

2008 FALL & WINTER ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
September 6 , 4-8PM	Midsommar Celebration	Hosie/Carter Garden	Bill Hedberg
October 18	Fall Banquet	Spindeltop Hall	Bill Hedberg
December 13	Lucia	To be decided	Bill Hedberg

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Letter from SHSKY President Bill Hedberg

**Greetings to Members and Friends of SHSKI**

The Scandinavian Heritage Society of Kentucky has experienced some changes over the past year. I want to give you an overall view of what is planned for the coming year.

Currently, we meet six times a year as follows:

- ❖ February - Laskiainen Celebration (Finland) at Hunter Presbyterian Church.
- ❖ March - Annual Business Meeting and Election of Officers at Gethsemene Lutheran Church.
- ❖ May - Syttende Mai (Norway) - a Celebration of Independence - celebrate with a picnic in the park, followed with cupcakes and ice cream.
- ❖ June - Midsommar (Sweden) - Celebration of the long days of Summer - We meet in Marie Hosie and Harold Carter's backyard park. It is fun for the whole family as Marie assists you in making flower wreaths before the pot-luck supper.
- ❖ October - Annual Fall Banquet - a dress-up affair held at Spindeltop. A delicious dinner, great fellowship and always a good program.
- ❖ December - Lucia Festival - held at Gethsemene Lutheran Church. A great family Christmas Celebration.

Also, in the planning stages is an event celebrating Denmark. I am working with Sune Fredericksen to plan this event.

Dates and times for all the above events will be listed on our web-page, [www.SHSKY.org](http://www.SHSKY.org), as well

as in our newsletter. Also, two weeks prior to each event a special notice will be sent to our paying members, either by e-mail or regular mail. You may choose which method of communication you would prefer; please contact Treasurer Jan Lindskog with your e-mail or mailing address. If you have an e-mail account and internet access, we do strongly encourage you to chose the e-mail option, for economical and ecological reasons as well as work reduction for the SHSKY officers.

This is your Society and I want you to be an active part of it. If you have any suggestions or fresh ideas please inform me. All our events and activities are possible because of the hard work of willing volunteers. We need you. We appreciate you and welcome your help and assistance at all our events.

The Literary Club has been put on hold temporarily because we do not have a leader. We would like to start meeting again in January. We meet in various homes on the third Sunday of each month and enjoy reading Scandinavian literature, and, of course, enjoy fellowship and dessert. If you are interested or know of anyone who would like to lead this group please contact me.

Membership dues for SHSK is \$25.00 annually per Family or \$20.00 per Individual, and can be paid in December for the coming year. The dues can be paid at any of our meetings or mailed to Jan Lindskog, using the membership form found on page 4, together with your current contact information (address, phone number and e-mail address). Non-members are welcome at all of the events. A small charge of \$3.00 is requested. A membership booklet is in the making and when completed will be available for all members. We are also working on providing a membership card for each paying member.

Come and join with us at all of our meetings. Invite others also. Call me at 859-272-0640.

*Thank you,  
Bill Hedberg, President SHSKY*

## Upcoming Event—Midsummer Celebration



A few examples of traditional types Maypoles. From top to bottom: **Sibby on Åland, Stockholm's Skär-gård, Sweden, and Fredriksdal in Helsingborg, Sweden.**

**O**n Saturday September 6th, it is time to gather and enjoy one of SHSKY's favorite events; the Midsummer Celebration. We are once again welcomed to Marie Hosie's and Harold Carter's wonderful garden, where we will enjoy nature's bounty, a fantastic potluck with traditional Scandinavian dishes and, last but not least, each others company.

As our tradition bids, we will gather in the garden at 4PM on Saturday for flower wreath binding. If you are interested in making wreaths, please make sure to bring some extra flowers. The dinner will begin at 6PM. *Welcome!*



### Some Interesting Midsummer Curiosa and Traditions

**M**idsummer is one of the only pagan holidays that are still celebrated in Europe. In Denmark and Norway it is referred to as the Eve of St. Hans but it's only in Sweden that it has kept its original name.

Greenery placed over houses and barns were supposed to bring good fortune and health to people and livestock; this old tradition of decorating with greens continues still today. In eastern Finland entire young birch trees (*koivu*) are brought to both sides of the front door to welcome visitors. The tradition is believed to have its origin in Germany and it was probably introduced to Sweden in the 12th or 13th century. To decorate with greens was called *att maja* (to "may" or to decorate something with leaves) and may be the origin of the word *majstång* (May or Midsummer pole). Another theory is that the Germans traditionally decorated with greens in May (the month May is 'maj' in Swedish), but since the greenery and flowers were hard to find so early in the spring in the much colder Sweden, the decoration with greenery was moved to a warmer month. As can be seen from the photos to the left, Midsummer poles can look very different from county to county. The more spectacular examples can be found on Åland. The largest ones are about 130-165 feet long and weigh over 2,000 lbs. At the very top is sometimes a small wooden man attached. He will twist and turn and move his arms in the wind, symbolizing work and diligence. Under the man is a pennant which, ever since Åland got its own flag in 1954, generally shows Åland's colors. Small model ships, symbolizing the are attached to arms that rotate in the wind. The pole can also be decorated with decorated leaf and flower wreaths or straw crowns embellished with colored paper or wool. Other examples are stylized figures depicting the sun, which are turned towards east to greet the rising morning sun. A weather vane attached the back of the figure. When the pole has been risen, people gather and sing, play games,



and dance around the pole in ring dances. One of the favorite dances I recall from my childhood is the 'frog dance'!

