, launched April 1, 2026.

This new series represents a significant step forward for our annuity offerings, with improved renewal rates designed to enhance long-term growth and provide even greater value to our

members.

So what makes the SNPJ Promise Annuities stand out? Let's start with what matters most: growth and stability.

With the SNPJ Promise 8 Annuity, members can receive a 5.25 percent first-year guarantee rate, with a current renewal rate also at 5.25 percent in years two through eight. The SNPJ Promise 5 Annuity offers a 5.00 percent first-year guarantee rate, with a 5.00 percent current renewal rate in years two through five. Both options are also backed by a lifetime 2.50 percent guaranteed minimum interest rate.

In today's financial environment, where

market volatility can make planning feel uncertain, these types of consistent, competitive rates offer something many people are looking for — predictability and confidence.

Unlike market-based investments, fixed annuities are designed to protect your principal while still allowing it to grow. That means your money isn't subject to stock market downturns, yet it continues to earn interest over time. It's a powerful combination of safety and opportunity. And it doesn't stop there...

One of the key advantages of an SNPJ

SEE PROMISE ANNUITIES
ON PAGE 3

briefly

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!

Your pageant donations support SNPJ tradition

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The Miss SNPJ Pageant Booster Fund is accepting donations. There are numerous costs associated with the pageant, and your donations, both large and small, are truly appreciated to help defray those costs. Please make checks payable to SNPJ, noting "Miss SNPJ Pageant" on the memo line, and mail your donation to Slovene National Benefit Society, Attn: Miss SNPJ Pageant Booster Fund, 247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126.

THE DEADLINE

The next two *PROSVETA* issue dates are June 1 and July 1. All material must be received by noon on Monday, May 18, for the June 1 issue, and by Monday, June 15, for the July 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.

Save the dates and join in the excitement of
43RD ANNUAL
Slovenefest
July 10-12, 2026

hosted by the

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Non-stop live entertainment starting

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and featuring the

68th Miss SNPJ Pageant

FEATURED IN
Pittsburgh
Magazine
AS ONE OF THE
"Top 10 THINGS TO
DO IN JULY"

PERIODICAL MATERIAL

A Memorial Day weekend opening date for the SNPJ Heritage Center

by KATHY PAULENICH (776)
SNPJ Heritage Center Director

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — "April showers bring May flowers," leading to summer, the best season of the year!

The SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center Committee is looking forward to a busy 2026 season of events. We will be opening the museum and gift shop at the Recreation Center on Saturday, May 23 (Memorial Day weekend), with hours of 1 to 5 p.m. We will remain open every Saturday after that date until and including Labor Day weekend.

Be sure to visit our museum and use the QR codes set up in the displays. Some new items that you'll want to check out will be available for purchase in the gift shop. I'll report more on the gift shop next month.

For those of you in the Washington, D.C., area, Heritage Center Committee members Kathy Paulenich, Ed Robich and Patty Candela will be returning to the Slovenian Embassy on Saturday, May 9, with our traveling museum of Slovenian artifacts. You can also visit the other embassies that are part of the European Union for their open house that day. The hours are 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Come and enjoy all the displays of our heritage at the Slovenian Embassy.

This year the Slovenian Heritage Center will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the grand opening of the first Heritage Room, which opened to the public on Sept. 19, 1976, at the Recreation Center. Yes, it was actually a room!

In just a year the Heritage Room had to be moved to the lower level of the Culkar Building as it outgrew the many donations of Slovenian articles. This move was completed in September 1978 with the initial committee working on the move. At that time the current name, "SNPJ Slovenian Heritage Center," was adopted.

As some members dropped off the committee, others were added over the years from 1978 to 1990: Lou Serjak, Jennie Gorjanc, Agnes Elish, Betty Godina, Frank and Mary Rezek, Ed Zitko and Ann Evanish. I will continue this

SEE HERITAGE CENTER
ON PAGE 6

The Chicago Federation hosting its 92nd Memorial Day Service May 25

by TINA RIGLER (8)
SNPJ Region 4 Vice President

CHICAGO — Everyone is invited to attend the 92nd annual Memorial Day Service scheduled Monday, May 25, starting at 11 a.m. at Woodlawn Cemetery, 7600 W. Cermak Road in Forest Park, Ill. The SNPJ Section is located at the east end of the cemetery.

The service includes a short program. A get-together for lunch will follow at a nearby Olive Garden restaurant. For more information contact Tina Rigler at (708) 257-8312.

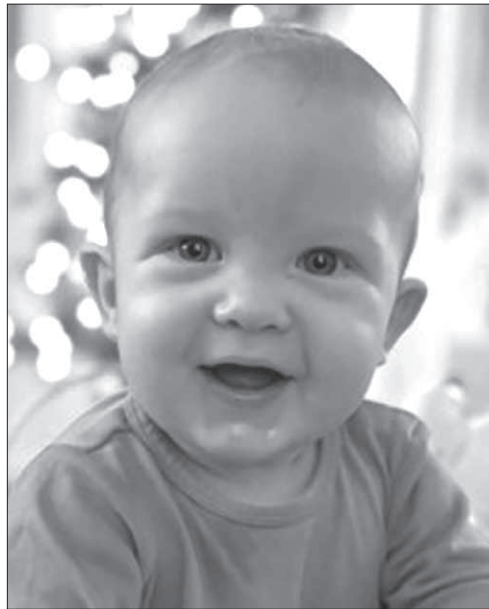
Family members and friends have gathered together in the SNPJ Section of Woodlawn Cemetery for 91 years to remember our dearly

departed and share memories. The Chicago Federation is pleased to be able to keep this tradition alive and present a program that includes a speaker, and keeping with the tradition of Slovenian music. Woodlawn Cemetery and the Chicago Federation worked together to bring about the Slovene Section. A memorial stone placed at the Slovene Section of the cemetery was dedicated July 16, 1992. Each year, a program booklet is distributed that includes the names and dates of those buried in the SNPJ Section.

The SNPJ Chicago District Federation proudly sponsors this event so we can come together and enjoy the company of family and friends.



SNPJ members and families in attendance at the 91st annual Memorial Day Service in May 2025. The Chicago District Federation will host the 92nd service Monday, May 25, in the SNPJ Section of Woodlawn Cemetery, Forest Park, Ill.



Theodore J. Dwyer

Born June 12, 2025
Glenshaw, Pa., Lodge 782

The members of Lodge 782 proudly welcome Theodore Jack "Teddy" Dwyer as the newest member of the Lodge. Teddy is the son of Megan Sinan Dwyer and Matt Dwyer (782), and carries on a remarkable family legacy within SNPJ. He is the grandson of SNPJ Region 1 Vice President Maury Sinan and Kathleen Sinan (782), and Lenore Larsen-Dwyer (782); and the great-grandson of Angela "Fran" Sinan (87), Maurice Sinan, Valerie Kelly (782) and Richard Kelly. With his enrollment, Teddy has become a sixth-generation SNPJ member, an extraordinary milestone that reflects generations of commitment, tradition and pride in our Society.

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Make snpj.org
your first stop for
SNPJ information
on the go.
Scan the code
to get started.



