

Reflecting on Slovenefest 2026 and a year I'll never forget as Miss SNPJ

by ELLEN KOCI (786)
Miss SNPJ 2026

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — Thank you to everyone who attended Slovenefest 2026! I hope you all had an enjoyable, memorable weekend celebrating Slovenian culture, family, friendship, and everything that makes our community so special.

For those who still may not know me, my name is Ellen Koci, and I was Miss SNPJ 2026. I am a proud member of

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Miss SNPJ 2026 **ELLEN KOCI** [left] and the former Miss SNPJs who were in attendance at this year's Slovenefest.



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briefly

Home Office closed as we celebrate Thanksgiving

IMPERIAL, Pa. — The SNPJ Home Office will be closed Thursday, Nov. 26, and Friday, Nov. 27, in celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday. Regular office hours, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., will resume Monday, Nov. 30. We wish all SNPJ members and friends a very happy Thanksgiving.

Policy owners, register to access the SNPJ Portal

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

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

We hope you enjoy your SNPJ Portal experience!

Have you recommended a new member lately?

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

THE DEADLINE

The next two *PROSVETA* issue dates are Nov. 2 and Dec. 1. All material must be received by noon on Monday, Oct. 19, for the Nov. 2 issue, and by Monday, Nov. 9, for the Dec. 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.

Your opt-in required to continue receiving *PROSVETA* by mail

IMPERIAL, Pa. — As published in the September issue, SNPJ is asking all members to determine whether or not they would like to receive *PROSVETA* by mail. While *PROSVETA* readership has continued to change over the years, SNPJ recognizes that many members still appreciate reading the monthly *PROSVETA* in its physical, printed format. SNPJ will continue to print and mail *PROSVETA* to those members who choose to opt-in and continue home delivery.

On Dec. 1, 2026, the *PROSVETA* mailing file will be reformatted to include **ONLY** the addresses of SNPJ members who have chosen to opt-in and receive *PROSVETA* by mail. Starting with the January 2027 issue, members who have not selected to opt-in will no longer receive print copies of *PROSVETA* in the mail. The opt-in does not pertain to members who have previously selected to receive notifications by e-mail for the online *PROSVETA* issues, nor to non-member *PROSVETA* subscribers.

To ensure delivery of the print copy of the January 2027 and future *PROSVETA* issues, the opt-in process must be completed no later than Monday, Nov. 30, 2026, by phoning the SNPJ Home Office at 1-800-843-7675 ext. 136 or sending an e-mail to optin@snpj.com with “OPT-IN” in the subject line and providing your name, current mailing address and phone number in the message. Please keep in mind that although opt-ins will be



accepted after Nov. 30, mail delivery of the printed *PROSVETA* issues will cease until your opt-in request is received.

Three choices are available to all SNPJ members:

- 1.) Opt-in to continue receiving *PROSVETA* print copies by mail;
- 2.) Opt-out of receiving *PROSVETA* in the mail, but provide an e-mail address and request to receive notification when each *PROSVETA* issue is posted to the SNPJ website;
- 3.) Make no reply and opt-out completely, which means your address information will be automatically removed from all future *PROSVETA* print copy mailings until an opt-in is received.

In its 15th year, the Pretty in Pink fundraiser commemorates founder Lois Denning

by JACKIE DENNING
Lodge 41

YUKON, Pa. — The Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges held the annual Pretty in Pink benefit dance, celebrating the 15th year of the fundraiser, on July 26 at the Yukon Slovenian Hall.

This year's event was especially meaningful as we gathered not only to support local cancer patients, but to commemorate the life and legacy of my mother, Lois Denning, who founded and

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Gene Gabonay and **MARY ANN BEBAR** (41) greeted guests to Pretty in Pink with warm Slovenian hospitality.

Join Lodge 142 for a Pumpkinville visit in October

by KARA MARUSZAK
Lodge 142 Vice President

CLEVELAND — Lodge 142 has an exciting outing planned at Pumpkinville, which is located at Rock's Farm and Garden in Kirtland, Ohio, on Saturday, Oct. 10, at 2 p.m. for Lodge members, their family and friends. The Rock family is very active in the Cleveland Slovenian community, and we are excited to partner with them on this event.

Pumpkinville has all your favorite fall activities, including a petting zoo, corn maze, kids' activities, face painting, a food truck, kettle corn and more! This year, there will be a photo op with the animals and donations will be accepted to benefit the Fieldstone Farm Therapeutic Riding Center in Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

Each Lodge member (adult and youth) will receive a pumpkin provided by the Lodge which they can paint and decorate at Pumpkinville.

Please call Carol at (440) 655-8776 by Oct. 1 to reserve your spot. It will be a fun day, and we hope to see you there!

Our final regular meeting and annual meeting will be held in November. We encourage our members to get involved with the Lodge — we would love to see some new faces! As always, you can stay up to date on Lodge happenings by following our Facebook page, SNPJ Lodge 142.

PERIODICAL MATERIAL

Lodge 581 will close out the year with plans for the future

by MARCIA KLANCER BLEGGI
Lodge 581 Secretary/Treasurer

ST. MARYS, Pa. — Two officers from SNPJ Lodge 581, Marcia Klancer Bleggi and John Troha, attended the Society's 33rd Quadrennial Convention at the SNPJ Recreation Center on Aug. 17.

The Convention was certainly planned well — the food was absolutely outstanding, as was the entertainment. Making decisions about the Society bylaws was very informative for all delegates in attendance.

Lodge 581 extends a special thank you to Karen Pintar, Joe Evanish, and Robert J. Lawrence for all their work on the Convention and for the many years of service they have given to SNPJ. It is so important for all of us to realize how many people and committees it takes to keep this fraternal organization going. We thank all of you for the hard work that keeps SNPJ functioning so well.

As we return to our respective Lodges, we do so with the goal of making our Lodges more active and our members more involved. Our Lodge delegates talked to many delegates from around the country and realized we all have some of the same issues, most importantly, “How do we get SNPJ members to

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Indy Rose Zimmermann

Born Aug. 14, 2024
Denver Lodge 218

The members of Denver Lodge 218 welcome Indy Zimmermann as the newest addition to their Lodge. Indy is the daughter of Caitlin and Ryan Zimmermann (218), the sister of Harper (218), the granddaughter of Bonnie and Gregg Lechner (218), and the great-granddaughter of Edward and Elizabeth Tomsic (218). We welcome Indy 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 () _____

E-mail _____

Complete and return to:
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Photo by Tim Cimperman, submitted by Kara Maruszak.

All Smiles for the 33rd Convention

Pictured are 10 former Miss SNPJs, from six different states, who attended the SNPJ 33rd Quadrennial Convention in August: [from left] Miss SNPJ 1971 **CAROL (Bokal) BACNIK** (142), Miss SNPJ 1981 **JUSTINA “Tina” (Dabrowski) RIGLER** (8), Miss SNPJ 1982 **TRACEY ANDERSON** (677), Miss SNPJ 1989 **TERESA (Mlakar) KOCI** (786), Miss SNPJ 2001 **KANDACE (Kocjan) FRANKLIN** (643), Miss SNPJ 2010 **KARA MARUSZAK** (142), Miss SNPJ 2019 **ELIZABETH SMRDEL** (158), Miss SNPJ 2020 **DANIELLA VOLPE** (158), Miss SNPJ 2023 **MADISON SINAN** (782), and Miss SNPJ 2024 **MORGAN SINAN** (782). Although she was in attendance and working during the Convention, Miss SNPJ 2004 and SNPJ Fraternal Director Courtney (Pabian) Valencic is not pictured.

Spartans Lodge 576 schedules a casino bus trip in November

by KAREN NOVAK
Lodge 576 President

CLEVELAND — The Spartans Lodge 576 summer picnic featuring the annual Lou Novak Balina Tournament was held Sunday, Aug. 16, at the SNPJ Farm in Kirtland, Ohio. Despite the rain and humidity, everyone had a great time!

The day started off with the Lou Novak Balina Tournament. The Spartans Lodge donated three new sets of balina balls to the Farm which, of course, we used for the first time that day. It was a close call, but the winning team of Craig Young, Jake Young, Mikey Lawrence and Clair Stevenson took home the trophy this year. Dr. Slivo would have been proud to see his nephews win.

The Garrett Tatano Band played for our dancing and listening pleasure. Special guests Joe Novak and T.J. Likovic joined in for a few songs on button box.

The kids’ activities (glitter tattoos and coloring pages that taught Slovenian words) were a great success, and a few kids had fun running around and catching bugs. Please don’t get the



Clair Stevenson, MIKEY LAWRENCE, JAKE YOUNG and **CRAIG YOUNG** took honors as champions of the 2026 Lou Novak Balina Tournament hosted by Spartans Lodge 576 at the SNPJ Farm in August.

kids started on the “Egg Roll” song!

A very special thank you Betty Young and her cabbage roll crew. Word around was that they were delicious! When the food is mostly sold out, you know it had to have been good!

Congratulations to all the basket drawing and 50/50 winners. A big congratulations to Mila Pompeani who

was the winner of the liquor basket.

I think a good time was had by all. Thank you again to all the workers and to Spartans Lodge members who helped make our picnic a success. We’ll see you all again next year.

Keep the fun going! The Spartans Lodge will be hosting a one-day casino bus trip to Presque Isle Casino on Saturday, Nov. 21. Contact Karen



Spartans Lodge 576 donated three sets of balina balls to the SNPJ Farm which were used for the very first time during this year’s annual Lou Novak Balina Tournament.

Novak at (216) 965-3181 or Erica Novak at (440) 725-6523, or e-mail snpjspartans576@gmail.com with any questions about the bus trip or future Spartans Lodge meetings and events.

Our next Spartans Lodge meeting is scheduled Sunday, Nov. 8. If you would like to attend, contact Karen Novak for details.

The 2026 Pretty in Pink fundraiser held in memory of founder

PRETTY IN PINK
FROM PAGE 1

organized this event for 14 years, and who passed away this past December. Her spirit was felt throughout the entire afternoon.

