



Journal

January 2026





Ken Dvorsky Gets Award
Page 29



Baby Naming Ceremony
Page 30

On the Cover

Sister Alix Fron (second from left) of Lodge Lincoln No. 7 delighted the audience as she energetically danced with the Moravian Dancers for the grand opening of the tree lighting ceremony at the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, Illinois. See article on page 25.

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Volunteering at the Pantry
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Membership Matters

Rounding Out the Listening Tour

Brothers and Sisters,

Happy New Year to everyone. May 2026 bring all of you good health and happiness.

As we come up to CSA's 172nd Anniversary, through the merger with BetterLife, we continue to help our members with their financial needs, and we also continue to provide our wonderful array of membership offerings and programs. From annual scholarships that we award to our young adults, to Matching Funds that we offer through our CSA Serves Program, to Lodge Recognition Program awards (with a cash prize for highly productive lodges!), to bowling events, Photo Contests, and volunteering within the community, we have several great offerings for you, the CSA / BetterLife member.

Over the last few months, a few of us have been out and about visiting all CSA lodges as part of our "Listening Tour." Jake Manne, Kelly Deegan, Chris Campbell, and I have made our way to the majority of CSA lodges as of the

writing of this article. We'll round out these meetings as we get later into the month of January. The visits are intended to give BetterLife management an idea of our lodge culture and customs, and to assure CSA members that, even with the merger, the lodge system within CSA will continue as it has been. An added bonus has been that I've gotten a chance to see everyone. It's always nice being out and about.

This year, our Annual Get-Together will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin over the first weekend in August. Mark your calendars to be there. You'll be seeing more information on the GTG in future *Journal* articles.

Needless to say, there are several great things happening within CSA and BetterLife. We'll continue to keep them going and make them better.

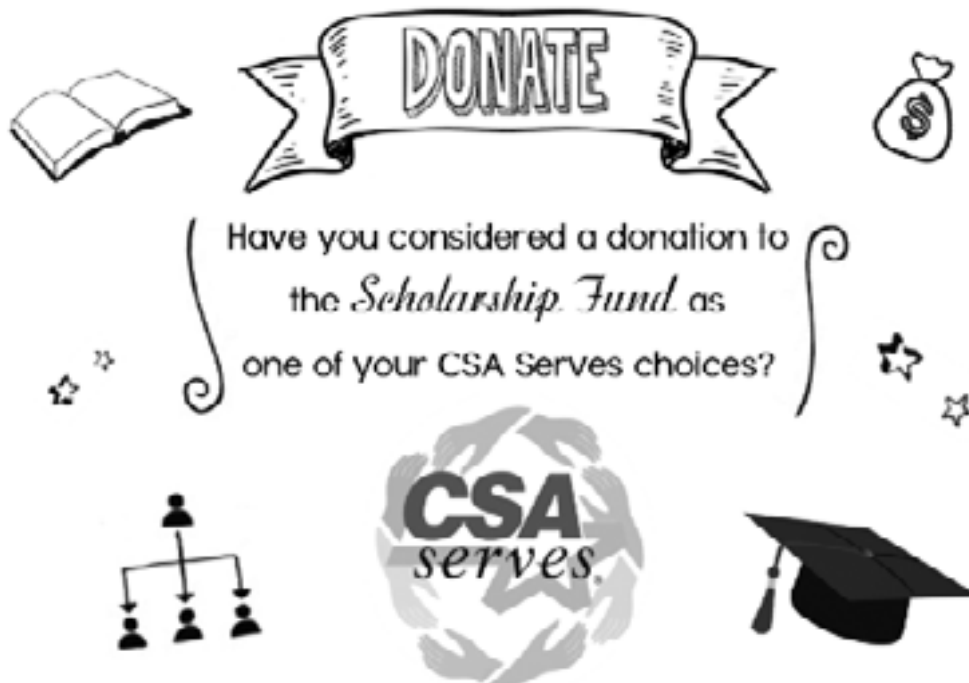
Thanks again for your support over the years.

Happy New Year to all!



John J. Kielczewski
Senior Vice President
Fraternal Development
Better Life

*Until next month,
John J. Kielczewski, CLU, FLMI
Senior Vice President,
Fraternal Development
BetterLife*



Leadership

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Fraternal Development

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 1, 2026
Home Office Closed
New Year's Day

January 2, 2026
Miss CSA Application Available
CSALife.com

January 2, 2026
Scholarship Application Available
CSALife.com

January 31, 2026
Lodge Recognition Program Deadline

CSA Journal

Volume 139 No. 1 January 2026



A Dynamic Magazine "Dedicated to Our Membership"

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CSA MISSION STATEMENT

CSA Fraternal Life is a fraternal benefit Society that provides families with financial security while promoting community involvement with volunteerism.

Home Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

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Today's Fraternal

Looking Ahead to Shared Experiences in 2026



Greetings, Brothers and Sisters,

It's been a busy but really enjoyable end to the year. It all started with the District Council No. 12 Christmas lunch at the McCook Bohemian Restaurant. (See photo above.) The food was delicious, as always, and it was great spending time catching up with such wonderful company.

Not long after that, the Home Office staff headed to Madison to spend some meaningful (and fun!) time with our new teams. The group I was part of spent one day shopping for several children, and I'm happy to say we were able to take care of everything on their wish lists. It felt good knowing we could help make a difference, and we had a lot of fun along the way. (See photos on pages 6 and 7.)

We also got together back at the McCook Bohemian Restaurant for the Lodge Sokol Pilsen No. 434 December meeting and lunch. It was another nice afternoon filled with good conversation and fellowship. Members even had the chance to meet Jake from BetterLife, and everyone enjoyed getting to know him. (See photo to the right.)

I loved seeing all the photos shared on Facebook from lodges near and far. It's always inspiring to see the activities, celebrations, and hard work happening throughout our community. Thanks to everyone who shares and helps keep that lodge spirit going.

