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Trustee (2025-2027)
Lynn Rasmussen

Trustee (2024-2026)
Karen Trzebiatowski

Vennligfolk Lodge
meets the second
Sunday at 5:00 pm
Sept thru Dec & April-May;
and meets the second Sunday
Jan thru March at 1PM
at St. Paul's
United Methodist Church
600 Wilshire Blvd
Stevens Point, WI



Vennligblad



Friendly Pages for Vennligfolk - Sons of Norway Lodge #5-627 of Central Wisconsin
Serving Stevens Point, Whiting, Plover, Marshfield, and Wisconsin Rapids Areas

Volume 33 Issue 1

DISTRICT 5, ZONE 2

JANUAR OG FEBRUAR 2026

Fra presidenten:



Happy New Year! Before I write about 2026, I have few thoughts about **Vennligfolk** 2025. It was a year of growth as Myrmarken and Elvedal Lodges merged with Vennligfolk Lodge. Our September lodge meeting was a "meet & greet" time where we all had the opportunity to get to know each other. Since then, we have welcomed three more new members - - Alex Ingersoll and Doug & Sue Barsness. A big *Velkommen* to all our new members!

Julefest was such a special "moment in time" for our lodge! *Tusen takk* to everyone who helped with the planning, set-up & clean-up, and food. I do want to mention the Henslers who supply the fresh tree and greenery every year that add that festive Norwegian décor. Also, Tom Johnson who worked "overtime" to make sure everything in the building was set up and cleaned up so nicely. Carl has included many Julefest pictures in this newsletter that you can enjoy seeing.

One important part of our lodge meetings is the fellowship we have while enjoying the tasty refreshments that are always provided by lodge volunteers. With our growing lodge, we are in need of more servers for our refreshments. Three or four volunteers each month works best to provide the amount of food that is served. I will have a sign-up sheet at our January meeting as we are in need of more servers for February, March, April, & May.

There is always a basket out on the refreshment table for "donations" at each meeting. Perhaps you have wondered what that money is used for? In the past, all the money was used for lodge

expenses such as printing the newsletters, postage, and stipends for program presenters who are not members of Vennligfolk Lodge, etc. At our last Officers' Meeting, we discussed using some of that money for the cost of food served at lodge meetings.

We realize with the cost of food these days, it can be expensive to serve. What was "mulled over" was providing a \$25 reimbursement for each server if they request to be reimbursed. I served at the September meeting, and I know that \$25 would not have covered what I spent for the food I prepared and served. But, \$25 would certainly be helpful in cutting the cost.

Your officers would like to know how you feel about this. Please contact any of your Vennligfolk Lodge Officers listed in the column to the left to let us know your thoughts on this matter. Our phone numbers and emails are listed on the front page of each newsletter or catch us at the next meeting!

So, we begin a new year of **Vennligfolk Lodge** meetings and activities, and . . . I begin my 14th year as your *Presidenten*. It is an honor for me to serve such a wonderful group of people! Honestly, I could not do this job without the help of the dedicated people who serve with me. *Tusen takk* to Lois Hagen and Tom Johnson who have served as officers for many years and are now stepping down from their officer duties. You will be missed at our meetings around my dining room table.

Looking forward to seeing you all at our January 11th meeting at **1:00 PM!**

Hilsen, Susan Morton

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Gratulerer med dagen

Congratulations on the day!

Januar

Jerry Schneider 4
 Lynn Rasmussen – 7
 Priscilla J Kellogg - 10
 Lois Hagen – 16
Sons of Norway -16
 Bette Schneider – 17
 Sophia Boudreau - 27
 Susan Morton -31

January						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Februar

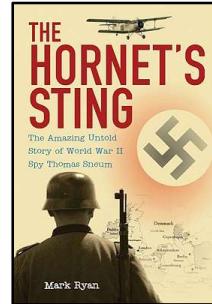
George Kelsey – 3
 Roger Krogstad – 5
 Karen Brinkman - 7
Valentine's Day - 14
 Gene Numsen – 19
 Ruth Stram – 20
 Katie A Boudreau – 24
 Elaine Morgan - 25
 Suzanne Troestler - 25

February						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

What's Happening at Vennligfolk???