Many thanks to Kristin Derry (41) and her daughter, Kennah Lebron (41), for the beautiful pink balloon entryway. Entertainment was provided by The Polka Classics, who packed the dance floor.

The kitchen offered pulled pork, roast beef, klobase, potato salad, pierogies, and a re-creation of my mother’s famous Slovenian beans. The bar featured our signature pink cocktail, named the “Pretty in Pink.” The dessert table was overflowing and included the famous Lake Bled cake donated by Kathleen and Maury Sinan (782), and Joann Krance’s signature *flancati* (crullers).

A big thank you to all the individuals, SNPJ Lodges, the SNPJ Home Office, and local businesses who donated a record number of 64 baskets this year for our basket drawing. The decorating committee from SNPJ Lodge 729 did a wonderful job adorning the room in pink decor.

The baskets contained a variety of popular items that including Pittsburgh gear, Slovenian wine, DeLallo’s Italian products, and golf packages, along with gift cards, cash and lottery tickets. Thank you to Rosie Denning (41), Brandon Swain, Jess Nagy (41) and Rachelle Cilli for handling all of the baskets.

Thank you to my cousin, Donna Cilli, who donated the beautiful pink wreath for the door prize. Special thanks to SNPJ Lodge 729 youth and young adult members Makenzie, Kennedy, Harrison and Quinn Krance, and Lodge 41 young adult Cameron Murphy for donating their time toward this worthy cause. Many



Friends from SNPJ Lodge 358 in West Point, Ohio, made a special trip to the Yukon Slovenian Hall to attend the 15th annual Pretty in Pink fundraiser and support the cause: [from left] **Brandon Swain, ROSIE DENNING** (41), **JESS NAGY** (41), **HOWARD LOUDON** (358), **JACKIE DENNING** (41), **SARAH LOUDON** (358) and **KATHY LOUDON** (358).

thanks as well to all the folks who helped advertise the event: Marko Kuhns, Jerry Zagar, Jack Tady, Steve Novosel, Sharon Ujcich and Ed Gould.

We very much appreciate Linda Pocratsky and her talented Yukon Slovenian Hall crew for their bartending skills.

Thank you as well to our welcoming committee, Mary Ann Bebar (41), Larry and Joann Krance (729), Denny Susa (41), Tracy Hapeman, Martha Kalina (6), and others who stepped in throughout the day.

We were joined by Joe Nease, representing the Karla J. Nease Foundation, our partner in this event for 15 years and counting. Thanks to the Foundation, local patients in need receive financial support throughout their cancer treatment journey.

This year’s event carried an extra

layer of emotion as we took a moment to remember and honor my mother, Lois Denning. She believed with her whole heart that a community coming together could ease the burden of even the hardest journey.

For 14 years, she poured her energy, her love, and her time into making Pretty in Pink what it is today. We felt her presence in every pink balloon, every pierogi, every polka, and every generous donation. The greatest tribute we can offer her is to keep going – and that is exactly what we intend to do!

Special thanks to Mary Ann Bebar, my cousin and my mother’s chosen sister, for taking the lead in organizing this year’s event and carrying on the legacy. We also thank local news reporter Addison Albert for featuring our story and promoting Pretty in

Pink on WPXI.

On behalf of everyone at the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges, I want to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who attended or donated to our fundraiser in its 15th year. Your support means the world to us and to those whose lives are impacted by this disease. Your contributions help patients undergoing cancer treatment focus on their health by supporting them with needed essentials such as fuel, groceries, rent and utilities.

Thank you for continuing to support this meaningful cause as we carry on my mother’s legacy – we couldn’t do it without you! Donations are accepted year-round by mail to Mary Ann Bebar, 2414 Rt. 819, Greensburg, PA 15601. Make checks payable to Pretty in Pink. *Hvala lepa!*

Up-and-Coming...

A look at events planned by the Slovene National Benefit Society

- OCT. 9..... SNPJ Lodge 729 presents the Pittsburgh Belairs (doo-wop and Motown), 7-10 p.m. at the Yukon Slovenian Hall, 137 Yukon Ave. Bring your own snacks. Refreshments will be available for purchase – no BYOB. Admission is \$10 per person. To reserve a table, phone (724) 722-9700 and leave a message.
- OCT. 9-11..... SNPJ National Bowling Tournament co-hosted by Sygan, Pa., Lodge 6 and Strabane, Pa., Lodge 138 at the Sygan Lodge 6 Bowling Center and the Strabane Lodge 138 Lanes. Entry form available online at snpj.org.
- OCT. 18..... Fall dance hosted by the Westmoreland County Federation of SNPJ Lodges at the Yukon Slovenian Hall, Yukon, Pa., 2-6 p.m. Music by the Garrett Tatano Band. Food and refreshments available for purchase. For information contact Mary Ann Bebar at (724) 244-4986.

We've Got You
COVERED



by DAVID GOMBKOTO
SNPJ Sales Director

How to identify, verify and avoid today’s scams

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, making it a good time to talk about something that affects nearly everyone: scams. Criminals no longer rely only on suspicious e-mails filled with obvious spelling mistakes. Today, a fraudulent call may appear from your bank. A text message may look like it came from a delivery company. A voicemail may claim to be from a government agency, and an e-mail may use the logo and wording of a company you recognize. The goal is usually the same: get you to *act* before you have time to *think*. For retirees and older adults, the stakes can be especially high. Retirement savings and personal information can make someone an attractive target. Fortunately, many scams share the same warning signs. Learning to recognize them can help protect what you have worked a lifetime to build.

Start With One Rule: Stop and Verify
If you receive an unexpected call, text, voicemail or e-mail asking for money or personal information, do not react immediately. Pause and verify the request independently. Do not call the number provided in the suspicious message or click its link. Instead, find the organization’s official phone number on a statement, bank card or website you locate yourself. If someone claims to be a family member in trouble, hang up and call that person directly using the number you already have.

Watch for Pressure and Urgency
Scammers frequently try to create fear or excitement: “Your account has been compromised.” “You owe money immediately.” “Your grandchild is in trouble.” “You won a prize.” “This investment opportunity expires today.” The story may change, but the pressure is the clue. Anytime someone insists that you act immediately, slow down. Talk to a family member or someone you trust before sending money or sharing information.

Never Trust Caller ID Alone
Seeing the name of your bank, Medicare, Social Security, the IRS, or even a local number on your screen does not prove who is calling. Scammers can “spoof” caller ID information so a fraudulent call appears legitimate. The same applies to e-mail. A familiar logo or company name doesn’t make a message genuine. Look closely at the sender’s actual e-mail address and be cautious about attachments and links you were not expecting.

Be Suspicious of Unusual Payment Requests
If someone tells you to solve a problem by purchasing gift cards, sending cryptocurrency, wiring money, using a payment app, or moving money to a so-called “safe account,” STOP! Legitimate government agencies and reputable financial institutions don’t unexpectedly instruct consumers to protect their money by transferring it to a stranger or purchasing gift cards. Never provide gift card numbers or verification codes to someone who contacts you. A common method is by directing you to the nearest kiosk for immediate payment. This is an immediate reg flag.

Protect Your Passwords and Security Codes
Use a different, strong password for important e-mail, banking, retirement and financial accounts. Always use multifactor authentication when available. This adds another step – such as an authentication app, fingerprint, facial recognition or a security code – before someone can access your account. Never give an unexpected caller a one-time security code sent to your phone. That code may be the final piece a criminal will need to access your account. Keep your devices and applications updated as well. Security updates can correct vulnerabilities criminals may try to exploit.

Your Best Defense Is Permission to Say “No”
Scammers are skilled at creating convincing stories designed to trigger fear, trust, excitement or urgency. Give yourself permission to hang up. Delete the message. Ignore the text. Ask questions. Call someone you trust. Verify before acting.

This Cybersecurity Awareness Month, take a few minutes to strengthen passwords, enable multifactor authentication, update your devices, and talk with family members about scams. Most importantly, remember three simple words whenever something doesn’t feel right: *Stop. Verify. Protect.*

At SNPJ, protecting your financial future is about more than helping you build security. It’s also about helping you preserve it. The identity and savings you have spent a lifetime building are worth protecting, and a little caution today can help keep them secure for years to come. For an updated review of your retirement plan, contact the SNPJ Home Office at 1-800-843-7675.



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Flood repair completed at Ljubljana archives unit

ŠKOFJA LOKA (STA) — The Ljubljana History Archives has concluded the repair of the Škofja Loka unit that was flooded in August 2023. Archive material that was being restored in the Czech Republic was expected to be returned to the archive in late September. The Škofja Loka unit of the archive is located in semi-basement premises that were previously flooded in 2007 and 2016. Several protective measures were implemented following the 2016 flood, which included removing a loading platform and closing a shaft in which [the platform] was located. “We thought [those measures] would suffice, but the flood returned in 2023 on a much larger scale,” Ljubljana History Archives assistant director Marija Čipić Rehar said. All of the rooms at the Škofja Loka unit were flooded in 2023. The workspaces and reading room were unusable for nearly three years, so employees were relocated to rented premises in Škofja Loka. The reconstruction started in January and the work concluded in May. Workers were able to return to the premises in June, when most of the archival materials were returned to the site as well. The 2023 flooding damaged 35 boxes of archival material, which had to be frozen during the reconstruction work. In July, the damaged materials were transported to the Czech National and University Library, which has special restoration chambers. The material is dried and preserved in the best possible condition through a process that takes around six weeks.

A push to certify mining trails as a cultural route

IDRIJA (STA) — Eight partners from seven European countries, including the Idrija Mercury Heritage Management Centre, have submitted a joint application for the network of their mining trails to be certified as a Council of Europe (CoE) Cultural Route. The partners formed the European Mining Routes of Saint Barbara Federation in 2020, an association that includes eight organizations managing the heritage of former mines in Italy, Spain, Belgium, France, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Idrija CUDHg center, the sole member from Slovenia, joined the federation in 2021. The association’s aim is to foster collaboration and cooperation for the protection, preservation and presentation of mining heritage across its regions. The individual partners strive to transform mining heritage into development opportunities for these regions, particularly in the field of sustainable tourism.

