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AMERIKAN UUTiset

The National Newspaper for Finnish-Americans

13. päivänä syyskuuta 2017 • September 13th, 2017 • Vol XVIII • NO 17

Hinta / Price \$3,00



FinnFest 2017

Minneapolis, Minnesota

9.17 - 9.24.2017

Suomi
Finland
100



AMERIKAN UUTiset



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NYC Street Fair and Finland 100th Birthday Party Gala a Smash Hit

On Saturday September 9, 2017, from 11:00AM to 5:00 PM, the first truly all Finnish Street Fair was held on Bleecker Street, between Christopher Street and West 10th Street, in Greenwich Village NYC. This location is around the corner from St. John's Lutheran Church where the Finnish Lutheran Church meets.

The Street Fair included a variety of vendors, all Finnish related: Finlandia Foundation, the traveling Sauna, Lumene, Elementem Photography, Hana-mi Real Flower Jewelry, and many others. Finnish could be heard spoken on the streets of New York, if only for this one day. The majority of visitors were Americans, drawn not only to this event, but to other street fairs on each side of the Finnish street fair, guaranteeing a large attendance.

Many people contributed to its success, including but not limited to Eero Kilpi, (Finlandia Foundation NY Chapter President), Annemarie Hjorth (Finnish American Chamber of Commerce project and events manager) and Michael Sylvia, who coordinated the actual physical set up of the booths and stage for musical and dance pre-



Eero Kilpi, Taina Elg and Annemarie Hjorth.



Finlandia Foundation members Kaija Caldara, Paula Hoffen, Sanna Lemmetti, and Marja Makela working the booth at the Finnish Street Fair in New York.

sentations. Heli Silvio was the Master of Ceremonies. Performances included music by singer songwriter Petra Haapamaki; Kalevala the Musical by Johanna Telander; Sauna Poems by Cheryl Fish; music by singer songwriter Ida Metsberg; Dance performances by Heidi Alasuvanto, and piano music by Markus Kaitila.

The tables were full for viewing the performances. The lines were long for the Finnish delicacies at the Suomi Café run by the popular professional cook Simo Kuusisto. Organic rye bread ruisleipa and Karelian piirakka were sold out. Finlandia Foundation handed out free buckets. Lumene offered free tastings in cups of Birchsap. Fashion was available by Weecos.com. An area was blocked off for players to play "Mölkky", a game similar to bocci but with wooden pegs/batons.

Americans, including many of Finnish descent, were surprised to learn that there were Finnish communities in Harlem, Brooklyn and the Bronx in New York City. There were at times actual lines to read and take pictures

of the History of Finns in NYC posters prepared by Robert Alan Saasto, Esq., who also had a second booth displaying watercolor paintings by his mother, Irene Aunio, a well-known Finnish American artist.

On Saturday September 30, 2017, at the Scandinavia House at 58 Park Avenue, New York, NY, Robert Alan Saasto, Esq., will be making a presentation of The Finns of NYC at 5PM at the conclusion of the events that day, which is being devoted to Finnish events.

Finland100 Birthday Party

In the evening that day from 7:00 PM to Midnight, there was a Finland 100 Birthday Party event featuring unique Finnish design, tech, and art at Gary's Loft located at 28 West 36th Street, New York, NY, on the rooftop terrace. Almost 300 people attended. The event was sponsored by the Finnish American Chamber of Commerce, and Finnish Tech Design and Art sponsors. The evening commenced with cocktails on the roof terrace followed by the Finnish nation-

al anthem Maamme. The Master of Ceremonies was Annemarie Hjorth who organized the events and affair. Eero Kilpi made the welcoming address with the Empire State Building in the background. He recognized Laila Williamson (whose father General Heiskanen was a Mannerheim Cross Medal recipient and Commander in Chief of the Finnish Military Forces in the 1950s) and Taina Elg (renowned actress and friend of the rich and famous in Hollywood). Eero recognized the numerous sponsors and supporters by having them come to the stage for recognition. While people ate Finnish



In the evening there was a Finland 100 Birthday Party event featuring unique Finnish design, tech, and art at Gary's Loft on West 36th Street, New York, NY, on the rooftop terrace. The event organizer Annemarie Hjorth welcomed the guests.



The streets of Greenwich Village were full of Finnish-Americans who celebrated Finland's 100 years of independence.

delicacies, and enjoyed the donated Finlandia cheese and Finlandia vodka, they could socialize and/or enjoy the singer Gea, DJ Rony Rex, media art, music and dance improvisation by Oases from HEL, live painting by Susanna Sivonen, and scanography by Kira Leskinen.

Additional events to ce-

lebrate the 100th year of Independence of Finland are to follow in NYC; however, they have started off with a very successful beginning.

Article and photos by Robert Alan Saasto, Esq. New York, NY



Michael Sylvia and Eero Kilpi checked out the traveling sauna.

Finnish-American Society of the Midwest to Sponsor Anu Partanen

As part of the continuing celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Finland, the Finnish-American Society of the Midwest is sponsoring a presentation by Anu Partanen, author of the highly acclaimed book, *The Nordic Theory of Everything*. Ms. Partanen will speak on November 5, 2017, at the Estonian House, 14700 Estonian Lane, in Riverwoods, Illinois.

Anu Partanen began her career as a journalist in her native Finland but when



Anu Partanen's book *The Nordic Theory of Everything* has garnered much attention in the US.

she married an American, decided to move to the United States. Now a naturalized citizen, she is continuing her career, based in New York City. She has written for many periods

including the New York Times, the Atlantic, and Helsingin Sanomat. The Nordic Theory of Everything has attracted widespread attention, called "A best Book of 2017" by Seattle Times and "a best book of summer 2016" by O, the Oprah Magazine. Robert Reich, former secretary of labor has called it "a wonderful, hopeful book about what American society could be".

In her presentation Ms. Partanen describes her feelings upon encountering

for the first time the many difficulties and anxieties of American life, anxieties that in many cases simply don't exist in the Nordic countries. Although she is forthright in stating the many things about the United States that she loves and admires, she clearly and even-handedly presents many ideas and practices long familiar in the Nordic countries that could be adopted here and which could greatly improve the life of the average American citizen.

The program starts at 2pm. The admission is \$10 (donation). There is opportunity to buy the book signed by the author.

Other events that have been sponsored by FASM in this special year have been a highly successful lecture on the Kalevala by Dr. Börje Vähämäki, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto, as well as pre-concert reception and post-concert meeting with the distinguished conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen. That

occasion was the world premiere of Mr. Salonen's Cello Concerto, performed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Celebration of this anniversary year will culminate in a Gala dinner on December 1, 2017, at the Chicago Cultural Center. The Finnish-American Society of the Midwest, a Finlandia Foundation Chapter, welcomes new members. For more information, visit our website www.fasm.us. We are on Facebook, also.