

Sons of Norway District 5 - Friendly Fifth Friday News
August 14, 2026
A District Weekly Newsletter to Keep Us Up to Date!

Wagons Forward, The 57th Biennial Convention of the Sons of Norway District 5

Cheryl Wille-Schlesser, Past President

On behalf of the 2024-2026 District 5 Board of Directors, I would like to thank the eighty-two delegates and their families for making their attendance possible at this year's convention. We respect and require the assistance of our membership in addressing the district's business.

To the many individuals who chaired or constituted an advisory committee prior to the convention, thank you! I know this service placed one more responsibility on your plate, but using technology has made committee work easier, allowing for advanced meetings prior to the convention. It was exciting to see numerous younger lodge leaders step into chair positions and serve admirably.

I have had a busy four years trying to chart the Fifth District's course through some rough seas which provided me with many opportunities for learning. I would like to thank the Executive Committee members: Darlene Arneson, Jim Herman, Connie Kross, and Corey Olson for their guidance and expertise.

The additional members of the board willingly accepted their roles and fulfilled their duties to the best of their ability. Some individuals, when asked, wore multiple hats, changed positions, and served in an unrivaled capacity. We were a cohesive team and accomplished much.

It was great to have representation from the Sons of Norway International office in Minneapolis. Connie O'Brien and Amy Tuchenhausen led the charge. Many of our delegates had never met the support staff that often work closely with their lodge's concerns, Jana Velo and Kirsten Lehman.

Words from Chris Campbell, CEO and Chairman of the Board at *BetterLife*, provided a sense of relief to our members who own benefit products. Any current Sons of Norway policies are in effect and secure.

The newly created partnership provides our members with many more options in safeguarding the future of their loved ones. *BetterLife* is authorized to conduct business in thirty-seven states. Agents for *BetterLife* may be contacting you with further investment information. Know that you are in control of your personal information and can have it removed from future marketing.

Lodges who wish to invite a salesperson to a meeting should contact the Chief Distribution Officer, Dudley Simmons, for further assistance. At the present time, Sons of Norway financial benefit counselors are completing on-boarding training to represent the new partnership. Contact the *BetterLife* home office: 608-833-1936, 800-779-1936 or email: info@betterlifeins.com to learn more. One may also find a dedicated representative or connect digitally via the *BetterLife* contact page address indicated.

The oath has been taken, the gavel passed, and the first meeting of the 2026-2028 District 5 Board of Directors is in the books. Now is the time to direct our attention to Scott Wegner, our newest "Friendly Fifth" president. I wish him the best of luck in this very demanding position, fully knowing that he is up for the task and will lead the district to heights unknown.

Tusen takk til alle for fire år,

Cheryl

Cheryl Wille-Schlesser

Past President, District 5 Sons of Norway- cwschlesser200bc@gmail.com

From Cheryl Wille-Schlesser and the Roundtable workshop at convention:

From: [Bloomerang.com/blog/effective-membership-recruitment ideas](https://bloomerang.com/blog/effective-membership-recruitment-ideas)

- 1. Enhance and promote your membership **benefits**
- 2. Attract your target audience
- 3. Host a membership drive
- 4. Offer a *volunteer opportunity*
- 5. Open your major events to everyone
- 6. Use a strategic social media approach
- Take Creative, Strategic Steps to Recruit More Members

To effectively attract new members, leverage existing networks, utilize social media, and create engaging events that showcase the value of your organization.

