

# Askeladden News



ASKELOADDEN  
LODGE 5-610

May 2026

**President:** Jeff Andert  
(269) 967-1311  
jnandert@gmail.com

**Vice President:** Bob Swanson  
(269) 986-4776  
robertswanson646@gmail.com

**Membership Secretary:**  
Joan O'Bryan  
(269) 383-6802  
joan.obryan@wmich.edu

**Secretary:** Karen Hare  
(269) 568-9797  
astutekaren@gmail.com

**Newsletter Editor:**  
Karn Erlandson  
(269) 579-0619  
karnerlandson@yahoo.com

**Treasurer:** Curtis Cleveland  
(269) 381-4531  
cacleve82@att.net

**Cultural Director:**  
Elizabeth Kraatz  
(573) 999-1113  
KraatzE@gmail.com

**Affiliation:**  
Sons of Norway International  
<https://www.sofn.com>  
District 5  
<https://sonsofnorway5.com>

**Lodge Contact Info:**  
Askeladden.Lodge@gmail.com  
(269) 350-3330  
Kalamazoo, MI

**Financial Benefits Counselor**  
Greg Ragan  
(815) 623-8817  
gragan51@gmail.com  
[www.raganfinancialgroup.com](http://www.raganfinancialgroup.com)

## Next event

**Sunday May 17, 2026, 2 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church**  
*Syttende Mai Celebration*

Celebrate 17.Mai with us at **2 p.m. on Sunday, May 17** at Trinity Lutheran Church (504 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo). We will celebrate like the Norwegians do! Hot dogs with all the traditional Nordic fixings will be provided, as well as ice cream. Bring a picnic-y dish to contribute to our potluck and wear your red, blue, and white in honor of Syttende Mai!

We'll have our traditional sparkling cider toast to the Norwegian King, sing patriotic songs, and have a little parade to include the kids (or kids at heart). Did you know that both the Norwegian flag and national anthem have changed over time? In our cultural program we'll learn a little more.



## May Reminders



- The **monthly Marshall Norsk language learning group** meets Wednesday 5/13 at 10:30 a.m. at Marshall District Library (124 W. Green St, Marshall, MI). Zoom link also available.
- The **online-only Norsk language learning group** (with Nordkap Lodge) meets 5/14 and 5/21 at 7:30 p.m. by Zoom.
- Bring **monetary and/or food donations** to our 5/17 event for our semi-annual food pantry drive. See inside for details.



A Congenial Society of Sons, Daughters, and Friends of Norway

[www.norwayinkalamazoo.com](http://www.norwayinkalamazoo.com)



[facebook.com/AskeladdenLodge](https://facebook.com/AskeladdenLodge)

---

## Sons of Norway Enters into Agreement to Join BetterLife

Includes excerpt from May 5, 2026 press release

Sons of Norway International had an all-member Zoom call on 5/5 at 7:00 p.m. EDT to make a **big announcement** about their insurance business. Below is an excerpt from their press release:

“Today, Sons of Norway announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to join BetterLife, a member-founded, member-owned organization. The transaction is subject to regulatory approval and customary closing conditions...

...Under the agreement, Sons of Norway will retain its name, brand, lodges, district structure, foundation, cultural programs, and publications—including Viking magazine. Members will continue participating in the same local Sons of Norway traditions that

define the organization, and the Sons of Norway Foundation will continue to support members and celebrate Norwegian heritage and culture.

...Following completion of the transaction, Sons of Norway members are also expected to gain access to additional financial products and enhanced member benefits offered by BetterLife, while continuing to enjoy the cultural programs and local experiences that define Sons of Norway membership.”

Read the full press release [here](#).

For more information, also view [this video](#)

---

## May Food Drive & Food Bank Campaign

Curtis Cleveland, Treasurer

Lodge members are asked to bring a grocery bag of nonperishable food on 5/17 for Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes food pantry.

Members are also asked to donate by cash or check to one of the three food banks that serve Southwest Michigan:

- Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes (serves all of Kalamazoo County)
- South Michigan Food Bank (serves Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and 6 other counties)
- Feeding America: West Michigan (serves Van Buren, Allegan, Kent, and 37 other counties)

Askeladden Lodge has been conducting the food bank campaigns twice a year since 2025. At the 2025 Syttende Mai Celebration, lodge members donated \$310 to the three food banks and 41 pounds of nonperishable food to the Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes.

Gifts to these food banks are tax deductible. Thanks to all members who participate in this important community service.

