



FAA Uutiset

Newsletter of the Finnish American Association

Syksy/Autumn 2026

Sept. 17–20, 2026

Finn Fest™ is a four-day celebration of culture, music, art, design, food, language, lectures, and workshops. This year's festival celebrates 250 years of Finnish-American history, offering a glance back in history and insight for the future.

Come experience the ideas that make this corner of the world so admired.

Special discount pricing:
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"ASSOCIATION"
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FinnFest— September 17–20

FinnFest is our FAA–TC September event! What a great event. FAA members can volunteer at FinnFest, and get a free day pass for another day! There are many other volunteering opportunities, or...you can just come and enjoy!

Finn Fun Day—Sunday at ASI.” The 6th annual Finn Fun Day will be at FinnFest this year. Finn Fun Day will be hosted by the Salolampi Foundation, the FAA–TC, and the Finnish Language School of MN aka *Suomikoulu*. While FFD will take a slightly different format this year, our usual outdoor games and playful activities will welcome attendees to move, laugh and celebrate together. We hope to see you at ASI on Sunday, September 20th.

If you would like to volunteer, sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0444ADAF2BA2FCCF8-64610994-finnfest>

Volunteering for a shift will get you a free day pass to use on one of the other days (example: Thursday help, choose a day pass for one of the other days at the end of your shift, plus you can hang out for whatever is happening outside of your shift Thursday)

Volunteers also receive a T-shirt upon checking in for their shift—what a great souvenir!

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President's/Interim Editor's Message

By Louise Morgan

Where did the summer go? It is hard to believe August is already here—summer always flies by far too quickly.

Back in June, I had the wonderful opportunity to reconnect with my family in Finland after 19 years away. My grandmother was one of nine children—her sister alone had 12—and my grandfather was one of six, being the only sibling to immigrate to the US. Needless to say, I have deep roots and many relatives over there! Everyone was remarkably welcoming, and we had a wonderful reunion with my grandmother's side of the family. I even got to experience an authentic savu sauna and take a plunge into the Baltic right at my grandfather's home.

But enough about my travels—the FAA has plenty of exciting updates to share!



Louise and her Finnish relatives

First, we are thrilled to unveil our new logo, which you can read all about in this edition. We are also welcoming four new members to our board. At the same time, I want to express my sincere gratitude to our outgoing board members—Betsey Norgard, Mirja Hanson, and Kendra Kauppi—for their tireless work, especially during the merger of FFTC and FACA. We have navigated a lot of change over the past few years, and their dedication to establishing our new organization has laid a strong foundation for our future. Please join me in thanking them and welcoming our incoming leaders!

Our new board members have hit the ground running as they plan our upcoming 2026–2027 programming year. September is going to look a little different this time around, as our main focus will be supporting FinnFest right here in Minneapolis! We hope to see many of you there.

The final day of FinnFest takes place at the American Swedish Institute (ASI), where FAA board member Katja Zarns is currently planning our FAA sponsored Finn Fun Day for Sunday. I hope to see you all there—whether as an attendee or a volunteer. I have already signed up to volunteer for both FinnFest and Finn Fun Day, and we would love to have you join us!



Guess Who?

Can you guess who these Salolampi campers are? Read the next issue of the *Uutiset* to find out!

Board News

By Katja Tiainen Zarns

It has been a few years now since FACA and FinnSource started communicating regarding a possible merger. Members of each organization voted 'yes' to the merger, a transition board was set in place with Louise Morgan serving as the board president, Betsey Norgard as the Vice President, Kathy Jorgensen as the treasurer, Mirja Hanson as the secretary, Kendra Kauppi as the support chair, and myself serving as communications manager. The merger was a lengthy one, It included a town hall where members met in small groups to consider a new name for the organization, and later culminating in a vote. The newly merged organization became the Finnish American Association–Twin Cities.

