

Askeladden News

Jeff Andert



Sunday Sept. 13, 2026, 2 p.m.

**ASKELOADDEN LODGE
5-610**

September 2026

President

Vice President
Bob Swanson

Membership Secretary
Joan O'Bryan

Secretary
Karen Hare

Newsletter Editor
Karn Erlandson

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District 5
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www.raganfinancialgroup.com

Next event

(504 S. Westnedge Ave, Kalamazoo) in the lower level fellowship hall. Arrive a little early to help set up if you are able.

What to bring: Bring a dish to pass (extra credit if it's Scandinavian cuisine but all delicious food is welcome), your curiosity about fellow Lodge members' summer adventures, and your questions for Sons of Norway District 5 leaders.

Our potluck meal and social time begins at 2 p.m. We are fortunate to have special guests from our District 5 leadership visiting us. Cheryl Wille-Schlesser is D5 At-large Director (and past D5 President) and comes to us from Vennelag 5-513 Lodge based in Mt. Horeb, WI. Connie Kross is also a D5 At-large Director based in Norway, Illinois' Cleng Peerson Lodge 5-525. Please see Cheryl's letter on page 2. Cheryl and Connie are resources to share success stories, ideas, and learnings from other Lodges.

Lodge members are requested to stay for a business meeting after the program to discuss our participation in upcoming events such as the Fort Custer Norwegian Foot March on 10/24 (see back page) and the Kalamazoo Holiday Parade on 11/21.

Potluck + District 5 Leadership Meet & Greet

Summer is almost over and that means it's time for Askeladden Lodge monthly potlucks and Lodge programs- join us for food, fun, and fellowship!

When & Where: 2 p.m. Sunday 9/13 at Trinity Lutheran Church

September/ October Reminders

The **online-only Norsk language learning group** with Nordkap Lodge will resume meeting by Zoom on Thurs. 9/24 at 7:30 p.m. If you wish to be considered for the October **Norway Trip drawing**, please contact Membership Secretary Joan O'Bryan by 9/13 (see page 3). Save the date for Sunday afternoon, 10/4, when the Vasa Swedish-American Lodge plans to host their **annual fish boil** at Trinity.

A Congenial Society of Sons, Daughters, and Friends of Norway www.norwayinkalamazoo.com

facebook.com/AskeladdenLodge



A Letter from District 5 Leadership- Visiting September 13

Cheryl Wille-Schlesser, District 5 Director-At-Large

Kjærer Medlemmer (Dear Members),

One of the goals of the District 5 Board is to work with our local lodges in addressing their concerns. The D5 board sees its role as the intermediary between local lodges and the international fraternal board of directors. The directors offer suggestions, and they do not judge. The control of any local lodge remains in the hands of its members. We are happy to partner with you if we can help your lodge in any way.

During the last biennium, past vice president Jim Herman developed a strategy for the board to contact all District 5 lodges. Because Askeladden was not visited during that time, I have made your lodge an early priority for the new biennium.

At our most recent district convention, I spoke to many people who share common threads. The first is the lack of willing members to assume leadership roles. A second issue is attracting new members. The third is how to show appreciation for the committed veteran members already in place.

Two lodges shared ways to garner the public's attention at our recent convention. The Music City Vikings Lodge from Nashville,

TN, organized watch parties during the FIFA soccer tournament. It started with a small gathering at the home of one family, and then grew to a large watch party event at a downtown venue that numbered over seventy-five



We join the people of Norway and all those of Norwegian heritage around the world in mourning the passing of King Harald V on the August 28 after 89 years of life, 35 years of service as King, and almost 58 years of marriage to Queen Sonja.

As Sons of Norway stated in their remembrance, “Like his father and grandfather, King Harald adopted the motto “Alt for Norge” – Everything for Norway. He became a king of the people known for his compassion and sense of humor. He was often called “all of Norway’s grandfather” – hele Norges bestefar.”

participants. The newly installed leadership felt the energy and excitement as people with Nordic heritage came out of the woodwork! They partnered with the venue’s owners and utilized social media to share their passion. The outcome was new members, specifically the age demographic we all seek: younger families.

Cleung Peerson Lodge in Illinois provided live stream classes that became international, as learners logged on from places throughout the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Australia. Cleung Peerson’s plan is to continue using this approach to reach people outside of their immediate geographic area. This lodge is poised to make a comeback, and they are willing to think outside of the box to get the job done.

I am interested in knowing how we might be of service to your lodge, and I appreciate the warm welcome extended to me by several members of Askeladden Lodge. My fellow at large director Connie Kross also plans to attend. We look forward to our visit on September 13, 2026.

Fraternally,

Cheryl

Cheryl Wille-Schlesser

Past D5 President

Current At-Large Director

King Harald was only 3 years old when the royal family was separated and forced to flee the country due to Germany’s WWII invasion. Harald spent the next 5 years with his mother and sisters until the family was reunited and able to return to Norway in 1945.

Harald studied at the Norwegian Military Academy and at Oxford before his 1968 marriage to commoner Sonya Haraldson. Their children were born in 1971 (Princess Märtha Louise) and 1973

(Crown Prince and now King Haakon). When Harald became King in 1991, he was the first Norwegian-born monarch in >600 years.

