



# Uutiset

*Newsletter of Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc.*

## **January–February/*Tammikuu–Helmikuu* 2025**

### **Sauna Quest with Aarne and Steve**

**January 17—6:30 p.m. via Zoom**

Longtime friends and sauna enthusiasts Steve Leppälä and Aarne Vainio, share humorous stories of their sessions at Steve's basement sauna and at other locations—including Finland—in search of sauna experiences to write home about.

Steve Leppälä is a former environmental regulator who describes himself as voluntarily unemployed, and Aarne Vainio is a family practice MD in Cloquet, Minnesota.



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89578269048?pwd=3HapH3AxnIKU2lrGMJ0XqsCiw3r0Hv.1>

Meeting ID: 895 7826 9048

Passcode: 772387



*A floating sauna  
from Tampere  
Finland. You  
take your sauna  
and jump into  
the lake, right  
from the sauna.*

## Proposed FAA 2024–2025 Board of Directors

President

**Louise Morgan**

612-590-1673

louise.morgan21@gmail.com

Vice President

**Betsey Norgard**

facaboard1@gmail.com

Secretary

**Mirja Hansen**

facaboard1@gmail.com

Treasurers

**Nate Hoch/**

nate.hoch@rbc.com and

**Kathy Jorgensen**

kathymjorgensen@yahoo.com

Website/Media

**Katja Zarns**

facaboard1@gmail.com

Subcommittee

**John Morgan**

jmorgan7887@gmail.com

**Kendra Kauppi**

facaboard1@gmail.com

Photography courtesy of

**Kathy and John**

**Jorgensen**

## FACA Newsletter Committee

Interim Editor

**Louise Morgan**

612-590-1673

louise.morgan21@gmail.com

Graphic Design

**Darlene Esko**

651-455-8843

bobdar@att.net

Membership/Mailing

**Urho and Pam Rahkola**

651-429-3319

rahkola.urho@comcast.net

**Website: finnfaca.org**

**Facebook:**

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/116365755059161/FACA)

[/116365755059161/FACA](https://www.facebook.com/groups/116365755059161/FACA)

3015-2016 B

(If the Website does not load,  
please hit the "refresh" button.)

## President's/Interim Editor's Message

By Louise Morgan

When you read this, 2024 will be in the books. 2024 has been a year of change for us—a new name, a new board, with more to come. I hope you will agree that we are heading in the right direction. A few years ago, a few of us met to discuss how we could keep FACA, FinnSource and FFTC alive. We quickly came to the conclusion that we needed to join forces. Stronger together. We are down the road now. Still a lot to do, but we have made progress.

I hope you have noticed and enjoyed some of the collaborative events. We had our 4th Finn Fun Day. Even with the rain (during a drought) we had a strong turnout. It just gets better each year. Our next big collaborative event is *Laskiainen*, out at Lebanon Hills. This year we hope to add a *sauna* to the event. How fun that will be! We will show them how much fun we Finns have. Sledding, bonfire, hot dogs (*makkara*) and a *sauna*. Maybe a roll in the snow. Then on to March, and St. Urho's: a concert, dance, and of course our Pea Soup Cookoff! A not-to-be-missed event. Lastly, we are in the early planning stages for a Mid-summer's event. Stay tuned.

So there's lots going on. A big *kiitos* to all our volunteers and to the people who plan these events. It takes all of us to keep our heritage going here in Minnesota. I can safely say that we all are proud of our heritage and want to keep celebrating it every chance we get.

Saying that, this is your organization. We value all of you, and your input is important to us. Feel free to call or send me an email anytime.

*Onnellista Uttu Vuotta 2025!*

## 2024 Sauna Bucket Award Request for Nominees

A sauna bucket serves an important function in containing water to be ladled onto hot rocks to generate steam or *löyly*—spirit, breath or soul. Do you know someone who is the spirit behind FAA? Someone who generates the steam at member gatherings, volunteer events or board meetings? Please consider nominating that individual for the Sauna Bucket Award.