Now that we're into the New Year, just a quick reminder that the forms on the website have been updated. Be sure to take a look at the deadlines, as a few have changed this year. Your lodge activities and accomplishments really matter, so please remember to submit your forms on time and include a clear signature so you get the credit you deserve.

As you start looking ahead, don't forget to mark your calendars for the 89th Annual Get-Together this summer. Home Office/BetterLife will be hosting a fun weekend in Milwaukee, and it will be a great chance to connect with fellow members. We'd love to see you there! And, please consider encouraging an eligible daughter, granddaughter, or niece to run for Miss CSA. It's an amazing experience with opportuni-



ties to make new friends, travel, and create lasting memories. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

I'm really looking forward to another year of shared experiences, accomplishments, and plenty of great moments together. What a nice way to wrap up a busy season—full of good food, great people, and meaningful moments.

Fraternally,

Kelly Deegan

Fraternal Programs Manager

Lodge DuPage Pioneers/Edison No. 409



Today's Fraternal Staff Make Wishes Come True



Today's Fraternal Staff Shop and Celebrate Together



Miss National CSA

Looking Forward to Interesting Events in 2026

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters,

I hope everyone had an amazing time during the holiday season, and I hope all families and individuals had an amazing Thanksgiving. In my family, we had a different Thanksgiving than usual, as this year my dad spent the entire week in the hospital. As different as it was, my family is amazing at staying positive and making the most out of any situation.

This left my boyfriend Conner and me as the only candidates possible to cook the turkey. I think we did an amazing job. It took seven hours on the Traeger! This was an experience on its own! But even with my dad in the hospital, he still called and checked in the entire time, trying to help us as much as he could.

As a whole, my family was all there for each other, we spent as much time at the hospital as possible to make things feel a little bit more normal for my dad, as he would usually be up cooking at sunrise.

As most of you may know, I am from Colorado, and if you know anything about our weather right now, you know we have gotten one snowfall since this season began. I'm sure no one else is anticipating it to start snowing, but I, for one, am a huge fan of the snow. Maybe it is because I don't have to do the shoveling. I have not yet had a chance to go skiing up in the mountains because of the weather circumstances, so I do look forward to being able to go out and do winter activities once the weather agrees.

I was incredibly excited for Christmas this year. I have always loved the holiday season and I think it's very important to be present for our loved ones during this time.

I hope to do more to involve myself with the lodges and volunteering at events in 2026, and I hope that the rest of my journey is filled with more exciting and fun experiences.

I am very blessed to have the support system and reassurance I have, and I hope everyone has an amazing New Year.

*Fraternally,
Cassidy Payer
Miss National CSA 2025-2026*



Let's Get-Together 2026!

Save the date to join us at the
89th Annual Get-Together

in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Friday, July 31 - Sunday, August 2



2026 Fraternal Calendar

JANUARY

- 1 – Home Office Closed (New Year's Day)
- 2 – Miss CSA Application Available
- 2 – CSA Scholarship Application Available
- 31 – Deadline: Lodge Recognition Program

FEBRUARY

- 1 – Deadline: President's Reports

MARCH

- 15 – Deadline: CSA Scholarship Application & Transcript
- 31 – Deadline: Lodge Financial & Election Forms

APRIL

- 24 – Deadline: Bowl-O-Rama Entries

MAY

- 25 – Home Office Closed (Memorial Day)

JUNE

- 8 – Deadline: Miss CSA Application & Photos
- 26 – Deadline: Fraternalist of the Year Nomination

JULY

- 2 – Deadline: Kropik Scholarship Application
- 2 – Deadline: CSA Scholarship Recipient Information Form
- 4 – Home Office Closed (Independence Day)

AUGUST

- 7/31 – 8/2
- 89th Annual Get-Together, Milwaukee, WI

SEPTEMBER

- 7 – Home Office Closed (Labor Day)
- 26 – Deadline: Photo Contest Entry

OCTOBER

- 15 – Deadline: Veteran's Names & Articles

NOVEMBER

- 26 – Home Office Closed (Thanksgiving)
- 27 – Home Office Closed (Thanksgiving)

DECEMBER

- 1 – Deadline: CSA Serves Matching Funds Request
- 24 – Home Office Closed (Christmas)
- 25 – Home Office Closed (Christmas)





*Miss CSA
Applications
available
now!*

Visit CSALife.com

Six Steps to Start a New Year Routine

(Family Features) With time away from work and school – not to mention indulgent feasts and social commitments – it's easy to let good habits go by the wayside around the turn of the new year. Whether you're resolving to get back to a regular routine or starting one anew in 2026, now is a perfect time to rethink your day-to-day for heightened productivity and less stress.

Commit to a new year of new routines with this step-by-step guidance.

Establish Bed and Wake Routines

When routines begin to fade, sleep is often one of the first areas of health that can slip. It's also one of the simplest bad habits to shake. Hold yourself accountable by preparing for sleep at the same time each night with an easy-to-follow routine – like brushing your teeth, drinking a glass of water and changing into pajamas – that signals to your body it's time to rest. Waking up at the same time each day, even on the weekends, can help you dial in on a more natural sleep and wake rhythm.

Organize and Declutter

If a messy home is what's keeping you awake at night, try putting a weekly or

biweekly “cleaning day” on the calendar and ask family members to do their part. Start in shared spaces like the kitchen, bathrooms and living areas, then divide and conquer bedrooms, prioritizing throwing away (or recycling) items that aren't used frequently while reorganizing chaotic spaces for peace of mind.

Plan Meals and Snacks

The hectic nature of life, especially busy weeknights, is inescapable. Whether you're wrapping up late work meetings, running kids to activities, tackling homework or juggling errands, turning to a tasty, convenient air fryer snack can hold the family over before mealtime.