Association members have developed St. Barbara tourism and cultural mining trails which can be explored on foot, by bike or by car. The trails vary in length from the longest – the Cammino Minerario di Santa Barbara in Sardinia, Italy, a network that spans a total of 500 kilometers (approx. 311 miles) – to shorter routes such as the Idrija Miners’ Route. The latter is 33 kilometers (20.5 miles) long and connects the most iconic sites of the 500-year history of the Idrija mercury mine and its surroundings. The partners have been working on their joint application for three years, submitting it to the European Institute of Cultural Routes (EICR) in late July. Since EICR assessors will visit each member country to verify whether the information in the application corresponds to the situation on the ground, an assessment of the application is expected to take quite some time. A final decision is expected in June 2027 at the latest.

The European Cultural Route is a certificate awarded to networks that promote shared European culture, history and heritage, and that put into practice the fundamental values promoted by the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and intercultural exchange as part of cultural tourism. A total of 13 cultural routes in Slovenia currently hold this certificate, including the Women Writers’ Route, the first CoE Cultural Route based in Slovenia.

New app opens coastal observation to the public

PIRAN (STA) — A new app has been launched that enables the public to help researchers, conservationists and decision-makers better understand and protect the Slovenian sea and coast by



entering their observations. Initiated by the Connected for the Sea consortium, the platform is available on the zamorje.si website. “The more eyes observing the sea, the more we can discover,” Irena Fonda, the director of the YouSea institute, one of the partners in the consortium, told the press as she announced the platform in late July. Fonda said that if each of the visitors to the Slovenian coast – there are thousands of them every day, especially in the warm months of the year – contributed just one observation per year, it would be possible to create the largest database on the Slovenian sea. On the app, the public will be able to report various sightings of animals and plants – such as dolphins, sea turtles, crabs, seaweed, fish and birds – to researchers. They can also record observations of other items, such as marine debris, improperly anchored vessels, oil spills and dead marine animals, with the entries being directly available to scientists and other users. Fonda said that although the Slovenian coastline is just 47 kilometers (29 miles) long, researchers and conservationists cannot be present on every beach and pier and under the sea every day, adding that “the power of participatory science is in bringing together experts and the public.”

Slovenia boasts a self-sufficient supply of blood

LJUBLJANA (STA) — Slovenia is completely self-sufficient in its blood supply, meaning the nation fully covers the medical needs of its healthcare system using its own domestic resources. The number of blood donors matches the European average, Valentina Filipović Samec of the Slovenian Institute for Transfusion Medicine explained to the press. “Current stocks of blood components are satisfactory but fluctuate, which is why stock levels are monitored daily,” Samec said. She continued: “The average demand for blood components of different blood types is proportional to the distribution of blood types among the population. However, blood supplies depend on the number of blood donors, the amount of blood collected, and patient needs.” Since Slovenia has a self-sufficient blood supply, there has never been a case when someone did not receive blood when needed. With prior approval from the Ministry of Health, Slovenia could also provide international humanitarian aid in this area. Annually, some 90,000 blood donors register to donate blood and 80,000 donations are collected. Roughly 10 percent of these are new donors. The most common blood types in Slovenia are A and O, accounting for about 40 percent and 38 percent of the population, respectively. According to Samec, thanks to a 70-year tradition of blood donation in Slovenia there are well-established procedures for adjusting to blood supplies, and the partnership between the Slovenian Red Cross and the transfusion service plays a key role in this.

Agriculture and tourism combine in a new project

BOHINJ (STA) — While tourism in Slovenia’s Julian Alps is thriving, agriculture is seeing a negative trend as the number of family farms is declining. In an attempt to address this situation, a new cooperative platform has been established to bring together local food producers and tourism providers. Launched in 2025, the “Yes 100% Local” project aims to strengthen the local food supply chain. The project now includes around 100 farmers and food producers, restaurant owners, hospitality providers, and other tourism workers. Organizers have established logistics routes accommodating the Bohinj lakeside resort, the Kranjska Gora ski resort, and Posočje, an area known for its emerald-green Soča River. “As part of the network, two cold storage facilities serve as pickup locations, one in the Gorenjska region and another in Posočje,” project coordinator Greta Lizabeta Črnilogar said. The food is picked up by the staff running the project and delivered to customers who

have placed the orders. The project is the culmination of years-long efforts to promote locally sourced food. “Bohinj is visited by some 350,000 tourists per year. In the Julian Alps, the figure rises to some two million visitors...,” said Klemen Langus, director of Tourism Bohinj and coordinator of the Julian Alps Community, a network of municipalities and tourism organizations. “Tourism is an interdisciplinary sector which has to foster ties with other sectors, including agriculture. There are many farmers producing high-quality food in the area, but they find it hard to reach more customers,” he added. Langus hopes that the Yes 100% Local project will create long-term ties so that cooperation between farmers and tourism providers doesn’t fade once the project ends in 2027. Yes 100% Local brings together 11 municipalities that are part of the Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve. In addition to the above-mentioned towns, the partners include Bled, Jesenice and Radovljica. The participants would like to see the project grow even further. According to Črnilogar, the biggest challenge is to get customers actively involved in the network.

Urška Urbanc, another member of the team behind the project, said that it had been a long-held belief that restaurants and pubs wouldn’t be buying local because such products were too expensive. She would like to see the project’s supply chain become so strong that menus would be created based on what the farmers have to offer.

The Los Angeles Kings retiring Kopitar’s number

LOS ANGELES (STA) — Slovenian hockey legend Anže Kopitar will be honored by his former team, the Los Angeles Kings, for which he played his entire career in the NHL, in February by having his number 11 retired and a bronze statue of him as the top scorer in team history unveiled. The ceremony will take place Feb. 24, 2027, at Crypto.com Arena, according to an announcement posted to the Kings website. Kopitar, the franchise leader in games played (1,521), assists (864) and points (1,316), will become the eighth player to have his number retired by the team. The statue of Kopitar, the fourth for the Kings franchise, will be displayed at the entrance to the arena alongside those of Wayne Gretzky, Luc Robitaille and Dustin Brown. “To have my number retired and a statue unveiled by the L.A. Kings is an incredible honor and one that is difficult to put into words,” Kopitar said. “I never imagined something like this. I have been fortunate to spend my entire career with one organization, surrounded by amazing teammates, coaches, staff and fans who have made this journey so special,” he added. Kings president Luc Robitaille said that “Kopitar has defined what it means to be a Los Angeles King for the past two decades,” adding that his “leadership, consistency and commitment to excellence have helped shape the identity of our franchise, both on and off the ice.” According to Robitaille, the Slovenian’s legacy extends far beyond records, awards and championships. He has “inspired generations of Kings fans and left an indelible mark on our franchise, and on the Los Angeles and Southern California community.” Kopitar, who announced his retirement from the NHL in March, helped the Kings win two Stanley Cups, in the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 seasons.

Europe’s best rowers will compete at Bled in 2027

VARESE, Italy (STA) — During this year’s European Rowing Championships held in August in Varese, the European Rowing Confederation announced that Lake Bled will host the 2027 championships. Lake Bled hosted the European Championships in 1956 and 2023, and will again host the best European rowers May 28-30 next year. “Bled has received unanimous support, which for us is an expression of trust in our abilities and experience as a host of major competitions,” Secretary General of the Slovenian Rowing Federation Jernej Slivnik told the press as he commented on the announcement. *The articles comprising this feature have been reprinted with permission from the Slovenian Press Agency (STA).*

Out Fontana Way

by PAMELA RICHTAR PANDŽA
Lodge 723

FONTANA, Calif. — So here we are, thinking about autumn events, cooler temperatures, and for us in California, asking the question: “Will Super El Niño really be a part of this year’s weather pattern?” Is that rarely encountered item called an umbrella going to become useful as winter arrives? Should we review the lyrics to “*Jaz pa ti, pa židana morela*” (You and I and the silk umbrella)?

For Krste and me, thoughts will soon turn to re-establishing residency in the California Mojave Desert after enjoying summertime scenery in Croatia and Slovenia. We have a few adventures left here in Europe first, one being the Kravljí Bal at Lake Bohinj.

This festive event celebrates the return of the cows with their herders from higher elevations where the grass was green for summer grazing. Awards await the most elegant bovines to descend from their mountain camps. Can cows smile? Un-initiated in judging their health and beauty, I will look for a happy, smiling cow to reward with a flowery necklace. We’re looking forward to a taste of some delicious cheese to complement fresh bread, and maybe a glass of wine or Union or Laško pivo.

We will visit friends and relatives in different areas of Slovenia and Croatia, and hope to get in a couple days at a *toplice* where thermal springs deliver some relaxation and rejuvenation as a prelude

to the long flight across two continents and one ocean.

Also on the agenda for our “return to reality” (and a break from doctors’ appointments) will be the Lodge 723 meeting on Sunday, Oct. 18, at 1 p.m. at Napoli Restaurant in Loma Linda, Calif. Members have likely heard from our efficient secretary, Diana Rote. She requests your RSVP as soon as you can contact her. Diana also reminds us to bring in any collected pull tabs, along with non-perishable food items for those who are struggling to make ends meet in the Fontana area.

Our president, Sherri Black, and secretary, Diana Rote, collaborated to send out to members by snail-mail their requests for e-mail addresses to keep more people informed about our Lodge activities in the future. They shared with me some of the responses from California, Washington, Wyoming, Colorado and other states, which were a pleasure to read.

One communication was from the granddaughter of Frank and Ann Vidmar, whose

name I immediately recognized from my work with Santa to provide holiday gifts to juvenile members in years gone by.

If any Lodge 723 members from afar happen to be visiting Southern California during meeting dates, please contact Diana Rote and we’ll look forward to your presence for lunch and the meeting.

The next gathering, after October, is scheduled for Dec. 6. That will be a session to elect officers for 2027. We will also collect toys for distribution to families with limited resources. It would be great if some musicians magically show up with their instruments and get everyone in the merry spirit.

In June, Lodge 723 member Krste Pandža celebrated his 80th birthday in Bizjelsko, Slovenia, with family and friends. Gostilna Kocjan hosted the event with sparkling wine from Istenič Estate down the road.