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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 () _____

E-mail _____

Complete and return to:
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247 W. Allegheny Road
Imperial, PA 15126-9774
e-mail: prosveta@snpj.com

SNPJ Lodge 581 completes road cleanup, selects the Troha Music Scholarship recipients

by MARCIA KLANCER BLEGGI
Lodge 581 Secretary/Treasurer

ST. MARYS, Pa. — More than 20 participants helped clean up Jackson Road and a portion of West Creek Road in St. Marys on April 11. The group brought together students from both St. Marys schools, parents, members of Friends of Jackson Road, and all SNPJ Lodge 581 officers.

Lodge 581 provided breakfast at 8:30 a.m. while participants registered for possible hours of service for their programs at school. Lunch was provided by the John Troha family following the cleanup. PA Cleanways provided vests, gloves and garbage bags. After the cleanup, the City of St. Marys picked up the garbage bags. All materials collected were recycled or taken to a landfill.

No tires were found this year, although it was quite a collection: mostly bottles, cans and paper, along with a vacuum cleaner, a 1920s

bottle, and some cable. Both schools advertised the cleanup project, which helped encourage students to participate. Becky Titchner and the Elk County Recycling Center helped with recycling the cans and plastic.

The Jerry Troha Music Scholarship winners have been announced and the prizes will be awarded at the public school on May 18, and at the Catholic school on May 20. Later in the summer, the scholarship recipients and their families will be invited to attend a polka dance to be introduced to SNPJ Lodge 581 members and to members of the North Central Pennsylvania Slovene Polka Boosters, the two groups who sponsor the \$250 scholarship awards.

Polka dances are scheduled on May 3 featuring the Heritage Band at the Kersey Firemen's, on May 17 with the Frank Moravcik Band at the Wildwoods, and on May 31 with the Dick Tady Orchestra at the Kersey



Photo by Don Bleggi

MARCIA BLEGGI, Marg and Mo Griffith, Mick McMackin, Jane Wickett, Zig Gradi, JOHN TROHA, PAT and JOHN MOORE, Bryce Gausman, Addy Gradi, Jaxon, Leo, Kylie Bleggi, SUNDANCE TROHA, BOB MOSIER and Jim Dostal at the completion of the SNPJ Lodge 581 annual road cleanup held in April.

Firemen's. All dances are scheduled from 2 to 5 p.m.

For more information about SNPJ Lodge 581 activities, contact

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



At the conclusion of their March meeting, SNPJ Lodge 8 members took to the lanes for a fun afternoon of bowling.

Lodge 8 elects Young Adult and Convention delegates in March

by TINA RIGLER
Lodge 8 Secretary/Treasurer

CHICAGO — Lodge 8 members held their first meeting of the year on March 15. Secretary Tina Rigler read all correspondence and gave the financial report. Auditors Jan Maresh, Vince Rigler and Jason Rigler gave the audit report and found all Lodge books in order.

During this meeting, Robert Rigler and Jason Rigler were elected as delegates to attend the Young Adult Conference scheduled June 12-14. Alenka Rus and Emma Kovack were also selected to attend the conference as delegates from another Lodge.

Lodge 8 is entitled to two delegates for the upcoming Quadrennial Convention to be held Aug. 17. Justin Rigler and Carmella Smidl were elected as delegates, and Edward Dabrowski and Jason Rigler were elected as alternates.

Lodge members also approved the

purchase of an ad in the Convention program booklet.

Secretary Tina Rigler reported that the Lodge received a bonus award for reaching the Gold Level for Activity in the 2025 SNPJ Lodge Bonus Program. All communications from the Home Office were read, including the list of 50-, 60- and 70-year members, and all new members recently added to our Lodge.

Tina Rigler and Carmella Smidl won the meeting awards. After the meeting, members and guests enjoyed bowling and had a great time.

The next Lodge 8 meeting will be held July 25, and will include a pool party and barbecue following the meeting at the home of Bill and Jan Maresh. Contact Lodge Secretary Tina Rigler at (708) 257-8312 for the address if you plan to join us. The Lodge will pay for the meat; those attending are asked to bring a dish to share.

Lodge 559 readies for the 33rd Convention and June Young Adult Conference

by MELANIE MATIASEK
Lodge 559 Secretary/Treasurer

CHICAGO—I hope everyone is enjoying spring! Lodge 559 members held their first meeting of the year on March 13 and were happy to have a warm, but windy, spring day here in the Chicago area.

Our first activity for the year was a food drive to support St. Cletus Church in La Grange, Ill. Geri Matiassek delivered the items to their food pantry. Lodge members were very generous with much-needed items.

It was great to see everyone at the meeting. Our audit for 2025 was conducted by Mike Vidmar and Geri Matiassek; all was found in good order. We nominated Lodge 8 member Alenka Rus to represent our

Lodge at the Young Adult Conference in June.

We also conducted elections for the upcoming Quadrennial Convention. Our delegates are Kaitlyn Chiappetta and Geri Matiassek; the alternates are Jennifer Matiassek and Melanie Matiassek. Our meeting was followed by a delicious lunch and social time.

The next Lodge meeting will be held Friday, May 8, starting at noon at the McCook Restaurant. We will again host a food drive, so if you are attending, please bring non-perishable items. Please let Lodge Secretary Melanie Matiassek know if you will be attending so that she can include you in the reservation. Contact Melanie at (708) 715-0131.



Lodge 559 members conducted a food drive during their March meeting, collecting some much-needed items for the St. Cletus Church food pantry in La Grange, Ill.

Lodge 749 opens the year with Convention delegate elections

by EVELYN DIMPFL
Lodge 749 Secretary

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — During the SNPJ Lodge 749 meeting held in December 2025, election of Lodge officers for 2026 was held after the usual business was completed. Retained were President James Vasilko, Vice President Joanne Vasilko, Treasurer Judith Edsall, Secretary/Recording Secretary Evelyn Dimpfl, and auditor Julie Wagner. Steve Yuhas was elected as a new auditor.

Louis Hrebar and Mary Ann Knipple were recognized by those in

attendance for attaining 70 years of SNPJ membership in January 2026; Guy K. Magagnotti attained 50 years of membership. Congratulations to all of you!

We held our next meeting in February to determine the date when we would elect delegates to the Convention scheduled in August. It was agreed to elect our delegates at the March 24 meeting.

Julie Wagner, a committee member for the Slavic Fest held in September each year, gave us updates on the upcoming festival.

Steve Yuhas and Julie audited the treasurer's books and found them to be in good order.

After all regular business was conducted, we focused on the upcoming Convention and passed a motion to purchase a quarter-page ad in a Convention program booklet. We also elected Convention delegates Evelyn Dimpfl, James Vasilko, Joanne Vasilko and Steve Yuhas.

Over the past several months I have been notified of the following members who have passed: Bryan C. Jubina, Mary C. Prince, John Yuko,

Victoria R. Lermineau, John A Novitsiki, and Christine R. Radovich. Their memories were honored at the meeting, and we extend sympathies to their families.

I'm sure we're all looking forward to spring and upcoming SNPJ events – I know I am!

Don't forget the SNPJ for insurance and annuity products, and remember to keep your beneficiaries updated. If you're thinking that it just may be time to add more life insurance or to finally take out that annuity or IRA, keep SNPJ in mind!

Up-and-Coming... A look at events planned by the Slovene National Benefit Society

- MAY 25Chicago District Federation 92nd annual Memorial Day Service starting at 11 a.m. in Woodlawn Cemetery, 7600 W. Cermak Road, Forest Park, Ill. A short program will be followed by lunch at a nearby Olive Garden restaurant. For more information contact Tina Rigler at (708) 257-8312.
- 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 10-12The 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.

