

April/Huhtikuu 2026

Beyond the Stacks: Helsinki's Oodi Library



On **Saturday, April 18**, FAA brings the library to your living room to visit Oodi's public spaces, tech areas, and equipment, and "book heaven," where you can sit and read a book under real trees. We are expecting some voices from Finland and a surprise or two from FAA folks on the scene! Watch for more information and Zoom details: **Saturday, April 18, 11:00 a.m. CDT** (7 p.m. Finland). (Saturday, so we can tie into Finland real time)

Called "the living room of Helsinki," the Central Library Oodi was opened and inaugurated in 2018 on December 5, the eve of Finland's Independence Day. Its goal is to provide enjoyable places where Helsinki residents and others of all ages can come together to learn, enjoy cinema, understand new technologies and equipment, spend time with their children and neighbors, and relax outside with coffee or a sandwich, enjoying a spectacular view over central Helsinki.

Zoom link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4819312478?pwd=nCINwMFcdY5GczjsZeOqROjvbYOSCj.1&omn=86170417431>

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**President's/Interim
Editor's Message**

By Louise Morgan

Sigh, I am having a hard time getting excited about this spring. Isn't it supposed to be spring? Well, we do live in Minnesota so I guess I should not be surprised about the ups and downs. I do know that the birds are back, trees are starting to maybe bud, and it is getting warmer...sort of.



Louise and Mia Morgan

I know you all were as disappointed as I was, that we had to cancel our St. Urho's Day event. We had a lot of fun planned for the day. But the weather just did not cooperate, and I think we all were happier staying home and being safe. There is always next year, and we will have another St. Urho's next year. But on the bright side, *Juhannus* is coming up and we have another chance to get together, dance, party and have lots of Finnish fun. Daina is making *Munkki* again, we will have some wonderful crepes, and more. Plus, lots of music! Make sure you put it on your calendar.

We have been working on some exciting new programming. In just a few weeks, we will be hosting a Saturday morning Zoom, focusing on the amazing Oodi Library in Helsinki. It is being held on a Saturday so we can tie people in from Finland! And our very own William Bessonon, who is going to school in Helsinki this year, has made a short video at the library for us to see!

As I write this, we are still trying to make May a go. We have been working on bringing Jay Smith, the Finlandia Foundation lecturer of the year to the Twin Cities. Our biggest challenge has been finding a venue that would hold a large group but not break our bank. Not an easy task. We are still searching. We need a Finland House! I will keep you updated on our progress.

Lastly, I did want to say a few words about Festival of Nations. As you all know, it was cancelled when Covid hit. They are starting it up again this year, but it is not being run by the International Institute. Somehow, the new organization did not have our contact information because we did not find out about it until it was too late to sign up. We have corrected that and they now have us on their list. But you can still see Kisarit dancing and Lauluaiika! *Thank you Kisarit and Lauluaiika!*

Hope to see you all soon, either via Zoom or in person!





May 14th, 6:00 pm

Maplewood Public Library

3025 Southlawn Drive, Maplewood, MN 55109

Suggested Donation: \$5 Members, \$10 Non Members

Lecturer of the Year 2026 Jay Smith

John E. Smith III—known to many simply as Jay—is a trained public historian, researcher, and archivist whose passion lies in making history both engaging and accessible. After earning his bachelor's degree in history and political science from West Chester University in 2016, Jay continued his academic journey at Temple University, completing a master's degree at the Center for Public History. He has since been celebrated as a dynamic communicator of the past, even earning comparisons to "the Steve Kornacki of local history" for his lively, data-driven storytelling.

During his years as an archivist with the Chester County Archives (2018–2023), Jay introduced innovative public outreach strategies—from interactive GIS story maps to video features and educational programming—helping bring local historical narratives to life. Now working as an independent researcher, he remains committed to bridging academic scholarship with community curiosity and fostering public engagement with the past.