On the merger board, Mirja Hanson brought immense talent and expertise as a consultant. Mirja's organizational skills, along with color-coded notes and detailed booklets, were tremendously helpful. Betsey Norgard with her decades-long presence and organizational memory in the Finnish American community on both local and national level assisted our consideration of mission and vision for the future organization. The transition board finished its task earlier this year, and we would like to extend our gratitude again—*kiitos paljon*, Mirja and Betsey, for all your hard and generous work during this immense process!

We are so grateful that in late spring and early summer we had a few members commit to serving on the FAA board. The incoming board members were approved via an online vote. Here is an introduction of the new board and our reasons for serving:

Louise Morgan, President: "I am passionate about preserving our Finnish heritage here in Minnesota. I am very excited that our Finnish Community has been collaborating more over the last few years. We definitely are stronger together!"

Katja Tiainen Zarns, Vice President: "Serving on the FACA, now FAA, board through the pandemic and merger has been wonderfully stretching. I love participating in and sharing about my own and our collective Finnish culture and heritage."

Kathy Jorgensen, Treasurer: "Since joining FACA in 1997, being on the board 2017–2020 and now again since 2024 as treasurer, I continue to appreciate and enjoy meeting and working with people with a broad array of backgrounds, talents, and passions for keeping our Finnish heritage alive and thriving."

Marissa Callender, Secretary: "I am truly honored to be a member of FAA and look forward to deepening my connection to the Finnish American community."

Molly Tynjala King, Young Adult Representative: "I am eager to support FAA and its community-building events over the next year! We have so much to gain from showing up and connecting with each other. I hope that my role on



the board will help create opportunities that allow for us to gather, share, and grow together."

Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner, Support Chair: "I look forward to various interesting and fun events and activities and being part of the Finnish and Finnish American community."

Liisa Lê, Support Chair: "I joined the board to deepen my roots in Minnesota's Finnish community and explore my own cultural behaviors through shared experiences. I hope to channel my energy into activating our local Finnish artists, building a more connected and creatively inspired network for all of us."

Together with you, the members, we are excited and energized and look forward to what is next for our organization—we hope you are feeling the same and will help grow the FAA serving in the many volunteer opportunities available! See you around this fall!

Welcome New Members

Rose Aneriasniemi
William Besonen
David Gibbens
MaryAnn Scott
Stephen Westmark

Big News! A New Face for FAA-TC!



Thank you to all who contributed to creating our new FAA Logo! The process began last fall with an open call to help shape our logo, followed by member polling to rank, give comments and constructive suggestions on the many thoughtful and creative submissions, which included complete designs,

concepts, and advice about essential components. All comments, and rankings were carefully considered by the board to ensure the selected logo best communicates the mission and values of FAA.

The chosen design was created by a younger person, then refined by a graphic designer for our final beautiful new visual identity. Our new logo reflects our beloved state of Minnesota and our strong and living connection to Finland.

We are proud of this unique, made-for-us logo. It is another important step in making our mark on our local community and beyond, while living out FAA's mission: We seek to elevate the visibility of contemporary Finland and celebrate our Finnish culture, heritage, and life in Minnesota. We look forward to continuing to build and enhance the Finnish American Association with each of you!

The FAA-TC Board

Hello from Helsinki!

By Elaine Kumpula

It's official! My husband and I moved to Helsinki in May. How did this happen? I qualified for Finland's remigration program based on my maternal grandparents who immigrated to the United States from Finland in 1913. My husband, who has no Finnish heritage, was able to come with me as my spouse as long as I could show that I could financially support him while we live here.

The journey from thinking about moving to Finland until we moved was not short. It took some time to consider and receive advice concerning the implications of such a move, gather documents proving that at least one grandparent was Finnish when they emigrated from Finland, and demonstrate that I was, indeed, their grandchild. Official copies, some of which required an apostille, (a step beyond a certified copy in the U.S., of birth certificates, marriage certificates and other materials), dependent on any one individual's situation, are needed. However, once one has the appropriate documents and completes the necessary forms, that process is relatively straightforward. The applications are filed electronically and, in our case, appeared at Finland's Consulate General in New York for an interview and the capturing of biometrics.