New SNPJ annuity offers a promise for your future

PROMISE ANNUITIES FROM PAGE 1

annuity is how efficiently your money works for you. Your funds grow with tax-deferred interest, allowing your savings to compound faster over time. Additionally, there are no administrative or maintenance fees, ensuring that more of your money stays invested and working toward your future.

Flexibility is another major benefit. The SNPJ Promise Annuity Series allows for additional contributions, accepts rollovers and transfers from other retirement accounts, and can be used as part of a Traditional IRA or Roth IRA strategy. Whether you're consolidating existing retirement assets or starting fresh, these annuities are designed to fit into your broader financial plan.

And if access to your money is a concern, SNPJ has built in features to help. You can withdraw up to 10 percent of your annuity value each year without penalty during the surrender period. Once that period ends, your funds are fully accessible.

Beyond accumulation, annuities also play a critical role in income planning. When the time comes, your annuity can be converted into a guaranteed stream of income, helping to ensure that you don't outlive your savings. It's a valuable tool for retirement planning, especially for those looking to supplement Social Security or other income sources.

Another often-overlooked advantage is how annuities

support your loved ones. In the event of your passing, annuity proceeds can go directly to your beneficiaries without going through probate, simplifying the process during an already difficult time. We also waive any early surrender charges in the event of death, nursing home care, or required minimum distributions (RMDs).

We believe financial products should do more than just grow your money—they should reflect your values and be easy to understand. As a fraternal benefit society, we aren't driven by shareholders, but by our members. That means everything we offer, including the new Promise Annuity Series, is designed with your best interests in mind.

This year, we're making a strong push to help more individuals and families take advantage of the benefits annuities can provide. Whether you're nearing retirement, actively planning for the future, or simply looking for a safe place to grow your savings, now is a great time to explore what an SNPJ Promise Annuity can do for you. Our promise is in the name – and in everything we stand for.

If you'd like to learn more about the SNPJ Promise Annuity Series, we encourage you to reach out to an SNPJ agent, or contact the Home Office at 1-800-843-7675 or e-mail snpjmarketing@snpj.com. We're here to help you take the next step toward a more secure financial future. Because at SNPJ, "We've Got You COVERED!"

PREPARE FOR RETIREMENT CONFIDENTLY!

Contact the SNPJ Home Office at 1-800-843-7675 to open your Promise Annuity TODAY!

Promise 8 Annuity	Promise 5 Annuity
8-year surrender period	5-year surrender period
5.25% first-year <i>guarantee</i> rate for new money	5.00% first-year <i>guarantee</i> rate for new money
5.25% in years two and after	5.00% in years two and after

- No fees attached to either Promise Annuity
- Rates not guaranteed after the first year
 - 2.50% guaranteed minimum
- IRAs/Roth IRA/non-qualified eligible
- Conversions of existing annuities available

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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 Valencic: cvalencic@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

New program paves the way for tech development

LJUBLJANA (STA) — In mid-March, the Slovenian government adopted the national program for the development of chip and semiconductor technologies until 2030. Some EUR 160 million (\$185.5 million) will be earmarked for the program, the goal of which is to strengthen the ecosystem of the electronics industry and establish Slovenia as a key player in select niche segments.

Slovenia is not aiming for mass production [of chips and semiconductors], but is orienting its program toward niche segments with high added value, such as specialized ASIC (Application-Specific Integrated Circuit) chips, systems on chip, and advanced new-generation technologies.

The program aims to promote cooperation between industry and research institutions, and strengthen the electronics industry ecosystem by investing in research and development. It also aims to strengthen and update the research, development and innovation infrastructure, as well as attract talent, and develop and retain highly qualified staff.

As part of the program, a chip competence center was launched last September. An excellence center for chip and semiconductor technology will also be established.

The specific measures, program funding and a timeline will be detailed in an implementation plan, which must be drafted within a year after adoption of the program. The implementation of the program will be monitored and coordinated by Slovenia's Digital Transformation Ministry.

Flag on label guarantees Slovenian food products

KOPER (STA) — Slovenia will start using its flag on food products to indicate they were fully produced, processed and manufactured in the country. Since March 21, eligible producers have been able to label their products included in various quality programs.

The Slovenian flag, which was introduced as a label in the Act on Safe Food passed in November 2025, indicates that products are fully produced, processed and packaged in Slovenia, or that the animals were born, raised and processed in the country.

It is intended for agricultural and food products that are part of various quality programs. These include programs for organic products, protected designation of origin, higher quality and gold-standard animal welfare, and certain optional quality indications.

During a presentation held in mid-March, Agriculture Minister Mateja Čalušić said that choosing Slovenian products served as an endorsement of Slovenian farmers, to the preservation of rural areas, and as a promotion of short supply chains and sustainable development. "The Slovenian flag [displayed] on food products will become a symbol of trust, quality and pride," Minister Čalušić said.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, the use of the [flag] label will be voluntary. Manufacturers will have to obtain a certificate for one of the quality programs in order to use the label. The flag must be visible and placed next to the national symbol of Slovenia or the EU symbol.

The Agriculture Ministry believes the new label will improve the visibility of Slovenian products and allow consumers to recognize locally produced and processed food.

The regulations governing the label were effective as of March 21, the date when manufacturers who meet the requirements were able to start labeling their products with the Slovenian flag.

Researchers welcome updated ion accelerator

LJUBLJANA (STA) — Research scientists at Slovenia's Jožef Stefan Institute have switched on a new state-of-the-art ion accelerator that will allow researchers to study materials with greater precision and explore applications ranging from fusion energy to biomedical science.

The instrument, known as a Tandetron accelerator, was installed at the Jožef Stefan Institute Reactor Centre and is the only research accelerator of its kind in Slovenia. It operates at a maximum three



million volts, which is about 50 percent higher than the system it replaced, enabling more detailed experiments.

Ion accelerators work by firing extremely small, electrically-charged ions at high speeds toward a target material. When the ions collide with a sample, they trigger tiny reactions that scientists can measure. By analyzing the signals produced during these interactions, researchers can determine the chemical composition and structure of a material with very high accuracy. The technique is widely used in physics, chemistry, materials science and environmental research.

Such instruments can also modify materials by implanting ions into them, a method used to improve properties such as strength, conductivity or resistance to heat.

At the launch of the Tandetron, Primož Pelicon, the director of the institute's Microanalytical Centre, said that the new accelerator would make it easier to conduct research into materials for fusion reactors and batteries, and facilitate biomedical research. Jožef Stefan Institute director Leon Cizelj added that the new machine marked a serious improvement in conditions for research. "New opportunities lie ahead for the scientists," he said.

Researchers at the Jožef Stefan Institute have been using ion beams in experiments for decades. The first machine, a Van de Graaff accelerator, began operating there in 1956. Since 1997, experiments were carried out using an earlier Tandetron accelerator operating at two million volts, but the system had reached the end of its operational life and was thus replaced.

Forest Seed, Plant and Protection Center opens

LJUBLJANA (STA) — The new Forest Seed, Plant and Protection Center opened in Ljubljana in March, allowing for the development of tree nursery and seed production activities, and to boost forest protection with state-of-the-art research and technologies.

The center, with its research, lab and support facilities spanning more than 2,500 square meters (26,900 square feet), is located near the Slovenian Forestry Institute in Ljubljana and replaces a dilapidated greenhouse that included laboratories.