---

## Apr. 12th Event Recap- *Allt för Sverige* watch party

Joan O'Bryan, Membership Secretary

As happens when Easter falls at the beginning of April, we joined forces with Vasa Swedish Lodge for our cultural program. Vasa aired 2 episodes of “All for Sweden” as we enjoyed finger foods during the showing. Local Kalamazoo contestant Michaeline Magnusson Martin, who traveled to Sweden to participate in the show, discussed her experiences with us and answered our questions. Our thanks to Vasa for planning and presenting this fun and successful event!

*April 12, 2026, Askeladden member attendance: Diane Andert, Jeff Andert, Curtis Cleveland, Karn Erlandson, Joyce Hare, Karen Hare, Holly Jensen, Teri Koretsky, Elizabeth Kraatz, Joan O'Bryan, Kris Spence, Laurie Swanson, Robert Swanson, Gail Thompson-Hadley, Astrid Willis and guest Lisa Reed*

Please contact Membership Secretary Joan O'Bryan with any attendance corrections.



# 2025 Volunteer Service Hours Report

Karen Hare, Secretary

2025 saw increases in Volunteer Service Hours, due in part to a change in reporting hours' structure. Under the new structure, members are credited 5 hours for each Lodge meeting they participate in. As the Lodge traditionally underrepresents its service hours, this was a more accurate reflection of time and effort manifested in generating a viable and enjoyable monthly Lodge experience.

Total Service Hours for 2025 were **Community: 872 hrs** and **Fraternal: 1,282 hrs.**

The Lodge surpassed its previous years' hours significantly, due to the following events:

1. *The Uprooting* play;
2. Margery Seldon's presentation at the Kalamazoo Ladies Library Association;
3. The Norwegian language classes held; and
4. The number of Board meetings held.

Thank you to everyone who participated and generated their service hours! Tusen takk!

## Greetings and Thanks from Margrethe Hoff

On April 16, 2026, the Lodge received a letter from Margrethe Hoff, the author of the book "Norway Meets America," who spoke at our lodge meeting in February. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

"Dear Friends,

James & I wanted to thank you again for a lovely visit & meal at your lodge: we felt such a kindred spirit with you all. And the Kringle from Joan...oh My!

We are shortly on our way to follow my father's footsteps on the 1st part of his escape to Sweden & have connected with folks from Ålen who will help us along to the farm...then to Kjøligruber...a journalist asked us about this & what fun! I've also written a song "Flukten" about Dad's journey, looking forward, looking back. It will be on Spotify as of April 21.

Do you meet in July? We will be out your way then. Someday we will reconnect, I am sure.

Kind regards, Margrethe Hoff and James"



## Mai Kalender

- 5/1 *Arbeidernes Dag* - Labor Day (Norway)
- 5/8 *Frigjøringsdagen* - V-E Liberation Day, 1945
- 5/10 Mother's Day (U.S. & Canada)
- 5/13 Marshall Norsk language group, 10:30 a.m.**  
(Marshall District Library)
- 5/14 Nordkap Zoom Norsk language group, 7:30 p.m.**
- 5/17 Syttende Mai - Constitution Day (Norway)
- 5/17 Askeladden Lodge 17.Mai Celebration, 2 p.m.**
- 5/19 Victoria Day (Canada)
- 5/21 Nordkap Zoom Norsk language group, 7:30 p.m.**
- 5/25 Memorial Day (U.S.)
- 6/3 Last day to submit June/July newsletter articles

## Mai Birthdays

Gratulerer med dagen til:

Jeff Andert	Penelope Erickson
Josephina Croce	Harper Fugett
Elliott DeWitt	Alice Kraatz
Liam DeWitt	Curt Osborn
Augie Erickson	Kris Spence



## Norske ord

Jeg elsker et barnetog ("Yie ELSker et BARNehtohg") = I love a children's parade!

Feir med en piknik ("FAYear meh en peakneak") = Celebrate with a picnic.

Spis pølser og iskrem ("Spees PUHLSair oh EESkrem") = Eat hot dogs and ice cream.



The mission of Sons of Norway is to promote and to preserve the heritage and culture of Norway, to celebrate our relationship with other Nordic Countries, and to provide quality insurance and financial products to our members.



**SONS of  
NORWAY**

---

*Askeladden Lodge 5-610*

507 Clinton Ave

Kalamazoo, MI 49001

### **Video of “Arctic Artistry” program available online**

January’s cultural program exploring the work of artist Elizabeth Philotera Bourne is now available online, due to the patient editing work of Cultural Director Elizabeth Kraatz. Elizabeth Bourne lived for several years on Svalbard, Norway, immersing herself in the High Arctic. Through her photography, painting, and cyanotypes, she captures both its stark beauty and fragility in the face of climate change.

<https://youtu.be/fdbNhmYi8AA?si=VIMkM1P4afV3Mj5L>