The Finnish Immigration Service normally takes some time to process the application. One should not expect an immediate

answer. In our case, we waited 8 months for a decision. This is not unusual. It can take a bit less or more time depending on work load at the Immigration Service and potential complications on any individual case. As a fully retired U.S. immigration lawyer, I am comfortable stating that this variable timing is typical for the type of application we filed.

With a positive decision from Finland, we are now here in Helsinki and loving it! The summer weather has been wonderful this year. Have we had any challenges? Of course. That is normal when one moves to another country. Stay tuned for updates on the challenges and triumphs we experience following this life-changing retirement adventure!

Oodi Library—Helsinki

By Molly Tynjala King

Finland is highly regarded as one of the happiest, most educated democracies in the world. It's also home to one of the world's best libraries. Oodi, Helsinki's Central Library, is an emblem of Finland's national commitment to and appreciation of literacy and culture.

In a virtual program on April 18, Betsey Norgard and I shared some of Oodi's history, including details regarding the thoughtful, inclusive planning process that brought the library to life. For example, the library's creators facilitated public participation in the library's design process through a citizen project (called Tree of Dreams) and architectural and naming competitions. The result of the collaboration is a library that both reflects and supports the community for which it was made.

Betsey and I walked viewers through each of the library's three floors, an inviting and active ground floor, a "maker-space" on the second floor, and a "book heaven" on the third floor. This section of the program was supplemented by a video of Oodi, which was created by William Besonen during his recent time in Finland.

The topic of the program was a rather personal one for me. I'm a senior editor and fact-checker at a local magazine, and I have been an avid reader for most of my life. I'm often distressed by the pervasive idea that reading is in decline.

Yet Oodi's success is a testament to the enduring value of libraries and literacy in the modern world. Since it opened in 2018, Oodi has been recognized as Public Library of the Year (in 2019) and as a Project of Influence (in 2020). And in 2024, the library welcomed its 10 millionth visitor—suggesting that the appetite for quality book and learning spaces is alive and well.

Learn more about Oodi by watching the program at FAA-TC's website: <https://www.faatc.org/other-videos/>.

A Forgotten Founding Father Comes to Life

By Liisa Lê

On May 14th, the Ramsey County Library in Maplewood hosted a fantastic event for local Finns, courtesy of the Finnish American Association. Attendees settled in with pulla, coffee, and plenty of treats to hear Jay Smith, a 2026 Lecturer of the Year honoree (awarded by the Finlandia Foundation National) deliver a spellbinding talk.



His lecture, “An Introduction to John Morton: America’s Finnish Founding Father,” brought a true historical ghost back from the shadows. Why does Morton matter? Because as a Pennsylvania delegate in 1776, he cast the deciding vote that pushed his colony to say “yes” to independence. Without his vote, the Declaration might never have been signed.

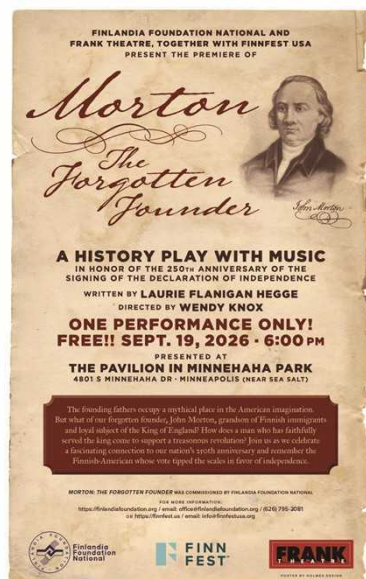
In 1777, John Morton sadly died, never to see the foundational years of the United States of America. His life records either disappeared or were forgotten in history. Despite scarce records, Smith masterfully traced Morton’s Finnish roots all the way back to the New Sweden colony of the 1650s and showed how this nearly forgotten immigrant’s descendant helped seal America’s fate with his signature. It was history made thrilling, just as vivid as if we were in that room ourselves.

Curious yet? You can watch the full lecture on YouTube right now. (Yes, there’s the occasional ad to skip, but trust me, it’s a treasure trove and absolutely worth every second.)