As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Jay's lecture topic could not be more timely or significant. He argues that few historical figures embody Finlandia Foundation National's mission more profoundly than John Morton—the Finnish-descended signer of the Declaration of Independence whose decisive vote helped secure American independence. Despite Morton's pivotal role in shaping the emerging republic, his story remains remarkably underrepresented in both scholarly discourse and public memory. Jay's lecture seeks to illuminate Morton's essential contributions while exploring the deeper influence of his Finnish ancestral roots, tracing his family's migration to the colony of New Sweden in the mid-17th century. By highlighting how Morton's Finnish heritage informed his political worldview and democratic convictions, Jay aims to elevate a remarkable chapter of Finnish-American history at a moment when Americans are reflecting more than ever on the origins and ideals of the nation.

For more about Jay: www.johnsmithiii.com

For information about FFN: FinlandiaFoundation.org

2026 FAA Salolampi Scholarship Awards

By Kathy Jorgensen

Thanks to last fall's generous donations for the FAA Salolampi Scholarship fundraiser, we are excited to be able to award *an all-time record \$2100(!)* toward 2026 Salolampi Finnish Language Village summer sessions to *an unprecedented 7 candidates(!)*, well-deserving relatives of FAA members! It is exciting to see so much interest in Salolampi Finnish Language Camp—such an amazing way to keep the Finnish heritage alive through our young people!

Criteria for determination of awards included years of FAA membership, previous Salolampi attendance, participation in Finnish activities, and quality of a written essay for the one, two, and four-week villagers, as well as additional criteria such as academic merit, character, extra curriculars, and community involvement for two and four-week high school credit villagers.

Congratulations to our 2026 Scholarship award recipients!

- ♦ Alma Mitchell and Deanna Mehle—first-time 1-week campers
- ♦ Ellis Vogsland and Everly Vogsland—returning 2-week campers
- ♦ Baylor Gerou—first-time 2-week high school credit camper
- ♦ Poppy Ramin and Max Zarns—returning 4-week high school credit campers

Best wishes for their Salolampi adventure this summer! We hope it proves to be a meaningful, enriching, fun and exciting experience, learning about the Finnish language and culture in so many ways in the beautiful North Woods Salolampi camp in Bemidji MN.

I thank our scholarship committee for their thoughtful deliberations in determining our scholarship awards. Joining me were volunteers: Kendra Kauppi, Marlene Moreno, and Gene Ollila.

And, if you are interested in donating to our FAA Salolampi Scholarship fund, you can always do so now through our website at www.faatc.org/donate/

Folk Dancing at the Tapestry — *Voi ei, I am Tosi out of shape!*

By Liisa Le

What a treat it is to learn how to folk dance with one of the best Finnish bands in Minnesota! The wonderful Lauluaiika are a favorite at the Tapestry Folk Dance Center, and last February was my very first Nordic Dance. I was absolutely delighted to see them settling in for a musical evening.

Just listening to Lauluaiika's joyful tunes has my feet tapping away. To be honest, I am still very unsure of my steps and needed those lessons! Between learning the moves, laughing at my mistakes, and trying to avoid my partner's toes, each swirl around the room had me out of breath in the best way. It was a fantastic workout, and a perfect reminder that you don't need to be an expert to have a lot of fun.

Everyone I danced with was so kind, taking the time to offer instruction as we circled the floor. And yes, there were plenty of amazing partners with great skill who danced circles around me but watching them was part of the joy! If you want to join in and learn from a hall full of knowledgeable and friendly dancers, mark your calendars for the Nordic Dance Second Sunday each month 6:30–7 pm Lessons and 7–9 pm Dance.

Lauluika will be playing again in May at the Tapestry or check out their webpage at <https://www.lauluika.com/schedule.html>

Contra Dance with Lauluika

When: Saturday, May 10, 2026

7:30pm lesson, 8-11pm dance

Nordic Dance with Lauluika

When: Saturday, May 31, 2026

Dance lesson at 6:30 pm, dance 7:00–9:00pm

Both events will be held at the Tapestry Folk Dance Center in Minneapolis.