Nike Krajnc, director of the Forestry Institute, told the press that some 35 Forestry Institute researchers will relocate to the center since it will house the departments for forest protection, forest physiology, and genetics. The new center will allow for contemporary laboratories to be set up, as well as infrastructure to obtain, extract, store and germinate seeds to help restore forests. It will also allow for a forest health diagnostics center to be established, along with storing a portion of the Slovenian forest gene bank.

"The center represents an important asset for the Forestry Institute. It focuses on three key areas especially under fire in a time of climate change; namely, seeds, tree nurseries and forest protection," Krajnc said.

"Seed cultivation and growing trees may have been somewhat neglected in the past as forests were restored using natural methods," Krajnc explained, adding that "In periods following extreme weather events and natural disasters, more support is needed."

Most recent finds from ancient Emona on display

LJUBLJANA (STA) — A new exhibition showcasing the most recent archaeological discoveries from the proposed site of Ljubljana's National and University Library opened at the City Museum of Ljubljana in March. Titled "From Private House to Public Bath," the exhibition reveals the architectural and social evolution of Emona, the ancient Roman settlement that preceded modern-day Ljubljana.

Archaeological investigations at the site have been ongoing since the 1990s. The final excavation of a previously inaccessible 520-square-meter (5,600-square-foot) section was completed between October 2024 and April

2025. Situated just inside the eastern gates of the former Roman city walls, the recent excavation yielded more than 13 tons of material, predominantly ancient brickwork, ceramics, glass and metal artefacts.

The archaeologists noted that researchers were particularly interested in the site's pre-urban history. Excavations uncovered remnants of prehistoric graves connected to an ancient settlement on Ljubljana's Castle Hill, alongside evidence of early Roman military encampments on the banks of the Ljubljanica River.

Although largely destroyed when later Roman builders leveled the ground to construct the city of Emona, traces of defensive ditches, hearths and wooden posts were successfully identified.

Once Emona was established, the site was occupied by two residential blocks, known as "insulae," featuring courtyard wells, ovens and simple pebble floors. However, during a major renovation in the early fourth century, these residential buildings were merged into a substantial public bathhouse complex. Likely coinciding with the introduction of new plumbing and sewage systems, the sophisticated limestone facility was constructed over a former street and included subfloor heating.

The exhibition, which will be on display until June, opened with the first-ever architectural scale model of Emona, created around 1930. Museum visitors can also view a curated selection of the latest Roman-era finds among the collections, including multicolored frescoes, glass vessels and various bronze items.

Climate change posing a threat to winter sports

PLANICA (STA) — While this past winter was generous with snow, Slovenia's winter sports industry faces mounting pressure from climate change as rising temperatures and shorter snow seasons reshape conditions across the Alps.

According to Slovenian Environment Agency climatologist Gregor Vertačnik, meteorological winters in the Julian Alps have warmed by an average of 2.5 degrees over the past 50 years. The warming trend is already visible at lower elevations. "In the ski resort of Kranjska Gora, for example, new snowfall has declined by roughly one-third over the past four decades," he said.

"Under moderate climate scenarios, much of the Slovenian Alps could see the average duration of snow cover shrink by one to two months by the end of the century," Vertačnik warned. Regional differences will remain, but winters with little or no snow may become increasingly common.

Even Planica, one of the world's major ski jumping venues and a symbol of Slovenia's winter sports tradition, is feeling the effects. "Planica is one of our most beautiful postcards, but it also reminds us how urgent climate change is," said Nataša Kos, deputy director of Spirit Slovenia. "The white backdrop is becoming less white, and preparing venues for events like this is becoming increasingly costly and demanding."

"Climate disruptions are already affecting the sports calendar – Maribor has lost the annual women's World Cup skiing event known as the Golden Fox," noted Miha Košak, vice president of the British-Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and head of the Chapter Zero Slovenia climate initiative.

"Winter sports are [among] the clearest examples of how climate risks are becoming a direct business, development and management issue. We're no longer talking about something that might be important in the future; it already has an impact today," Košak added.

"The good news is that we see winter sports centers adapting to climate change," said Barbara Uranjek Kozina, director of the British-Slovenian Chamber of Commerce. And according to Ernest Kovač, secretary of the Slovenian Cableway Operators Association, the priority for ski lift operators is investment in artificial snow infrastructure.

As Daniel Neulicherl of Techno-Alpin, a manufacturer of snowmaking equipment, explained, "Technology firms are also responding. Modern snowmaking systems increasingly focus on operating efficiently at marginal temperatures while reducing energy consumption."

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

SNPJ fraternal sympathies

BRO. STEPHEN P. RAZO • LODGE 770 •

BOROUGH OF SNPJ, Pa. — The members of Lodge 770 sadly report the Nov. 16, 2025, passing of Bro. Stephen P. Razo, 85, at his home in New Middletown, Ohio, surrounded by his family.

Bro. Razo was born May 18, 1940, in Youngstown, Ohio, a son of the late Eli and Helen (Wac) Razo. He graduated from Springfield Local in 1958, then enlisted in the U.S. Army. He served in Germany during the Cold War with the 7th Armored Cavalry Regiment. He was proud of his military service, and his unit, known as the “Garryowen” regiment, had a long history.

Steve was a bricklayer for many years, and he owned and operated a masonry construction company. After his time as a bricklayer, he was employed as a mill superintendent for IMS for more than 15 years, working all over the country, including Texas and Minnesota.

Steve grew up working on a farm, and his farming continued into adulthood. He was proud to pass on all he knew about farming to his son, Eli. He raised poultry and had pigeons for several years. He enjoyed golfing in his earlier years and was a lifetime hunter, enjoying the peace and quiet of the woods for hours on end.

Steve was also an avid gardener. He planted his last crop of giant garlic last year to be harvested this spring. His most famous crop was his giant pumpkins. In 2023 he grew the heaviest field pumpkin in the state of Ohio, a record that still stands. He also received awards for his squash and watermelons through the years.

Steve was very involved in his community. He assisted with Little League baseball, was a 4H advisor for 10 years, and supported the 4H livestock sale.

A 67-year SNPJ member,

he was also a member of St. Paul the Apostle Church in New Middletown, the New Middletown Sportsman’s Club, and Johnson Club. He was a lifetime member of both the Ohio Valley Giant Pumpkin Growers and the Bessemer Croatian Club.

Steve is survived by his wife, the former Eleanor P. Satak, whom he married Aug. 8, 1964; his son, Eli J. (Carol) Razo of Salem, Ohio; his daughter, Stephanie Razo of Poland, Ohio; his sister, Kathy D’Amico of Poland; five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Robert Razo; and his sister, Barbara Hallwood.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Bro. Razo on Nov. 21 at St. Paul the Apostle Church.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 770 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Bro. Razo’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

BRO. JAMES L. GIORDANO • LODGE 225 •

GIRARD, Kan. — The members of Lodge 225 sadly report the Dec. 27, 2025, passing of Bro. James Lee Giordano, 82, of Arma, Kan., at his home.

Bro. Giordano was born April 5, 1943, in Pittsburg, Kan., a son of the late James Carl and Lola Belle (Loomis) Giordano. He attended Pittsburg grade schools and graduated from Pittsburg High School. James joined the U.S. Marine Corps on Aug. 1, 1962, and spent the next four years proudly serving his country before he was honorably discharged.