Local young musicians played traditional music, and our guest, Michelle Račić Fon —formerly of Fontana and now living near Lake Bled with her husband Sebastijan, daughter Katarina, and son Jaka—entertained us with her vocal talent. She and her sister, Mary Ann Račić Vučinić, “grew up” at the

Fontana Slovene Hall. Mary Ann (a former Miss SNPJ) and her family now live near Chicago.

Another former Miss SNPJ, Lisa Videgar Lucas, was scheduled to attend the party from her work assignment area in Piran, Slovenia, but was under the weather and couldn’t make the trip. She was a Fulbright Scholar, analyzing the health of the Adriatic Sea environment, and has now returned home to the San Francisco Bay area.

Congratulations to new grandparents Teresa (Mlakar) and Ken Koci. They are spending a lot of time in Reno, Nev., where their son James and his wife Alyssa are parents to baby Ava, who is the apple of her parents’ and grandparents’ eyes; not to forget great-grandmother Jean Koci, a longtime SNPJ Lodge officer and *PROSVETA* correspondent.

It has been a hot summer in Europe; you’ve certainly heard about the fires and drought effects on corn and other crops. We have seen an early grape harvest, which has also occurred in Napa Sonoma, Calif. In Dalmatia in particular, native trees and shrubs have suffered from the



KRSTE PANDŽA’s birthday celebration in Bizjelsko, Slovenia: [from left] nephew **Marko Pandža**, niece **Davorka Djelekovčan**, sister-in-law **Hermína Pandža**, birthday boy **Krste** wearing his Šibenik cap, sister-in-law **Katica Pandža**, and niece **Sanja Urek**.



MICHELLE RAČIĆ FON (723) and Pamela’s cousin Drago Zafran sing with the young local musicians.

Lodge 749 recognizes member honors and awards

by EVELYN DIMPFL
Lodge 749 Secretary

JOHNSTOWN, Pa. — Having enjoyed a visit to the SNPJ Recreation Center in June for the annual Heritage Center Weekend, I must say it was a great weekend. We finally had the pleasure of staying in a cabin with air conditioning and all the new updates.

After checking in, we ran into our friend Shirley from the Trailer Court. We had dinner in the Gostilna on Friday evening. The Gostilna was rather quiet at the time, so we went back to our cabin and enjoyed a great bonfire.

While sitting outside early Saturday morning, we discovered that our neighbors across the road were Seph Kumer and his friend. They were on their

way to the Amish bakery for doughnuts, so we followed them and bought enough sweets to last a week — *yum!*

Later in the day we watched some of the balina tournament and enjoyed the activities. We also walked through the SNPJ Heritage Center Museum and talked to Lynn Romeo, the host for the day, and to Ed Robich. Saturday evening found us at the Gostilna for bingo — a great crowd.

On Sunday we traveled to New Castle, Pa., to attend Mass at St. Vitus Church. In the afternoon we were happy to watch and listen to Lodge 749 member Julie Wagner present an informative demonstration of making Slovenian cookies and distribute delicious samples. It was soon time to head

for home after another wonderful time at the Campsite.

Speaking of Julie Wagner, she was recently recognized by the YWCA Greater Johnstown as this year’s Lady Liberty honoree.

Julie is an assistant professor of criminal justice at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, a U.S. Army veteran, and a retired Johnstown Police Department detective. She is extremely active in her church, and she makes a trip to Slovenia every year to visit relatives and learn more about our heritage. Congratulations, Julie! You truly deserve this honor.

Congratulations as well to the following Lodge 749 members who have attained 50 and 60 years of SNPJ member-

ship: Susan Rightnour, Mary A. Strong, Michael L. Zupan, Lorraine A. Falotico, Ronald Butler and Kimberly Kopler for 50 years; and Louis R. Ograyensek, Bonita Logar, Ernest Fetzer and Rosanne McDonald for 60 years.

Sympathies are extended to the families of recently deceased Lodge members Robert E. Evacko, Dorothy Butler and Joseph L. McCloskey. I didn’t know Mr. Evacko personally, but Dorothy Butler and her late husband owned a very nice market in Johnstown for many years, and Joe McCloskey was well known in the area as a button box accordion musician.

One last thing: Don’t forget the SNPJ for life insurance, IRAs and annuities.

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The Dick Tady Orchestra (D.T.O.) played their final engagement at the Yukon Slovenian Hall, Yukon, Pennsylvania, on Sunday, July 19, 2026.

Free CD copies of their latest release, “**A MUSICAL THANK YOU FROM THE DICK TADY ORCHESTRA, D.T.O.**,” were given out to all who were in attendance.

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PROSVETA Crossword Halloween (#1026) by StatePoint Media

- ACROSS**
- Eye affliction
 - Nickname
 - Christmas tree variety
 - Not we
 - Use a whetstone
 - Lyric poem
 - New Haven University
 - Unrivaled
 - Buenos follower
 - Number one
 - pumpkin-growing state
 - Phishing attack
 - Dead to the world
 - Albanian money
 - *One, two, ____’s coming for you”
 - Harasses
 - Bloodshot
 - System of newsgroups on Internet
 - Muscular strength
 - Not odds
 - Zedong of China
 - Do penitence
 - Form of wrestling
 - Certain Native American dwelling
 - Cleopatra’s cause of death, supposedly
 - * ____ O’Rourke of “Poltergeist”

- *Silver ammo, useful against werewolves, sing.
 - Rooster’s girlfriend
 - Seattle’s ____ Needle
 - Sportscaster Andrews
 - *One of two first ever fun size candy bars
 - Unbroken mustang
 - In ____ of
 - Lash mark
 - Missouri River tributary
 - Chooses
 - *Rice of “The Vampire Chronicles” fame
 - “ ____ the fields we go”
 - Turkish title of respect
 - Oxen’s harness
- DOWN**
- Hog haven
 - Like certain ice tea
 - Holler
 - Pupil protector
 - Driver’s license sticker
 - Dark
 - #63 Across, pl.
 - Forum, pl.
 - Previously mentioned, acr.
 - Hi- ____ monitor
 - Pooh’s repast, pl.

- Drawing support
- *Bobby ____ of “Monster Mash” fame
- River in India
- Auction batch
- Like classic TV’s Prince
- Variety show
- a.k.a. dropsy
- *What witch’s familiar says
- Sandbar
- Sometimes it’s perfect
- Hid under a rug
- Independent chieftain
- Old horse
- *What Michael Myers says
- Without self-control
- Skin cyst
- Manual calculator
- From this time on
- Wiggle room
- Kind of wading bird
- Religious devotion
- Gaelic
- Big cat sound
- No neatnik
- City in Nevada
- Did like the Titanic
- *What ghost says
- Bruce or Spike

The solution to puzzle #1026 will run in the Nov. 2 issue.

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SOME SUMMER FUN
FOR LODGE 776 MEMBERS



[Above] Members and their families at the Lodge 776 social gathering held in the Gostilna at the Recreation Center in July.

[Below] Lodge members enjoyed an evening at Credit Union Field in Niles, Ohio, for a Mahoning Valley Scrappers baseball game in August.



Lodge 603 Oct. schedule features Halloween event

by JEANNETTE HUMPHREY
Lodge 603 Recording Secretary

SAMSULA, Fla. — Following a summer break during the months of June, July and August, Lodge 603 members held a meeting on Sept. 14. Ruth Benedict presided in the absence of President Brandon Schmidt who was on vacation.

Members are reminded that Lodge dues of \$10 a year are now payable; a number of members have not yet paid. Send dues payment to Ruth Benedict, 3605 Darby Rd., New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168.

Ruth Benedict, Rhonda Tesauro and yours truly served as delegates to the SNPJ 33rd Quadrennial Convention held on Aug. 17 at the SNPJ Recreation Center in Enon Valley, Pa. We enjoyed seeing other delegates who were in attendance from across the country.

The Convention was led by SNPJ National President Joseph C. Evanish. National Secretary Karen Pintar was also present, along with the National Board. The food and music were great, and we enjoyed our time in the Gostilna. We arrived for the Convention on Saturday, Aug. 15, and flew home on Tuesday, Aug. 18.

Halloween activities at the Lodge 603 Hall, which include a haunted house led by Nancy

Bass, are scheduled Friday, Oct. 30, starting at 6 p.m. Costume judging begins at 7 p.m., followed by games and a cakewalk on the main dance floor. Please bring a cake, pie, cookies or other baked goods for the cake walk. Food will be available for purchase from the kitchen.

Be sure to mark your calendars as we celebrate the 100th year of SNPJ Lodge 603. The festivities begin at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5, with a social hour, followed by a program led by Bill Tomazin and George Benedict. Several additional activities are planned throughout the afternoon. Lunch will be provided by our Lodge, along with balina games and a jump house for the kids.

Christian Razpotnik has booked a Slovenian band for the entertainment. Music by Karl Lukitsch and the Autobahn Trio is scheduled from 2 to 6 p.m. Christian will lead the jam sessions.

An apple strudel making session is planned at the Lodge hall on Saturday, Nov. 7, starting at 9 a.m. Ashley Benedict has volunteered to take charge of both the strudel session and the kitchen for our special 100th year celebration. We will also have Slovenian potica and apple cakes avail-

able. Josephine Vogrin taught many Lodge members about the Slovenian heritage, and as a tribute to her we are using her apple cake recipe. A celebration cake is also planned.

Please make reservations for the 100th year celebration by e-mail to snpj@lodge603@gmail.com, or phone the Lodge hall at (386) 428-3983 and leave a message. Barbara Benedict has volunteered to send out invitations to Lodge members.

The annual Samsula Woman's Club Christmas Bazaar is planned Saturday, Nov. 21, from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. at our Lodge hall. Breakfast and lunch will be available for purchase. Vendors will be set up inside the hall and at outdoor booths. This event is open to the public.

A celebration of life for lifelong SNPJ member Jennifer Luznar was held Aug. 5 at our Lodge hall. Jennifer suffered a tragic car accident in 1997 and was confined to a wheelchair until her passing. She was preceded in death by her parents. Her father, Frank Luznar Jr., was a past president of our Lodge, and her mother, Anna Lou Luznar, served as Lodge recording secretary for many years.