Update Family Calendars

Keeping up with a schedule full of field trips, sporting events, work meetings, social commitments and weekend activities can be a chore, but turning to technology makes it more manageable. Choose a family calendar app that can be downloaded to your devices and log all of your upcoming events so everyone stays in the know.

Review Screentime Habits

While tech can encourage better organization and planning, it can also encroach on special moments together. After a break from school and work, you might have noticed more screentime around the house – making this an ideal time to return to screentime limits or, at the least, mindfulness of how often you and your loved ones are in front of a TV, computer or mobile device. Encourage kids to put down the tablets and instead opt for family game nights or craft sessions, putting your creativity to the test while reconnecting offline.

Plan for Downtime

Reshaping day-to-day schedules, reviewing routines and preparing for a strong start to 2026 doesn't mean fun is out the window. You can meet your goals and set your family up for success with, like always, a little planning. While building out your calendar with mandatory meetings and obligations, make sure to prioritize downtime, too. Schedule family game nights, dinners at home when everyone is available or a weekend trip to a favorite nearby attraction. Remember what matters most in the hustle and bustle: shared moments with your nearest and dearest.



Wake Up Refreshed: Simple Ways to Begin Your Morning

(Family Features) Ready, set, go. Just as you would set off at the starting line of a race, this hectic pace is how mornings begin for many men and women.

Instead of waking with dread to face another hectic morning, consider these tips for a healthier way to ease into your daily rituals. While these activities may require you to allow extra time, you may be pleased with the productive results.

Meditate.

A practice that has been around for thousands of years may still be one of the best stress busters for hurried mornings. To start, find a place in your home that

is free of noise and distraction. Practice sitting still, with eyes closed, and focus only on your breathing. Using deep, controlled breaths, try to steer your thoughts away from negative and stress-inducing thoughts.

Stretch.

While the most health-conscious person may opt for a morning sweat-a-thon, working in some stretches can also be beneficial. When you awake, think about oft-used muscles and extend each one for 15-30 seconds.

Activate.

Give your brain some fuel in the morning while also doing something nice for your mind. For example, journaling is a gentle way to ease into your morning and get your brain firing. If you can't think of a topic, simply write down a few affirmations for the day, revisit a pleasant memory from your past or scribble down a goal for the week. Journaling can be an uplifting way to engage the mind and express gratitude for the day ahead.

Find more tips for starting your day on the right foot at eLivingToday.com.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images



New Year, New Better-for-You Breakfast

(Family Features) Whether you're preparing to power through workouts or recharging for a day of play, a filling, satisfying breakfast is a fitting way to start the morning. Shaking off the sleepiness can begin with the meal of your dreams, one that's loaded with complex carbohydrates, electrolytes, antioxidants and protein.

For a healthier form of "carb loading," turn to Sweet Potato Blueberry Baked Oatmeal for a quick, nutritious, better way to kickstart the day. It offers complex carbohydrates through oats and sweet potatoes, providing a perfect base for adding yogurt, peanut butter or pairing with eggs for a protein boost. Plus, anthocyanins found in blueberries pack an antioxidant punch to take breakfast to the next level.

Don't let their sweet nature fool you – sweet potatoes are a wholesome option for children, adults and anyone interesting in a nutritional boost. They're used in cuisines all over the world as a satisfying and versatile vegetable, with many surprised to learn a medium sweet potato contains about 100 calories when baked in the skin, along with 2 grams of protein and 25 grams of carbohydrates.

Their carbs may have a bad reputation, but they're made up of complex carbohydrates (which provide energy) that are released at a steady pace. Furthermore, they include a myriad of health-promoting antioxidants – like vitamins A and C – that play a role in immunity, skin health and eye health. Plus, sweet potatoes are a good source of fiber, which helps you feel "full" and can aid in digestion, and potassium.

To learn more and discover better-for-you recipes for the new year, visit ncsweetpotatoes.com.

Sweet Potato Blueberry Baked Oatmeal

*Recipe courtesy of Sarah Schlichter
on behalf of the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission*

Prep time: 10 minutes, Cook time: 30 minutes, Servings: 6

Butter, oil or nonstick cooking spray
2 cups uncooked rolled or old-fashioned oats
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 cups 1% milk
2 large eggs
1 cup mashed sweet potato
1 1/2 tablespoons butter, melted
1/3 cup maple syrup, plus more for drizzling
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2/3 cup blueberries (fresh or frozen)

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Coat inside of 2-quart baking dish with butter, oil or nonstick cooking spray.

Mix oats, cinnamon, salt and baking powder.

Beat in milk, eggs, sweet potato, butter, 1/3 cup maple syrup and vanilla extract.

Mix together, saving blueberries for last to prevent staining or crushing, and spread inside dish.

Bake 30-35 minutes until oats are tender and moisture has been absorbed.

Drizzle with maple syrup, to taste.



Super Foods for a Nutritious Diet

(Family Features) The health community has long praised the benefits of vitamins and nutrients derived from natural sources. For those looking to improve their health or take preventative measures, these 10 natural super foods can be incorporated into your daily diet to help support your health:

Green Tea –

Armed with a special type of antioxidants called polyphenols, green tea can decrease plaque formed in the arteries and can fight prostate cancer.

Rosemary –

Studies have shown this powerful spice can reduce the risk of stroke, as well as protect against Alzheimer's disease.

Almonds –

Full of plant sterols and amino acids, almonds can help lower high cholesterol and promote muscle growth. These handheld treats are also rich in vitamin E, which can protect skin from sun damage.

Fatty Fish –

Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, fatty fish such as salmon, flounder and sardines can lower the risk of heart disease.

Bananas –

This easy, portable snack is loaded with essential potassium, which regulates the nervous system. Bananas also offer loads of vitamin B-6, which aids immunity and metabolism.