**B**ecause Midsummer was thought to be one of the times of the year when magic was at its strongest, it was considered a good night to perform rituals to look into the future. Traditionally, a young woman would pick bouquets of seven different wild flowers, preferably at a road crossing, climb over seven fences, place the flowers under her pillow and go to sleep—all under complete silence. If the young woman followed these instructions, she would dream about her future spouse during the Midsummer night. This is a ritual that is still practiced today, even though it is more for fun and, I suspect, to keep the older kids busy. I remember picking the seven flowers as a girl, but I never dreamt about someone special - I recall that I was too young to keep quiet and I skipped the fence climbing, so who knows; it may still work if it is done just right? In the past it was also believed that herbs picked at Midsummer were highly potent, and water from springs could bring good health. However, people also believed that this was a particularly bad night to go swimming, since Näckén was thought to spell bound and drown by-passers and swimmers with his violin during the long and warm Midsummer night. Näckén was believed to be a supernatural creature in the shape of a naked man with long wavy hair who sat in creeks, rapids, or lakes. Näckén has various names depending on where in Sweden or Finland he is discussed. Some tales had it that Näckén taught men to play the violin in his magical way, which ended with the violin player getting so caught up in the music that he would lose his mind, while the listeners would be bound to dance until they died from exhaustion. The only way to escape was to cut off the violin strings with a knife!

**I**n Finland, Denmark, and Norway Midsummer is celebrated with bonfires. In the Finnish midsummer celebration, the bonfires (*kokko*) are burnt at lakesides and by the sea. St. Hans' Eve was an official holiday in Denmark until 1770, and in accordance with the Scandinavian tradition of celebrating a holiday on the Eve instead of the Day, it takes place on the evening of June 23rd. This was the day where the medieval wise men and women, the healers, would gather the special herbs that they needed for the rest of the year to cure people. It has been celebrated since the times of the Vikings, by visiting healing water wells and making a large bonfire to ward away evil spirits. Today the water well tradition is gone. Bonfires on the beach, speeches, picnics and songs are traditional, although bonfires are built in many other places where beaches may not be close. In the 1920s a tradition of putting a witch made of straw and cloth on the bonfire emerged as a remembrance of the church's witch burnings from 1540 to 1693.

*Glad Midsommar!*



*From top to bottom: Näckén, a fountain by Johan Peter Molin. Midsummer bonfire in Mäntsälä, Finland. Bonfires are very common in Finland, where many people spend their midsummer in the countryside. An example of a Danish midsummer bonfire with the traditional burning of a witch.*



## Scandinavian Shopping On-Line

With the wonders of the World Wide Web today, Scandinavian goods are only a few clicks away. This is definitely something well worth to keep in mind for celebrations of all types; who wouldn't be excited about getting a package of knäckebröd for their birthday breakfast or Finnish glass for Christmas?



If you are interested in great examples of Scandinavian design and quality products, I would recommend visiting *Fjorn Scandinavian—Beautiful Things from the Old Country* at <http://www.fjorn.com/>. Among other things, you can look at wonderful linen from Ekelund Weavers (Sweden), beautiful glass from Iittala (Finland), attractive glass and dinner ware from Rosendahl Copenhagen, and classical knitted sweaters from Norway. Decorative and useful products with a more modern vibe are represented by the companies Klippan Natural Textiles, Design House Stockholm, and Bengt & Lotta.



Scandinavian toys can be found at *Kid's Scandinavian Shop* (<http://www.kids-scandinavian-shop.com>). Even as a grown up it is hard not to long to play with toys from Lego, Brio, and Hansa. Something that definitely made me look twice was a spectacular Lego Viking set and the Playsam toys, even though the latter category lies in a price class of its own....



Fun stuff can be found on a number of web sites, including Scandinavian Touch (<http://scandinaviantouch.com/index.htm>). Here you can find a wide variety of Scandinavian welcome signs, front license plates and license plate frames, decals, sun catchers, flag garlands for Christmas tree decorations, CDs with children's songs in Swedish, and Nordic style costume patterns. The site also has a handy gift section with items divided in price categories, so it is easy to find gifts under \$10 or \$25 and so on.

At Scandinavian South (<http://www.scandinavian-south.com/>) you can find the traditional clogs and also glass ware, jewelry (including Swedish pewter and Norwegian sterling silver), cook ware (mini pancake pan, tartlet tins, rolling pins, cheese slicers etc), and food from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland.

I hope that this article will encourage you to look into Scandinavian gifts options; after all, you will not only share a great gift but also our heritage!

*As always—  
I wish You Happy Surfing!*



### Membership and Charitable Contribution Form

Make checks payable to SHSK, and send this form to:  
Jan Lindskog, 1083 Meridian Court, Lexington, KY 40504.



Dues:

Individual (\$20/person) = \_\_\_\_\_

Family (\$25/family) = \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Contribution:

Please accept my gift of \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED = \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

(Required for electronic delivery of Newsletter. E-mail and mailing address will not get shared.)

News and Information for the newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