Billy Gilmore's Bluegrass Band performed at our Lodge

hall on Aug. 7. Ashley Benedict and her crew of volunteers sold food from the kitchen, and Victoria Stein and Sheryl Benedict operated the bar. The performance was well attended.

The following day, Ashley hosted a 50th birthday party for a longtime friend. She provided a taco bar, appetizers and birthday strudel, and guests enjoyed listening to the bluegrass music performed by Billy Gilmore's band. Ashley is a lifelong SNPJ member and was very active with Youth Circle 57 as a child.

Lodge 603 Hall Treasurer Rhonda Tesauro and her sister, Sharon Wolf, recently returned home after spending two weeks in Africa, taking in Safari treks and a balloon ride.

Lodge 603 Vice President Jerry Hafner underwent multiple surgeries in May, and is now home and doing well. His wife, Jane, is recovering after emergency surgery in Palatka, Fla.

Sympathy is extended to John and Rhonda Tesauro on the passing of John's sister, Marcy, in Texas. John drove out to be with Marcy in her final days, and even though Rhonda flew to Texas, she was still able to attend the SNPJ Quadrennial Convention.

St. Marys Lodge 581 Convention delegates **JOHN TROHA** and **MARCIA BLEGGI** at the entrance to the SNPJ Recreation Center, the site of the 33rd SNPJ Quadrennial Convention.



Member activity a priority for St. Marys Lodge 581

LODGE 581
FROM PAGE 1

become more active?"

During the Lodge 581 quarterly meeting held Aug. 30, we made a few decisions to work toward solving this problem.

Since our Lodge members are spread out over several states and we cannot expect members to attend meetings that require traveling 50 or a hundred miles, we have decided to try alternating our meeting sites. And since there are many more members in the area of Kane, Pa., two of our quarterly meetings will

be held in Kane rather than St. Marys, and maybe we'll add another meeting. We will decide that at the November meeting. Hopefully, members who live closer to Kane will attend the meetings there.

We're also hoping to attract younger members who have some new ideas. Lodge 581 doesn't have a youth group at present. Perhaps we will encourage young members to become more active. We certainly welcome the advice from any Lodge that has an active youth group.

Our next meeting is scheduled Sunday, Nov. 29, starting at 12:30

p.m. prior to the polka dance at the Kersey Firemen's Club in Kersey, Pa. We will hold our Christmas party, which we share with the North Central Pennsylvania Slovenian Polka Boosters, on Sunday, Dec. 20, from 2 to 6 p.m. at the Kersey Firemen's. The Christmas party features a Chinese auction and a 50/50 drawing.

For information about Lodge 581 activities or SNPJ investments and insurance, contact Lodge Secretary/Treasurer Marcia Klancer Bleggi at (814) 335-4983 or President Pat Moore at (814) 589-2269.

SNPJ Scholarship Award Program
A potential benefit of \$4,000 for Society members



ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible for an SNPJ Scholarship, the student must meet the following requirements:

- Be an SNPJ member for at least two years
- Have a \$5,000 minimum permanent life insurance policy in place (\$2,000 if purchased prior to January 1996)
- Enroll as a full-time (at least 12 credit hours) or part-time (at least 6 credit hours) student at an accredited college, university or trade school

TYPES OF SCHOLARSHIPS: All requirements **MUST** be satisfied in order to qualify for the following scholarships:

REGULAR:

- Member for at least 2 years
- \$5,000 permanent insurance (\$2,000 if purchased prior to 1996)
- 1040 Tax Form (*income level not to exceed \$20,000 per dependent/per family*)
- Maintain 2.5 GPA (out of 4.0) or above
- Annual SNPJ-Approved Activity

ACTIVITY (JOSEPH C. UMECK):

- Member for at least 2 years
- \$5,000 permanent insurance (\$2,000 if purchased prior to 1996)
- Extensive SNPJ Activity*
- Maintain 2.5 GPA (out of 4.0) or above
- Age 30 or under

ACADEMIC:

- Member for at least 2 years
- \$5,000 permanent insurance (\$2,000 if purchased prior to 1996)
- Maintain 3.2 GPA (out of 4.0) or above
- Age 30 or under
- Annual SNPJ-Approved Activity

Full-Time Student

- Attend school as a full-time student
- Minimum of 12 credit hours/semester

Part-Time Student

- Attend school as a part-time student
- Must declare a major (six to 11 credit hours/semester)

SNPJ Approved Activity: Participation at social and athletic events, attend the SNPJ Young Adult Conference, attendance or service at meetings and conferences, attend or volunteer at special Lodge events, write an article to be published in *PROSVETA*, participate in an SNPJ athletic tournament (bowling, golf, balina, bean bag toss, etc.), help organize a youth activity at your Lodge, hold an office in your Lodge, volunteer to work during Slovenefest at the SNPJ Recreation Center, participate in an SNPJ-organized activity, perform community service on behalf of SNPJ (must be approved by the Fraternal Department), recommend a new member to SNPJ.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

1. Carefully review all SNPJ scholarship requirements.
2. Select the scholarship type for which you qualify.
3. Complete the scholarship application and deliver to your Lodge secretary for signatures.
4. Return the signed application, along with the following items, to the SNPJ Home Office by the August 1st deadline:

- Copy of your last grade report or transcript (Transcripts do not have to be originals, but must show student name, semester, GPA, and number of credit hours completed).
- Short essay about fraternalism, the principles of SNPJ, and how they work in our Society and its Lodges.
- Brief history of your life, high school accomplishments, past awards and achievements, and college plans.
- Copies of your parents' and your 1040 tax forms for the previous year (if applying for the SNPJ Regular Scholarship).
- Copy of the Lodge secretary's letter (if applying for the SNPJ Activity Scholarship).

Please make sure all of the applicable items listed above are included when mailing your application. Failure to provide all required information at one time may result in denial of your application.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE:

- **Full-time Students:** Payments of \$500 each installment are made twice a year (first installment: February/March; second installment: August/September) totaling \$1,000 per year. Applicants will receive payments for not more than eight (8) installments which may include graduate school.
- **Part-Time Students:** Payments of \$250 each installment are made twice a year totaling \$500 per year. Part-time applicants who have declared a major shall receive payments equivalent to the TOTAL amount the full-time student receives for a maximum of 16 semesters.
- Selection of students to receive the scholarship awards will be based on evidence of the applicant's school record, personality, character, SNPJ Approved Activity, the applicant's need for financial aid or academic achievement, and on the recommendation of the local Lodge of which he/she is a member.

Applications, renewal forms and the SNPJ Scholarship Program brochure are available online at <https://snpj.org/membership/scholarships/>

Applications for SNPJ Scholarship Awards should be sent to the National President
APPLICATION DEADLINE IS AUGUST 1 of each year. RENEWAL DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 1 and AUGUST 1. Mail to:

Joseph C. Evanish, National President/CEO
SLOVENE NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY Scholarship Committee
247 West Allegheny Rd. • Imperial, PA • 15126-9774

SNPJ fraternal sympathies

BRO. ROBERT L. KILLAM
• LODGE 34 •

INDIANAPOLIS — The members of Lodge 34 sadly report the April 19, 2026, passing of Bro. Robert Luther Killam Sr., 95, in Cox Medical Center South, Springfield, Mo.

Bro. Killam was born April 8, 1931, in Boston, the son of the late Calvin and Sadie (Wright) Killam. He served in the United States Marine Corps. He worked in logistics support for many years and was a talented woodworker; he could fix anything.

He is survived by his wife, Marjorie Ann Killam, with whom he was united in marriage on July 3, 1952, at First Baptist Church in Weymouth, Mass.; three sons, Robert Killam Jr. of Thomson Falls, Mont., Richard (Lisa) Killam of Santa Clarita, Calif., and Ken (Susie) Killam of Oxnard, Calif.; four grandchildren, Aaron, Jason, Lauren and Kara Killam; and one great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by his parents; twin sisters Ruby and Ruth; and one son, Mark Paul Killam.

Graveside services for Bro. Killam were held April 21 in Marshfield Cemetery, Marshfield, Mo.

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

BRO. ROLAND L. MESSETT
• LODGE 31 •

SHARON, Pa. — The members of Lodge 31 sadly report the May 30, 2026, passing of Bro. Roland L. "Ron" Messett, 82, of Sharpsville, Pa., in UPMC Mercy Hospital, Pittsburgh.

Bro. Messett was born March 15, 1944, in Sharon, the son of the late Roland M. and Doris E. (McDowell) Messett, and graduated from

Sharon High School in 1962. Following graduation, Ron enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served aboard the USS Boxer during the Vietnam War until being honorably discharged on Sept. 9, 1966.

Ron worked as a salesman at Sharon Chrysler Plymouth, retiring in 2006 following 30 years of service. He served as choir director at Hubbard Church of the Nazarene, Hubbard, Ohio, for several years.

A man of many athletic and recreational pursuits, Ron won numerous gold medals at the Senior Olympics and always looked forward to playing pickleball, basketball, golf or softball with his good friends. He also enjoyed spending time outdoors fishing, especially at Pymatuning Lake. Ron will be remembered for his crushing handshakes, secret-recipe root beer floats, and his "happy motoring" farewells.

Above all else, Ron dedicated his life to his family. He was a devoted husband, caring father and adoring grandpa.

His beloved wife of 59 years, Judith L. "Judy" (Sackett) Messett, whom he married Feb. 11, 1967, survives. He is also survived by three sons, Keith (Beth) Messett of Sharpsville, Timothy (Amity) Messett of Sauquoit, N.Y., and Kirk (JoAnn) Messett of Hermitage, Pa.; seven grandchildren; seven adopted grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Norma Shernisky and Nadine Bateman.

A funeral service for Bro. Messett was held June 3 in J. Bradley McGonigle Funeral Home & Crematory, Inc., Sharon, with full military honors rendered by the Wheatland American Legion and West Middlesex VFW Honor Guard. Interment followed in Hillcrest Memorial Park, Hermitage.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 31 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we

extend our condolences to Bro. Messett's family, relatives and friends on their loss.