On April 26, 1966, he married Edith Lynn Buffington. They were looking forward to celebrating 60 years of marriage in April.

James worked most of his

career as a machinist at McNally Manufacturing in Pittsburgh, and retired from Thomas Manufacturing in Girard.

A 50-year SNPJ member, he was also a member of the American Legion and VFW. He served on the Arma City Council and was a lifelong supporter of U.S. military veterans, especially disabled veterans.

In his free time, James enjoyed woodworking, fishing and hunting. He also loved spending time with his family, and was very proud of his grandchildren. Following his retirement, James spent a lot of his time sitting on the bench in his back yard watching the squirrels and birds, or on the front porch waving to those who passed by.

He is survived by his wife, Edith Lynn Giordano; his son, James Joseph Giordano of Arma; his daughter, Sherri (Rob) Oehme of Republic, Mo.; two grandchildren, Elizabeth (Aaron) Yount and Bradley (Baily) Oehme; and five great-grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Sam Giordano; and his sister, Rosalie Siekman.

Graveside services for Bro. Giordano were held Jan. 5 in Garden of Memories Cemetery, Pittsburg.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 225 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our condolences to Bro. Giordano’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

BRO. RAYMOND J. ZALAZNIK • LODGE 89 •

MIDWAY, Pa. — The members of Lodge 89 sadly report the Jan. 26, 2026, passing of Bro. Raymond John Zalaznik, 68, of Bulger, Smith Twp., Pa., on his family farm. He was a 49-year SNPJ Lodge 89 member.

Bro. Zalaznik was born Jan. 7, 1958, in Canonsburg, Pa., a

son of the late Raymond and Margaret (Bentz) Zalaznik.

Ray was the most hard-working man you will ever find. He loved being home tinkering around on the farm with his tractors, and he was truly the happiest on his tractors, or in his car or side-by-side. He could usually be found taking his four-legged best friend, Maisey, for a ride.

He loved tending to his grass – not only in the front yard, but in the field as well. He was meticulous outdoors and indoors as well, always cleaning and keeping up with his granddaughter, Macie.

Ray was a family man first. He loved being a husband, a father, and most recently a grandfather. He devoted his life to caring for his family and did a remarkable job.

Ray was the rock of his family, he cherished the time he was able to spend with his daughter, son-in-law, granddaughter and sister. Within the past two years of his granddaughter’s life, he was thankful to live so close to her and have so many special memories.

Not only was Ray’s family important to him, his friends were too. He had a standing breakfast meet-up with his friends every Saturday. He truly enjoyed those get-togethers every weekend morning.

Surviving are his loving daughter, Brittany (Cody) Scariot; his granddaughter, Macie Scariot; and a sister, Joyce Zalaznik.

In addition to his parents, Ray was preceded in death by his best friend and wife, Sandra Lee (Roach) Zalaznik; and a sister, Carol Zalaznik.

A service for Bro. Zalaznik was held Jan. 30 at Thomas-Little Funeral Service, Inc., McDonald, Pa.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 89 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Bro. Zalaznik’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.



Bro. JOSEPH C. GODINA Jr. (643)

BRO. JOSEPH C. GODINA JR. • LODGE 643 •

GIRARD, Ohio — The Godina family and the members of Lodge 643 sadly report the March 2, 2026, passing of Bro. Joseph C. Godina Jr., 81, of Farrell, Pa., in the emergency room of Sharon Regional Medical Center, Sharon, Pa.

Bro. Godina was born Feb. 28, 1945, in Greenville, Pa., a son of the late Joseph C. Sr. and Josephine J. (Valentine) Godina. He was a 1963 graduate of St. Michael’s High School in Greenville and furthered his education at Youngstown State University, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in computer science.

Joe worked out of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union Local #47/449 of Monaca, Pa., and Pittsburgh, mainly in commercial construction as a plumber steamfitter. He dedicated more than 60 years to his craft, and retired from his vocation with a great sense of pride and accomplishment.

A 57-year SNPJ member, he was also a member of the Slovenian Working Men’s Club in Sharon, the Penn-Ohio Polka Pals and the National Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame, where he received

recognition as Promoter of the Year and a Lifetime Achievement Award. Joe was also successful with his Spotlight Productions business, recording and producing music projects for customers from his office on a daily basis.

In his spare time he enjoyed hunting, fishing, spending time at camp, and playing his button box. He also liked helping his son, Jeff, roast lamb and chickens. However, Joe might be best remembered from his “Polka Heaven Show” and “The Italian Show” on WPIC-AM 790 radio and other radio stations in the Pittsburgh and Cleveland markets which aired over the past 60 years. He also played polka music on 247polkaheaven.com that was broadcast all over the world by internet.

Mourning his loss are his wife, Paula Ann (Gligor) Godina, whom he married April 23, 1983; his children, Jeffrey J. (Dawn) Godina of Brookfield, Ohio, and Jessie J. Godina-O’Bruba (Daniel) of Pittsburgh; his stepdaughter, Michele A. (Richard) Martin of Red Lion, Pa.; his stepson, Michael (Maria) Balluch of El Paso, Texas; step-grandsons Jordan and M.J.; and countless friends.

A memorial gathering in honor of Bro. Godina was held March 7 at Briceland Funeral Service, LLC, Brookfield, Ohio. As suggested by his family, memorial contributions can be made to the Slovenian Working Men’s Club by sending donations to Briceland Funeral Service, LLC, P.O. Box 551, Brookfield, OH 44403.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 643 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Bro. Godina’s family, relatives and friends on their loss.

DEATHS REPORTED
For the month of March 2026

LODGE	NAME	DATE OF DEATH	CITY, STATE
2	Kathleen M. Penca	02-21-2026	East Moline, Ill.
5	Josephine M. Zupancic	08-28-2005	Maple Hgts., Ohio
6	Rosella Giehl	01-27-2026	Bethel Park, Pa.
6	William E. Rennie	02-03-2026	Bridgeville, Pa.
6	Pamela K. Walker	02-22-2026	Tustin, Calif.
33	John Hertzler Jr.	01-30-2026	Moon Twp., Pa.
87	Evelyn J. Montecupo	03-08-2026	Greensburg, Pa.
106	Michael T. Force	01-26-2026	Aliquippa, Pa.
106	Henrietta Rejniak	02-20-2026	Imperial, Pa.
106	Paul G. Tomko	03-05-2026	Clinton, Pa.
106	Dean Miller	03-11-2026	Clinton, Pa.
106	Devon Robert Paul	05-30-2025	Savona, N.Y.
117	Michael Premich Jr.	02-12-2026	Carbondale, Colo.
142	Frances A. Pelton	02-16-2026	Norton, Ohio
142	Kenneth A. Planisek	11-29-2025	Pickerington, Ohio
158	Joseph V. Hocevar	01-21-2026	Cleveland, Ohio
158	Joseph J. Hrvatin	02-21-2018	Euclid, Ohio
158	Ronald F. Suponic Sr.	02-22-2026	Venice, Fla.
158	Frances M. Zupon	05-18-2015	Wickliffe, Ohio
174	Sandra Lee Rheel	01-08-2026	Johnstown, Pa.
216	Dorothy R. Cenk	07-06-2025	El Paso, Texas
218	Mike Satak Jr.	03-02-2026	Longmont, Colo.
223	Robert B. Davis	06-06-2025	Greensburg, Pa.
257	Julia Sustersic	06-25-2019	Parma Hgts., Ohio
562	Carl J. Pierce	10-28-2025	Belmont, Ohio
576	Florence J. Vicente	02-12-2026	Columbus, Ohio
576	Daniella Avsec	03-17-2026	Wickliffe, Ohio
584	Marlene J. Watkins	01-08-2026	Brown Deer, Wis.
584	Pauline J. Beton	02-25-2026	Gilbert, Minn.
603	Valentine J. Kovacs	02-19-2026	Dade City, Fla.
604	Katherine L. Thomas	02-17-2026	Bradenton, Fla.
604	William S. Perdan	12-28-2025	Lexington, Ky.
643	Joseph C. Godina Jr.	03-02-2026	Farrell, Pa.
665	William A. Gramc	02-19-2026	Pittsburgh, Pa.
721	Debra M. Balawajder	02-22-2026	Gahanna, Ohio
729	Edward R. Manchas III	01-14-2021	Brownsville, Pa.
729	Albert L. Potisek	01-21-2026	Belle Vernon, Pa.
745	Sherry L. Stocks	03-24-2022	Silver Springs, Nev.
749	Christine N. Radovich	01-30-2026	Little Creek, Del.
749	Dorothy Butler	02-25-2026	Davidsville, Pa.
749	Robert E. Evacko	10-26-2025	Arvada, Colo.
770	Donna J. Mackie	01-23-2026	Riverside, R.I.
770	Nickolas M. Bok	01-30-2026	New Castle, Pa.
776	Pamela A. Engle	12-30-2025	Beaver Falls, Pa.
786	Albert Suhajda	12-24-2025	Aliso Viejo, Calif.