Sunday January 11, 1 PM Secret Escape from Denmark

A World War II story about Tommy Sneum, a young Danish resistance fighter with flight experience determined to reach England to join the RAF to fight the Germans. With friend, Kjeld Pedersen, they risk their lives making a 720-mile journey across the North Sea in a two-seat bi-plane with a range of only 372 miles and no place to refuel! Presented by Arno Morton. **Food Servers:** Jen Haas, Lynn Rasmussen, Bea Berg, **Table Display:** Susan Morton **Marshall:** Susan Morton



Saturday February 7 Iola Lutefisk tradition continues. See Page 8 for details!



Sunday February 8, 1 PM - The Story of Al Johnson's

Swedish Restaurant - Lynn and Carl Rasmussen host a video presentation about the history about this iconic Scandinavian themed Door County-Sister Bay restaurant and landmark. **Food Servers:** Jane Gjever, **Table Display:** TBD, **Marshall:** TBD



Sunday March 8, 2026 1 PM Highlights of Boston's

Freedom Trail - The Freedom Trail in Boston has a 2.5-mile-long path painted between key revolutionary and colonial-era sites. Jan Flatoff and husband, Ernie, took a walking tour along the Freedom Trail and visited the sites on it. Jan will share some of the interesting stories they heard about events leading up to the American Revolution and the signing of the declaration of independence 250 years ago! **Food Servers:** Charlotte & Ron Hensler, **TBD Table Display:** Charlotte Hensler **Marshall:** TBD (photo: Paul Revere & the N Church)



Sunday April 12, 2026 Return to Norway, Presenter Julie Faust tells of her 2025 return to Norway and her original host family during nine months of high school. This time she brought her entire family! Julie is the owner of Julie's Norwegian Bakery in Plover.



Saturday May 2 10AM - 5PM: Portage County Cultural Festival

"Food, Fun, & Music from Around the World" Mark your calendars and make plans to participate in this primary lodge fund raiser.



Sunday May 10, 5PM Accomplished Rosemaler, Lisa Anderson and husband Tor describe their travels for two weeks in Norway last summer visiting multiple folk museums and examples of historic rosemaling from Bergen to Gudbrandsdalen. They also visited 11 of the remaining 28 stave medieval wooden churches and experienced the hospitality of family members.

Tuesday June 16, 2026 at 5 PM Norway's first World Cup appearance since 1998 See Page 6 for details. Mark your calendars now!



Midtsommer 2026 - Watch this space for details

Treasurer Judy Pesanka reports: On Dec 3, 2025, prior to Julefest 2025, the lodge had a checkbook balance of **\$5976**.



Vennligfolk Julefest 2025



Music by Aspiring Acapella



Under "Mele Kalikimaka's" spell!

2025 Vennligfolk Julefest
Sunday, December 14, 2025

Velkommen to Vennligfolk Lodge Julefest 2025!

It is an honor to have you join us as we celebrate once again, one of our most cherished Scandinavian heritage traditions.

4:30 PM Social Time with punch, cheese & crackers

5:30 PM Welcome Susan Morton, President

Norwegian Table Prayer by Cindy Kluck

I Jesu navn g r vi til b ord
  sp s, i drikke p  ditt ord.
Deg, Gud til ere, oss til gavn,
S r far vi mat i Jesu navn.

Amen

Julefest Sm rg s bord
6:30 PM

Singing of the U.S., Canadian, & Norwegian Anthems
Accompanied by Louise Lang, Lodge Musician

Installation 2026 Officers
Christmas Music Performance by Aspiring Acapella
Group Christmas Carols
Group Photo



Merlin Hoiness, Lefse Pioneer

Adapted from original by Wanda Hanson, Jan 2025

Editors Note: the following is edited and shared with the kind permission of **Norsland Lefse**. The company is located in Rushford, MN (pop 1876) in southeast Minnesota near the Iowa border.