▶ Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BU7ZVx1UgO8>

To learn more about Jay E. Smith III and see other great historical documentations from West Chester, Pennsylvania:

▶ <https://www.johnsmithiii.com/portfolio>



Obituaries

Helen (Pukkinen Ylonen Maria “Helen” (Pulkkinen), Ylonen age 89, of Lake Elmo, Minnesota, passed away peacefully on July 19, 2026 surrounded by family.

Helen was born in Finland on April 4, 1937, while her parents, Lauri and Emmi Pulkkinen, were on an extended vacation from their jobs in New York City. Helen stayed with her grandparents and Aunt Aino in Rääkkylä, Finland when her parents needed to return to their jobs in America. When WWII broke out children in Finland were encouraged to reunite with family overseas. Helen joined her parents in New York City in the spring of 1940.

Oiva and Helen Ylonen inspired the Kisarit Dancers start at an early Juhannus celebration at Lake Phalen.

Ruth Ann Rintola-Swanson Our dear Ruth Ann “Terttu” Rintala-Swanson passed away on Saturday, May 30, 2026. Ruth Ann was a longtime member of FACA, including a winner of the Sauna Bucket in 1995. She worked at the FACA Festival of Nations Finnish Cafe and Cultural Booth several years and even chaired the Cafe.

Her Finnish heritage fully embodied her invincible *sisu* spirit. Ruthann was active with Finnish organizations including the Finnish American Association, Salolampi Concordia, and Ladies of Kaleva Lodge #15.

Norma Ruth Mary Gilbertson (nee Kyro) September 24, 1930–April 3, 2026 Norma was born 9/24/1930 to Otto and Marie Kyro. She grew up in the Bryn Mahr neighborhood in North Mpls. She spoke Finnish until Kindergarten. They were members of the Suomi Synod/Finnish American Church and Morgan Avenue Lutheran. She graduated from North High in North Mpls., a National Honor Society Student. She then went onto nursing school and met Gerald Gilbertson. They were married in 1949. She was active with her family, neighbors and Cross of Glory Lutheran Church. She wanted to help and support everyone.

Rev. John Bispala April 11, 1938–May 26, 2026 Rev. John Bispala leaves behind a legacy of faith, music, scholarship, service, and love. His life touched parishioners, musicians, friends, and family members across generations and continents. Though he will be deeply missed, his songs, teachings, faith, and example continue to resonate in the hearts of all who knew him.

Book Club

Meetings are held about once a month. If you are interested in participating in the book club, contact Louise Morgan at louise.morgan21@gmail.com or Linda Mell at lmell46@msn.com.



Sauna Bucket Awards

By Katja Tiainen Zarns

One of many traditions we celebrate is the Sauna Bucket Award. As with similar recognitions, the recipient of our award is selected via member nominations, and honors a member or members for outstanding service to our organization and/or the Finnish American community in the Twin Cities. This year's FAA Sauna Bucket Award was



granted to long time members Heidi and Harvey Barberg! There is a great chance that you have met the pair in person as the list of their presence and involvement with the Twin Cities, Cokato, and Minnesota Finns, and beyond is both exhaustive and impressive.

Typically, the award is given as a surprise at one of FAA's Spring programs. Yet, since the last events were

co-hosted with other organizations, and since the Barbergs live quite a distance away from the Twin Cities, the FAA board chose to orchestrate a road trip. With the help Mike Fredrikson, the plan was to arrive under the guise of a tour of the Finnish Pioneer Park, also known as Temperance Corner. Harvey met us with a big, welcoming smile, instantaneously stepping into the role of a tour guide. Inside the Temperance Hall, Heidi and a friend met us with warmth while setting up a table of goodies, the board came hailing with some added baked items and coffee to the spread. After a lovely time socializing and learning about the history of the building, Mike revealed the true reason for the visit—the brewing surprise finally revealed that Heidi and Harvey were the Sauna Bucket Award recipients! The event and fellowship therein all happened on a glorious Finnish-inspired summer day—the sky was bright blue with white cotton clouds, the fields and trees a vivid hue of early summer green, the sun was warm, yet a coolish wind beckoned a jacket. Perfection.