SIS. ANNE RETEL
• LODGE 2 •

LA SALLE, Ill. — The members of Lodge 2 sadly report the July 14, 2026, passing of Sis. Anne Retel, 92, of DePue, Ill., at Manor Court of Princeton, where she had been a resident for the past 12 years.

Sis. Retel was born July 8, 1934, in DePue, the daughter of the late Anton and Margaret (Barbic) Retel.

She retired from Illinois Valley Community Hospital where she had worked in the X-ray department.

A 74-year SNPJ Lodge 2 member, Anne was also a faithful member of St. Mary Catholic Church in DePue and a past president of the St. Mary Cemetery Association.

She is survived by her extended family.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated for Sis. Retel on July 21 at St. Mary Catholic Church. Burial followed in St. Mary Catholic Cemetery.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 2 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we extend our condolences to Sis. Retel's family, relatives and friends on their loss.

SIS. JANICE M. SULLIVAN
• LODGE 559 •

CHICAGO — The Celigoj and Sullivan families sadly report the Aug. 11, 2026, passing of Sis. Janice Mary Sullivan, 79, at her home in Hackettstown, N.J., with her loving husband by her side.

Sis. Sullivan was born Aug. 31, 1946, in Cleveland, a daughter of the late Frank and Zora Celigoj.

She married the love of her life, David Sullivan, in 1966. Residing in Chester, N.J., for more than 30 years, they moved to Panther Valley in 2012.



Sis. JANICE M. SULLIVAN (559)

Janice earned two degrees in college. She earned a degree in elementary education from National College of Education in Illinois, then went on to earn her degree in design from Centenary University in New Jersey. She had her own interior design business for many years prior to her retirement in 2023.

A 61-year SNPJ member, Janice was also a member of the Church of the Messiah in Chester. She was an avid reader, loved music, played piano, and sang in many choirs over the years. She was also a talented artist, painting many treasures that will be enjoyed for years to come.

Above all, she loved her family and the time spent with them. She will be greatly missed.

Janice is survived by her devoted husband of 60 years, David Sullivan; her loving children, David Sullivan Jr. and Emily Sullivan (husband David Nikstaitis); two granddaughters, Erin and Leah Nikstaitis; a brother, Frank Celigoj (wife Pravanrat Pichayapaisarn); and a sister, Kathy (Julio) Aburto.

A memorial service celebrating Janice's life was held Sept. 1 at the Church of the Messiah, Chester.

On behalf of the members of Lodge 559 and the Slovene National Benefit Society, we offer our condolences to Sis. Sullivan's family, relatives and friends on their loss.

SIS. ROSE MARIE LAWRENCE
• LODGE 138 •

STRABANE, Pa. — The Lawrence family and the members of Lodge 138 sadly report the Aug. 18, 2026, passing of Sis. Rose Marie Lawrence, 90, a lifelong resident of Strabane.

Sis. Lawrence was born June 20, 1936, in Strabane, the daughter of the late Joseph and Rozalia (Bobnar) Progar. A 1954 graduate of Chartiers High School and a 1955 graduate of Penn Commercial College, Rose Marie worked as a stenographer at I.N.A. for seven years before dedicating her life entirely to raising her family.

A 72-year SNPJ Lodge 138 member, she was also a member of KSKJ St. Jerome Lodge 153 and the Slovene Women's Union in Strabane, and a faithful member of St. Patrick Church in Canonsburg, Pa. Deeply proud of her Slovenian heritage, she was an avid bowler and polka dancer who served as a constant source of care and comfort to all who knew her.

She leaves behind her loving husband, Robert Lawrence, whom she married July 1, 1961. She is also survived by her six children, Robert (Jan) Lawrence of Canonsburg, Karen (Ryan) Brumbaugh of Canonsburg, Becky (Mike) Mangione of McCandless, Pa., Michael (Annie) Law-



Sis. ROSE MARIE LAWRENCE (138)

rence of Chardon, Ohio, Ken Lawrence of Strabane, and Melissa (Dan) McCormack of Virginia Beach, Va.; 11 cherished grandchildren, Alec and Ian (Marta) Brumbaugh, Mary and Jordan (Danielle) Mangione, Robert and Erin Lawrence, Mikey, Amelia and Anthony Lawrence, and Maeve and Kenna McCormack; as well as several nieces and nephews.

Deceased, in addition to her parents, are her brothers, Joseph (Amelia), William (Veronica), Anthony (Thelma), and Edward (Marie) Progar.

A blessing service for Sis. Lawrence was held Sept. 12 at Salandra Funeral & Cremation Services, Inc., Canonsburg.

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

DEATHS REPORTED
For the month of August 2026

LODGE	NAME	DATE OF DEATH	CITY, STATE
2	Anne Retel	07-14-2026	Depue, Ill.
3	Theodore Znidarsic	05-05-2026	South Fork, Pa.
5	Edna J. Scotton	02-27-2022	Maple Hgts., Ohio
5	Helen R. Petrigac	08-02-2026	Grafton, Ohio
6	Edna A. Phillips	01-18-2023	McDonald, Pa.
6	Michael Sirochman	07-12-2026	Bethel Park, Pa.
6	Frank A. Dolinar	08-31-2025	Cliffwood, N.J.
8	Mary J. Palmquist	06-13-2026	Lisle, Ill.
34	Michael A. Turk	05-11-2016	Indianapolis, Ind.
41	Ernest Serbernak	02-11-2026	Clairidge, Pa.
87	Carl D. Rahne	10-28-2024	Hermine, Pa.
106	Marie H. Zawatski	07-28-2026	Coraopolis, Pa.
106	Mary Jane Pihonsky	08-10-2016	Conway, Pa.
117	James Spraitz	12-07-2023	Waldorf, Md.
138	Sharon Marie Shirley	04-06-2019	St. Albans, W.Va.
138	Debra A. Houston	07-22-2026	Punta Gorda, Fla.
138	James A. Vehar II	12-17-2020	Washington, Pa.
158	Daniel R. Polantz	06-16-2015	Richmond Hgts., Ohio
174	Vera Sturm	07-11-2026	Parkhill, Pa.
174	Frederick W. Ponczek	07-17-2026	Johnstown, Pa.
225	Linda L. Scales	06-18-2026	Girard, Kan.
304	Stephen P. Rusic	02-28-2020	Redding, Calif.
518	Walter J. Slapnik	07-07-2026	Flat Rock, Mich.
564	David Benjamin	01-28-2022	Flint, Mich.
584	Frances Suhadolnik	03-12-2012	Glenview, Ill.
584	Elizabeth S. Nelson	06-07-2026	Waukegan, Ill.
584	Rosemarie Kozel	06-28-2026	New Brighton, Minn.
584	William J. Matko	07-14-2026	Eveleth, Minn.
643	Patricia A. Merkel	09-02-2025	Cape Coral, Fla.
677	Kathleen Grizzle	06-01-2024	Holly, Mich.
715	Lillian R. Forrest	05-05-2025	Pittsburgh, Pa.
715	Joseph S. Balcerek	06-22-2026	Salineville, Ohio
715	David T. Gillingham	07-23-2026	Belle Vernon, Pa.
721	Michael W. Majernik	06-13-2025	Aliquippa, Pa.
729	Dorothy K. Steck	06-03-2026	Santa Barbara, Calif.
749	Frances White	04-17-2026	Greensburg, Pa.
782	Philip M. Samotus	08-08-2026	Fayetteville, Pa.
786	Kenneth Roughton	01-30-2023	Tucson, Ariz.

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

PROSVETA 2026 Publication Dates

JANUARY 2026

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	(19)	20	21	22	23	24
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FEBRUARY 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.

PROSVETA Crossword
AUTUMN VIBES (#0926) solution

C	O	R	N			M	B	A				C	G	I					
A	N	O	A			L	O	O	N			A	P	A	R	T			
M	I	S	T			E	L	A	N			Z	U	N	I	S			
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Let’s play ball! (Or should we say “Let’s play balina?”)

by TERESA KOCI
Lodge 786 Secretary/Treasurer
ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. — When the weather finally decided to give Southern California a little break from the heat, Lodge 786 decided it was the perfect time to get outside, and naturally we brought our Lodge meeting with us!

On Aug. 30, Lodge 786 gathered at Marina Hills Park in Laguna Niguel, Calif., for our August meeting, followed by an afternoon of food, friends, family and, of course, a friendly game of balina.

Now for those who may not know the difference between balina and bocce, let’s just say we had an educational afternoon. On the courts next to us, some Italian players and other social players were enjoying a spirited game of bocce. Naturally, they noticed our Slovenian flag and had a few questions. We happily explained that the flag represented Slovenia – and before long, the conversation moved from flags to balls, and then straight into the weeds of bocce versus balina scoring rules.

That’s when things got serious... well, as serious as a friendly afternoon of throwing balls around can get! Apparently, bocce and balina have some differences in scoring and playing traditions. Who knew a little ball could cause so much international discussion? We may have arrived simply to play, but we apparently left with a small college course in Balkan-Italian ball sports!

The concrete balina courts at Marina Hills Park are relatively new to the City of Laguna Niguel and are

beautifully maintained. With built-in shade, picnic tables and benches, the park provides a wonderful setting for players and spectators of all ages. But those concrete courts are nothing like the old balina courts at the Fontana Slovenian Hall!

Back in the day, those courts had wooden sideboards that helped keep our balls from wandering off into the neighborhood. These new concrete courts? Let’s just say the balls have apparently discovered speed. The balls rolled faster. Much faster. There seemed to be very little friction to slow them down, and more than once, a carefully aimed ball went sailing right past the balina as if it had somewhere else to be!

At first, we thought perhaps we had suddenly forgotten how to play. There is no way it could be us! Then we realized: The courts were the problem! Or at least that’s what we were telling ourselves.

Everyone had to adjust to the faster surface, which made for plenty of laughs and unexpected shots. Fortunately, nobody kept score of the “almost perfect” throws.

It was a great day for Lodge 786. Even better, we had some of our younger generation join us for the outdoor fun. It was wonderful to see families enjoying the afternoon together, and we were especially happy to have our Circle director, Krista Lawson, and her young family join us.