King Harald was a steadfast presence in times of crisis and tragedy. He was also a modernizing influence on the monarchy and encouraged religious tolerance, support for refugees, and LGBTQ+ rights in a historic 2016 speech. King Harald was a lifelong passionate sailor and represented Norway in the 1964, 1968 and 1972 Summer Olympic games in yachting events.

Harald’s son is now King Haakon VIII. His first, moving address to the Norwegian people can be viewed at:

https://youtu.be/sXC_LjEBR9U?si=GG92E43wvi7bgbQX

(turn on English subtitles for a translation.).

August Event Recap- Ice Cream Social

Joan O’Bryan, Membership Secretary

We had a fantastic turnout in August when 16 Askeladden members and 5 guests gathered for a lovely afternoon at Goguac Lake in Battle Creek for our annual Ice Cream Social. We are so grateful to our hosts, Diane and Jeff Andert, for once again organizing this event and hosting us at their beautiful lakeside home – especially after just returning from representing our Lodge at the District 5 Convention in Wisconsin! It was so nice to get to gather and catch up with our friends. The Anderts’ friendly dogs were wearing their delightful Norwegian flag body suits. The rain waited until the event ended – but it came down quite hard when it hit. The I-94 traffic towards Kalamazoo slowed to 40 mph!

August 2026 Askeladden Member attendance: *Diane Andert, Jeff Andert, Curtis Cleveland, Kaaren DeWitt, Kerry DeWitt, Karn Erlandson, Holly Jensen, Joan O’Bryan, Joanna Phelps, Peter Phelps, Kris Spence, Laurie Swanson, Robert Swanson, and Heritage Members: Finna, Malin, & Rorik Andert*

Guests: Andrea, Hugo, Jason, & Justin Andert, Adele Denison **June 2026 Midsommar attendance:** *Diane & Jeff Andert, Curtis Cleveland, Kaaren & Kerry DeWitt, Karen Hare, Holly Jensen, Elizabeth Kraatz, James Kraatz, Joan O’Bryan, Sandra Santas, Kris Spence, Laurie & Robert Swanson* *Guest: Sue Flurry*

Please contact Membership Secretary Joan O’Bryan with any attendance





corrections.

Norway Trip Drawing Deadline

You are reminded: Under our Lodge's established Norway Trip drawing rules, if you want to be considered for the October 2026 drawing, you must submit your request in writing (email is preferable) to the Membership Secretary by the September meeting. If you would like more information about our annual trip drawing, consider becoming a member of our Lodge, or attend an event to find out more. Members can contact the Membership Secretary for a copy of the current policy.

Joan O'Bryan, Membership Secretary
joan.obryan@wmich.edu or Ask Skeladden.Lodge@gmail.com



September Birthdays
Gratulerer med dagen til:

September Kalender

group, 7:30 p.m. 9/26 Last day to submit Evelyn Iverson Holly Jensen Samuel Lee

Oct. newsletter articles 10/4 Fish Boil with Gwen Meredith Luke O'Bryan

Vasa, ~1 p.m.

Beverly Osborn Elizabeth Sherman Larry Skutnick

g, 2 p.m.

Earnie Best

Birthday

Lucie Darling Kerry DeWitt Elaine Erickson Richard Wesenberg Astrid Willis

juage



**SONS of
NORWAY**

Skeladden Lodge 5-610

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.

507 Clinton Ave
Kalamazoo, MI 49001



Volunteers Needed: Ft. Custer Norwegian Foot March on Saturday 10/24

Hey Lodge Members, and especially BAKERS,

We need YOU! The Lodge Board has agreed to support this year's Fort Custer Norwegian Foot March (NFM).

What does support look like? The NFM has requested bags of cookies to hand out to participants after crossing the finish line. We want to make 250 snack-sized bags with stickers saying "Yay, great march!" & including the Askeladden Sons of Norway logo and website. Willing to bake cookies, pack cookies, or hand out cookies? If so, please sign-up at the September business meeting. **For those wanting to help at the Lodge table, we need to provide your name to Fort Custer in advance, so you must sign-up.** Stay tuned for details from Kris Spence re: logistics for cookie packing and delivery.

The NFM originated in 1915 as a Norwegian Armed Forces military endurance and strength test. Participants had to complete a 30-km (18.6 mile) march carrying a ruck sack that weighed at least 25 lbs within 4.5 hours. The NFM has become an international tradition, especially popular with the U.S. Army as well as civilian hikers. In March 2025, Nathan DeWitt, the son of Lodge members Kaaren and Kerry DeWitt, and Nathan's wife Jamie both completed the very first NFM held at Ft. Custer. The DeWitt's both did extremely well -- and both are planning to participate in this year's event.

The Norwegian Embassy awards badges to those who complete the march in the specified period of time. The NFM held at Ft. Custer is also used to collect donations for the local South Michigan Food Bank and each participant is asked to bring a bag of non-perishable food. The NFM organizers specifically requested cookie assistance from our lodge members.