An innovative first generation Norwegian American named Merlin Hoiness saw a need for a lefse factory and was determined to make it a reality. He would later become known as, "Mr. Lefse!"

Merlin's father Edward had originally come to America from Norway at 16 and ended up settling in Iowa and would open a creamery. When his creamery burned in a fire, the town of Harmony, Minnesota asked Edward to open a creamery there. Edward and his six sons (including Merlin) operated a creamery into the 1950s.

In the 1960s Merlin owned and operated a grocery store in Harmony. Merlin was concerned about the future of Harmony. At the time, there was a lot of consolidation of schools and small farmers were being bought out by much larger farms.

Merlin and his partner Wilbur Peterson began another business, Harmony Enterprises, to provide jobs in Harmony. The company built portable fishing shelters and went on to manufacture pop-up campers in 1963. More than 60 years later that company is still in business today, selling internationally offering a wide variety of manufactured products.

When Merlin retired from Harmony Enterprises in 1975, he went into the grocery business again with his son Jim. At 60, Merlin was managing the Harmony grocery store. Merlin commented in an interview with a local paper, "I feel that there's a demand for lefse, especially now during its peak season. But we have been experimenting with selling it throughout the year (at the Harmony IGA) and find people are interested in having it available at any time. I think Harmony is a good testing spot as we have many folks of Scandinavian backgrounds."

Merlin first began baking lefse at an empty bakery in Harmony in 1981. He planned at first for Norsland Lefse to be a wholesale outlet, selling to local grocery stores with the possibility of expanding to restaurant sales later. Soon,



Merlin Hoiness

however, he was approached by a restaurant to supply 300 rounds of lefse each week for its weekly Scandinavian Night!

At the beginning, his employees were using only six standard lefse grills. Soon he ordered 16 feet of gas grills along with an automatic potato peeler, a sheeter to thin out the dough, a large mixer and a wrapping machine for the finished lefse! Initially his five employees were using 200 pounds of potatoes a day.

Merlin's goal was to increase employment and help the community of Harmony economically. He and his partner Wilbur Peterson, formerly an engineer with the Boeing Company, worked to put together the first heavy duty mechanical machine to make lefse. The machine was prone to breaking down but still increased the lefse production!

Merlin and his wife Zola promoted lefse with demonstrations and samples at schools. The J.C. Penney Co. sponsored them at the Syttende Mai celebration in Minneapolis in 1986. It was there that Merlin's new product, "Uffda Chips." The chips were lefse cut into small pieces, deep fried and salted. Originally, the chips were made to use up lefse that had ripped in production. Soon, the chips became so popular that more lefse needed to be made just to keep up with demand!

Minnesota 1st District U.S. House of Representative Tim Penny (1983-1995) would order lefse to bring to an event held yearly in Washington, D.C. Legislators from all over the country were first introduced to the Minnesota delicacy at these events.

When a larger building became available in Rushford, Minnesota, 30 miles to the northeast, the growing business was moved there. Jim Humble, "kind of a homegrown engineer" according to Hoiness' son, helped Merlin improve the lefse rolling machines and Jim Humble's sons also helped accomplish the improved lefse machine production.

When Merlin Hoiness decided it was time to retire again, Norsland Lefse was purchased by his son Jim's company, a large grocery store serving Rushford, Harmony, and Preston, Minnesota. The lefse business was hard to operate in



Merlin Hoiness, Lefse Pioneer - - - continued

addition to the grocery store, so in a few years it was sold to local businessmen who operated it for a few years and later sold it back to Merlin's son Jim and grandson Brad directly to keep the business in Rushford.

Only a few years later another Rushford local, Mark Johnson purchased the lefse business and operated it for more than 15 years. In 2007, Norsland Lefse was moved to an even larger building and added more Scandinavian merchandise to the store such as rolling pins, lefse grills, foods and novelties.