Whether you're a seasoned dancer or have two left feet (like me!), this is a guaranteed wonderful time. Come for the music, stay for the community, and leave with a smile. For more information, be sure to check out Tapestry's website. <https://www.tapestryfolkdance.org/nordic-dance>



Meet Our Finnish Exchange Students!

By Marissa Callender, FAA Member

Each year, our country has the privilege of welcoming exchange students from around the world into our homes, schools, and communities. These experiences enrich not only the students, but also the families and communities who welcome them, weaving together hearts and cultures in a shared journey. This year, we're especially proud to highlight three remarkable students from Finland, whose stories resonate deeply within our Finnish American community.

Anna (17, Tampere Finland): Anna's year has been filled with unforgettable moments, including her favorite: attending the U.S. Synchronized Skating Nationals in Salt Lake City. She says she'll miss "the people that have made this place feel like home" most when she returns to Finland. Though she looks forward to familiar comforts like "the sauna and liquorice," she encourages future exchange students to embrace every moment because "10 months goes by far too quickly."

Martta (17, Pori Finland): Martta was surprised by how talkative and social Americans are, noting that Finns "don't do small talk and enjoy being in silence... it's not meant to come across as rude, that's just our way of showing respect to another person." Throughout her exchange year, she has stepped outside her comfort zone and discovered what she truly values. Sharing Finnish foods with her host family has been a highlight, and she says she will miss them and new friends, most when she returns home.

Konsta (18, Tampere Finland): Konsta joined the exchange program for "American football and life experience," and playing under the stadium glow on Friday nights with the whole school watching was unlike anything he'd experienced before. His favorite place visited with his host family was Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Like Anna and Martta, he says the hardest part of leaving will be missing his host family and friends.

As first-time hosts, this journey has meant more than we ever imagined. As an active FAA member, I first saw a post on the FAA social media page a year ago and felt immediately drawn to learn more. Since welcoming Konsta



Konsta (left) Anna (middle) Martta (right)

into our home, we've loved practicing our Finnish, cooking traditional foods, and sharing our daily lives together. Highlights include cheering on Team Finland at junior hockey, visiting up-north and the U.P., hunting for our favorite Finnish candies, coffee, tea, and pastries.

Celebrating at FinnFun Day, laughing through Ismo's comedy show, learning about Salolampi, enjoying Laskiainen, and gathering for Finnish family dinners with other host families have all deepened this experience in unforgettable ways. It has truly been one of the most rewarding journeys of our lives, almost impossible to capture fully in words. If you are interested in learning more about hosting an exchange student, visit ie-USA.org or contact: M.Vandecastle@ie-usa.org.

In Memory of Stella Arola

Submitted by Harvey Arola

Stella Margaret (Penttinen) Arola of Crystal, MN passed away on December 20, 2021. She was born March 17th, 1934, in Shell Lake township to William and Mary Penttinen. She was the eldest of four children.

Stella married Harvey R. Arola on July 5, 1953. They made their home in Crystal MN and raised three sons. Stella loved learning and would read a variety of books. She sewed many pieces of clothing for her family and herself, and many household accessories. Stella enjoyed traveling, especially to Finland. Stella enjoyed bus tours and cruises. Several winters spent with friends and relatives in FL, TX, and AZ. She was an active member of FACA. Stella spoke, read and wrote fluent Finnish. Stella and Harvey were instrumental members in building their church, Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, and have been faithful members through life.

Finnish American Association would like to thank Harvey for the generous donation in memory of Stella.

Welcome New Members

(since January 1, 2026)

Carol Gerou	Samuel Morgan
Baylor Gerou	James Radford
Marlene Hallikainen	Daina Rosen
Susan Jacobsen	Honor Schauland
Maria Lehto	Becky Vogsland
Ida Metsberg	Jon Tynjala

FAA and Genealogy Book Club April 9th Ridgedale Library 1–3pm

The FAA and Genealogy book club is going strong! We are currently on our third book, *The Rabbit Factor* by Antti Tuomainen. *The Rabbit Factor* is a dark comedy thriller about Henri Koskinen, a meticulous insurance actuary whose life is upended when he loses his job and inherits a failing adventure park from his deceased brother, complete with criminal debts and eccentric staff.