The Sauna Bucket Award has been given out annually since 1980 honoring dedicated FACA volunteers and contributors to the local Twin Cities area Finnish Community. Nominations will be accepted through February 2025 by filling in the questions below and submitting them electronically or via postal mail. E-mail is the preferred method.

Mail—Louise Morgan, 5370 Union Terrace Lane N., Plymouth, MN 55442

E-mail—[louise.morgan21@gmail.com](mailto:louise.morgan21@gmail.com)

1. Name and contact information of person submitting nomination.
2. Name and contact information of the person being nominated for their dedicated service.
3. Provide a narrative as to why the person is being nominated. Why do you think this individual should receive the Sauna Bucket Award? What FAA activities has the nominee been involved in? What impact has the individual made to the FAA/Finnish community? How have other individuals benefited from the accomplishments? What has the Finnish community gained from the contributions? Provide specific examples.





Hello, one and all! Snow has arrived in the Twin Cities and hopefully will stay around for *Laskiainen* 2025. Join FAA and Suomi-koulu—the Finnish School of Minnesota—for our annual *Laskiainen* (Sledding Day) event. As usual we will have a potluck style picnic with hot dogs, hot coffee and *pulla* stuffed with whipped cream and jam. An outdoor fire pit will fuel the food, sledding, and other outdoor adventures. A Finnish-style warming house with a play area is nearby in the Visitor Center. See you at Schultz Lake at Lebanon Hills Regional Park in February! And we hope to have a mobile *sauna* for you to enjoy! *Tervetuloa!*

### **Finnish Story Hour, Finnish Bistro Monday, January 13, 6 p.m.**

*By Jane Olson*

How has your Finnish heritage influenced you, from experiences of your ancestors to **Sauna** and **SISU**? Everyone has a story to tell. We would love to hear yours. Join us at Finnish Bistro for coffee, food and stories.

We hope to see you there.

## Sara Pajunen at the Danish American Center

By John Morgan

On a crisp evening at the American Danish Center, the Finnish American Association hosted a performance by Sara Pajunen, a celebrated musician known for her mastery of Finnish folk music. The intimate setting provided the perfect backdrop for an evening steeped in cultural heritage and beautiful folk tales.

Sara, a classically trained violinist and composer from the Iron Range, has garnered a reputation as a respected interpreter of Finnish music. Her career is a testament to her commitment to preserving and reimagining traditional Finnish sounds. Sara has explored the deep connection of ancestral roots and the experience of current American culture as it relates to Nordic folk music. Along with this, Sara incorporates themes of the Iron Range's landscapes, history, and cultural narratives in her artistic output. She has been recognized through the receipt of funding from numerous organizations including, but not limited to, American Scandinavian Foundation, the Arts Council of Finland and the Minnesota State Arts Board.



During the evening, Sara performed a selection of Finnish folk pieces, enchanting the audience with her skill and reverence for history. Between songs, she shared insights into the history and cultural significance of each piece, creating a rich, immersive experience. Her ability to connect with the audience was evident through the participation and song requests.

The response to Sara's performance was overwhelmingly positive. The evening was both moving and inspiring, with Sara having a clear skill and passion for keeping Finnish traditions alive. As the last notes of her violin lingered in the air, people were left contemplating the music that has connected us for a brief moment to our ancestors. Sara Pajunen's performance was more than just a concert—it was a heartfelt celebration of Finnish culture and heritage.

## Kauneimmat Joululaulut—Singing the Favorite Finnish Carols

By Betsey Norgard

On December 7, about 150 people in the Finnish and wider community joined together at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Roseville for the annual sing-along of beloved old and new Finnish and other Christmas carols. While most songs were sung in Finnish, some were sung in English translation from the recently published *Finnish Heritage Hymnbook*, along with other familiar carols. Guest violinist Sara Pajunen added special music to the piano and singing.