Did you know...

there's a Finnish Choir in Twin Cities

By Kirsi Ritosalmi-Kisner

The Suomi Finland (SF) 100 Choir was founded with the goal of honoring the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence in 1917. Since then, the choir has had many successful performances both locally and in wider MN.

Among past highlights are performances at the Orchestra Hall, including a flash mob of Sibelius' Finlandia at Osmo Vänskä's farewell in 2022, recording and touring with Ameriikan Poijat, and several performances at Finnish Christmas carol Kauneimmat joululaulut event.

Anybody is welcome to join the choir, as there is no audition. A majority of the singers are of Finnish ancestry, but the choir is open to everybody. Singers are a good mixture of seasoned SF 100 veterans and more recently joined members. Songs are performed in Finnish, Swedish (the second official language in Finland) and English. Director Eeva Savolainen, graduate of Sibelius Academy, prepares practice tracks for each song so singers can start learning parts at home. Usually, in-person rehearsals begin about six weeks before performances.

This fall, the SF100 Choir celebrates its 10th anniversary with several activities. First, the choir will bring Finnish tunes to residents of an assisted living facility in the Twin Cities area. Then, three performances are scheduled during FinnFest, September 17–20: the choir will be part of the opening ceremony on Thursday, and there will be a singalong gathering on Saturday at the downtown Minneapolis Hilton. The festival's last event for the choir will be Sunday morning service at the Christ Church Lutheran.

The choir's activities in September culminate with the choir's 10th anniversary gala at Norway House on September 26th. The party starts at 4:30 pm, and there will be a concert, Nordic-themed appetizers, silent auction, and cash bar. This celebration of Finnish song and joy is open to everybody, with a suggested donation of \$20 / person. The busy fall wraps up on October 11th, when the SF100 Choir joins the Mindekirken Choir as part of the annual Leif Eriksson Festival. You can find the choir on Facebook under Suomi Finland 100 Chorus.

Nordic Music Festival

By Jaana Tuttila

The Nordic Music Festival is a fun event nestled in a sweet community park in Victoria, MN. This September 12th the Lions Park in Victoria will be transformed into a small Nordic village.



Music and dance groups representing Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland will be performing on the stages from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lauluaika and Kisarit Dancers will be there representing Finland! Cottage crafters will be selling their inventory in tents and there will be a silent auction in the main hall as well as nordic sweets including pulla and kringla, for sale with coffee. Other food vendors will be on site for hungry visitors, and the Viking Village will be tucked in one area of the festival to view viking life and sport. Often the day's schedule has included a Lutefisk Toss with small trophies for the winners. Many of those attending will be in their folk costumes enjoying the day of celebrating Nordic music and dance. So come, bring your family and enjoy this day with music in the air and friends at the table. And it's free! See you then.

Juhannus 2026!

By Diane Pearson

On Saturday, June 27, six Twin Cities-based Finnish organizations, hosted the 2nd annual Juhannus, aka Midsummer celebration, at Bryant Park in Bloomington. FAA-TC members on the planning committee included Louise Morgan, Kathy Jorgensen, and Diane Pearson.

After last year's heat index of 110°, we were happy for 80° and a beautiful sunny afternoon. We had an increase in attendance from last year. Several people mentioned, it felt like a family reunion with familiar faces and friendly newcomers. Guests were greeted by Finnish flags, maps, and a handcrafted 5' faux red, yellow, and orange *kokko*, aka bonfire.



Ralph Tuttila, with Lauluaika, organized the music for the celebration. Music started with Dennis Halme, and the Finnish and Finnish-American folk music played by Finn Hall. Then, Kyle Gray Young sang and Lauluaika played songs from Finn Hall's playbook thru the afternoon.