If you are interested in joining our book club, contact Louise Morgan, louise.morgan21@gmail.com, or Linda Mell, lmell46@msn.com

International Festival of Minnesota Formally Festival of Nations

April 10–11, 2026

Kisarit will be performing on **April 11th @ 3pm** in the Cafe area.

A beloved cultural tradition will return to Minnesota's capital this spring as the International Festival of Minnesota (IFest-MN), formerly known as Festival of Nations, takes place April 10–11 at Saint Paul RiverCentre.

After a seven-year hiatus, the reimagined festival will feature participation from 67 nations and ethnic communities celebrating Minnesota's cultural diversity and global connections. The event will offer global cuisine, hands-on multicultural activities, artisan goods, and music and dance performances throughout the two-day festival.

Sadly, FAA did not find out about the event until after registration was closed. We have contacted the event planners, and we intend to participate in this event the next time it is held.

Kisarit and **Lauluaika** did get the notice and will be performing on **April 11th** in the Cafe area. **Kisarit** will be performing a 3pm and **Laulaika** will be performing at 4pm. Thank you **Kisarit** and **Lauluaika** for representing Finland at the festival!



Kalevala Recap

By VuoriVene and Diane Pearson

On February 27th, the Finnish American Association (FAA) based in Minneapolis hosted VuoriVene, a Runolaulu, rune singing group. The six singers, led by Karen Ba, presented features of the *Kalevala*, background on the author Elias Lönnrot, and the mythologies in the epic piece of literature. VuoriVene sang excerpts from the *Kalevala*



and shared Finnish and translated text in English. Runolaulu, is an ancient form of Baltic-Finnic oral poetry and music, characterized by a specific four- or five-note range, alliterative, non-rhyming verse, and often, a dialogue

structure, which forms the foundation of the *Kalevala*.

The author of the *Kalevala*, Elias Lönnrot, was a scholar in many fields, a Doctor of Medicine, linguist, professor of Finnish language and literature, musician and poet, just to name a few. Between 1828 and 1845 acting as a physician and folklorist, he organized eleven extensive trips throughout Finland and Russian Karelia. Traveling on foot, skis, and by boat, he documented on paper thousands of verses of oral poetry, myths and folk songs from traditional rune singers. Two versions of the *Kalevala* were published: the *Old Kalevala* in 1835 and the *New Kalevala* in 1849. The latter is the final, more well-known version of the epic.

Karen Ba has led the Karelian and Finnish folk tradition of Runolaulu since 2020. She organizes monthly Zoom sessions which focus on specific chapters of the *Kalevala*. The Zoom sessions have so far included participants from the U.S., Canada, France, Turkey, and Japan, Vietnam and Finnish runo singers as special guests. VuoriVene consists of six people living in Minnesota and Wisconsin who collaborate in leading songs and presenting materials in the Runolaulu sessions. Their mission is to bring this living and unique tradition to the Finnish diaspora and friends of Finnish culture.

VuoriVene welcomes anyone interested in Finnish folklore. Their priority is acceptance and encouragement of all participants, no matter their knowledge of this genre. Singing together with folk text and melodies produces a sense of connection to the tradition and learning from each other. If you are interested but feeling shy, sing to your heart's content and keep your audio on mute!

Contact the group at SuomiSingalong@gmail.com and join our Facebook page Suomi Sing-Along.

