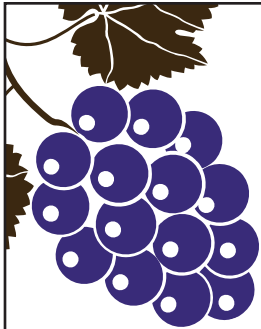




# Uutiset

*Newsletter of Finnish American Cultural Activities, Inc.*

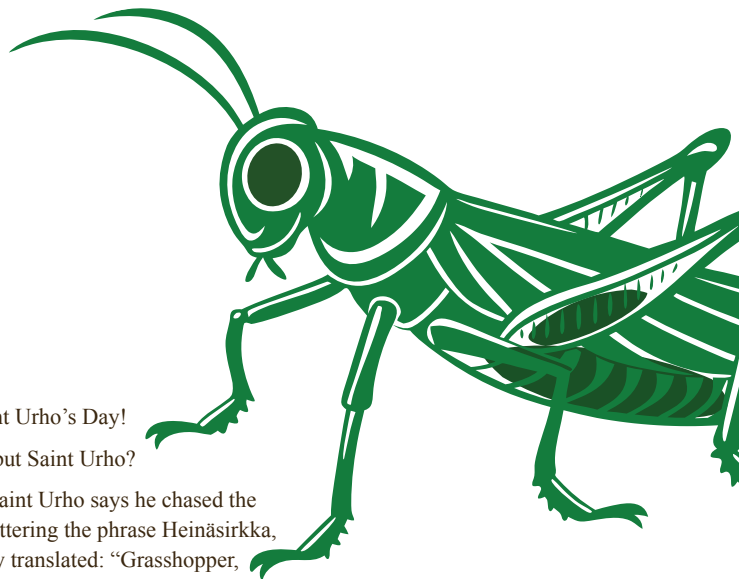
**March–April / *Maaliskuu–Huhtikuu* 2025**



## Saint Urho Day Celebration

Sunday, March 16, 4pm

*music • dancing • pea soup*



Hyvää Urhonpäivää! Happy Saint Urho's Day!

You've heard of Saint Patrick—but Saint Urho?

The tongue-in-cheek legend of Saint Urho says he chased the grasshoppers out of Finland by uttering the phrase Heinäsirkka, heinäsirkka, mene täältä (roughly translated: "Grasshopper, grasshopper, go to hell!"). The grasshoppers were decimating the grape crop.

In the end, the day offers all of us—Irish, Finnish, and everyone else—an occasion for a good party. Join the Ameriikan Poijat brass band with guest vocalists Eeva Savolainen and Elina Koivusaari and organist Megan Engel in concert. Dance music at the reception will be led by the Finnish folk music band Lauluaika. Don't miss this afternoon of merriment—including dancing, singing, a pea soup cook-off contest, and more!

*The event is co-sponsored by Christ Church Lutheran and the Finnish American Association.*

**Christ Church Lutheran**  
**3244 34th Ave South, Minneapolis**  
**[christchurchluth.org](http://christchurchluth.org)**

## Proposed FAA 2024–2025 Board of Directors

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Photography courtesy of

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please hit the "refresh" button.)

## President's/Interim Editor's Message

*By Louise Morgan*

Happy St. Urho's Day! Well, in a few days or weeks, depending on when you get this newsletter. I am so excited about this year's St. Urho's Day event. We are partnering with Christ Church Lutheran and have a wonderful day planned. Music, Pea Soup, Dancing, what more could you ask for? I hope all of you will come and make this one of our signature events.

We are making progress on our merger. Yes, we are still working on it. We have many t's to cross and i's to dot. A few of the major hurdles will soon be cleared. Our new website is in progress and will be announced when it is available. Our Facebook page has been updated with our new name. The board is working on the governance.

But in the meantime, we have some new and exciting events in the works. You need to put our First Midsummer's event on your calendar! It will take place on the solstice, and we are planning on a traditional Finnish celebration...bonfire and all. Music, dancing, food and a bonfire. A not-to-be-missed event. So put June 21 on your calendar. It will take place at the lovely Lake Phalen picnic pavilion.