Key Strategies for Attracting New Members

1. **Leverage Existing Members:** Encourage current members to bring friends or colleagues to events. Implement a "bring a friend" policy to make it easy for members to introduce potential new members. wildapricot.com
2. **Utilize Social Media:** Promote your organization through social media platforms. Share success stories, member testimonials, and upcoming events to engage a wider audience. Regularly update your social media profiles to keep followers informed and interested wildapricot.com+1.
3. **Host Engaging Events:** Organize family-friendly events or open houses that allow potential members to experience your organization firsthand. This can help demystify your activities and showcase the benefits of joining wildapricot.com+1.
4. **Offer Incentives:** Provide incentives for new members to join, such as discounts on membership fees, exclusive access to events, or special recognition within the organization. Highlight the unique benefits that your organization offers compared to others momentivesoftware.com+1.
5. **Create a Welcoming Environment:** Ensure that your organization is welcoming and inclusive. Personalize the recruitment experience by reaching out to potential members with follow-up emails or phone calls, making them feel valued and appreciated. wildapricot.com+1.
6. **Understand Your Audience:** Conduct research to understand the motivations and preferences of your target audience. Tailor your recruitment strategies to meet their needs and highlight the specific benefits they would gain from membership momentivesoftware.com+1.
7. **Regular Communication:** Keep potential members informed about your organization through newsletters, emails, and social media updates. Regular communication helps build familiarity and trust, making it more likely that they will consider joining. wildapricot.com+1

Our Rocks

Those who came before us and emigrated here,
Brought with them their love of Norway and all that they held dear.
They are “Our Rocks” we think of fondly now,
Perhaps never having met them but to whom we owe a bow.
Through a port in Canada’s Quebec or via New York’s Ellis Island they came,
Toting trunks, children, and personal effects, all pieces of a bigger game.
Reconnecting with family already settled was their goal,
They paid additional passage further inland with desires hidden in their souls.
Some were indentured servants, willing to work to pay for their passage,
Household chores or manual labor, the immigrant toiled the best he could manage.
To the Ohio Valley or Fox River area they roamed,
To the Koshkonong Prairie and beyond they established new homes.
With them came their skills, trades, and expertise.
They helped to build America, little by little, and piece by piece.
They purchased land, ran businesses, and provided much labor,
Success came the Nordmann’s direction by generously helping their neighbors.
Takk, Bestemor, for your work ethic and many nurturing ways,
Because of you we still celebrate traditions and our heritage on holidays.
Tusen takk, Bestefar, for your strict guidance and leading by example.
We have shaped our lives, living by every sample.
Today, we honor “our rocks” short or tall, round, or thin, humble, and wise.
Whose generations of guidance now live on through our eyes.
What you do with your rocks is now your call. Feel welcome to trade with one another or ask for a replacement at breaktime.

**Could you use a doorstep?
A paperweight for your desk?
A heritage shelf piece?
The possibilities are endless!**

**Flowerbed décor needed.
Tent flap or pet anchor?
Trail marker?**

***Takk så mye, Amanda Beck, from Cleng Peerson Lodge, who lives in Morris, IL, for creating
“our rocks,” fitting mementos of the 2026 D5 Convention.**



Sons of Norway District 5 Convention and Lodge Meeting Recap by D5 Secretary Darlene Arneson

Pictures- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1410575062591249/media/albums>

New District 5 Board of Directors

President	Scott Wegner
Vice President	Laurie Barrett
Secretary	Darlene Arneson
Treasurer	Corey Olson
Sports & Rec	Andrea Malouf
Publicity	Christina Fairchild
Cultural	Lucy Ghastin
Youth	Lisa Rove-Williams
At Large 1	
At Large 2	
At Large 3	Connie Kross
At Large 4	Cheryl Will-Schlesser
Webmaster	Christina Fairchild

2024 and 2025 Lodge Achievement and Family Lodge of the Year Awards:

2024 Large- Family Lodge of the Year- Wergeland Lodge, LaCrosse, WI
2024 Small Lodge – Polar Star Lodge, Aurora, IL
2024 Large Lodge- Mandt Lodge, Stoughton, WI
2024 Large- International Lodge of the Year- Nordkap, Detroit, MI.

2025 Family Small Family Lodge of the Year- Circle City Lodge of Carmel, IN
2025 Large- Family Lodge of the Year- Nordkap Lodge, Detroit, MI
2025 Small Lodge – Polar Star Lodge, Aurora, IL
2025 Large Lodge- Mandt Lodge, Stoughton, WI
2025 Small- International Lodge of the Year- Polar Star, Aurora, IL

By the numbers:

- 150 registered for the convention
- 82 delegates
- 30 lodges sent representation

The Lodge Certificates of Recognition were awarded.

