

Finlandia University President: SISU is the greatest indicator of success

New York, NY
Amerikan Utiset
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On November 17, 2017, Consul General, Ambassador Manu Virtamo, hosted in NYC at his residence a reception for Philip Johnson, PhD, President of Finlandia University and James Kurtti, the Director of the Finnish American Heritage Center & Historical Archives and Honorary Consul of Finland to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Approximately thirty invited guests from the Finnish community in New York City attended. This included members of the Finnish Consulate in NYC, Finlandia Foundation-NY Chapter and National; several members of the Finnish American Lawyers Association (FALA), and other dignitaries.

Philip Johnson spoke about how the original Finnish Lutheran



From Left: president of Finlandia University Philip Johnson (PhD), FALA members Matt Saha (Esq.), president Robert Saasto (Esq.) and Ernest Saasto (Esq.). In front row there are: honorary consul Jim Kurtti, FALA members Laila Williamson (Esq.), Beth Pessala (Esq.) and Michael Student (Esq.). On the extreme right is Consul General (NY), Ambassador Manu Virtamo.

immigrants created Suomi College in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, at the end of a long country road. That college is now Finlandia University and its educational mission has embedded in it the ideals of SISU, "perseverance in the face of adversity." Of all the indicators of success in college, that SISU or perseverance of character is the greatest indicator of success. Philip Johnson introduced James Kurtti, the Direc-

tor of the Finnish American Heritage Center & Historical Archives, and described him as the "voice of Finnish Americans today."

James Kurtti presented a film showing the building of the Historical Center and the numerous historical projects taking place therein. The Heritage Center was established in 1932 to collect, interpret, and preserve the artifacts of the Finnish Americans in the USA. It

was his purpose to make it known to Finnish Americans the importance of preserving these artifacts for the future, and to encourage them to send photos and other items to the Center before they are thrown out by heirs who are not aware of their significance.

Robert Alan Saasto, Esq. made a presentation of two watercolor paintings made by his mother, Irene Aunio, a renowned Finnish American

artist whose watercolors have received numerous awards and are in the permanent collections of several museums. He also presented four large poster boards depicting photos of the History of the Finns in Harlem and Finntown Brooklyn in NYC. These historical presentations were exhibited at the Street Fair in Greenwich Village and at the Scandinavian House in the fall as part of the 100th Year of Independence of Finland celebrations in NYC.

Consul General Ambassador Manu Virtamo addressed the group before the buffet luncheon was served. He took considerable pleasure in showing the group a drawing by Tapio Wirkkala, a very well-known Finnish designer and sculptor. It depicted two men in a dug-out trench on the front lines in the defense of Finland, in Eastern Karjala. The drawing is signed by Tapio Wirkkala. "Itä Karjalassa 6.12.1942" appears thereon referring



Ambassador Manu Virtamo displaying an artwork by sculptor Tapio Wirkkala.

to Eastern Karelia on the 25th year of Finnish Independence!! What a significant work to display at events honoring the 100th year of independence today.

The festive occasion was an excellent opportunity for supporters of Finlandia University and the Finnish American Heritage Center & Historical Archives to mingle, network, and socialize in an informal setting.