Whole Grains –

These powerful body defenders have been known to boost immunity, protect against various cancers and reduce cholesterol.

Eggs –

These energy-packed breakfast favorites contain a special type of protein that helps build muscle strength more than other proteins. When compared to other breakfast foods, eggs can also keep you feeling fuller longer with fewer calories and fat.

Spinach –

Chock-full of magnesium, potassium and various vitamins and nutrients, spinach can prevent clogged arteries and protect against prostate and colon cancers.

Soy –

This protein-packed food contains isoflavones, which can aid in treatment and prevention of prostate cancer. Also, research from the Food and Drug Administration shows that 25 grams per day can help lessen the risk of heart disease.

Dark Chocolate –

Satisfy your sweet tooth and improve blood flow to the brain at the same time. Dark chocolate can also lower blood pressure and increase skin's resistance to UV rays.

Find more health-conscious tips at eLivingToday.com.

*Photo courtesy of Getty Images
Source: eLivingToday.com*






Junior Bowl-O-Rama Scores

Boy's Division #2 Ages 8-11

Colby Breidenbach
Finn Michalek
Nolan Daberkow
Elijah Macht

Lodge Missouri No. 001
Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77
Lodge Mile-Hi Czechs No. 432
Lodge Laurel No. 452



Total Score 277	1st Place
Total Score 246	2nd Place
Total Score 74	3rd Place

Boy's Division #3 Ages 12-14

Reed Michalek

Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77


Total Score 304 1st Place

Boy's Division #4 Ages 15-17

Collin Graveen
Tyler Sullivan
Mason Varga
Ryan Goodwin

Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77
Lodge Woodrow Wilson No. 377
Lodge Laurel No. 452
Lodge Laurel No. 452

Total Score 459	1st Place
Total Score 335	2nd Place
Total Score 290	3rd Place
Total Score 247	






Junior Bowl-O-Rama Scores

Girls's Division #2 Ages 8-11

Kayleigh Daberkow
Kalani Michalek

Lodge Mile-Hi Czech No. 432
Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77

Total Score 84 1st Place
Total Score 73 2nd Place



Girl's Division #3 Ages 12-14

Vanessa Graveen
Grace Macht

Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77
Lodge Laurel No. 452

Total Score 217 1st Place
Total Score

Thank You, Bowlers



District Council

Camaraderie of Fellow Members

District Council No. 10, Northern Ohio – We had a brief meeting for the Election of Officers and they will remain the same: President/Vice President Diane DiBianca and Treasurer/Scribe Annette Reichman. Congratulations.

We then enjoyed the camaraderie of our fellow members from Lodge Paramount/Southgate No. 372: Johnny Weiss, Diane DiBianca, Donna Stepka,

Mary Ann Toncar, Kris and Bruce Marek, and me. Lodge Cleveland Chapter No. 219 members: Tony and Judy Genco, Freddie Shima, Sue Garofalo, and Marsh Gorman joined at Eddie's Creekside in Brecksville, Ohio. The food and conversations were great.

Our next meeting will be May 7 at the Parma/Snow Library at 10 a.m.

*Fraternally,
Annette Reichman*



Journal Themes for 2026

February – Presidents' Day

March – Happy Birthday, CSA

April – Get Ready for the Get-Together

May – Join Hands Day

June – Flag Day

July/August – Independence Day

September – Annual Get-Together

October – Lodge Recognition Program

November – Honoring Those Who Served

December – Photo Contest Winners

Please send lodge articles to:
csajournaleditor@gmail.com by the 13th of the month prior.

Please address all Fraternal inquiries to:
Kelly Deegan at kdeegan@csalife.com
or call 1.800.543.3272 x 4307

Scholarship Fund Donation Form

With the price of higher education rapidly increasing, scholarships continue to be an important fraternal benefit. The CSA Scholarship Fund assists young adults, not only with their education, but with their professional goals. We appreciate your generous donations and your continued support!

Fill and send this form with donation. Please make checks payable to CSA Fraternal Life Scholarship Fund.

Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____

☐ For the general Scholarship Fund or ☐ In Memory of _____

Send acknowledgement of contribution to _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Donor's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

“ We were delighted to donate \$5,000 from our t-shirt and mug sales to the CSA Scholarship Fund! ”
— the 83rd Annual CSA Get-Together Committee



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LODGE HAPPENINGS

Congratulations to Our Newly Elected Officers



Lodge Paramount/Southgate No. 372, Maple Heights, Ohio – It was a crisp 36 degrees at the DTJ in Taborville for our meeting on November 20, 2025.

We had our Election of Officers and they will remain the same: President MaryAnn Toncar; Vice President/Scribe Annette Reichman; Secretary Kris Marek; and Treasurer Diane DiBianca. Congratulations, everyone!

Kris feverishly wrote down questions from our members Kris and Bruce, Diane, Mary Ann, Johnny Weiss, and Donna Stupka for the officers' meeting with the BetterLife on December 6.

Congratulations to our 50/50 winners: Mary Ann won first, and then picked herself, she "re-picked" Johnny, and lastly, Bruce was picked.

Mary Ann brought in "thinking of you" cards for everybody to sign for Jan Dembowski. We miss her!

Thank you, Diane, for our snack: Italian wedding soup with oyster crackers. It was a great idea for a chilly day! And, of course, there was dessert of apple cider donut cake and Italian Love Cake. All was delicious. Was there a theme?

Our last meeting for 2025 was our Christmas Luncheon on December 18.

Come to a meeting, reconnect with friends, and have a tasty snack. We would love to see you!

*Fraternally,
Annette Reichman*



Fraternal Well Wishes

Joan Sapp
Lodge Cleveland Chapter
No. 219

LODGE HAPPENINGS

Updates from the BetterLife Meeting

Lodge Cleveland Chapter No. 219, Cleveland, Ohio – Our December meeting was held at the LongHorn Restaurant. Eleven members attended. We had a short meeting followed by a yummy lunch. Our new member, Carol Schroeder, attended the luncheon. Welcome, Carol!