I have changed my photo this month. I took this photo while I was on a trip to Laos and Cambodia. We stopped at a little resort on the Mekong River in southern Laos. I was surprised to see a little hand-made Finnish flag on a tree, under the Netherlands flag. I think, maybe the owner is a bit Finn? Just thinking. Finns are everywhere!

Below, I am highlighting where you can get involved. We need your help. If we are going to be vibrant in the Twin Cities, we need help. Please consider getting involved in some way. Kiitos.



## *Keep FAA Strong! Volunteer! We need you!*

*Email [louise.morgan21@gmail.com](mailto:louise.morgan21@gmail.com) with how you would like to help.*

Do you want our Finnish Community to grow and thrive? If so, consider becoming a volunteer. We need volunteers at all levels. Your help is needed at events, on committees, as a leader. We need you. Even if you can commit to only one event, great! Let us know.

**Utiliset**—Editor, contributors (it is your newsletter. Send us articles, ideas, etc.)

**Board Member**—Do you want to help strengthen our organization? Join our fun group.

### Upcoming Events:

**St. Urho's Day**—March 16, (Set Up, Clean Up)

**Midsummer Day Celebration** (June 21) Lake Phalen—planning, set up, clean up

**Finn Fun Day**—September—Cooking, running a booth, set up, clean up

**Nordic Music Festival**—September—Help run a booth—promote FAA.

### Planning Committees:

Programming committee—Help plan events.

Membership committee —Strategize how to grow.

Young Professionals—We know you are out there. Let's create a program for you!

Scholarship committee—Help with the Salolampi Scholarship Fundraising campaign.

Hospitality Committee—Help set up and tear down at monthly meetings.

Fill Louise's inbox with your names and how you would like to help.

*Email—[louise.morgan21@gmail.com](mailto:louise.morgan21@gmail.com)*

## FinnFest Is Coming!

By Ira Salmela

Welcome to FinnFest 2025 this summer, hosted in Duluth, Minn. on the beautiful shores of Lake Superior, August 1–3. Three full days, Friday to Sunday, FinnFest offers something for everyone, children, young adults, families, and adults of all ages. Events begin early in the morning, continue throughout the day and last well into the evening: lectures, panels, exhibits, films, live music, the International Finnish Chorus, the FinnFest Orchestra, dances, demonstrations, an ecumenical service, saunas and, of course, the *Tori* (marketplace) Nordic Fair with shopping and food.

This year's special guest is the new Ambassador of Finland to the United States, Leena-Kaisa Mikkola. She brings a unique view on Finland and the world today, after serving as the Ambassador of Finland to Israel, 2011–2016, and the People's Republic of China from 2021 to 2024. Her visit creates many ways for people to meet and hear her speak.

To honor the 80th anniversary of the publication of Tove Jansson's first Moomin story, FinnFest is bringing six Finnish actors to sing and dance as the Moomins interact spontaneously with *tori* attendees. Each day, the Moomins



will also perform a musical play, “Peeks Into the Dancing Moominvalley.”

Music! Lots of music in the *tori* and in small and large concerts: traditional folk music, classical music, Sámi joiking, acoustic singer/songwriters, classic and contemporary Finnish pop/rock, bluegrass, children's music, and more. Kantele programming returns to FinnFest, including a chance to pick one up to try it as well as take a 5-string beginner workshop.

Pre-festival programming, Thursday, July 31, will include all-day seminars and tours: a chance to spend a day studying Finnish, exploring family history skills, reconnecting to Finnish American cooking, deepening your sauna knowledge. Five all-day tours to Finnish heritage sites will feature local historians like Lyz Jaakola and internationally recognized professors such as Arnold Alanen.

For more than 40 years, people of various backgrounds have come, intrigued by FinnFest's unique connections to Nordic cultures, every year different programs, each day's special features.

More event details and discounted Early Bird Full Festival Passes are now available at <http://finnfest.us>.

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### Kyle Gray Young, April 18, 6:30 p.m.

Danish American Center

3030 W. River Pkwy., Minneapolis, Minn. 55406

Kyle Gray Young is a Finnish American singer-songwriter, music educator, and music historian from St. Cloud, Minn. He has released 11 albums, 30 books of sheet music, and has been performing professionally for more than 20 years. Kyle has received four grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board



and two from the Central Minnesota Arts Board for various music research projects. In his latest role, he has been serving as the music director for FinnFest USA this year which will take place August 1–3 in Duluth.