That’s what Lodge gatherings are all about – bringing generations together, sharing our Slovenian traditions, enjoying good food, and occasionally a spirited discussion

over the proper way to throw a ball!

We began the day with 20 members and guests participating in our Lodge meeting and outdoor potluck. After everyone had a chance to eat, visit and catch up, we got down to Lodge business.

The meeting included a summary of my trip to the SNPJ Convention, planning for the 2027 California SNPJ Day (stay tuned for those details later this year), and a report from our very own Miss SNPJ 2026 Ellen Koci about the Young Adult Conference.

We also discussed plans for our upcoming holiday potluck. And as always, once food is involved, everyone suddenly becomes very interested in the meeting!

Save the date: Our Lodge 786 holiday potluck will be held Sunday, Nov. 29, starting at 11:30 a.m. at Laguna Hills Village Clubhouse, 23300 Santa Vittoria Dr. in Laguna Hills, Calif.

Join us for a festive Lodge meeting and holiday celebration! The Lodge will provide Slovenian sausage from Cleveland, sauerkraut, drinks and paper supplies. Members and

guests are asked to bring an appetizer, side dish or dessert for eight to 12 people to share.

Please RSVP for this holiday potluck no later than Nov. 27 to Teresa Koci. Call or text (949) 246-1983, or e-mail teresamkoci@gmail.com to assure we have enough main dish and supplies for everyone.

If you are bringing a youth member or guest age 18 or younger, please RSVP to Circle Director Krista Lawson via e-mail to learning_to_live_616@yahoo.com no later than Nov. 24. Krista is in close communication with Santa Claus as he is already planning his annual visit.

Musicians, please bring your instruments and join in the fun.

We will again collect donations for the St. Timothy’s Catholic Church Pantry which helps those in need. Please bring a donation if you can.

All in all, Aug. 30 was a great day for Lodge 786. We got a little Lodge business accomplished, enjoyed a delicious potluck, introduced our Slovenian traditions to our bocce-playing neighbors, welcomed the younger generation, and learned that concrete



Standing [from left]: MIKE BAJC, MARIE BAJC, Michael Bajc, Abbas Samii, KEN KOCI, Miss SNPJ 2026 ELLEN KOCI, EVANDER LAWSON, CAROL JANCICH, JOHN LUNDGREN, JANET LUNDGREN, JONATHAN LAWSON, ISAIAH LAWSON and KRISTA LAWSON; seated [from left]: TERESA KOCI, MaryAlice Samii, Irena Petrač and JEAN KOCI. Standing to the right of Jean is her great-granddaughter, ANNIKA LAWSON.

courts apparently have no intention of letting a balina ball slow down!

But that’s what makes these gatherings so much fun. Good food. Good friends. Family. Slovenian traditions. A little friendly competition. And perhaps a few balls that completely ignored where we told them to go.

Until the next ball rolls, keep your eye on the balina, watch out for those fast concrete courts, and whatever you do, invite those bocce players to play... as long as they play by our balina rules!



MIKE BAJC admires the results of a perfect balina throw.

A memorable year comes to a close for Miss SNPJ 2026

MISS SNPJ 2026
FROM PAGE 1

Lodge 786 in Orange County, Calif. I am the granddaughter of Joseph and Rosemary Mlakar and Arnold and Jean Koci, and the daughter of Ken and Teresa Koci. Slovenian heritage has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, and it has always been something of which I have been incredibly proud.

I want to take a moment to recognize everyone who made Slovenefest possible. Events like Slovenefest don’t happen without an enormous amount of work behind the scenes. Thank you to the SNPJ Executive Board, all of the volunteers who gave their time

and energy, our generous sponsors, and all of the Slovenian families and supporters who continue to show up and keep our traditions alive. Slovenefest is truly a community effort, and it was wonderful to see so many people come together once again.

As my year as Miss SNPJ has come to a close, I have reflected on just how much this experience has meant to me. From my very first Slovenefest to National Days, Pust, Florida Days, and California Days, I have had the opportunity to travel, celebrate our heritage, and meet so many incredible people along the way.

More than the events themselves, what I will remember

most are the friendships I have made. I have met people with whom I may never have crossed paths otherwise, and I am incredibly grateful for every conversation, every laugh, every shared experience, and every new connection. Being Miss SNPJ has given me an even greater appreciation for how special our organization and our Slovenian community truly are.

Representing our Slovenian heritage has been an incredible honor. Being able to wear the crown and represent something that has been a part of my family for generations has made this experience especially meaningful to me. The title of Miss SNPJ 2026 has been about so much more than being a pageant winner. It has given me an opportunity to represent my family, my Lodge, my heritage, and the community that has been such an important part of my life.

For everyone across SNPJ, start planning your trip to California! Keep an eye out for future PROSVETA articles with more information about

California SNPJ Days, which will take place sometime in the spring, likely in April. Whether you’re from California or across the country, I hope you will consider making the trip.

California Days are a wonderful opportunity to experience our Slovenian community on the West Coast, meet fellow members from across the country, and make memories together. If you have any questions or are interested in attending, please reach out to my mother, Teresa Koci, at teresamkoci@gmail.com. We would love to welcome you to California!

I hope all of us continue supporting one another and keeping our Slovenian traditions alive. Our heritage continues because people choose to participate, teach the next generation, show up for one another, and keep these traditions going.

Thank you for making this past year so special and for allowing me to represent all of you as Miss SNPJ 2026.

Na svidenje, and see you all soon!



Miss SNPJ 2026 ELLEN KOCI pictured with the members of Slovenska Mladinska Skupina Marela at Slovenefest.

Official Proceedings

Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting
Sept. 16, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 1 p.m. by President Evanish with National Secretary Karen Pintar and National Treasurer Robert Lawrence in attendance.

Approved the minutes of the May 2025 meeting.

This meeting is to review and discuss the bylaws and proposed changes to the bylaws prior to our meeting with attorney Todd Martin this afternoon.

Reported on a successful and productive American Fraternal Alliance meeting that the Executive Committee attended.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Dec. 16, 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 September 2025 meeting.

We met with the Society actuary and discussed interest rates, annuity products, investment opportunities and expenses.

Discussed the Board governance call and the proposed changes to the bylaws.

Approved President Evanish to attend the LIC CEO meeting in Arizona in February.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

JOSEPH C. EVANISH
National President/CEO

KAREN A. PINTAR
National Secretary/COO

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Slovene National Benefit Society

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(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County copies included in PS Form 3541		0	0
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(4) Free or Nominal Rate distribution outside the mail		0	0
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))		0	0
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		10,559	10,380
g. Copies not Distributed		117	115
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		10,676	10,495
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)		100%	100%
17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.			

JAY SEDMAK
Editor, SNPJ Publications

Loyalites Lodge 158 sets a date for Christmas party

by DANIELLA VOLPE
Lodge 158 Treasurer

EUCLID, Ohio — And just like that, we’re in the last quarter or the year. I guess time really does fly when you’re having fun! But just because it’s getting colder doesn’t mean the fun has to stop. The Loyalites want to keep it going all year long. Next up for Lodge 158 is our annual Christmas party.

The big guy in red will be joining us on Sunday, Dec. 6, at the Willowick Community Center in Willowick, Ohio. The party will include food, games, Jungle Terry and his critter friends, and of course, Old Saint Nick. Keep an eye out for more information and be sure to check our website

and social media pages for up-to-date news.

Some news you may not see on our website (but we always want to make sure we mention) are celebrations. We wish a belated happy birthday to Anna Horabik (Sept. 10), along with huge congratulations for passing her nursing board exams. Way to go, Anna; we’re all proud of you!

If you would like to receive e-mail correspondence for Loyalites events, and specifically the Christmas party forms, a link is now available on our Facebook page.

As always, we send our thoughts and prayers to all of our ailing and deceased members and their families during this difficult time.

SNPJ FRATERNAL HONOREES

Members celebrating 50, 60, 70 and 80 years with the Slovene National Benefit Society

by JOSEPH C. EVANISH
SNPJ National President/CEO

Of the 2,000 life insurance companies and fraternal benefit societies operating in the United States, fewer than 100 have been in existence as long as the SNPJ. As a not-for-profit fraternal benefit society, we have successfully provided life insurance to our members since 1904, along with a full package of social, athletic and cultural programs, scholarships, community service projects, and much more. SNPJ also offers annuities that can be used for IRAs and Roth IRAs.

Our more than 115 years of longevity and success have been made possible by the loyalty and dedication of our members. The SNPJ’s engine may have been built and its direction set by its founders and subsequent leaders, but its path has been traveled, cleared and paved by our dedicated members.

As a way to show respect and appreciation to our longtime and loyal members, we recognize membership

milestones with a custom gift. The years of membership are counted in terms of adult membership years, not including youth enrollment years. These milestones of recognition include 50, 60, 70 and 80 years of adult membership. We ask our Fraternal Honorees, once they have received their awards from the Society, to submit a short report on their past and present lifestyle, including their Lodge affiliation, hobbies and any other information that might be of interest to our readers.

In acknowledging these dedicated members, it is our privilege to show respect for these honorees by offering our thanks and appreciation for the loyalty they have shown the SNPJ for so many years. In this small way, through our official SNPJ publication, we can etch their names even deeper into the archives of the Slovene National Benefit Society.

On behalf of the entire membership, we extend our congratulations to those members reaching these anniversary milestones.

• Grass Valley, Calif., Lodge 745 member **Sis. MILDRED R. (Moneta) ROWE** celebrated her 80-year SNPJ membership anniversary in May. She writes:

“I am proud of my Slovenian heritage. I have been a part of SNPJ for 98 years, though I realize anniversaries are only measured from age 18. I thank the Lodge for recognizing my 80-year membership by publishing my name and this milestone in PROSVETA.

“My parents, Martin and Mary Moneta, were both of Slovenian heritage. My mother was born in 1902 on the family homestead in Klein, Mont. My father was born in 1888 and came to the United States in 1907 through Ellis Island. Upon arriving in New York, he was sponsored and left for mining work in Illinois. Records indicate he immediately joined SNPJ as his membership dates back to 1907.