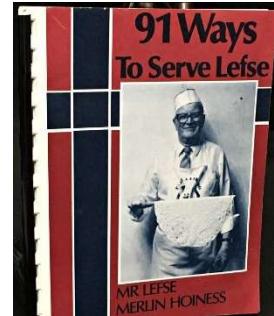
Wife Zola with Merlin Hoiness at Norsland Lefse company

In addition, Johnson set up sales through Amazon.com and began selling their products online. According to former owner Jim Hoiness, Mark shared that "sales shot through the roof!"

The business is now in the hands of Lori and David McDonald and still in Rushford. Jim Hoiness was happy to see Norsland

Lefse purchased locally as he had been concerned that Rushford would lose the business and employment. Norsland Lefse was an accomplishment for Merlin Hoiness; he was successful in establishing a business that provided local employment and preserved a part of the Scandinavian culture of the area. According to Hoiness, his father never made much money, but he loved what he was doing; he enjoyed the ride and was successful in starting two businesses still going strong today.

In addition to the lefse business, Merlin was an author. He wrote "91 Ways to Serve Lefse" which sold over 40,000 prints and is still available from NorslandLefse.com, LefseTime.com, and Amazon. Production initially consisted of printing the pages professionally and then Merlin and his wife would assemble the book at their dining room table.



Merlin had other books too, including "Amish Recipes - Handwritten by Old Order Amish Families of Southeast Minnesota." This 98-page spiral bound book was first published in 1998 and followed by six additional printings! The book remains available in used condition through Amazon, eBay, or by local inter-library loan.

Zola and Merlin Hoiness celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary in May 2011. Merlin Hoiness, died in December 2013 in Harmony, Minnesota. "Mr. Lefse" was 96.

Norsland Lefse supplies the packaged lefse sold each year by Vennligfolk Lodge 5-627 at Cultural Fest. In addition to lefse products, the company website, "www.norslandlefse.com" offers a variety of unique Scandinavian foods, gifts, crafts, and books, plus lefse griddles and lefse utensils.



Lefse Griddle Purchased

After one of our three Lodge lefse griddles failed during Cultural Festival 2025, Lodge officers authorized the Rasmussens to purchase a replacement.

When Black Friday came, Lynn Rasmussen saw that Fleet Farm had discounted their Bethany Aluminum griddles from a regular price of \$159.99 to only \$99.99. She bought one of the two that were left.!

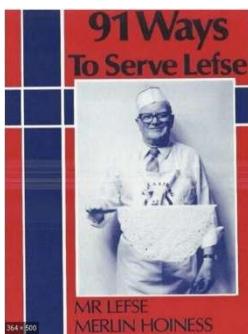
The new griddle was put to work in mid-December to season it, and make certain it worked properly. Both tasks were accomplished. Forty lefse were rolled and grilled in under hour and ready for Christmas!



Last Ball!

The new griddle will be heated and put through the paces again at least once before the hard work needed at Cultural Fest.

91 Ways to Serve Lefse



even making lefse into dessert pizzas and wraps, transforming it from a simple snack into year-round dishes for any meal.

The booklet expands the versatility of lefse, encouraging people with ways to use it as a bread, wrap, or even a base for creative meals and desserts beyond just a simple snack.

Classic & Simple Servings:

- Butter & Sugar
- Cinnamon Sugar: A popular variation of the classic.

Savory Ideas (from the booklet & tradition):

- With Meats: Cured meats, sausage, or even leftover turkey!
- With Dairy/Spreads: Cream cheese, sour cream, or flavored dips.
- With Fish: Smoked salmon is a traditional Norwegian pairing.
- With Veggies: Diced onions, chives, or other fresh herbs.
- Breakfast: Use as a wrap for eggs, bacon, or sausage.

Sweet & Dessert Ideas:

- Fruit Fillings: Jams, preserves, or fresh berries.
- Dessert Wraps: With Nutella, whipped cream, or fruit.
- Pizza Style: As a base for sweet toppings.