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

PROSVETA 2026 Publication Dates

JANUARY 2026											
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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.

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Official Proceedings

Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting
Feb. 10, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m. by President Evanish with National Secretary Karen Pintar and National Treasurer Robert Lawrence in attendance.

Approved the minutes of the December 2024 meeting.

This meeting is for discussion centered around the new illustration system and the various scenarios we wish to display.

Reported several discussions with IT and the sales director on this illustration and will move forward with development.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

March 26, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. by President Evanish with National Secretary Karen Pintar and National Treasurer Robert Lawrence in attendance.

Approved the minutes of the February 2025 meeting.

Discussed the upcoming National Board meeting agenda and presenters.

Discussed annuity options and illustrations for the life insurance products.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

May 1, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m. by President Evanish with National Secretary Karen Pintar and National Treasurer Robert Lawrence in attendance.

Approved the minutes of the March 2025 meeting.

Discussed the illustration system software and reviewed the project timeline.

Met with actuary Chris Conklin to discuss annuity opportunities for the Society and reviewed current rates.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

JOSEPH C. EVANISH
National President/CEO

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

SNPJ Membership Anniversaries
May 2026

80-Year Members

Lodge	Member
31	Frances Giewont
745	Mildred R. Rowe

70-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
6	Robert G. Krek	257	Kenneth J. Ivancic
113	Leonard K. Shield	629	Patricia M. Todd
225	Mary D. Yates	719	Richard G. Terdine

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Kathleen J. Utz	174	Susan Pecherkiewicz
5	Dorothy J. Johnston	518	Marie J. Menosky
6	Andrea L. Aloe	559	Camille G. Woodward
34	Robert N. Kukich	559	Alan M. Hunter
87	Michael G. Briscoe	559	Jane K. Goodrich
142	Peggy A. Watson	576	Edward A. Ozanick
142	Joseph L. Trunkely	665	Frank R. Bell
158	Carol A. Mogyorody	721	Thomas J. Wuchina

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
2	Mary J. Gehant	562	Judy L. Patterson
2	Vincent J. Papish	564	Laura D. Smith
5	Mark A. Scotton	584	Michael S. Widemshek
5	Frank M. Hribar	584	Jamie L. Gareri
6	Beth B. Hemans	604	Mark V. Gorjanc
87	Barry Minkel	629	Lynda T. Brettschneider
106	Patrick L. Messner	643	John M. Penza
106	Robert E. Heffern	677	Gregory A. Maisel
138	John W. Verhovnik	677	Ronald A. Bernick
138	Dennis J. Farrer	689	Robert A. Bero
142	Bradford C. Lautar	723	Gary J. Vieira
142	Brian F. Lautar	729	Terri L. Krance
158	John W. Hayward	729	Toni L. Krance
158	Susan Mrocza	749	Ronald J. Butler
174	Barbara E. Naglic	770	Lee A. Martin
216	Robert E. Zastawniak		
562	Ronald J. Molnar		

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

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As California SNPJ Day demonstrates, “Je treba delat (in se zabaviti)” – You have to work (and play)

by TERESA KOCI (786)
and PAMELA PANDZA (723)

BREA, Calif. — Greetings from the West Coast, where the Orange County and Fontana Lodges collaborated to host the second California SNPJ Day event at the Phoenix Club, held April 11 this year.

The traditional California SNPJ Days program formerly included a rotating schedule of Labor Day festivities held one year in Los Angeles, another year in Fontana, and the following year in San Francisco. Many changes in circumstances precipitated the end of that tradition, but an idea arose last year to plan a special occasion to bring together folks for an SNPJ-sponsored celebration in our region. Thus was inaugurated a “new and revived” California SNPJ Day.

The success in 2025 inspired Lodge officers to repeat the springtime gathering this year. And if we can gauge success by the smiles on people’s faces, dancers on the floor, and fraternal spirit exhibited, this year produced another winning occasion.

The big draw of the event is the music, of course. Musicians were everywhere, like they were coming out of the woodwork – we love it!

Frank Rote and Fred Mlakar on accordions got the crowd going with several toe-tapping Slovenian favorites that felt instantly familiar. The rhythm section anchored the sound beautifully: Joe Mlakar from Northern California on banjo; James Koci from Reno, Nev., joining his Mlakar uncles on bass; and local talent Frank Zajc III on drums.

Accordionists John Mlakar and John Hutar, also from Northern California, kept the dancers kicking, hopping and cheering. Frank Rote seemed to appear wherever he was needed, effortlessly jumping in to enrich each composition with his signature style. Even those seated couldn’t resist bouncing along, captivated by the rich variety of music filling the ballroom throughout the afternoon. And yes, there was more. Ernie Blazic joined in as well, adding yet another layer to the lively musical mix.

The tunes didn’t stop there. Another Southern California standout, Chris Thomas (of the Chris Thomas Orchestra), launched into an additional set that elevated the atmosphere further. He was joined by Gregory Yeseta of the former Yeseta Brothers Tamburitzan Orchestra on bass, along with our very own former radio DJ, Skip Sampson, who stepped in to give James Koci a chance to join his family on the dance floor. The line dances quickly became a crowd favorite, winding their way across the room in lively snaking patterns.

Looking at the years of musical experience and talent alone among our array of musicians, the total would be more than 300 years!

In its previous format, SNPJ Days included an afternoon program of a few speeches, a display of talent on the stage, and often a skit performed by Lodge members. The current Orange County and Fontana groups wanted to bring some of that spirit to this year’s event. But what could serve as the theme for a presentation that would allow us to organize something without actual practice (since we live many freeways apart from each other)? All of us recalled our

families’ admonitions to work hard and not be lazy.