“My dad eventually moved from Illinois to Montana to pursue work at Maxi Camp, near Klein. It was here, in 1922, that he met and married my mother, Mary Planishek. That same year my mother became a member of SNPJ Lodge 132 in Klein. My brother, Joseph Moneta, also a lifelong SNPJ member, was born in 1923, and I was born in 1927.

“In 1934, my dad moved our family from Montana to northern California as he pursued a job as a hard rock miner in the little gold rush town of Grass Valley. Once there, my mother, dad, and other Slovenians immediately established the SNPJ Golden Valley Lodge 745.

“According to the Association of Historical Societies of Slovenia: *The most important Slovenian settlement in this area developed in the town of Grass Valley (about 90 km northeast of Sacramento), where two support societies operated before World War I. Society No. 147 of the SSPZ (Slovenian Progressive Benefit Society) was founded in June 1917. In the early 1930s it had 23 members... . And society “Golden Valley” No. 745 SNPJ [chartered in 1934] was led in the mid-1930s by Mary Moneta (president) [my mother]. In 1941 SSPZ merged into SNPJ. Since in the early 1980s there were still 115 inhabitants of Slovenian origin living in the city*

and its surroundings, the “Golden Valley” society No. 745 SNPJ also maintained its activities.”

“At a young age I recall being a member of SNPJ. Once a month I received *The Voice of Youth* publication. My favorite part of the magazine was the PenPal section. I began writing to my lifelong SNPJ friend Rosalie Semenchuk of Euclid, Ohio, in 1932. We remained friends until her death. We were even able to visit each other in our later years.

“All of my associations with SNPJ have brought joy to my life. Growing up, I have many fond memories of meetings being held at our house. Our home was always full of Slovenians, with lots of good food and conversation. I’m not sure what everyone was talking about because I didn’t speak the language, but the group was always happy.

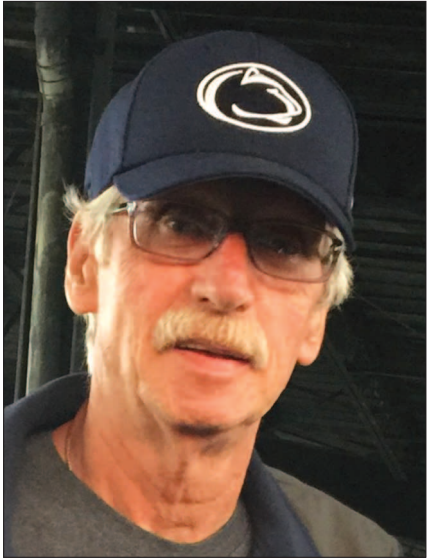
“My mother, Mary, served in various leadership roles within SNPJ, including president in the mid-1930s, and my father, Martin, served as secretary in 1935 and as president in 1942. It is no surprise that in my later years I also served in various leadership roles within the Lodge. I am proud that both of my daughters, my three grandchildren, and my great-grandchildren continue our family connection to SNPJ.

“At age 98, I now reflect on how difficult it must have been for my parents to navigate their existence. Despite just trying to survive, they took the time to become leaders. Their leadership in SNPJ is an inspiration to me and my family. I am sure that many other SNPJ members have a story similar to mine. Life was difficult, but being part of a community with shared cultural experiences brought us closer. We worked together to survive and we have, indeed, made life better for our children.”

Sis. MILDRED R. ROWE
Grass Valley, Calif., Lodge 745
Grass Valley, CA

• Bro. **PAUL D. SNYDER**, a member of Lodge 776 in the Borough of SNPJ, Pa., celebrated his SNPJ 50-year membership anniversary in June. His son, Dustin, writes:

“Paul Snyder is celebrating his



Bro. PAUL D. SNYDER (776)

50th year as a member of SNPJ Lodge 776, and is one of over a dozen in his family who are also SNPJ members. Paul was born outside Beaverdale, Pa., in an area known as Onnalinda, and has lived in South Fork, Pa., with his wife Susan since their marriage in 1977.

“In 2010 he retired after a long career on the railroad with Conrail, and has since enjoyed his retirement traveling and ‘Fishing with Marty Johnson.’ He is a proponent of youth and high school athletics, and is a mainstay at all the local sporting events, traveling far and wide to show support for the local kids.

“If he’s not at a high school softball game, you can usually find him at Jojo’s Pizza or watching ‘The Outlaw Josey Wales.’

“Paul has also been to almost every Major League Baseball stadium, is an avid muzzleloader hunter, and is an unwavering Pepsi loyalist in the cola wars. His favorite athlete is Paul Posluszny (Penn State), favorite actor is Chuck Norris, and his favorite food would be subs from the St. Michael (Pa.) Fire Hall.

“He loves to read the SNPJ PROSVETA because of the coverage of the traditional Slovene cultural programs.

“Paul is the little brother of long-time Lodge 776 Secretary Edward Snyder.”

Bro. PAUL D. SNYDER
Boro of SNPJ, Pa., Lodge 776
South Fork, PA

SNPJ LODGE 371 CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT RAISES FUNDS FOR ALZHEIMER’S RESEARCH

by KEN Kladnik
Lodge 371 President

CLE ELUM, Wash. — The second annual SNPJ Lodge 371 Cornhole Tournament was played on Aug. 16 with 24 participants. George Crofton and Paula Burton captured first place.

A total of \$1,503 was raised and donated toward Alzheimer’s research in memory of lifetime Lodge member Keith Kladnik, who passed away from Alzheimer’s on Aug. 8, 2026.



Tournament participants prepare to throw.



Lodge 371 President **KEN Kladnik** (left) presents the tournament champion awards to George Crofton and Paula Burton.



The 2026 tournament was played in memory of Lodge 371 member Keith Kladnik.



KUBBY SINGLETARY, a fourth-generation Lodge 371 member, plays a shot.

SNPJ Membership Anniversaries October 2026

70-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
41	Joseph Santel	562	Elizabeth J. Timko
138	Samuel G. Mazza	643	Lois A. Vrable

60-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
3	Linda J. Pritt	584	Jane M. Bena
8	Jeanne M. Jungbauer	584	John S. Erickson
31	Cynthia M. Buila	604	Louise Gruden
34	William P. Wacker	643	William R. Jamieson
34	Rosemary Skuta	715	Joyce M. Scott
138	Cheryl C. Smith	715	Nancy L. Sylvester
158	Kerice M. Verch	723	Cheryl A. LaVella
158	Sondra S. Meden	729	Margaret Sebetich
257	Marilyn Jira	749	Gary P. Nastase
265	Julian Bridgewater	771	Charles J. Skocic
564	Margaret J. Roy	786	Andrew Kotnik
584	Paul A. Michaels	A01	Clifford L. Moffett

50-Year Members

Lodge	Member	Lodge	Member
3	David H. McMahon	216	William A. Barr
5	Laura M. Balla	218	John J. Federico
31	Keith A. Hughes	225	Patti A. Farr
34	Kerry M. Woodruff	225	Jimmy R. Zibert
87	Jeffrey M. Ghion	257	Timothy Pelcic
89	Gregory C. McLaughlin	371	Ralph S. Semsak
106	Randall S. Fox	584	Laurel J. Roen
138	David G. Bunevich	604	Ronald Luzar
138	Nancy J. Crawford	643	Andrew C. Mooney
142	Joseph F. Tushar	643	Brenda L. Hopkins
158	Eric Ozanich	643	Lorraine M. Kaup
158	Matthew Martinsek	723	Randall I. Schwartz
158	John A. Zigman	749	Victoria E. White
174	Deborah S. Keytack	770	Dorothy M. Charniga
174	Theodore C. Joseph		

SNPJ 88th National Bowling Tournament October 9-11, 2026

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

MEN	WOMEN
Doubles & Singles Events at Strabane Lodge 138 269 Latimer Ave. Strabane, PA 15363 Club: (724) 745-9860 Lanes: (724) 745-9775 ☐ Friday, Oct. 9, 6:30 p.m. <i>Shift limited to 32 bowlers</i> ☐ Saturday, Oct. 10, Noon <i>Shift limited to 40 bowlers</i>	Doubles & Singles Events at Sygan Lodge 6 540 Third Ave. Bridgeville, PA 15017 Phone: (412) 221-9862 ☐ Saturday, Oct. 10, Noon <i>Shift limited to 40 bowlers</i>
MEN Team Event at Sygan Lodge 6 540 Third Ave. Bridgeville, PA 15017 Phone: (412) 221-9862 ☐ Sunday, Oct. 11, 9 a.m. ☐ Sunday, Oct. 11, Noon ☐ Sunday, Oct. 11, 3 p.m.	WOMEN Team Event at Strabane Lodge 138 269 Latimer Ave. Strabane, PA 15363 Club: (724) 745-9860 Lanes: (724) 745-9775 ☐ Sunday, Oct. 11, 10 a.m.

Doubles & Singles Entry fee \$32 per person Friday/Saturday Only	Lodge No.	Highest Average 2025-26	All-Events \$5 per person YES/NO
1.			
2.			
1.			
2.			

Submit bowlers’ names by position in lineup	Lodge No.	Highest Average 2025-26
Four Person Team Event Entry fee \$64 per team Sunday Only		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

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

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

Return form, along with fees of \$16 per person, per event, to:
Den Brand

405 Forbes St., Bridgeville, PA 15017

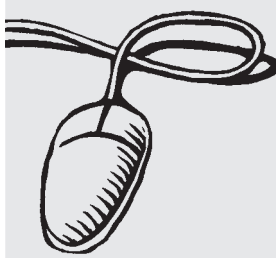
e-mail: dhbrand3517@gmail.com

Make checks payable to **SNPJ Lodge 6**

ENTRY DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 1, 2026

The Home Office will verify all memberships. Complete tournament rules are available by contacting the SNPJ Fraternal Department,
247 West Allegheny Rd., Imperial, PA 15126

Entries will be posted online at snpj.org



information at your fingertips

Looking for information on your SNPJ life insurance and annuity policies? Pay a visit to snpj.org, click any “**SNPJ Portal**” link and follow the step-by-step instructions to register or log in.