On April 18, Kyle will perform a set of contemporary Finnish pop, rock, and indie music from the past 30 years. He will share stories about the artists as well as some personal anecdotes about his journey as a Finnish American artist. To learn more about Kyle, hear some of his music, and find translations to his Finnish songs, please visit [www.KyleGrayYoung.com](http://www.KyleGrayYoung.com).

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## A Message from Your Board Secretary Mirja Hanson

Hello Members! My name is Mirja Hanson, and it has been a pleasure serving on the Finnish American Association Board of Directors as secretary. I have been preparing minutes of Board Meetings since the merger was launched in April 2024. The monthly meeting minutes are open to all members for review. Please feel free to request a copy of any minutes by reaching out to me at [mirjah@aol.com](mailto:mirjah@aol.com).

## Finland House—A Dream Taking Shape

By Elaine Kumpula, Finland Honorary Consul

For years the Minnesota Finnish expatriate and Finnish-American community has thought about, talked about, and dreamed of having a “Finland House”—a house of our own. So many of us have visited other cultural houses, noting that Minnesota has a Danish American Center, Norway House, the American Swedish Institute, the Ukrainian American Community Center and others, but no Finland House. Why not have a Finland House?

Over the past couple of years, a number of Finland House dreamers decided to collaborate to see if a Finland House is actually wanted and needed for our community. If yes, what would the house need to offer? Where would it be located? Would we rent, buy, build? How would we pay for it? How would we maintain it once we have it?

Our collaborative group does not have all of the answers to all of the questions; however, we did circulate a survey last spring to confirm interest in a Finland House and how individuals envision using it. Hopefully, the readers of this article remember responding to the survey! We appreciated the input! We are planning to send out another survey to the various Minnesota Finnish/Finnish American organizations to better understand how those organizations would envision using Finland House. That should go out soon.

From the results of our initial survey, we were encouraged to see that there is significant interest in having a Finland House that can offer a variety of services, for example, a meeting and gathering space, a place for coffee and *pulla*, rehearsal/performance space, exhibition space, language and cultural classes, cooking classes and more. (Perhaps a sauna?) Feeling encouraged, we decided to create a 501(c)(3) charitable organization which will allow us to move forward more formally and to start raising money to turn the dream of Finland House into a reality. That process is now underway.

If you are interested in joining the Finland House team and have not yet participated, we would love to have you! Please reach out to Louise Morgan (louise.morgan21@gmail.com) or Elaine Kumpula (elkumpula@outlook.com) and we will put you on our mailing list and invite you to meetings.

**Kathy Jorgensen and Mirja Hanson at Nordic Soundscapes on January 10.**



## Sauna Quest with Aarne and Steve

By Kendra Kauppi

In spite of chilly outdoor temperatures January 17, the heat was on with the *Sauna Quest* program presented by Aarne Vainio and Steve Leppälä—the mission to share the love and history of the sauna. Their sauna adventures spanned from Minnesota to Finland, historic to contemporary, savusauna to electric and invited to spontaneous. It did not matter what the sauna looked like as long as there was good steam, ventilation and heat!

Steve and Aarne explained part of the sauna experience are the rituals. At Salolampi, it was jumping in a cold lake, pausing only briefly and having a second thought at the end of the dock. At Finlandia Foundation Northland they made *vasta* or birch branches used to whisk the back. Not as much from Finland but Latvia, fashionable sauna hats made of wool kept the heads cool. At Joanne Bergman’s Island sauna, Aarne shared his homemade pine tar soap which can light up a face and transport a person back in time.

The duo explained that the sauna serves many unique and diverse purposes. Dinner and a sauna have a new meaning as *makkara pussi* or a foil sausage bag that allows for direct cooking on the sauna stove rocks. The sauna was often the first building on a property where not only kettles were rendered for laundry, but children were born. The Ely Steam Bath built in 1915 served a purpose to the miners after a long day at work. They highly recommend a trip to Ely to pull the cord to get water to the radiator heating unit.