Afterwards, everyone enjoyed time for coffee and *pulla* (cardamom bread), and shopped for Finnish foods and handcrafted items in the Christmas *tori*, or marketplace.

The *Kauneimmat Joululaulut* (Beautiful Christmas Songs) program was begun in 1973 by the Finnish Mission Society, and now is sung between Advent and Epiphany by more than one million Finns in churches and other locations in Finland as well as internationally, where it has become popular among Finns living abroad. The traditional collection taken provides important support to global projects that help needy children. Song booklets printed each year are provided for all churches and are sent abroad.

*Kauneimmat Joululaulut* is sponsored by Finnish American Cultural Activities (FACA) and Finlandia Foundation Twin Cities (FFTC) (merging to become the Finnish American Association) and Finnish community members.

Conversational Finnish Class  
Tuesdays—2:00-3:30 p.m.  
Participation via Zoom Meeting  
For more information, please call  
Urho Rahkola at 651-429-3319



*Marlene Moreno and Judy Mikkola Preparing the Pulla*



*Michelle Ranta, Ruth Erkkila, Rex and Sally Dale and Emma Ojala enjoying Kaunimmat at the Tori*

## **"Fire and Light" Art Exhibit**

*By Sarah Stengle*

"Fire and Light" exhibit at the art gallery in A-Mill Lofts in Minneapolis features nine artists, connected to the Twin Cities Nordic community, five of whom are active members of FACA. The exhibit was organized by long time FACA member Elizabeth "Helvi" Brauer of Luumu-Finnish Living who drew together artists interested in Nordic themes such as forests, water and nature. "Fire and Light" includes diverse works including painting, textiles, photography, poetry, and ceramics. The exhibit runs through the end of January.

Anni Dahl's wheel thrown and hand-built ceramics include works that evoke earth and the forest, and two raku pieces titled "Frost From Flame" and "Ignition."

Brian Kays' luminous photographs include a stark and sun-drenched view of a red building standing on a rocky outcropping in the Faroe islands.

Cami Andersen exhibits four cross-stitched pieces including an imposing and elaborate embroidery based on a William Morris inspired design of scrolling leaves and flowers.

Eeva Räisänen expressive paintings show confident loose brushwork. Her work "Horse" shows a coppery-toned Sorrel horse turning its head against a wintery sky.

Elizabeth Brauer's work on paper "She burned the letters" is a hand-typed poem on the theme of "Fire and Light", with a burnt diagonal edge that underscores the poetic theme.

Liisa Lê's landscape paintings, with cranes, are detailed and realistic; additionally there are a group of masterful ink drawings of cranes installed under the staircase.

Mandy Pedigo's hand-woven wall hanging integrates colors from the forest, earth and sky into a harmonious composition with a strong diagonal design.

Michelle Ranta's oil pastoral painting focuses on scenes from nature with great attention to atmosphere and depth, and a beautiful rendition of foliage and water.

Sarah Stengle's drawings and artists' books include three works titled "Kindling Thief" inspired by birch trees injured by campers.

The exhibit runs through the end of January. Anyone interested should contact the co-curator, Elizabeth Brauer, also known to the Finnish community as "Helvi" at [luumuabc@gmail.com](mailto:luumuabc@gmail.com) for a tour.



*Elizabeth Bauer, Michelle Ranta, Liisa Le and Sarah Stengle at Fire and Light Art Show*

## Is Sauna Therapy Built Into Our Genes?

**Science is finally catching up and starting to figure out why and how saunas do their magic.**

(Excerpt from January 15, 2024, Thom Hartmann, *The Wisdom School*)

Could a regular sauna save or lengthen your life? Is it more than just enjoyable warmth during these brutally cold winter months?

The contemporary sauna craze may seem like a new phenomenon, but in reality, the origins of saunas stretch back at least a staggering 10,000 years. These ancient spaces, often called pit saunas, consisted of a simple pit dug into the ground with a pile of stones at its core, heated by a campfire. Once those stones reached the right temperature, the pit was covered with materials like wattle, thatch, or peat, and water was splashed on the stones to create rejuvenating steam.