2024

Gold

- Nordkap
- Dovre

Silver

- Gronnvik

Bronze

- Edvard Grieg
- Ostestaden
- Fagernes
- Askeladden
- Scandiana
- Skjold
- Valkyrien

2025

Gold

- Wergeland
- Viking
- Valhall
- Scandiana
- Ostestaden
- Loven
- Gronnvik
- Fosselyngen
- Fagernes
- Edvard Grieg
- Dovre
- Askeladden

Silver

- Vennligfolk
- Valkyrien
- Sognefjord
- Music City Vikings

Most Compliant 2024

- Mandt
- Nordkap

Most Compliant 2025

- Mandt

Fundraising- Sons of Norway D5 Nordic Legacy Foundation

Activity	Amount	Benefits	Notes		
Foundation Fun Night	\$ 573	NLF			
Heads and Tails	\$ 138	MM	Winner donated her half		
Silent Auction	\$ 4,960	NLF			
Donation bowl	\$ 90	MM	Bowl set out at silent auction		
Sami Bowl Sale	\$ 1,000	MM			
Subtotal Events	\$ 6,761				
Arnesons Donation	\$ 300	MM			
Idun Donation	\$ 1,000	MM			
Jane Conner Donation	\$ 50	MM			
Total Raised	\$ 8,111				
Total MM	\$ 2,578				
Total NLF	\$ 5,533				
	\$ 8,111				

Fundraising- Sons of Norway Foundation

I count 8 individuals/families, and 17 lodges gave checks for the \$60 for 60 campaigns for a total of \$3,093. This doesn't include gifts that came in via credit card, QR code, etc. That number includes the \$573 from the Foundation fun night.

Cultural Arts winners

First Place	Mandy Beck	Needle felted Viking Ship picture	Cleng Peerson
Second Place	Mitch Vesaas	Carved kubbestol	Norse Valley
(tie)Third Place	Jerry Rud	Cherry Tine box (bentwood box)	Circle City
Third Place	Karen Hankee	Rosemaled Tine box	Solvang

Cultural Challenge List

May 1, 2025 to May 31, 2026

Scandiana 5-600

David C. Hirschey – Literature

Nordkap 5-378

Derrick Hendricks-Sinke – Cooking

Carol Jehle -- Cooking

Denise Marvel -- Cooking

Roy Marvel -- Cooking, Genealogy

Mary Morehead -- Cooking

Eli Anita Steyskal -- Cooking

Wergeland 5-028

Karen Broadhead -- Literature

Mandt 5-314

Aurora Malouf -- Cooking

Janis I. Wegner -- Cooking

Scott Wegner -- Cooking

Valhall 5-168

Nancy Mayfield -- Genealogy

Polar Star 5-472

Don M. Hirsch -- Genealogy

Jeanne Leifheit -- Cooking, Literature

Richard Vigsnes -- Stamp Collecting

Jo Anne Ward -- Genealogy, Music

Michael Ward -- Stamp Collecting, Genealogy

Areas covered

Cooking - Various levels

Genealogy – Various levels

Literature

Stamp Collecting

Music

Throwing Challenge- We had 6 lodges and 24 individuals submit minutes of activities.

Lodge Minutes:

Lodge Totals	Mandt	3540	1st
	Nordkap	780	2nd
	Nordlyset	240	3rd
	Idun	85	4th
	Sognefjord	30	5th
		4675	minutes

Individual Minutes:

	Individual Totals	
1st	5280	Lars Arneson
2nd	3945	Ginny Olson
3rd	2640	David Thompson
	2640	Jens Arneson
	1765	Jill Jenson
	1560	Margarita Thompson
	1440	Sydney Arneson
	1230	Carol Jehle
	1035	Tom Olson
	765	Jeri Smith
	765	Mary Ann Furnie
	540	John Arneson
	375	Thad Jenson
	300	Darlene Arneson
	240	Todd Fossum
	222	Connie Aiello
	120	Bob Giles
	120	Dennis Flessland
	120	Louise Giles
	60	Mark Schubring
	30	Erik Scharf
	30	Haley Jarasz
	30	Laura Jehle
	30	Mike Jehle

Bylaw Proposals

#1- Passed.