The methods are detailed in the spiral-bound booklet, "91 Ways to Serve Lefse," available from suppliers like Lefse Time, Bethany Housewares, and Amazon

Norway Qualifies for World Cup!

Circle the date! Norway's first World Cup appearance since 1998 will be Tuesday June 16, 2026 at 5 PM in Boston's Foxborough Stadium. They will play the winner of play-in games between Bolivia, Suriname, and Iraq in March.

Norway qualified for the 2026 World Cup by winning all eight of its qualifying matches led by their star phenom Erling Haaland. The perfect record secured them the top spot in their group. They clinched their spot with a dominant 4-1 victory over Italy in their final qualifier, ending a 27-year absence from the tournament.



Restauration Returns to Norway!

After a 97-day voyage from Stavanger the Norwegian ship Restauration arrived in New York Harbor on Leif Erikson Day, October 9, 2025. According to Sons of Norway blogger, Jana Velo, the ship's crew was "ready for a break and relieved to be boarding an airplane home!"

Still, the ship needed to be returned to Norway and fortunately there was a yacht delivery service available to do that called Halcyon Yachts. Without the many commemorative stops made along the way to the US, the all-British Halcyon crew made a much quicker return trip in just 49 days after leaving New York on October 21 and returning to Stavanger on December 9.

Awaiting the original crew that flew back to Norway were many "welcome home" festivities as they had achieved their goal recreating the original 1825 crossing of the first organized group of 52 Norwegian emigrants to the U.S. 200 years before in a 54-foot-long sloop.

The above photo was taken by lodge member Patti Rous as the Restauration entered New York Harbor October 14.



Erling Haaland
Photo: Fox Sports

The World Cup will run from June 11-July 19, 2026, spread across three countries and 16 stadiums in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Norway's first match promises to be a great Midsummer watch party opportunity for kindred spirits of all things Scandinavian!

Homemade Cardamom Granola with Almonds

An easy and delicious homemade granola recipe featuring oats, cardamom, and sliced almonds

Ingredients:

4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
 1 cup sliced almonds
 1/2 cup raw pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
 1 tsp. ground cardamom
 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
 1 tsp. fine salt
 1/2 cup canola oil
 1/2 cup real maple syrup
 1 tsp. vanilla extract
 1/2 tsp. almond extract



Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350°F/175°C. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Instructions Continued:

Combine oats, almonds, pepitas, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger and salt in a large bowl. Stir well.

Add oil, syrup and extracts. Stir well to combine. (See comment below)

Transfer granola to prepared pan. Spread evenly. Bake 15 minutes.

Remove granola from the oven and stir with a metal spatula to redistribute on the baking sheet. Bake for an additional 12-15 minutes or until toasty and golden brown.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely on the baking sheet.

Comment by L. Rasmussen: I would mix the salt and spices with the oil, syrup, etc. to help evenly distribute throughout the mixture.

Recipe & Photo source: True North Kitchen

a little in English – Knitting, The Key to Inner Peace

A Swedish study shows that knitting is good for more than just your wardrobe. It offers mental benefits that are of great value.

Traditionally, knitting has been a pleasant and calming activity that makes us think of grandmothers and older aunties. But modern and internationally renowned knitting luminaries like Lærke Bagger have given knitting a funky twist, making it a super popular hobby for all ages.

Easier to handle life

A study from the University of Gothenburg shows that people can use knitting as a form of medicine.

Three positive effects

The results of the analysis revealed three ways in which knitting is beneficial to health. It helps people to calm down and relax. As a hobby, it also gives people an identity as knitters in an informal setting. Finally, knitting helps to structure life and has a beneficial impact on mental health.

Overall, the knitters who participated in the study experienced their hobby as a highly valued activity that had a beneficial effect on their health, both in the short and long term. Some of the knitters had also observed a change in their mental processes, explaining that it was easier for them to think clearly and control their thoughts when they were knitting.