The rocks are an important consideration. Choosing a rock that will not explode is important. Sedimentary rocks should be avoided while those from Lake Superior are an option. Rough rocks have more surface area and provide steam. Some suggest that rocks should be changed yearly.

While in Finland, they enjoyed a floating sauna in Oulu and an apartment sauna in Tampere. Do you have a sauna to share with Aarne and Steve?

### Floating Sauna in Tampere



## Finnish Knits—*Satu Ramo*

By Louise Morgan

A few of you may know, I am a knitter. I follow Finnish designers. I recently received a knitting magazine, called *Laine*. *Laine Publishing* is out of Tampere, Finland. One designer that I follow, Jenna Kostet, takes inspiration from the *Kalevala*. I own both of her books, *Knitted Kalevala I* and *Knitted Kalevala II*. She has studied the *Kalevala* and its poems and the history of the Finnish, Karelian and wider Baltic-Finnish folk traditions and turns her inspiration into sweaters. I love the designs.

In the latest edition of the *Laine* magazine, there is an article about Satu Ramo. Satu Ramo is a popular Finnish Crime novelist. And she is a knitter! She just published her latest novel called *Rakel*, which continues the Hildur crime novel series. Ramo lives in Iceland, and she follows a strict daily routine, running, writing, strength training and... knitting. She learned to knit because one of the characters in her books knits.

Ramo was voted the most popular Finnish author in 2023. Her three-part series about Hildur Runarsdottir, an Icelandic police officer and Hildur's colleague, the Finnish Jakob Johanson, is available now in English. Jakob Johanson is the knitting character.

Knitting is a constant presence during Ramo's book tours: readers knit while listening and want to talk about their projects. Readers want to know why Ramo knits, what yarns she prefers and particularly why Jakob knits. One of the reasons for the popularity of Ramos' books is the calming rhythm of knitting. I am going to look for the *Hildur* book. I was hoping that I could find it on Audible, so I could listen and knit, but no luck. It is on Audible, but only in German. I am afraid I do not understand German. So I will have to read about the Finnish knitting police officer. Maybe a book club idea?

Now I have something new to knit and something new to read. No rest for the wicked.

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## The mostly Minnesotan story behind *Sauna Water*, a collaboration born of steam and ice;

Excerpt from the *The Minnesota Star Tribune*

When water hits hot river rocks in a sauna, crackling into instant steam, the sound mimics cracking open a can of a cold, carbonated beverage.

A wave of humid heat washes over those inside, coaxing out sweat and slow, deep breaths. The release of stepping outside, where the cold air kisses the skin and the sound of water lapping at a shoreline surrounds, is a pleasure plenty of

## Nordic Soundscapes at Orchestra Hall

January 10-18

By Kathy Jorgensen

The Minnesota Orchestra Hall's Nordic Soundscapes Festival ran January 10–18. Finland was highlighted opening night, with music including “Midnight Sun Variations” by Outi Tarkiainen and ending with the timeless classic Sibelius's “Finlandia.” Early arrivals were treated to a pre-concert performance by the Suomi Finland 100 Chorus in the lobby. Attendees gave rave reviews of the concert, most especially the clarinetist and of course the moving finale “Finlandia!” Afterwards concert-goers were entertained in the lobby by a small group of our talented local Finnish singers. It was indeed a great night to recognize and celebrate Finland!

For all six festival concerts, before the concerts and at intermission, tables lined the Mezzanine area, showcasing Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden along with Finland. Our Finnish American Association Twin Cities and FinnFest USA sponsored the Finland display, complete with blue and white Marimekko backdrop and table coverings and, flanked by Finnish flags, an eye-catching centerpiece of birch bark, cedar sprigs, pussy willow and red berries.

Our Finland table always was a-buzz with a lot of traffic and engagement. FinnFest offered early-bird tickets and merchandise for sale for the festival July 31–August 3, 2025, in Duluth. FAA gave out information about events, organizations and resources in the local Twin Cities Finnish-American community. FAA's “put yourself on the map” activity and the Finland trivia quiz were easily the most popular attractions of the showcase event with concert-goers! Thank you to the volunteers who staffed the FAA table on six days over two weekends—Phil and Katja Zarns, Elaine Kumpula, Kathy and John Jorgensen and Mirja Hanson.