LASKIAINEN

FEBRUARY 21 LEBANON HILLS REGIONAL PARK

By Marlene (Hanka) Moreno

I attended the Laskiainen celebration at Lebanon Hills and had also signed up for a group Sauna session. I discovered a great little Sauna (I'm sure I'm not the first)! The surroundings were a perfect setting for the compact building close to the lake. As our group entered the changing quarters, I realized I had made the right decision to wear a bathing suit under my outer clothing! The room is meant for a quick change in a small area, but we weren't there to lounge anyway - strictly in and out! So, out to the sauna we went, hurrying on a short path where you could smell that familiar wood scent. Inside, the immediate feeling of heat. I was sold! I said heat and it was hot! Our group took a break to cool off in the very cold air. Two brave gals laid in the snow, but I was very satisfied standing in the cool breeze with the others. Our session ended too soon, but a return reservation is on my agenda.

If you haven't tried it, I hope you'll make a date to visit Lebanon Hills to experience that Finnish sauna. Make it soon!

I can't say it was a coincidence, but I happened to go to two more saunas in a short time. The day after Laskiainen, friends and I went to Upper Michigan to ski, and the lodge had a sauna that we used three days in a row! Not great, but adequate. Not Lebanon Hills!

Two weeks later we were at Lutsen, MN to ski and our condo's spa turned out to have a better sauna than the previous one in Michigan. I had no idea that I would be experiencing any comparisons so soon after Lebanon Hills. As a matter of fact, I don't have the pleasure of taking saunas very often. There are favorites, but I do appreciate the many different types we have to choose from.

Now, when you make that sauna reservation at Lebanon Hills, mark your calendar to include another date for the (real possibility) 2027 Laskiainen at Lebanon Hills.



FACA Membership

A one-year membership for \$25 provides you with eight issues of 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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Finnish American Association

9408 Erin Court

Woodbury, MN 55129

Finnish American Cultural Activities is dedicated to exploring and preserving Finnish and American heritage.

<https://www.faatc.org/>

Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 9 FAA/FGGMN Book Club 1–3 pm Ridgedale Library. *The Rabbit Factor* by Antti Tuomainen (The funniest writer in Europe)

April 18 Beyond the Stacks: Helsinki's Oodi Library—Zoom Event—FAA brings the library to your living room to visit Oodi's public spaces, tech areas, and equipment, and "book heaven," where you can sit and read a book under real trees. We are expecting some voices from Finland and a surprise or two from FAA folks on the scene! Watch for more information and Zoom details: Saturday, April 18, 11:00 a.m. CDT (7 p.m. Finland). (Saturday, so we can tie into Finland real time)

April 26 Cantata Vespers—Sunday 4:00 p.m. Christ Church Lutheran The Elm Ensemble leads us in a service of evening prayer that includes a performance of Cantata 4 on Baroque instruments, as well as Bobby McFerrin's The Twenty-Third Psalm and a lovely choral piece by Finnish composer Leevi Madetoja (sung in Finnish). The event will be about 60 minutes long and is free and open to the public.

May 6 Jay Smith, John Morton—A signer of the Declaration of Independence, 6–8 p.m. Maplewood Library 3025 Southlawn Dr, Maplewood, MN 55109

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Jay's lecture topic could not be more timely or significant.

He argues that few historical figures embody Finlandia Foundation National's mission more profoundly than John Morton—the Finnish-descended signer of the Declaration of Independence whose decisive vote helped secure American independence.

Juhannus

FINNISH MIDSUMMER CELEBRATION

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, June 27 • 1:00 – 4:00pm

Bryant Park Pavilion, Bloomington, MN



Celebrate the Finnish Traditions of Summer Solstice

Lively Music	Strawberries	Kisarit Dancers	Surprises
Friendship	Finnish Coffee	Freshly Made Munkki	Games

Sponsors:

- Finnish American Association-Twin Cities • Finnish American Chamber of Commerce
- Finnish Honorary Consul • Finnish Genealogy Group of MN • Minnesotan Suomi Koulu
- Kisarit - Finnish American Folk Dancers • Lauluaika Finnish Folk Band

Visit [FAATC.ORG](https://www.faatc.org/) for Updates