Adi Smolar, a modern day songwriter and performer well-known in Slovenia, had written a tune with lyrics to perfectly exemplify that theme. The song, in Slovenian, is “Je Treba Delat” (You Have to Work). The message is that you can’t expect success in life unless you avoid deadbeat behavior and embrace hard work with all its rewards.

Eight proponents of Smolar’s and our parents’ theory signed a contract to perform live at the Phoenix Club on April 11, each charged with preparing his or her own example of productive work depicted in mime form.

The show began with Pamela Pandza as a fruit and vegetable gardener who changed scraggly little tomatoes into ultra large and juicy specimens with her hard work. Next, Krste Pandza re-enacted his days as a sheet metal mechanic, checking all the specifications for air conditioning elements to deliver relief from the California heat. He was followed by Ellie Koci, who appeared just in time to use her skills as a registered nurse to revive a very special patient in distress, her father, Ken. All is well due to her speedy and effective response.

After that, Southern California Edison worker Frank Rote made certain that all systems were “GO” for electrical service to the community. Marcia Leathers then offered Mary Kay cosmetics for that fine facial glow we all seek to display.

Following these devoted workers was Sherri Black, who displayed sophisticated dog grooming skills for the sophisticated canine in your family. No growling and no biting occurred during the process. Next up was Professor Ken Koci who illustrated the calculus formula for producing a delicious apple pie. Don’t forget an important part: 4 apple arctan(1) = apple pi.

Alas, the final performer illustrating the goal of working hard was Mary Alice Samii who showcased the role of a teacher of yore who definitely kept students in line in the classroom. She immediately spotted potential troublemakers and threatened them with the old “ruler to the knuckles” treatment. Everyone sat a little straighter after that.

Before and during the presentation, Mike Bajc served as narrator. He guided the audience to follow along with the lyrics of the Smolar song using a Karaoke-style system on a large screen. He admonished the group to include in their basic Slovenian vocabulary box the phrase “je treba delat.” Mike is a professional audiovisual master whose skills were greatly appreciated.

To conclude the production, the workers waved Slovenian flags and encouraged audience members to stand up and get loose dancing, miming, or at least keeping the beat. A short break followed, and then the musicians took over the stage again.

After the next musical segment, we were honored to hear from current Miss SNPJ Ellie Koci who lives in the Southern California area. She is actually a registered nurse, so she knew what to do with the dramatic medical event portrayed in the musical skit. Ellie will relinquish her crown in July at Slovenefest, to be held



The 2026 California SNPJ Day admissions team, **PEGGY ARGUBRIGHT** (left) and **MARIE BAJC**.



Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI** on stage with the musicians.



(Below) (from left) Skip Sampson, FRANK ROTE, and JOE and FRED MLAKAR.



Nurse Ellie (Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI**) to the rescue! The depictions showed that working hard to learn productive skills pays off in many ways.



Performers **KRSTE PANDZA**, Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI**, **FRANK ROTE**, **MARCIA LEATHERS**, **SHERRI BLACK**, **KEN KOCI** and narrator **MIKE BAJC** waved Slovenian flags after their demonstrations of work ethic.

at the SNPJ Recreation Center in Enon Valley, Pa.

It takes many players to make a worthy team. Thank you to our SNPJ associates who managed the check-in desk, Phyllis and Eric Wood, Peggy Argubright, and Marie Bajc.

April 11 was a fine day with no rain to dampen the motorways nor the spirits of the attendees. The crowd was jovial and diverse in ethnicities and generations. Great-grandparents were present, along with young children enjoying the polka beat. The

youngest reveler award surely went to eight-week-old Ava of the Mlakar-Koci clans.

At SNPJ events, we are honored to have guests of all ages—it’s great to see the young children, as well as grown-up ones, accompanying their parents and grandparents to carry on cultural aspects of Slovene-American life.

Committee members are contemplating a 2027 California SNPJ Day... volunteers rarely rest, it seems. Why? Because if you get the bug, je treba delat.

SNPJ Scholarship Fund Donations
for the months of February & March 2026

Jarvis Watkins, Brown Deer, Wis.\$605.10
In memory of Marlene Watkins
Mary Donovan (584), Mukwonago, Wis...\$288.12
In honor of Tony Verbrick

SNPJ Lodge 225, Girard, Kan.\$250
SID Vihar Society, Sidman, Pa.\$250
Westmoreland County Federation
of SNPJ Lodges.....\$200

SNPJ Lodge 174, Krayn, Pa.....\$200
Ken Zakraysek (174), Elton, Pa.\$100
SNPJ Lodge 782, Glenshaw, Pa.\$100

Memorial Day weekend marks the start of the SNPJ Heritage Center 2026 season

HERITAGE CENTER
FROM PAGE 1

history of the SNPJ Heritage Center in the June issue.

Come and celebrate our 50th anniversary the weekend of June 5-7 during Slovenian Heritage Center Weekend at the Recreation Center. We'll kick off the weekend on Friday, June 5, in the Gostilna with Patty Candela and 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.

Sarah Loudon will be leading a paint-and-sip in the Wine Room starting at 6 p.m. on Saturday. The craft this year is

a wind chime; a fee of \$20 will cover your supplies and snacks. The paint-and-sip is limited to 30 participants. Saturday activities conclude 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.

Come early for a baking demonstration starting at noon hosted by Julie Wagner from the Johnstown, Pa., Slavic Festival. Julie visits her cousins in Slovenia every summer, and while there she learns a new recipe. She will share one of her favorite recipes with us and provide samples.

We'll also welcome another guest, Joe Valencic from Cleveland, who many call "Mr. Slovenia" because of his knowledge about Slovenia. Joe is president of the Slovenian Union of America (SUA), and is very involved with the Cleveland-Style Polka Hall of Fame and the Cleveland Federation of SNPJ Lodges. He will have brochures about these various organizations, along with flyers detailing the many Slovenian events planned throughout the year.

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

Please support our Slovenian Heritage Center Weekend. As an added incentive to attend the entire weekend of events,

the Recreation Center is offering a 50 percent reduction in the price of cabin rentals. This is your opportunity to enjoy the peaceful, country surroundings of the Western Pennsylvania hills at the SNPJ Recreation Center. Phone the SNPJ Recreation Center office at (724) 336-5180 for rental information.

For all of you in the Youngstown, Ohio, area, mark your calendars for the 15th anniversary of the Simply Slavic Festival, planned June 26-28. The festival is held in the amphitheater in downtown Youngstown. This is a great event, presenting many different nationalities through the sales marketplace, the ethnic tent, food, drinks and music.

Soon it will be time for Slovenefest, scheduled the

weekend of July 10-12. The Recreation Center Committee is working hard to finalize the plans for this major event.

During Slovenefest, the Heritage Center museum and gift shop will be open on Friday from 5 to 8 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday from noon until 6 p.m. We will also be set up outside next to the entertainment tent on the Slovenefest midway on Friday from 5 to 8 p.m., on Saturday from 2 to 8 p.m., and on Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m.

Our "Closer Look at Slovenia" presentations will be located in various areas of the Recreation Center grounds this year. On Saturday you'll find Joe Valencic in the Heritage Pavilion from 2 to 5 p.m. displaying posters about Slovenians in different areas of

the U.S. He will also be available to answer your questions about Slovenia.