Freddie, Tony Genco, and Sue Garofalo attended the BetterLife meeting. Some questions were answered, some were not. One thing that was mentioned was that nothing will change in the next year.

There will be a Get-Together next year in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We have two ladies signed up for the Miss CSA Contest already.

Current annuities will be issued by BetterLife. The policy numbers will stay the same, but with an “S” in front of the numbers. The minimum purchase amount for the annuities is \$500.00.

BetterLife would like to have an office/contact in Ohio in the near future.

BetterLife has their own events that we will be invited to. As of now, there will be District meetings.

Our Parma Heights Library will be unavailable to us in January since it will be demolished. A new library in Parma Heights is being built. When it is finished, we will be meeting at the new library.

We will meet at the Parma Powers Library on Powers Drive in January,

same time and day. A postcard reminder will be sent out by Freddie.

Unfortunately, our long-time member, Joan Sapp, was unable to attend our luncheon.

We wish everyone a Happy New Year.

*Fraternally yours,
Judy (Sevcik) Genco*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Combined Social



Lodge Washington 30, St. Louis, Missouri – We had a short meeting in November, with the main order of business being the Election of Officers for the new year. All officers agreed to keep their positions for 2026, and we thank them for their service to the lodge. Jenny Zeman is President; Deborah Zeman, Vice President; Gail Petelik, Secretary; Karen Ditz, Treasurer; and Ericka Ryals, Guide and Sentry. All officers will be installed at the next District Council meeting.

We adjourned early so members of our lodge could join up with Lodge Missouri for our annual combined social. These are always a lot of fun, with desserts and coffee to enjoy, stories to share, and games with “fabulous” prizes. This year it was a Thanksgiving theme, and the game required some fast thinking to come up with three answers to various questions about turkey, pie, side dishes, and other subjects. We thank Marla Breidenbach for her usual good job of organizing the game. It was a very nice evening!

Our American-Czech Center held its Winter Market in early December with food and drink, Czech items for sale, cookie platters and other Christmas pastry, and some very special visitors – St. Nicholas himself, with the Angel and Devil in his entourage. Lodge Washington member Anna Ryals was part of the trio, looking very angelic and helping to hand out gifts to all the kids in attendance. Thank you, Anna!

Now we turn our attention to events and activities in 2026, and we’ll be telling everyone about those in the months to come. In the meantime, here’s wishing all our members and their families a very happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

Pictured top are Ericka Ryals and Marla Breidenbach at the combined social in November. The photo at the bottom is Anna Ryals as the Angel at the Winter Market /St. Nicholas celebration.



*Fraternally,
Deborah Zeman*

LODGE HAPPENINGS

Holiday Fun, Food, and Games

Lodge DuPage Pioneers No. 409, Lombard, Illinois – Members of the lodge met at Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket on historic Route 66 for our annual Christmas Party. Our gathering opened with the Pledge of Allegiance while the regular business of the meeting was tabled. Sixteen of us proceeded to enjoy delicious fried chicken and all the trimmings. Lots of conversation accompanied lunch with frequent smiles and laughter.

After lunch, we played Holiday Bingo, courtesy of our Fraternalist of the Year, Annmarie Antos. The standard Bingo card was replaced with one filled

with holiday icons: Elves, wreaths, bells, mistletoe, Santas, snowmen, snowflakes, and more. Traditional markers were replaced with candies of every kind. Every guest won at least two or three prizes!

Thanks to our President, Linda Burton, for hosting this festive event. She and husband Dale treated guests to chocolate Santas. Guests signed cards to be sent to John and Joann Nekolny for treating us to our plentiful buffet lunch, and to longtime member Martha Cervenka who couldn't be with us. Annmarie and brothers Anthony and Ed, supplied wonderful Bingo prizes and

assisted members who needed a little help getting around. We didn't forget to wish Anthony Cervenka a happy December birthday. Once again, Vice President Lisa Cassai generously donated raffle prizes to be won and enjoyed. District Council No. 12 President Ken Dvorsky joined in the fun and brought treats.

Closing out the event was our annual Christmas Card Exchange. It was a wonderful way to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and all the best in 2026!

*Fraternally,
Gerri Romanelli*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Happy 2026 – New Year, BetterLife!

Lodge Kruh Oswojeych Zen a Panu No. 121, Dillonvale, Ohio – Greetings and a very Happy New Year to all our BetterLife brothers and sisters nationwide! It's hard to believe that 2025 is already behind us and the new year is upon us! Wow! In this ever-changing world, we are sure moving quickly, friends. Isn't it strange to think back to when you were a child—didn't it seem to take forever for Santa to come? These days, you turn your head, and a whole month flies by! I honestly feel like I'm always working on a *Journal* article, friends. That's how fast things seem to be moving these days.

December, as always, was a busy month. My husband Gary and I were honored to represent Lodge No. 121 at the December meeting for Lodge Groveton No. 4 at Lu-Lou's Restaurant in Clinton, Pennsylvania. In addition to getting caught up with some of our CSA lifetime friends, we were delighted to meet some representatives of BetterLife including Jake, Maria, and James, along with former CSA President, John Kielczewski. We were able to participate in a question and answer forum regarding upcoming changes resulting from the recent merger. We were most relieved to hear that in 2026 most of our yearly CSA activities will remain as usual. Jake emphasized that the executive officers at BetterLife want to take a comprehensive look at our programs, consider their purposes, and study our operations. He further said that they were trying to get as many lodges as possible to participate in their "listening tour." The conversations were helpful as they put some of our concerns to rest, and generated excitement over what possible changes may be further down the road. We enjoyed our time with all those at the meeting from BetterLife and Lodge Groveton No. 4. Thank you for including us in your meeting and for the delicious meal! It was an enjoyable time of fraternalism with friends.

