

Sons of Norway District 5 - Friendly Fifth Friday News

January 23, 2026

A District Weekly Newsletter to Keep Us Up to Date!

Need a winter getaway? Then come to Stoughton!

As winter settles over Wisconsin, the world-renowned Stoughton Norwegian Dancers are preparing to bring a burst of color, music, and high-energy tradition to the community. The group will host its annual "Norse Afternoon of Fun" on Sunday, February 1, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. in the Stoughton High School Gymnasium.

More than just a performance, the Norse Afternoon of Fun is a local tradition designed to cure "cabin fever." The event showcases a vibrant display of authentic *bunads* (hand-crafted, traditional Norwegian folk costumes), rousing folk music, and the exuberant athleticism that has made the ensemble famous worldwide. "The combination of music, rhythm, and tradition creates an energy that is hard to find anywhere else," says Wendy Furseth, director. "It's the perfect way for our community to come together during the long winter months, celebrate our heritage, and get excited for *Syttende Mai*."

Attendees can expect a family-friendly program that bridges generations, featuring:

- Gravity-Defying Tradition: A mix of humorous, acrobatic, and traditional folk dances performed by 25 elite Stoughton High School students.
- The Next Generation: A special guest appearance by 20 Stoughton elementary students, who will join the high schoolers for select dances..
- Interactive Fun: Opportunities for audience participation that appeal to guests of all ages.

In addition to dancing, there will be a bake sale featuring authentic Norwegian pastries and baked goods, including Lefse, which the Stoughton Norwegian Dancer parent group prepares. There will also be a raffle drawing that includes the following fantastic prizes plus many more:

1. 1st Prize: \$1,000 Cash - (donated by Hamacher Lawn Care, Evolve Insurance, SK Marketing LLC, Appliance Repair Experts)
2. 2nd Prize: 4 Baskets and 4 Pints of Custard a Month for 1 year - Culver's of Stoughton
3. 3rd Prize: \$500 Gift Card to Conant Automotive - Conant Automotive
4. 4th Prize: Golf for 4 - Stoughton Country Club
5. 5th Prize: Weber Tailgate Grill - Stoughton Lumber
6. Multiple Cash prizes of \$100, \$200 & \$250

All proceeds support the Stoughton High School Norwegian Dancers. .

Event Details

- Date: Sunday, February 1, 2026
- Time: 1:30 p.m. (Doors open at 12:30 p.m.)
- Location: Stoughton High School Gymnasium, 600 Lincoln Avenue, Stoughton, WI
- Admission: Admission is \$5 for adults if tickets are purchased in advance or \$10 at the door. Admission is \$1 for all children age 12 and under. Tickets can be purchased in advance through current Norwegian dancer families, the Nordic Nook in downtown Stoughton, or by emailing stoughtonnorwegiandancers@gmail.com.

About the Stoughton Norwegian Dancers: Founded in 1953, the Stoughton Norwegian Dancers serve as goodwill ambassadors for their community, performing across the United States and Norway. The group is dedicated to preserving Norwegian heritage through authentic folk dance, music, and attire. For more information about the Norse Afternoon of Fun or the Stoughton Norwegian Dancers, please visit <https://stoughtonnorwegiandancers.com>.

From President Cheryl Wille – Schlesser

District 5 President's Report, Fall 2025-2026 to date **Cheryl Wille-Schlesser**

Introduction

The district five officers have been actively engaged in a wide variety of activities since our last meeting in April 2025. Their dedication and commitment to the organization have been evident throughout the past months.

Spring Meeting with the IBOD (International Board of Directors) and NDA Requirement

Under the advice of legal counsel, I did not attend the spring meeting with the IBOD. The document if signed and enforced would have led to financial hardships on my account and the legal firm felt the company's nondisclosure agreement was too restrictive for a company's volunteer.

Virtual Leadership Seminars

Our officers and directors participated in a virtual leadership seminar alongside members of the international office staff held on September 3, 2025. This session offered valuable updates and insights, and I strongly encourage any available members to attend in the future. A shareable Power Point document was provided to attendees, and its concepts would be suitable for all lodges.

Nordland Lodge 5-544 50th Anniversary Celebration, May 3, 2025

District representatives were proud to attend the celebration marking the 50th Anniversary of Nordland Lodge 5-544 in Janesville, WI. During the event, International Director Duane Kittleson, honored both past and present members of this once thriving lodge. Special recognition was given to the lodge's 93-year-old president, who has provided steadfast leadership and kept this lodge together for years. A recent phone conversation with her indicates that Nordland Lodge will remain active until it no longer has officers to lead.