Lucia Lindav from the Slovenian Consulate will be in the Heritage Center museum from 2 to 5 p.m. discussing Slovenian citizenship, language and travel; Lorri Kaup, president of the Slovenian Genealogy Society International, Inc., will answer questions in the gift shop from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday; and Sarah and Kathy Loudon will host a make it/take it craft next to the outdoor sales trailer from 2 to 5 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday, Selina Progar will present a baking demonstration in The Alpine Room beginning at 2 p.m.

We're looking forward to seeing you at Slovenefest and throughout the summer!



From the archives

Burning the mortgage on the former Eveleth SNPJ Home

Identified as "burning of the morgage [sic]," this photo of the Eveleth (Minnesota) SNPJ Home Board was taken in October 1936, likely around the date of the former Eveleth SNPJ Home grand opening.

According to information provided by the late Frances Kokaly, who served as secretary of the former SNPJ Lodge 130 in Eveleth, the organizational meeting for the Eveleth SNPJ Home was held April 14, 1936, and in May a building committee was elected by members of the three SNPJ Lodges in Eveleth at that time: Lodges 69, 130 and 650. The committee selected an appropriate structure to renovate – "a fairly new building in excellent condition" that was previously owned by a photography studio – and building committee officers successfully secured a \$5,000 mortgage (the building was valued at \$15,000). Fundraising commenced immediately, through which the committee sold shares in the Eveleth SNPJ Home ranging in amounts from \$2 to \$100. All loans were repaid, with interest, by 1945. The SNPJ Headquarters made a \$150 donation to the building fund.

With the assistance of local SNPJ members who volunteered to provide general labor, the renovations and expansion were completed just prior to the grand opening celebration held on Oct. 17, 1936. Through sales of admission tickets to the grand opening, which were priced at \$1 per person (approximately \$23 today), along with the proceeds from meal purchases, the home was able to raise a total of \$300 – quite a healthy sum in 1936! The Eveleth SNPJ Home was fully incorporated in March 1937. Concluding her notes, Sis. Kokaly wrote, "In spite of the poor economy at that time, these fine people had faith... and always looked to the future without fear. Their trust was rewarded."

[Editor's Note: Although the editor cannot determine if this photo was previously published, an article promoting the Eveleth SNPJ Home grand opening submitted by Eveleth Home Board member Jacob Setnikar was published in the Oct. 14, 1936, PROSVETA issue, supporting Frances Kokaly's information. The Eveleth SNPJ Home was the site of the 13th SNPJ National Convention, held Aug. 12-17, 1946, marking a major milestone in its early history.]



Photo submitted by Rich Dombrosky

It's a Hockey Night for Lodge 776!

SNPJ Lodge 776 members had a great time attending the Youngstown Phantoms hockey game on Feb. 14. The Phantoms, a Tier I junior ice hockey team in the United States Hockey League (USHL) Eastern Conference, play their home games at the 5,200-seat Covelli Centre in Youngstown, Ohio. For information on Lodge 776 upcoming meeting dates and event announcements, search SNPJ Lodge 776 on Facebook.

PROSVETA Crossword DESSERTS (#0426) solution

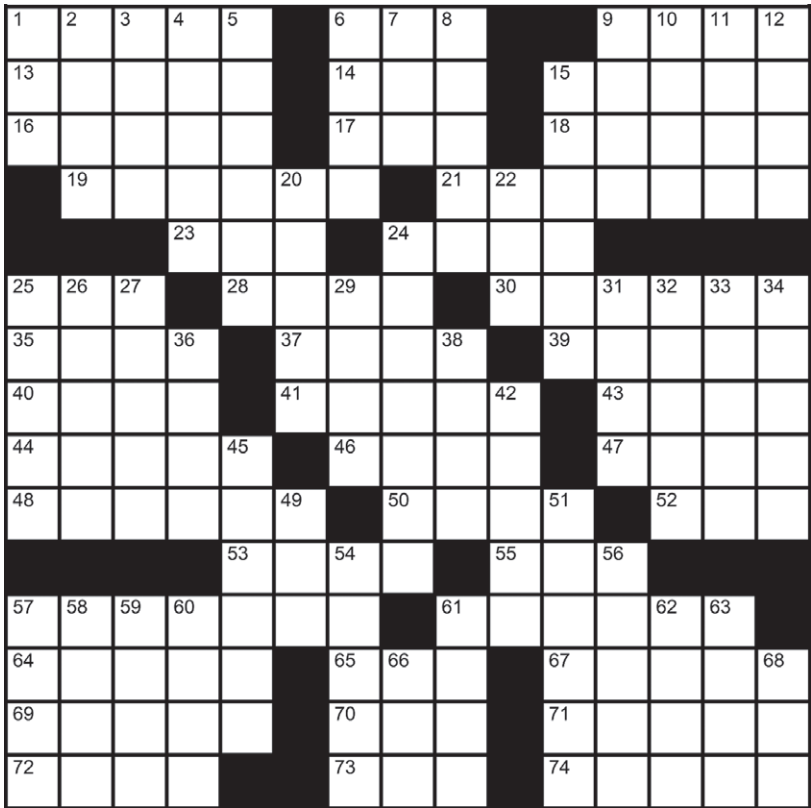
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PROSVETA Crossword Mother's Day (#0526) by StatePoint Media

- ACROSS**
- T. Rockwell's "How to Eat Fried ____"
 - Pro football org.
 - Tea servings
 - Gershwin or Levin
 - Break of day
 - Repeat, in music
 - Red Cross bed
 - Arm bones
 - *Mother ____, personification of physical world
 - *Mother ____, fictional dog owner
 - Opposite of hence
 - Sleeveless garment
 - Money source
 - Golfer's destination
 - Pass, as time
 - "Metamorphoses" poet
 - *The Beatles: "Mother ____ comes to me"
 - "The Goldbergs" sibling
 - Unacceptable, to a baby
 - Alpine singing
 - Resembling wings
 - Fill with optimism
 - Fill to satisfaction
 - Orion's ____
 - Like funeral atmosphere
 - Lice eggs
 - Morse code dash
 - Remainder of a cigarette
 - Before skip and a jump
 - *Mother of ____, a.k.a. Daenerys Targaryen
 - *Mother ____, Missionaries of Charity founder
 - Passé
 - Stir or fuss
 - Add together
 - Anomie, alt. sp.
 - Decompose
 - Very angry
 - Puppy sounds
 - "____ no evil, hear no evil"
 - Tennis-affected joint
- DOWN**
- Took place
 - Yoked team
 - Capital of Latvia
 - Kind of ray
 - Cast-off skin
 - French Riviera city
 - "To" follower
 - Wood turning device
 - Tulip starter
 - Luo's Karenina
 - ____ gum, food additive
 - Put metal to the pedal, p.t.
 - Difficult to detect
 - With ample space

- Employ
- Green and lush, as in trees
- *Mother ____, investigative journalism nonprofit
- Convex molding
- Twofold
- Cambodia's neighbor
- A in UAE
- Heaped
- Famous Teatro alla ____
- *Mother ____, personification of planet
- Shower with affection
- Abominable snowman
- River in Hades
- Personify
- *Mother Superior is the head one at the convent
- Foray
- Former Russian leaders
- *Mother of ____, a.k.a. nacre
- June 6, 1944
- Raja's wife
- On the surface
- Emeralds and rubies
- Carrying bag
- Hunk of something
- Lowest female singing voice
- Female forest ruminant
- Archery bow wood

The solution to puzzle #0526 will run in the June 1 issue.



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