Our November meeting resulted in the Election of Officers for the new year. Leading our group in 2026 will be President Wendy Lovell, Vice-President Bonnie Snider, Secretary Mariann Ebright, Treasurer Gary Lovell, Guide Charles Ebright, Sentry

Jack Snider, and Scribe/*Journal* Correspondent/LRP Coordinator Wendy Lovell. Lodge No. 121 usually meets the second Sunday of the month at 1:00 p.m. at various meeting-friendly venues or the Dillonvale Presbyterian Church Social Hall located at 52 Liberty St. in Dillonvale, Ohio. We encourage all our members to attend and ask that you contact either Mariann at (740) 733-8158, or Wendy at (740) 769-7511 or (740) 827-4572 to verify the date, time, and location as well as make a reservation, if that is needed. Please consider joining us. We promise to make you feel most welcome!

In November, we also completed our holiday cards for the VA Hospital in Cleveland. This has been a yearly outreach project for our group. We continue to collect pill bottles and turn them over to our director, Terry Placek, who forwards them on to the Home Office. Members continue to transport each other to lodge and community events; check on their neighbors; send cards, texts, and emails; and call to check on one another. In addition, we complete our CSA volunteer hours at our chosen charities, and donate gently used and new items to our local Salvation Army, Goodwill, and The Friendship Room.

In mid-December, our group met at Naples Spaghetti House at 329 North Street in Steubenville, Ohio. Members enjoyed a variety of delicious Italian dishes! We were taken care of by our lovely waitress, Phyllis Sciarra, lifetime resident of Steubenville. Phyllis is an attentive, caring waitress who greets the patrons with a generous smile and often a warm embrace. She makes you feel welcome—that's for sure! When you are there, you are treated like family. Phyllis has been employed there as long as I can remem-

ber—as well as most of the other folks who work there. That sure speaks volumes about the owners! If you are ever in our neck of the woods, please consider stopping in for an ethnic delicacy—or two! You can visit them online at naplesspaghettihouse.com.

This time of year, like us, you may also enjoy visiting the Nutcracker Village in the heart of downtown Steubenville. The display boasts over 180 life-sized nutcrackers throughout the Christmas Village and the business district crafted by Nelson's woodshops. In addition, you can visit the Christmas market, view holiday displays, purchase souvenirs, and enjoy some winter treats—among other points of interest. On one of the pictures, my Aunt Irene and I are posed in front of Naples with one of the nutcrackers, Chef Antonio. You can also see Gary and me pictured with Miss Phyllis, our sweet waitress from Naples. We sure enjoyed our afternoon in Steubenville! Visit them at steubenvillanutcrackervillage.com.

We want to wish all of you a "better life" in 2026 as we continue our CSA customs, traditions, and fraternal activities in addition to embracing our newly merged society with our brothers and sisters at BetterLife.

*Blessings in the new year,
Sister Wendy Kurtz Lovell*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Šťastný Nový Rok 2026!

Lodge Lincoln No. 7, Berwyn, Illinois – The Griffin Museum of Science and Industry, located in Chicago, Illinois, will be decorated with Christmas trees from around the world through the first weekend of January. Several of our lodge members, John Pritasil along with Adam, Lauren and Vera Wilt, and Ken and Alix Fron, are all members of the Moravian Cultural Society. Once again, the Czech tree was decorated by the Moravian Cultural Society with both hand-blown glass ornaments and wooden gingerbread hearts as you can see in the photos below. Sister Alix Fron delighted the audience as she energetically danced with the Moravian Dancers for the grand opening of the tree lighting ceremony held in November.

We had seven members submit entries for the 2025 Photo Contest: Glen

Jedlicka, Elaine Kamykowski, Cecelia Slezak, Pat Smolucha, Joan Smrha, Richard Smrha, and Robert Valenta. Joan Smrha received first place and an honorable mention. Pat Smolucha received second place and an honorable mention. Robert Valenta received an honorable mention. Congratulations to all award winners and participants!

At our December meeting, it was confirmed that all our officers would continue with their jobs in the year 2026. Congratulations to our President Matthew Schultz, Vice President Christine Lanzel, Secretary Vera Wilt, Treasurer Stanley Smolucha, Sentry John Pritasil, and Guide Joseph Hartzel. We appreciate all that you do for our lodge and look forward to the coming year with you as our officers.

Congratulations to George

Eschliman, the son of Amy and Tony Eschliman, who was baptized in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His godparents, Mike and Joy Smolucha, flew in from Italy for the special occasion. George wore a 131-year-old heirloom christening gown. This is the same gown worn by his godfather, mother, grandfather, and great great-grandmother from Michigan.

Our next meeting will take place on Thursday, January 15, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. A link will be provided prior to joining the meeting.

*Fraternally,
Pat Smolucha
s.smolucha@sbcglobal.net*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Donation Made to CR Freedom Foundation

Lodge Prokop Velky No. 137, Cedar Rapids, Iowa – During our November, meeting, we welcomed the CSA/BetterLife representatives to explain and answer questions concerning the merger. Several members had questions and, hopefully, got the answers they needed.

After, we had pizza and desserts. We discussed the food for the Christmas party and held the Election of Officers

for 2026: President Michael Papich, Vice President Vern Rompot, Treasurer Phillip Nejd, Secretary and Scribe Rai Ann Stratton, Sentry Peg Zach, and Guide Barb Pulkrab.

On December 5, we held our Christmas party at the Sokol Hall and catered a traditional Czech meal. Everyone brought a gift for the exchange. Drawings were held and everyone enjoyed their gifts.