No District Officer or Director shall be elected to serve more than three consecutive terms in any office except the Secretary, **Youth Director**, and the Treasurer whose term shall not be limited; so that there is continuity for the District, staff, and the facility.

#2- Passed after being amended

*To avoid disputes and conversations at meetings and **on public forums**, topics of religion and politics that are dominating and sparking division should be avoided. The leaders of the meeting or activity are*

*encouraged to share that our focus is on heritage and culture. Sharing of political activities, memes, and other messages and **on public forums** on any of the levels- International, District or Lodge should be avoided or removed.*

#3- Defeated

Par. 1 The elected Officers of the District shall be: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Recreation Director, Publicity Director, Cultural Director, ~~Youth Director~~ **District Masse Moro Director** and the four At-Large Directors provided for in these By-Laws.

Par. 6 The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Recreation Director, Publicity Director, Cultural Director, and ~~Youth Director~~ **District Masse Moro Director** shall receive such compensation as determined by the District Lodge. The Board of Directors shall make recommendations to each District Lodge Meeting with respect thereto.

#4- Defeated

Proposal was to remove the requirement that District President candidates have served previously on the District 5 Board.

Resolutions

#1- passed

Therefore be it resolved that we drop the benefit member requirement for the District 5 Scholarships.

#2- passed with committee changes

The District Board recommends to the District Lodge and its committees to consider this compensation for District Officers:

President \$1,500 per annum
Secretary \$2,000 per annum
Treasurer \$2,000 per annum
Vice President \$500 per annum
Publicity Director \$500 per annum
Cultural Director \$500per annum
Youth Director \$1,500 per annum
Recreation Director \$500 per annum

#3- passed

Therefore, Be It Resolved that cumulative expense reimbursement for Barnebirkie volunteers be set at up to \$2500 per year for the next two years.

#4 passed

Thank You – Resolution #4

Whereas, The 57th Biennial Sons of Norway District Five Lodge and Convention is coming to a successful conclusion; and

Whereas, District President Cheryl Wille-Schlesser conducted the meeting and her biennial duties with professional dispatch; and

Whereas, District Secretary Darlene Arneson has administered her office smoothly, with diligence, timeliness, and with boundless energy; and

Whereas, The District Board has performed its duties and obligations in an efficient manner; and

Whereas, International Director, Duane Kittleson, has represented our District on the International Board with distinction; and

Whereas, International Sons of Norway CEO, Daniel Seyfried has exhibited leadership in finding another like-minded fraternal to partner with; and

Whereas, the BetterLife staff have embraced our members and shared the BetterLife story as the new partnership develops. Thank you to Chair, President, and CEO of BetterLife, Chris Campbell, Dudley Simmons, Jake Manne, Rebecca Lureen, John Kielczewski and other BetterLife staff who assisted and volunteered throughout the convention; and

Whereas, International Sons of Norway Vice President of Fraternal & Foundation Development, Connie O'Brien, International Sons of Norway Foundation Director, Amy Tuchenhausen, Fraternal Manager Jana Velo and Fraternal Engagement Manager Kirsten Lehman, have updated us and were integral contributors to this biennial meeting; and

Whereas, The class presenters, farm tour hosts, and Cultural Arts Display participants added much to the richness and variety of this convention; and

Whereas, The District Five Board and its Biennial Convention Committee, being host to this fine assembly, carried out their duties with diligent planning and skill; and

Whereas, The Parliamentarian, Jerry Wendt, handled his duties with professional excellence; and

Whereas, The management and staff of the Tru by Hilton, Mandt Lodge, Otis Sampson American Legion, Halverson's Everything Nice, Main Street Kitchen, Stoughton VFW, and Stoughton Area School District Administrative Building provided excellent service and accommodations; and

Whereas, The outgoing and continuing Board members deserve our gratitude for their service over the last two years; and

Whereas, Those who donated gifts to the Silent Auction and supported both Foundations are to be commended and thanked, as well as the many buyers of those auction items; and

Whereas, Thanks are due to the appointed committee members and temporary officers of this Biennial District Lodge Meeting; and

Whereas, Delegates, Alternates and Visitors have given much of their time, talents and treasurers to attend and participate in this lodge meeting and convention, and much appreciation is due them;

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the incoming District Board of Directors is asked to extend our gratitude and thanks to all the individuals and groups named above, and any others inadvertently omitted from this resolution.