Interestingly, early sweat houses similar to saunas have been discovered across Europe and Asia, dating back to the Bronze Age. Saunas and sweat lodges also held significance in ancient Islamic cultures and indigenous societies in Mexico and North America. According to a study from Harvard University, Native American sweat lodge traditions involved intricate ceremonies and rituals focused on preparation, prayer, and purification.

Meanwhile, in Japan, natural caves were initially utilized as sweat baths, eventually evolving into bathhouses situated near temples and monasteries, as beautifully explained by Emma O’Kelly in her book, *Sauna—The Power of Deep Heat*.

O’Kelly explains how ancient Finns, akin to Native Americans, revered the four elements—air, water, fire, earth—within the confines of the sauna. It represents a microcosm of the three realms of the universe: the celestial realm, the earthly world, and the underworld of the departed. The symbolism mirrors the cycles of growth, interconnection, and symbiosis, all with the aim of achieving altered states, heightened consciousness, and rejuvenation.

In Finland, this sauna mythology found its place in the *Kalevala*, Finland’s epic poetry work, and Finnish runic songs. These ancient tales infused the sauna with profound symbolism, so much so that it’s not uncommon to spot the gods and goddesses of the *Kalevala* carved into sauna doors and windows.

## Website Update!

*By Katja Zarns*

Happy January to one and all! You may have noticed that our website has been taken down and replaced with the following note: “Under Construction. Thank you for being patient. New site and content arriving in the coming months.”

FACA has used US Family as their host platform for many years. As technology elsewhere has improved and photo sizes, for example, have become more significant, US Family have invested less in their websites. This has led to them being unable to handle the sheer information on our website, which needs to be refreshed multiple times. We have tried to contact US Family repeatedly only to find out they have one person staffing the office, themselves unable to help us improve our platform. We found a new web platform, yet US Family could not release our domain [www.finnfaca.org](http://www.finnfaca.org), so we decided not to use the website anymore.

As we voted to join efforts with Finnsources/FFTC, becoming a new organization with a new name, we are excited to present you with a fresh website that will handle our needs and purpose in the future.

Technology, eh?

*Terveisin, Katja Tiainen Zarns*

## 2025 Finnish American Association (FAA) Call for Salolampi Scholarship Applications

The FAA Salolampi Scholarship application process is open for the 2025 sessions. Youth Salolampi Scholarships (for 1-, 2- and 4-week sessions) are available to FAA members and members’ relatives: children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews.

Scholarships will be awarded based on years of membership, previous Salolampi attendance, past scholarship funding, participation in Finnish activities, and quality of a written essay. Applications can be obtained from the FAA Salolampi Scholarship Committee, c/o Kathy Jorgensen at [kathymjorgensen@yahoo.com](mailto:kathymjorgensen@yahoo.com).

Applications are due by February 28, 2025.

## Calendar—2025 Programs and Events

For more fun Finn events, see FinnSource  
([www.finnsource.org](http://www.finnsource.org))

- **Finlandia Scholarship Opportunities—Applications due February 1, 2025**
  - ◇ **P.J.C. Lindfors Legal Studies Scholarship—** U.S. law students studying in Finland and Finnish law students studying in the U.S. can apply for a scholarship for \$1,000–\$3,000.
  - ◇ Full-time undergraduate and graduate students of all academic disciplines who are currently enrolled in accredited post-secondary schools in the United States and Finland.
- **FAA Salolampi Scholarships—**See article for more details. Applications due end of February.

### 2025

- **January 13—Finnish Bistro 6:00, Tell Your Story—Hosted by Jane Olson.** We all have a story about how we came to be in this country. A fun evening getting to know more about your story, whether it is about a Sauna, Grandparent, or just SISU!
- **January 17—6:30 P.M.—Zoom—Steve Leppälä and Arne Vainio Sauna!** Zoom link will be sent out in a separate email.