Tribute to Sharon Anderson Idun Lodge, May 5, 2025

I paid final respects to Sharon Anderson of Idun Lodge, 5-074 who played a vital role as part of our Barnebirke staff in Hayward, WI.

Syttende Mai at Idun Lodge, May 10, 2025

I also attended the Syttende Mai banquet held at Trinity Lutheran Church for Idun Lodge in Madison, WI, where Christian Øverland, the Ruth and Harley Barker Director and CEO of the Wisconsin Historical Society was the presenter. He delivered a lively and informative presentation about the Society and its collections.

Promoting Norwegian Heritage at Stoughton Syttende Mai, May 18, 2025

The food offerings provided by members of Mandt Lodge, 5-314, were second to none. I was delighted to promote the Sons of Norway during the Syttende Mai Parade in Stoughton, WI. Following the parade, the Stoughton Norwegian dancers gave a high-energy performance, helping to share and celebrate our heritage. Know that this group is available for hire at one of your local events. Contact:

stoughtonnorwegiandancers@gmail.com

Norsk Museum Taste of Norway Breakfast, June 7, 2025

On June 7th I attended a great Frokost event in Norway, IL. Members of Cleng Peerson Lodge 5-525, and Polar Star Lodge 5-472 were highly integral to its success. Members of Shawnee Skogen Lodge 5-689 Wendy and Bill Bultinck and the family of Nathan Nutter were present. I visited the museum afterward and supported their efforts. Former D5 Director Tom Maxson and his wife Lynn Sove-Maxson were on sight selling her rosemaled items.

Østestaden Annual Potluck and Fyrbål Celebration, June 19, 2025

Members of Østestaden Lodge 5-642 held its annual bonfire and potluck venture. Door prizes were awarded by the district. International director Duane Kittleson and his wife Nancy were also in attendance.

District 3 Adult Coastal Retreat, June 26-29, 2025

Director Connie Aiello and I were on site at the Third District's first adult heritage weekend in Charleston, S.C. Their event was based on our success. Instructors were present to share their knowledge on a wide variety of topics. Connie brought stamping kits for sale and provided a demo.

Nordic Fest Representation, July 24-26, 2025

I worked with Chris Elwell from District 1 to have a presence at Decorah, IA's Nordic Fest celebration. Members from District 1 and I worked the Sons of Norway's information table. Julekurver, woven heart baskets, were popular with young families. Scholarships and grants provided through the Sons of Norway Foundation were promoted.

Edvard Grieg 5-657, August 23, 2025

International Director Duane Kittleson, his wife Nancy, Connie Aiello, and I were thrilled to be participants in the 25th Anniversary event held in Cincinnati, OH. Longtime member and former D5 Director, Esther Charleton, was honored for her impetus in creating this lodge. Raffle prizes were provided by the district. The opportunity to visit with lodge members was time well spent as D 5 Vice President and local lodge president Jim Herman attests.

Friends of the Norwegian American Genealogical Center and Næseth Library (NAGC&NL) Dinner, September 13, 2025

I represented the 5th District at the annual dinner, making acquaintances new and former. Dana Kelly, the Executive Director encouraged use of the center's resources to connect with Norwegian ancestors. Interpreters in Bokmål, Nynorsk, and Old Danish dialects can assist with your search. Participants were reminded that the NAGC&NL www.nagcnl.org has a variety of resources to assist in your search. The center is a 501C3 organization and encourages individuals to support the center now through gifts.

Fifth District Adult Nordic Heritage Weekend in Norway (Sheridan), IL, October 2-5, 2025

The Fifth District conducted its Adult Heritage Weekend event, attracting more than 250 registered participants. The event honored those who sailed to America aboard the *Restauration* in 1825. A variety of classes and breakout sessions were held. At-large director Connie Aiello organized a class on Nordic stamping and card production. Sessions were well attended and participants purchased significant district fundraising merchandise. The event provided indoor and friluftsliv activities that appealed to a wide audience. Kudos go to Cleng Peerson Lodge 5-525 and Polar Star Lodge 5-472 for amazing organizational efforts.

District Five Fall Board Meeting, October 24-25, 2025, Stoughton, WI

Officers and directors toured the facilities that will be used for the 2026 District 5 Convention. Director reports were shared and business was conducted.

International Board Meeting via Zoom, November 13-14, 2025

The District Presidents' Advisory Council met and shared reports from their districts with one another. The D5 International Board members presented queries for clarifications and asked for further information presented in the reports.