For our final service project for the year, we selected the CR Freedom Foundation. This is for the veterans and provides food and other necessities. We made a \$750 donation to their food pantry to purchase items needed.

Wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

*Fraternally yours,
Rai Ann Stratton
Secretary*

“Sponsor a Farm Animal” - We’ll Take Two!



Lodge Benjamin Franklin No. 02, Seven Hills, Ohio – Happy New Year, one and all. Hopefully, you had a great Christmas holiday season and Santa made it down your chimney. It's time to get back to the business of the new year - 2026, wow!

The final weeks of 2025 included our Election of Officers. Our President Scott Krecow shall continue holding the gavel as I maintain the Vice-Presidency and Scribe duties. Ken Burdzinski once again is Treasurer and keeper of the books. However, it is an end of an era, as Vicki Zidlicky steps down from the Secretary post. She had held that position for 17 years and we thank her for the service and the dedication she displayed to the lodge! Stepping in to fill the vacancy will be Secretary Pro Tem, Mike Cernosky. We have every confidence in him as well as Sentry Big Jim Zidlicky and Guide Jimmy Zidlicky.

At the year's end, we completed our charitable donations to qualify for CSA Serves Matching Funds by the December 1 deadline. Included were monetary gifts to the Ronald McDonald House of Northeast Ohio and the CSA Scholarship Fund. The Seven Hills Food Pantry is one of our new grantees. During that city's Holiday Fest, Ken Burdzinski presented a sizable check to an appreciative Mayor Biasiotta, who helped in promoting their food pantry donation table at the celebration.

Sterns Homestead is the last working farm in Parma, Ohio. Since 1981, it has been recognized by the National Register of Historic Places and maintained by The Parma Area Historical Society as a free, living museum. It is to this backdrop that the Homestead has a yearly, “sponsor a farm animal” drive, for feed, hay, straw, and medical needs. They say the cost is \$4,000 monthly for these requirements. We jumped in the saddle on this one and sponsored two horses for 2026!

Lodge meetings to start the year include January 19, February 16, and March 16, 2026. As always, we quorum at Mama Romito's Pub & Pizzeria in North Royalton, Ohio.

*Fraternal Regards,
Jeff Zidlicky*

LODGE HAPPENINGS

Adopted a Family of Six, Shopped for a Senior and Celebrated with Soup

Lodge Independence Liberty Bell No. 408, St. Louis, Michigan – Greetings to all! We have been busy. The lodge donated our hall to a group doing a fundraiser for a little, one-year-old girl. She has Glycogen Storage Disease Stage III. They raised almost \$10,000 to help with expenses and travel.

Our lodge adopted a family with six children through our local Child Advocacy. We got all the kids coats, boots, hats, gloves, clothes and toys. We gave a \$50 gift card to Meijer to the family. At the same time, we bought a \$50 gift card for an

area senior to be given out at an annual community free Christmas dinner on Christmas Day.

On December 7, we had our lodge Christmas party. We had a soup cook-off. Eleven soups were entered. They were all so good! Teresa Butcher got first place and Rod Hardman won second prize. It was a lot of fun!

*Fraternally,
Teresa Butcher*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Despite Challenges, We Persevere

Lodge Pingree No. 366, Dearborn Heights, Michigan – One is a lonely number, especially when you're trying to juggle 10 things at one time all with deadlines that come in a short time span! I have to admit, I'm struggling with this juggling at a time when I'm dealing with the sadness of three long-time friends all leaving this world within 24 days, including Jeff Teichman, President/Treasurer of our lodge, who left on October 3.

Audrey Modos has been faithful in helping distribute food for the past several years at our Food Pantry project every third Saturday of the month. We are hoping other members will join us in the future from 9 to 11 a.m. at 34500 Six Mile Road in Livonia (west of Farmington Road) with meetings, when needed, following the distribution.

As for me, I've been dealing with our house in Northern Michigan. It was gutted due to mold after an ice storm and heavy snow fall and more!

However, Audrey and I persevere and rejoice as we go forward, one step at a time with help from family and friends. Despite these challenges, we've been able to enjoy our Sokol Fest in July, seeing some coming in from out of state, as well as the 150 Anniversary of Sokol Detroit in November. These wonderful memories will be shared in future articles.

We are still waiting for two or more members to come on board to fill positions for President, Treasurer and Scribe (shared with me). Text me at (313) 505-5278 if you are interested or want to suggest another member or email me at vast4468@yahoo.com.

Until then, you are wished a happy, healthy, safe and blessed 2026!

*Respectfully submitted,
Marie Palmer,
Secretary*



In Memoriam

Due to the extended In Memoriam list in the December issue, we will share a current list in the February issue.

We are grateful to our long-time readers for their understanding as we take this time to quietly honor each life and the memories that remain.

Lodge Pingree No. 366 mourns the loss of their President **Jeff Teichman**.

LODGE HAPPENINGS

Stockings for Soldiers and “Stuff a Squad”

Lodge Yankee-Jungmann No. 77, Lombard, Illinois – At our November meeting, an award was presented to member Ken Dvorsky. The lodge recognized him for outstanding dedication, valuable contributions, commitment, and years of service to the Czechoslovak Society of America.

Our lodge contributed to many charities in November. I stopped by the Holy Guardian Angels Food Pantry with a trunk full of food and a monetary gift. They were so thankful for the contributions. Next, we collected many items for this year’s “Stockings for Soldiers”. My trunk was filled with six bags of donated goods to be distributed to soldiers serving in the Armed Forces. Lodge member Cindy Bueneman contributed toys to the North Riverside Police Department’s “Stuff A Squad,” which was done to support Toys for

Tots. Cindy was assisted by her son, Officer Tom Bueneman, and his son Duncan. Finally, this past year, our lodge collected 1,100 prescription bottles for the Home Office.