### February

- **February 15—Laskiainen! 12–3 p.m., Lebanon Hills Regional Park, 860 Cliff Road, Eagan, MN 55123;** Sledding, bonfire, hotdogs, *pulla* and this year...a mobile sauna!

### March

- **March 16—St. Urho's Day!!** Pea Soup cookoff, concert and dance. Christ Church Lutheran, 4–7 p.m. Concert by Ameriikan Poijat, followed by a pea soup cookoff, and dancing with Lauluaiika. More information to follow.

### April

- **Reception for Finnish Ambassador;** more information to follow.

### 2025 Pop-Ups—Watch for announcements

- **Knitting—**Knit along, led by David Fillman
- **Tell your story—**January 13
- **Book Club—The End of Drum-Time** by Hanna Pylväinen.

-----

### Volunteers Needed! Help make FAA great!

**Editor—***Uutiset*

**Events—**St. Urho's Day

Mid-Summer's Festival—June 21

Finn Fun Day

## Laskiainen—Finnish Flavors and Fun in the Northwoods

By Crystal Schlueter

In the late 1800's through the early twentieth century thousands of Finnish immigrants settled in Northeastern Minnesota to work in the area's iron mines. With a landscape much like Finland, immigrants felt at home amidst the expansive forests and wild cranberry bogs. From farmsteads to cultural festivals, the legacy of those early Finnish immigrants left a lasting effect. Remnants of old Finnish barns can still be seen dotted along the highways, and local festivals preserve traditions by showcasing an array of ethnic foods and lively folk music.

There is an annual Finnish sliding festival in Palo called *Laskiainen*. Held in early February, *Laskiainen* celebrates the new year and features live Finnish folk music, traditional foods, a craft fair and a Finnish museum, among other festivities. The main event, is an alarmingly steep hill that sends sledders zooming down a hill and onto an ice-covered lake. Sledders are encouraged to chant or sing for good luck in the year ahead; tradition states that the farther one slides, the more abundant the upcoming year's crop will be.

*Laskiainen* attendees can also enjoy traditional Finnish fare such as *mojakka* (a hearty beef and vegetable stew), *kropsua* (oven pancakes) and *ilmapuuro* (a cranberry pudding). A full calendar of activities include community meals dedicated to these hearty dishes. Throughout the festival you'll also find the prominent Finnish staple, *pulla*, a cardamom-scented bread that is most often baked around holidays and other celebratory events.

### FAA Membership

A one-year membership for \$25 provides you with this newsletter, plus other benefits. To subscribe or renew, complete this form and mail with your check to **FAA, Kathy Jorgensen, 9408 Erin Court, Woodbury, MN 55129.** (Check your email message for a membership expiration warning or your mailing label for an expiration date.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to receive my FAA *Uutiset* (please check one)

☐ electronic copy via email ☐ paper copy

[Note: choosing the email copy saves FAA both printing costs and postage.]



**Kathy Jorgensen**  
9408 Erin Court  
Woodbury, MN 55129

*Finnish American Cultural Activities  
is dedicated to exploring and preserving  
Finnish and Finnish American heritage.*  
**[www.finnfaca.org](http://www.finnfaca.org)**

## Finnish Paper Star Workshop—A Hit!

### Finnish Paper Star Workshop—A Hit!

*By Liisa Le*

The Finnish Paper Star workshop on November 16 was a wonderful success, largely thanks to Sarah Stengle's exceptional preparation and hard work. Sarah's enthusiasm and attention to detail made the event both educational and fun for all who attended. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about this Finnish tradition and the beautiful stars now adorning my living space bring me so much joy.

The event was such a hit that we are excited to make it an annual tradition. Join us next year with Sarah and her helpers to learn how to create your own Finnish Paper Star just in time for the holidays!

These simple yet striking stars are a perfect way to brighten any space and are great gifts, too.