January 9-11, 2026

At-large director Connie Aiello and I went to Nashville, TN to install the new board of officers and directors for the Music City Vikings Lodge, 5-681. There was an intensive dialogue session for new officers on Saturday, and the installation of the incoming board was held on Sunday. We are working to locate answers to a variety of questions they posed.

January 17, 2026

Installed the new board of directors for Idun Lodge, 5-074, Madison, WI

February 12, 2026

Present to install officers for Ostelladen Lodge, 5-642 in Monroe, WI

District Presidents' Advisory Council Meetings

The advisory council meets quarterly. A change in the meetings this year is an additional segment that includes frank discussions with the international office personnel. Luella Grangaard, International Chair, CEO Dan Seyfried, and Fraternal and Membership Director, Connie O'Brien, and the Foundation Director, Amy Tuchenhagen have been guests.

At the last meeting of the council, districts reported on their plans for the 2026 district conventions. All districts report the challenge of finding willing officers and directors for local lodges and will face the same issue when trying to fill district seats. Attracting willing delegates to our conventions is a grave concern. As our members age, getting delegates to the convention sites poses concerns. Transportation could be considered for delegates who do not want to drive.

Lodges in all eight districts are disbanding. The fifth district has closed four lodges, and several others are contemplating their future. In one district an entire local lodge board resigned. Sustaining and recruiting members is high on every district's list of wants. Succession planning should be in place at all levels of our organization. We have currently 4,989 adult members in the 5th District, and with youth and benefit members included our district total is 6,043.

Family camps remain popular. In D5 39 campers attended this past July.

District seven has suggested to its lodges to consult with Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, IA, for help with fraternal classes and when seeking further information on Norwegian topics. Crossings two hundred events were held in across the U.S.

There appears to be a darkness surrounding the Sons of Norway. It was suggested that a good, old-fashioned, pep talk by our international chair is needed. This could be delivered via Zoom, and it would be available to all members. What do we do when the pot runs dry? What is the overall health of the organization? The financial statement in *Viking* magazine was misleading.

Luella has been trying to address district concerns by conducting quarterly meetings with the district presidents via Zoom. The next meeting for the general membership is February 9, 2025, at 11 AM Central Time, and it will be delivered via Teams.

We have been informed that there are no monies available for an advertising program for recruitment of new members through the international office. Connie O'Brien has marketing plans for the financial division, but the fraternal side of the organization is not included.

Jana Velo will incorporate Norwegian topics into the website. Those are available to current members, and they cannot be used for membership recruitment. Encourage your members to use the SofN website, sofn.com, taking advantage of more current news on the blog provided.

Luella shared the grim side of our company finances. SofN is losing money partially due to more claims on life insurance than was budgeted. SofN product costs remain the same, but the company has not met its projected annuity sales. It is estimated that a turnaround could happen in 5 years. Lodge agents are resurfacing again. Non-performing sales associates have been furloughed. Lodges are encouraged to share product information with their members.

In other news

Nordkap Lodge 5-378, “the Detroit Norwegians” was awarded the International Lodge of the Year for 2022. This award was decided following the 2024 district convention and was sent to me for presentation this summer. Gratulerer til alle!

Fraternal funds will no longer be paid to districts. The impact on our district is between \$4,000 and \$6,000 and will have a direct impact on funding our convention.

Streamlining the Viking magazine has proven fruitful.

From the International SN

Dear members,

Please join us for an All Member meeting to discuss the following topics on **Monday, February 9 from 11am – 12:30 pm Central time:**

- 2026 District conventions
- How to become a delegate
- Membership survey results
- Overall changes in membership numbers
- Changes in membership numbers between the ages of 30-50
- Getting involved in your lodge and district

To register for the meeting on February 9 at 11 am Central time, click this button:

[Register for Meeting Here](#)

Due to the large number of people invited, please email questions by **Tuesday, February 3 to fraternal@sofn.com.**

District 5 Convention Bidding Guidelines for 2028

Updated April 26, 2025

Due March 15, 2026 for review at April District 5 Board Meeting so bids can be reviewed and then proposed to the delegates at the 2026 convention.

This proposal is to:

- Host the convention independently
- Co-host the convention with the District Board. Provide details of how the workload and profits/risk would be divided based on previous discussion with the District Board.

Information from the District Policies and Practices Book on Convention Bids

A. Convention Site: The convention site and facilities are of the utmost importance for the smooth operation of the District Lodge Meeting. The following shall aid in the site selection.