We had delicious food. Daina Lautinen Rosen woke up early in her Northern Minnesota farmhouse and made delicious *Munkki*, aka cardamom doughnuts. She then drove 140 miles to deliver them fresh to the event. Eli Ribar made fresh *lettu*, a thin pancake, topped with jam and whipped cream. Finally, we had a British invasion, a Cornish pasty food truck. The food truck worker said, he's never had so many people order traditional pasties and use so much ketchup!

Attendees had the opportunity to bid on 14 Finnish-themed baskets in the silent auction. Baskets were stuffed with Finnish coffee, mustard, chocolate, licorice, 20+ hours of family research, books, customized handmade mittens, knives, and more treasures. The auction was a fundraiser to cover event expenses and will also provide seed money for next year. Mark your calendar for next year's Juhannus Celebration on Saturday, June 19, 2027. Details will be coming out as we get closer to the date.



FACA Membership

A one-year membership for \$25 provides you four issues of this newsletter, plus other benefits. To join or renew, complete this form and mail with your check to FAA, Kathy Jorgensen, 9408 Erin Court, Woodbury, MN 55129, or pay by credit card online at <https://www.faatc.org/join-us2/> (Check your email message for a membership expiration warning or your mailing label for your expiration date.)

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Finnish American Association
9408 Erin Court
Woodbury, MN 55129

*We seek to elevate the visibility of contemporary
Finland and celebrate our Finnish culture,
heritage, and life in Minnesota.*

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 1 LauuluAika at Dancing in the Park at Harriet Island, 6:00-8:00 pm, includes dance lesson. Harriet Island, Wiginton Pavilion, 49 Harriet Island Rd, St. Paul. Part of the Tapestry Folkdance Center, Dancing in the Park summer series.

Thursday, September 3 Social hour for young adults (mid-20s to mid-30s) in the Twin Cities who have Nordic roots or connections. Gather at the courtyard of the American Swedish Institute for an evening of music, Nordic lawn games, and great conversation in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. RSVP here: <https://asimn.org/events-calendar/lille-fredag-happy-hour-3/>

Saturday, September 12 Nordic Music Festival in Victoria, Minn. from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. A wide variety of Nordic dancers, singers, instrumentalists and bands, along with arts and crafts vendors.

Thursday, September 17 Sunday, September 20 FinnFest 2026, featuring many Finnish artists, LauuluAika, SF100 Choir. Downtown Minneapolis Hilton <https://finnfest.us>

Saturday, September 26 SF100 Choir 10th Anniversary, Norway House, 4:30 pm–7 pm. Social hour, concert, food, silent auction.

October 1, Lille Fredag Happy Hour Social hour for Twin Cities young adults (mid-20s to mid-30s) with Nordic roots or connections in American Swedish Institute's courtyard for an evening of music, Nordic lawn games, and great

conversation in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. RSVP here: <https://asimn.org/events-calendar/lille-fredag-happy-hour-4/>

October 11, 11:00-12:00 Pastor Lloyd Tryland preaching; The Suomi Finland 100 Chorus, conducted by Eeva Savolainen, and the Mindekirken Choir. 924 East 21st Street, Minneapolis.

Friday, October 16, 6:30 pm William Besonen and Isaac "Arvo" Hanson will present their film documentary *Finland, Minnesota*, which captures the spirit of a small northern town as it celebrates the 50th Anniversary of St. Urho's Day. The film explores the community's deep Finnish roots, its historic landmarks, and the enduring connections that define life in this uniquely named place.

Saturday, October 17, 12:30 p.m. Himmeli craft workshop taught by Allison Aune at Christ Church Lutheran. Join FAA members in learning how to build himmelis, Finnish straw mobiles traditionally used as home decoration.

Saturday, November 14 time and location TBD
Cooking and baking workshop, featuring Karelian pies, or karjalanpiirakka. Instructor is Lily Obeda.

Friday, November 13 or 21, 6:30 p.m. FAA monthly meeting, location TBD. Program will include FAA's Salolampi scholarship campers and much more!

Saturday, December 5 Kauneimmat Joululaulut: St. Michael's Roseville: Watch for a flyer with more information.