Minnesotans know. Then comes the shock of submerging into the cold water, and surfacing to inhale air seasoned with the woods nearby. If someone wanted to synthesize that flavor, what would it taste like?

Jeff Vondenkamp and Justin Juntunen asked themselves that very question. Their answer: ***Sauna Water***, an intriguing nonalcoholic beverage from a brewer and a sauna maker with a flavor that decidedly says up north.

Vondenkamp was inspired to create Sauna Water's unique  
(*Sauna Water*, continued on page 6)

## **Juhannus, Midsummer Festival June 21—Lake Phalen Pavilion A Finnish Community Event!**

**Mark your calendars. Save the date!**

**The following is the story behind this exciting June event—From Ralph and Jaana Tuttila.**

When June arrives we start enjoying our time outside with warmer temperatures, water, firepits, and the sights and smells of trees and undergrowth. It's in our nature to look for a way to celebrate this new season together with our Finnish community outside in the new summer with music, dancing, fire, sharing a meal underneath new growth and above the warm earth. It's Juhannus!

We have been celebrating the coming of summer away from the cities in rural communities that hold to old traditions around Juhannus, and it's exciting to bring back these traditions to our community here, too!

The impetus from our part (Finn Hall) came from discussion of possible events for midsummer that we could do. In the past we have played at Oulu Wi many times with Finn Hall and later Lauluaiika—also played in the UP at Hancock, Toivola, Ontonogan and other distant places. Lots of fun and great folks who love the music, but very tiring and so often we do not get much \$ from it which means we pay to play.

One of our members suggested we put on our own Juhannus event after last year dealing with a downpour and a very cold night camping at Oulu.

So, we are very eager and excited to do something with FACA, now known as Finnish American Association—Twin Cities

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### ***Sauna Water, continued from page 5)***

flavor profile on a winter camping trip with his cousin. "He also got me into foraging," said Vondenkamp. "He would bring spruce tips to make a kind of tea."

Spruce tips provide the base flavor of Sauna Water, but other aromatics come into play. "Juniper, cardamom and allspice were kind of inspired by pho—that spice blend is all over the world. Scandinavian countries use it in baking," he said. Acidity and fruit comes from lemon, rounding out the spice profile.

The result is a beverage reminiscent of gin, without any of that

## **Finnish Dance Lessons**

*By Dan Salin*

Come learn some basic Finnish dance steps to get some exercise, learn or brush up on your Finnish dancing and have some fun learning Finnish dancing with live music!! No partner required. Comfortable clothing recommended and any type of smooth-soled footwear.



***Kisarit Dancers***

Kisarit will be offering dance lessons once again through the Adult Enrichment Community Ed. program of Hopkins High School in Minnetonka. The dance classes will be starting in the Spring and Kisarit members will be teaching Finnish basic dance steps: waltz, jenkka, masurka, humppa and some mixers every Thursday in April from 7–8 p.m. The dates are April 3, 10, 17 and 24, 2025. Cost is \$50/attendee for the 4-week session.

People interested can register for Kisarit dance classes by going to: [hopkins.ce.eleyo.com](http://hopkins.ce.eleyo.com) or call 952-988-4070 for help and information.

alcohol burn. The effervescence is refreshing, while the drink is more dry than sweet. And it's a crowd-pleaser, with everyone being able to have that adult drinking experience without the consequences and potential adverse health effects from alcohol.

***Aili, Louise  
Morgan's grand-  
daughter,  
enjoying  
Laskiainen at  
Lebanon Hills.  
(February 25)***



## Calendar 2025 Programs and Events

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

### March

- **March 16—St. Urho's Day!!** Pea Soup cookoff, concert and dance. Christ Church Lutheran, 3244 34th Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406, **4–7 p.m.** Concert by Ameriikan Poijat, followed by a pea soup cook off, and dancing with Lauluaiika.