We hope everyone had great holidays and want to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

*Fraternally,
Mary Ellen Janda*



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Celebrating the End of a Successful Year

Lodge Woodrow Wilson No. 377, Brookfield, Illinois – Our end-of-year meeting once again was full of fun and excitement. We celebrated the end of a successful year with our traditional potluck and much more. After enjoying all the goodies shared by our members, we had a baby-naming ritual for Lukas Dropka, the son of Mike and Chris, the little brother of Kamila, and the grandson of Missy.

Next in line was a “snowman competition,” without even having to get cold or wet! With a roll of dice, we were allowed to color in the corresponding components, and the winner-take-all was Beth Hemzacek with her snowman, Frosty. Finally, our big project for the end of the year was our annual holiday gift drive. Our generous members raised a total of \$750 plus another \$150 worth of toys and gifts, to benefit the clients of People’s Resource Center through their ‘Share

the Spirit’ program. Clients of PRC are members of our local community who are in need, and we are so proud to be able to brighten the holiday season to assist those who are struggling at this time of the year.

Sending wishes to all for a healthy and happy new year; and I look forward to being in touch about our programs and events with the hope that you will be able to join us!

Fraternally,

Jean Hemzáček Laukant

hemzacek.j@gmail.com

630-915-9745



Presentations and Parties

Lodge Groveton No. 4, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania – Happy New Year, Brothers and Sisters! May the new year bring you peace, happiness, and prosperity! We also hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday season with family and friends!

Our November meeting was called to order with 16 in attendance. Wyatt Forrester created and gave a presentation on the Czech Republic. He mentioned architectural landmarks such as the Charles Bridge and the Lennon Wall, different traditions like mushroom picking and Ježíšek at Christmas time, as well as how ice hockey is one of the most popular sports. Wyatt did a great job researching and presenting to us!

The Election of Officers was held at this meeting. We voted to keep everyone the same. Officers will be installed at one of the next meetings.

The December meeting was held at Lu-Lou's restaurant with 22 in attendance. Gary and Wendy Lovell from Lodge No. 121 and John Kielczewski and Jake Manne from BetterLife were all able to join us! After dinner, Jake took the time to get to know us and answer questions about the merger. Thank you to everyone for joining us and celebrating the Christmas season!

Speaking of celebrating Christmas, the Yurkovich family booked a train ride through Titusville, Pennsylvania. They were able to ride through the snow, sing Christmas carols, and meet Santa Claus!

Bentley and Braxton Yurkovich also turned three years old in December! They had a Pixar Cars-themed birthday party and received lots of presents. We don't know what was left for Santa to bring, but they are definitely loved by family and friends!

Lodge meetings will continue to be at Groveton Firehall on the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. Members should arrive a little early to enjoy food and refreshments. There is also an attendance drawing at the end of the meeting. We hope to see you there!

Fraternally,

Sis. Hunter Rae Yurkovich



Scholarship Fund Report



November 10, 2025 - December 10, 2025

IN MEMORY OF ALL PAST LEADERS OF CSA, WITH THANKS

Joan Cervenka, Lodge Woodrow Wilson No. 377

**TO CONTINUE CZECH HERITAGE AND CSA'S TRADITION OF ASSISTING OUR YOUNG MEMBERS
IN PURSUING THEIR EDUCATION**

Barbara Lesko, Lodge Brookfield No. 475

Lodge Benjamin Franklin No. 002

Total Donations:

\$5,200.00

Scholarship Applications are available at CSALife.com

Deadline: March 15, 2026



LODGE HAPPENINGS

Visit from St. Nick, the Angel, and the Devil

Lodge Missouri No. 1, St. Louis, Missouri – St. Nick, along with the Angel and the Devil, visited the American-Czech Educational Center for their Winter Market. Members of the St. Louis lodges came together with Gymnastic Association Sokol members to put on this fundraiser for the Center.

The Korpecki brothers made the goulash from their Teta Elsie's recipe, offering dinner on site and frozen to take home with you. There were other food items available along with frozen dumplings to purchase and the bakery offering Czech cookie plates, poppy seed loaves and cheese kolacky stollens. Czech items were for sale in the Corner Market and the Czech School Board had many goodies for youngsters to purchase as gifts and get wrapped on site.

The kids took their turn visiting with St. Nick and each received a treat bag. There was ornament making, face painting and mulled wine and spiced nuts to purchase. It was a fun-filled afternoon to kick off the holiday season. Thanks to all who worked to make it happen.

Happy New Year to all!

*Until next time,
Marla Breidenbach*



Birds

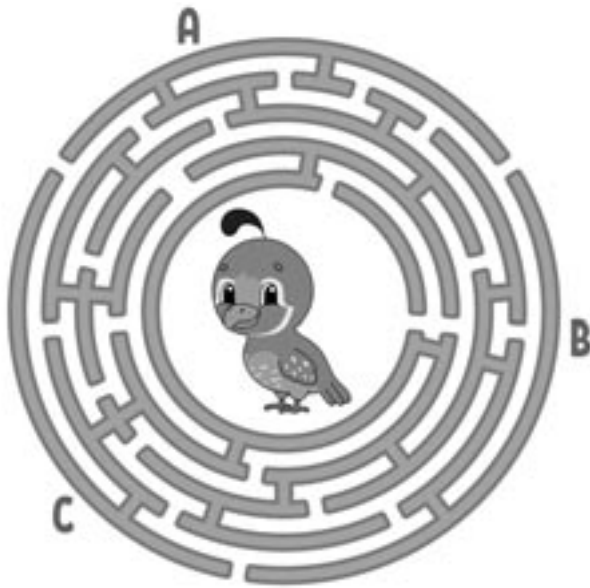
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WORD LIST

ROBIN	BLUEJAY	WOODPECKER
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FLAMINGO	LOON	GOOSE
DUCK	SWAN	CHICKEN



Help the Bird Through the Maze



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