“Occupational therapists’ job is to make people’s lives work. There is clearly a potential in knitting needles and yarn that healthcare should absolutely not underestimate,” they write.

litt på norsk. . . strikketøy nøkkelen til indre ro

En svensk studie viser at strikking er bra for mer enn bare garderoben. Det gir mentale fordeler som er av stor verdi.

Tradisjonelt sett har det vært en hyggelig og rolig aktivitet som leder tankene mot bestemødre og gamle tanter. Men moderne og internasjonalt anerkjente strikkekoryfører som Lærke Bagger har gitt strikking en funky vri, noe som har gjort det til en superpopulær hobby for alle aldre.

Lettere å håndtere livet

En studie fra Göteborgs universitet viser at personer kan bruke strikking som en form for medisin.

Tre positive effekter

Resultatene av analysen avdekket tre måter strikking er helsebringende på. Det hjelper folk til å roe ned og slappe av. Som hobby gir det også folk en identitet som strikker i en uformell setting. Til slutt bidrar strikking til å strukturere tilværelsen og har en gunstig innvirkning på den psykiske helsen.

Alt i alt opplevde strikkerne som deltok i studien at hobbyen deres var en høyt verdsatt aktivitet som hadde en gunstig effekt på helsen, både på kort og lang sikt. Noen av strikkerne hadde også observert en endring i sin mentale prosess, og forklarte at det var lettere for dem å tenke klart og styre tankene når de strikket.

«Ergoterapeuters jobb er å få folks liv til å fungere. Det ligger åpenbart et potensial i strikkekinner og garn som helsevesenet absolutt ikke bør undervurdere», skriver de.



Vennligfolk Lodge #5-627
Carl Rasmussen, Editor
3136 Dans Ave
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Secret Escape from Denmark

by Arno Morton
Sunday January 11, 1 PM
St Pauls UMC Stevens Point, WI

Story of Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant

Sunday February 8, 1 PM
By Lynn & Carl Rasmussen
St Pauls UMC Stevens Point, WI



Time to Tally Your Lodge Hours!

The New Year always brings an assignment for each of us. Yes, members need to tally all the hours you put in for **Vennligfolk Lodge** in 2025. What is needed is count all the hours you provided to **“Fraternal Events.”** Anything you did for the benefit of our lodge is considered a “Fraternal Event” such as: hours spent attending cultural skills classes, committee meetings and officers’ meetings; baking and/or cooking providing refreshments for lodge meetings, Midtsommer, or Julefest; setting-up or clean-up after lodge meetings; going to District 5 weekend events, etc. You do not have to include the hours attending regular lodge meetings. Our lodge secretary counts those hours.

Next, count the hours you spent on **“Community Events.”** Any hours working on or at Cultural Festival would count as a “Community Event.” Finally, you will need to give these totals to Jen Haas. Jen needs to submit these numbers to Sons of Norway headquarters.

Why is this important? These numbers help in keeping Sons of Norway status as a non-profit organization. If you have been keeping track of these numbers, this assignment is easy. If you have not kept track, just give the best estimate. Yes, we do need to do this assignment. If you have questions about this task, Susan Morton can answer them at our January 11th lodge meeting.



each and can be purchased at the Iola Village Clerk's Office up until the event or until sold out, or online at the following address: www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/64th-iola-winter-carnival-lutefisk-supper. Zeffy.com does solicit a donation of \$3.75 per ticket to avoid added processing fees to the sponsoring organization. Costs for children (6-12) are \$15.

Iola Lutefisk Supper Returns February 7

After a brief break, the Iola Lutefisk tradition returns to the **64th Annual Iola Winter Carnival** on **Saturday February 7** at Our Saviors Lutheran Church 395 East Iola Street, Iola. There will be three seatings of 100 each at: **Noon, 2PM, & 4PM**. Some Vennligfolk members are promoting eating as a group at 2PM. If you purchase a ticket for 2PM and want to sit as a Lodge, send an email to Vennligblad@gmail.com and tell how many are coming? We will try to get that arranged! Tickets cost \$22