### April

- **April 2–13, 2025. The Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF)** is returning. Three films that were produced or co-produced in Finland have been confirmed for the festival.
- **April 5, 4–8:30 p.m.—The Nordic Culture Club is hosting the Nordic Gala**, Saturday, at the Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo. A Norwegian dinner will be served followed by a silent auction. The program features **Lori Ann Reinhall from Crossings**. Crossing 200 is a group that is helping to commemorate the bicentennial of organized Norwegian emigration/immigration from Norway to the U.S.
- **April 18, 6:30 p.m.—Kyle Gray Young** will perform at the Danish American Center, 3030 W. River Pkwy., Minneapolis, MN 55406.
- **April 23, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.—the Swede Finn Jonathan Rundman**, a Lutheran Minister and long-time musician is playing religious music at the Parkway Theater in South Mpls. Cost is \$25.

### May

- Watch for May program announcements.

### June

- **June 21—Juhannus—Midsummer Celebration**, Lake Phalen Pavillion, 1600 Phalen Dr., St. Paul, MN 55106. Music, food, dancing and a bonfire! Mark your calendars and plan on attending our first Midsummer Celebration!

**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

## 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.)

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

## SoMe'n Päivitys—Social Media Update

*By Katja Tiainen Zarns*

Did you know that most Finns call social media SoMe in place of the full term *sosiaalinen media*?

As you know, with the merging of two organizations, our new mission is: “We seek to elevate the visibility of contemporary Finland and celebrate our Finnish culture, heritage and life in Minnesota.”

While our mission considers Minnesota, as an organization with events and activities, we are local to the Twin Cities and surrounding areas where many of our members live. Yet, as people from around the country and the world really are interested in all things Finnish, it is important that along with having a robust website that we also have a social media (or SoMe) presence.

Did you know that FAA or FAATC has a Facebook group? You can find us by searching for the Finnish American Association—Twin Cities. Did you know that we, since recently, have an Instagram account as well? Our handle is [@finns\\_in\\_mn](https://www.instagram.com/finns_in_mn) (FAA and FAATC were taken). If you are an enthusiastic social media user, we invite you to use the hashtags [#finnsinmn](https://www.instagram.com/finnsinmn) and [#faatc](https://www.instagram.com/faatc) when posting from FAAs, and other Finnish, and Finnish American events—to help celebrate our Finnish culture, heritage and life in Minnesota.

See you online!



**Finnish American Association**  
**9408 Erin Court**  
**Woodbury, MN 55129**

*Finnish American Cultural Activities  
is dedicated to exploring and preserving  
Finnish and Finnish American heritage.*  
**www.finnfaca.org**

## Laskiainen

### **Celebrating *Laskiainen* at Lebanon Hills Regional Park—February 15, 2025**

*By John Morgan*

Finnish and Finnish-American families gathered at Lebanon Hills Regional Park to celebrate *Laskiainen*, the traditional Finnish mid-winter festival. The event, co-hosted by the Finnish American Association (FAA) and Suomikoulu, brought together a fantastic turnout of people eager to embrace the winter season with outdoor fun, warm food and cultural traditions.

With snow-covered hills providing the perfect setting, children and adults alike enjoyed an afternoon of sledding, laughter, and camaraderie. The crisp winter air was filled with the crackling sounds of an open fire, where attendees roasted hot dogs and made delicious s'mores. The inviting scent of campfire-cooked treats added to the festive atmosphere, making for a truly memorable gathering.

To escape the chill, many found comfort inside the park's warming house, where a spread of snacks and traditional Finnish pea soup (*hernekeitto*) was available to all. The warm, hearty soup was a favorite among guests, providing much-needed sustenance before heading back out to enjoy more winter activities.

One of the highlights of the event was the complimentary sauna experience, sponsored by the Finnish American Association. Four free sauna sessions were offered, allowing participants to warm up in true Finnish fashion. The experience of transitioning from the cold outdoors into the deep, soothing heat of the sauna was a perfect way to embrace the *Laskiainen* spirit.

The event successfully captured the essence of Finnish winter traditions, offering a blend of outdoor adventure, comforting food, and authentic cultural experiences. With such a strong turnout and enthusiastic participation, this *Laskiainen* celebration at Lebanon Hills Regional Park was a resounding success—leaving many looking forward to next year's festivities.



**FAA Members**

**Max Zarns  
Katja Zarns  
John Morgan  
Ruth Erkkila  
Judy Mikkola  
Sam Morgan  
Tom Kill**

**Photo by Anna Renvall  
of SuomiKoulu**