1. Convention Bids: Bids to host a District Lodge Meeting two years hence shall be submitted in writing to the District Five Board of Directors prior to the spring Board of Directors meeting of a convention year.
2. Site Review: The site review should be completed prior to the District Board of Directors meeting which precedes the District Lodge Meeting and a report prepared for delivery at that time to the District Lodge.
3. Site Criteria: The following shall be inspected to provide for the needs of a comfortable and efficient District Lodge Meeting:
 - a. Dining Facilities: They should be separate from the main meeting room and have banquet capability with an on-site kitchen or established catering service.
 - b. District Lodge Meeting Room: The District Lodge meeting room should be isolated from noise, have proper lighting, ample seating for delegates and guests, and an adequate sound system, large screens, and ample Wi-fi. There should be ample and safe seating safe.
 - c. Committee Rooms: Committees that need to meet in-person should have meeting spaces.
 - d. Sleeping Rooms: A sufficient number of sleeping rooms for delegates and guests should be available.
 - e. Parking: Ample parking is necessary.

f. Exhibit Space: Spacious comfortable areas are needed to exhibit the crafts of Sons of Norway members and guests demonstrating our culture and heritage. There should be places for displays for related organizations, associations and vendors space.

g. Air Conditioning: Air conditioning is required for an efficient meeting and relaxing rest for delegates and guests.

h. Public Transportation: Consideration should be given to the availability of public transportation. Air, rail, bus, taxi and limousine services should all be reviewed.

i. Host Lodge Activities: The host lodge Committee is responsible for arranging cultural, educational, recreational, shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities that are available and accessible.

4. Set Costs: The Host Lodge Committee shall make available to the District Five Board of Directors a list of the set costs which those who attend the District Lodge meeting shall be responsible for paying. This shall be done by the Fall Board Meeting preceding the District Lodge Meeting.

5. Registration Fee: The assessment of a registration fee by the Host Lodge Committee must be approved by the District Five Board of Directors.

- Credentials: The Host Lodge Committee shall verify the identity of delegates. A delegate packet shall be issued only upon presentation of a legal form of identification.
- Host Lodge Committee Funding: During the month of January of the convention year; District Five will distribute to the host lodge monies collected and held in escrow the previous biennium. Action at June 2018 District Lodge Meeting- \$2500 shall be allocated for startup funds for the year 2026 District 5 Meeting and Convention

B. Progress Report: The Host Lodge Committee shall provide the District Five Board of Directors with a "progress report" on their work. This report shall be due at the spring Board Meeting in the year preceding the District Five Lodge meeting.

Other criteria a bidding lodge should consider:

Hotel needs for up to 120 delegates and additional guests (also refer to previous year's convention numbers)

- Traditional schedule: Wednesday- 25 rooms, Thursday- 100 rooms, Friday- 100 rooms, Saturday- 75 rooms
- Variation of days for the convention is allowed. Please work with the District Board on this to determine when the business meetings will be.

Sufficient break-out rooms - Committee meetings – up to 7 committees that might need meeting space- they can share rooms; Workshops- dependent on planning committee; Classes that might be offered.

Thursday noon luncheon- 60 people (committee and spouses, board and spouses, convention committee and spouses)

Friday noon luncheon- can be up to 150 people

Saturday noon lunch - can be up to 150 people

Room for business sessions:

- Classroom seating for delegates- up to 120 delegates
- Seating in back of room for 30-40 guests and visitors
- Tables around room for Silent Auction
- Head table for board, Parliamentarian, and International Director
- Microphones for delegates, front table, podium

Hallway space and rooms for:

- Displays and exhibits
- Convention registration
- Vendors

Bids should include the following information plus any supporting information:

- This proposal is to:
 - Host the convention independently
 - Co-host the convention with the District Board. Provide details of how the workload and profits/risk would be divided based on previous discussion with the District Board.
- Price of rooms: \$_____
- Hotel name, location and features:
- Contact person (from bidding lodge/committee)

Bids need to be sent to Darlene Arneson, District Secretary, 2056 Skaalen Rd., Stoughton, WI 53589 by March 15, 2026. For more information, contact Darlene at arnesonfamily5@gmail.com or 608-873-7209

2026 Calendar

February 9- All Member Call- SN International Hosting- 11 AM CST

February 19- Barnebirkie in Hayward

March 5- Delegate election results due

March 13-14- District 5 Board Meeting in Rockford, IL

March 15- Bids for 2028 Convention Due

March 16- District Scholarships Due

May 1, 2025 – May 1, 2026- Cultural Challenge

August 2-6- District 5 Convention in Stoughton

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 Tuchenhagen**
foundation@sofn.com, atuchenhagen@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.