Bids for 2028

There were no bids to host the 2028 District 5 Convention. The board encourages lodges to consider this and will discuss the matter at the fall board meeting.

BetterLife Presentation

Chris Campbell, the CEO of BetterLife addressed the meeting and provided an informational overview of the completed partnership between Sons of Norway and BetterLife. He described BetterLife as a member-founded, member-owned, community-based fraternal benefit society, and reviewed its financial position — including more than \$50 million in surplus and approximately \$900 million in assets under management — along with its focus on community wellness and membership growth to nearly 90,000 members. Mr. Campbell shared stories from several BetterLife communities illustrating the organization's common bond of celebrating traditions, supporting one another, and providing financial security, and noted that convention, district, and foundation governance are expected to continue under the partnership. The presentation was informational; no action was taken. He also introduced other BetterLife staff including Dudley Simmons, Jake Manne, Rebecca Lureen, and John Kielczewski, Greg Ragan from Sons of Norway, and opened the floor for questions.

Sons of Norway Staff Presentations

Presentations were given by Connie O'Brien, Vice President of Fraternal & Foundation Development; Amy Tuchenhausen, Foundation Director; Jana Velo, Fraternal Manager; and Kirsten Lehman, Fraternal Engagement Manager on their respective duties and roles at Sons of Norway.

Masse Moro Staff Presentation

Four staff members gave a presentation on the 2026 Camp and background about Masse Moro.

NORDIC FOLK ARTS & CULTURAL TRADITIONS

NORDIC FOLK ARTS & CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN THE UPPER MIDWEST

The American-Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) provides support for living Nordic folk arts and cultural traditions in the Upper Midwest (North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan).

Broadly defined, folk arts are expressions of community identity and values. They are cultivated informally among individuals by word of mouth or example. Whether practicing a traditional craft, art, technical or occupational skill; performing music or dance; or marking important moments of life or the year with special foods or customs, folk arts are deeply rooted in community life. They foster human creativity and transmit cultural values that affirm community ties.

ASF is committed to celebrating and preserving Nordic (Denmark, Greenland, Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sápmi, Sweden) cultures throughout the United States. By supporting folk arts and traditional cultures in the Upper Midwest, in particular, ASF recognizes and celebrates the mastery of individual artists or practitioners, facilitates the cultivation of skills and understanding among younger generations, brings greater visibility to living Nordic arts and traditions, and highlights the centrality of cultural expression to all of our lives.

Two kinds of awards are available – fellowships for artists/practitioners of traditional skills and grants for public programs and community projects. All of our grants encourage both the practice of folk arts and cultures and the presentation of these arts to public audiences.

Deadline: September 15, 2026

FELLOWSHIPS FOR ARTISTS

Fellowships for artists will deepen the skills of master artists and/or foster relationships among masters and their apprentices. As a result, these grants will encourage the development of traditional skills and help transmit the skills from generation to generation. They will also heighten the public awareness of Nordic cultural traditions.

[Application Instructions](#)

[Apply for Artist Fellowships](#)

[Current List of Grantees and Fellows](#)

[2017-25 Folk Artist Fellows](#)

[Final Reports](#)

To be completed by Artist Fellows no later than 60 days after the end of the fellowship period. Previous award winners must submit their final reports before submitting another application.

[Alternative Funding Sources](#)

A list of other organizations that may have grants for folk artists in the Upper Midwest.

GRANTS FOR PUBLIC PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Grants for public programs and community projects will shore up and encourage the preservation of and/or innovation within living Nordic cultural traditions through the support of community festivals, celebrations, and heritage events as well as workshops, performances, classes, and demonstrations. Applicants for public programs grants must be nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations.

