



VASA ORDER OF AMERICA

A Swedish-American Fraternal Organization

LOCAL LODGE SVEA NO. 296

Instituted May 20, 1914

Erie, Pennsylvania

December 2023 News & Notes

Hälsningar!

It is December already and what better way to start the holiday season than with our annual Lucia Festival of Light to be held December 10th, Luther Memorial Church, 4PM. Lynnette Gustafson, Lena Martin, and Amy Scott are busy preparing for the event, getting costumes ready, and helping the participants learn their parts. If you like to iron - we can use your expertise getting the costumes pressed and spiffy for the big day. All are welcome to join in the festivities!

Be thinking about who in your family might benefit from the scholarship programs - adult or youth. 2024 Applications and information are now available on the website or see one of the officers at our meetings. The scholarship program is sponsored by PA District #9 and is a phenomenal way to promote our organization and Scandinavian heritage.

MEMBERSHIP - It's that time of year when we ask that you send in your annual Svea dues. Dues remain \$35 per year. What does \$35 get you?

- Vasa Archives – preserves the history of our lodges and our members. It serves as a resource to members for genealogical and immigrant research of Scandinavian ancestors.
- Nordstjernen – The Vasa Star – is the official publication of the Order, published 4 times per year, and mailed to every family in the Order. It carries information from the Grand Lodge, articles about our Swedish heritage, language lessons, and Lodge activities from around the US, Canada, and Sweden.
- Old Age and Benefit Fund – financial assistance to members in need, based on age and years in the Order. Check out the website for the eligibility matrix and application - or see an officer.
- PA District #9 Education Fund – provides scholarships for the annual youth Swedish language camp, *Sjölunden*, and biennial grants for Elderhostel studies. The Grand Lodge provides scholarships for students in higher education.
- Facebook – Svea Lodge 296 – introduces you to other Scandinavian cultural opportunities in addition to our local activities.
- We are a Benevolent Society, making monetary contributions to valuable organizations, as well as, collecting tangible donations for local social service agencies.
- Networking opportunities.
- Voting power at the General Meetings.

WHAT'S IN THIS MONTHS NEWSLETTER?

- Mark Your Calendar
- Things to do in NWPA - Scandinavian and otherwise
- Our meeting in a nutshell
- Bokklubb - Astrid & Veronica
- News from our Sister Lodges and PA District Lodge #9
- Benevolence - Holy Trinity Center needs shampoo and body wash, all sizes

Upcoming events:

December 4, 2023 – VASA Lunch (formerly known as VASA Breakfast).

- Butch's Restaurant, West 26th Street
- 11:30 AM

December 10, 2023 - Santa Lucia Festival of Light

- Luther Memorial Church 225 West 10th Erie, PA
- 4:PM

Other Things to do in NWPA with your Svea friends:

Scandinavian Heritage Days - the first Saturday of each month through May 2024 at Jamestown Community College, Jamestown, NY

Check out the Erie Otters Schedule!

At our November 19th meeting:

- We discussed plans for Lucia - there is a sign up sheet for help in the kitchen, cookies, clean up, ushers, counters, narrators. Women were asked to find a Swedish apron among our costumes to wear for Lucia. There will be an ironing day, December 5th, to help get the costumes ready.
- Martha and Pat will decorate the Christmas tree for the Waterford community Christmas celebration. It will be a Viking theme this year. Lorraine prepared information about runes (ancient Viking writing)

and members made wooden tree decorations using rune inscriptions. Thanks to Craig Foster for cutting the wood discs.

- We welcomed a guest, Dennis Carlson. Dennis had been a member of Svea many years ago, moved away, but has returned to the area.
- Our Benevolence through December will be for the shower program at Holy Trinity Church. We continue to collect shampoo and body wash for their guests. Karen applied for a Thrivent Grant and purchased laundry supplies, towels, washcloths.
- Officers were voted on and the slate was accepted: Chair - Pat Bellingham, Vice Chair - Cheryl Brown, Secretary - Judy Etzler, Treasurer - Lorraine Johnson, Financial Secretary - Martha Stickner, Chaplain - Cathy Beck, Master of Ceremonies - Sarah Larson, Cultural Leader - Linda Graffius, Trustee - Nancy Serwinski, Auditor - Brian Davis. Thank you to these dedicated members! Installation for the officers will be in January.
- Scholarship applications for the Youth AND Adult scholarships are available. Check out the website or see an officer for more information.

Book Club - Bokklubb -

Our next book, Astrid & Veronica, by Linda Olsson, will be discussed in January. (We're all crazy busy during the holiday!)

News from our Sister Lodges and PA District Lodge #9

Drott Lodge: Members of Drott have joined in with another group for PLOGGING! Erik Ahlstrom coined this phrase as a combination of Plocka Upp (pick up) while jogging. They pick up trash along the highways in their community! You can also be PLALKING - walking and PLIKING - biking while picking up litter!

Nobel Monitor: Will have their Lucia Fest on December 10th as well.

PA DL #9: The ReEnergize and ReBuild committee is putting together ideas that the 3 lodges can do together. There will be is a Zoom program on Lucky Strike, February 17th 3:PM; Lucky Strike is about the WWII initiative that put American soldiers in Swedish war camps. It's not what you might think! I you are a history buff, this program is for you! Arne and Eva recently returned from their trip to Spain the El Camino pilgrimage. It was a fascinating journey that they will share on Zoom with any Vasa member. The Working Group's Zoom was 11/29/23.

It won't be too early to start thinking about the District Convention that will be September 27-29, 2024. The District Board is working on a contract with Geneva Conference Center in Geneva, Ohio. It is a lovely setting. The committee is negotiating a reasonably priced weekend. So be thinking about being a delegate for Svea. Based on our membership

numbers, we are entitled to 4 delegates. Even if you aren't a delegate, you are welcome to attend the convention.

Svea's By-Laws have been presented to the District Board. Rolf Bergman and Bruce Elfvin reviewed them to make sure that we have followed Grand Lodge guidelines. There are a few tweaks that need to be made but we're getting closer to having them adopted.

Next District Zoom is 1-8-24 at 6:30.

Our Benevolence:

At our September meeting we decided that our next benevolence project would be Holy Trinity Center. They are opening up a free laundromat and shower facilities for their neighborhood at 17th & Walnut. Appointments will be necessary. Neighbors who do not have a home or stable living situation may use the showers and will be given clean clothing to change into. Holy Trinity is asking for trial sized shampoo and body wash so that each person will have their own personal toiletries. We will be collecting those 2 items for the next couple of meetings. Karen Lundwall applied for a Thrivent grant to supply the towels and washcloths.

We strive to honor our aged members with cards and phone calls to let them know we value them. Let Cheryl know if anyone needs a card or call.

Lisa Davis supplied Swedish birthday cards. Members have volunteered to send the cards during the month to those celebrating another year around the sun!

Thank you for your generosity toward Holy Trinity Lutheran Church's new outreach ministry of providing laundry and shower facilities for those in need of clean clothes and bodies! You donated 34 small and 2 large bottles of shampoo, 27 small and 7 large bottles of body wash, 16 small empty refillable bottles and several extras of toothpaste and toothbrushes, hand lotion and baby powder. Thrivent Financial gave us a grant with which we were able to purchase 8 bath and 8 hand towels, 12 wash cloths, 6 laundry baskets, 4 laundry bags, 112 laundry detergent pods, 210 dryer sheets, and 200 small empty refillable bottles.



Ädelmod, Sanning och Enighet
Generosity, Truth and Unity