[Application Instructions](#)

[Apply for Public Programs](#)

[Current List of Grantees and Fellows](#)

[2017-25 Public Program Grantees](#)

[Final Reports](#)

To be completed by Public Program Grantees no later than 60 days after the end of the grant period. Previous award winners must submit their final reports before submitting another application.

EMAIL SIGNUP

Join our email list to receive all news about upcoming fellowship and grants opportunities!

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Two kinds of awards are available — **fellowships for artists** and **grants for public programs and community projects**. All of our grants encourage both the practice of folk arts and cultures and the presentation of these arts to public audiences.

FELLOWSHIPS FOR ARTISTS

Fellowships for artists deepen the skills of master artists; foster relationships among masters of artistic and technical skills and their apprentices, thereby encouraging the development of traditional skills as well as the perpetuation of skills from generation to generation; and encourage the awareness of folk traditions by creating innovative projects with wide visibility and public appeal.

GRANTS FOR PUBLIC PROGRAMS & COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Grants for public programs and community projects encourage the preservation of Nordic cultural traditions through the support of community festivals, celebrations, and heritage events as well as workshops, performances, classes, and demonstrations. Applicants for public programs grants must be nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations.

THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

The American-Scandinavian Foundation (ASF) promotes firsthand exchange of intellectual and creative influence between the United States and the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. A publicly supported American nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, ASF has an extensive program of fellowships, grants, intern/trainee sponsorship, publishing, and cultural activities. Headquartered in New York City, ASF has members throughout the United States, and alumni and donors worldwide. For more information, please visit amscan.org.

For further information, please contact Sally Yerkovich, Director of Educational Exchange & Special Projects, at 212-847-9714 or grants@amscan.org.

https://www.amscan.org/fellowships-grants/grants-for-folk-arts/?mc_cid=aad2a5e3e2&mc_eid=010fa03cf1

2026 Calendar

November 1- Lodge Liability Insurance due

December 31- Lodge Officer Updates (D63) due

Who to contact at the home office when you need help

- You can email cbs@sofn.com for any member updates that need to be made.
- **Foundation, Scholarships & Grants- Amy Tuchenhausen**
foundation@sofn.com, atuchenhausen@sofn.com, (612) 821-4655
- **Fraternal & Membership- Connie O'Brien and Kirsten Lehman**
fraternal@sofn.com, (612) 821-4643
- **Culture, Viking & Language: Jana Velo**
jvelo@sofn.com
- **Insurance Sales:**
SonsofNorwaySales@sofn.com, (833) 707-0012 – option 2

For matter like submitting a death, a change to a members address or other info please email cbs@sofn.com

- For issues with passwords or website use ithelp@sofn.com.
- The 800 number to call in for member support is 800-945-8851

Note:

- Check correspondence from the International and District and the International (www.sofn.com) and District (www.sonsofnorway5.com) websites for any updates and changes.
- Additional deadlines for the District 5 Conventions/Lodge Meetings will be added as those dates are established. Watch for future mailings and the District 5 website.

Compiled by Darlene Arneson, SN District 5 Secretary (arnesonfamily5@gmail.com or 608-873-7209)

FFFN Basics

In an attempt to help our lodge leaders become more familiar with resources, changes, deadlines and other information, I will compile a weekly "Friendly Fifth Friday News" email to our leadership. Some of the information you might already have, but hopefully it will be a good reminder for all of us (me included) of all the great resources that Sons of Norway has to offer. **Please feel free to cut and paste any of this information for your lodge's use!**

Send all web posting info and calendar dates/events directly to our webmaster at inputd5@sonsofnorway5.com

With our new arrangement, I actually send the FFFN pdf to our webmaster on Thursday morning before I go to work. So if you have anything you'd like me to consider putting in, please send it by 4 am on Thursday morning. Please do not send pdf's as I have a hard time cutting and pasting them. The Word Document works best for me. Don't forget that lodge events should be submitted to inputd5@sonsofnorway.com as I have a hard time keeping track of all lodge activities. I'll put

some in but that is more the role of the website event calendar. If you would like to get the MS Word document, just shoot me an email and I'll add you to the list. I send it out right after I send the email to the large group.