



Home ◀

Purpose ◀

Board of Directors ◀

By-laws ◀

Meeting Schedules ◀

Luncheon Registration ◀

Members ◀

Foundation ◀

Message Board ◀

Links ◀

Contact Us ◀

Meeting Schedule for 2007/2008

[Return to the current Meeting Schedule](#)

October 6, 2007



Speaker: *Robert P. Elde, Dean of the College of Biological Sciences, University of Minnesota*

Topic: We will have an opportunity to learn about the University of Minnesota's efforts to collaborate with Norwegian Universities in the field of biology. The University of Minnesota's Dean of the College of Biological Sciences, Dean Robert P. Elde, PhD, will deliver a PowerPoint presentation about the Norwegian Centennial Interdisciplinary Chair exchange program between the University of Minnesota and corresponding Norwegian University Life Science Programs.

In the spring of 2006, Dean Elde traveled to Norway, along with President Bob Bruininks and several other distinguished delegates, to establish this program. Professor Elde was named dean of the University of Minnesota's College of Biological Sciences in October, 1995. He received his Bachelor of Science degree at North Park College in Chicago and his PhD from the University of Minnesota. He is the J.B. Johnston Lan Grant Professor in Neuroscience and has received an honorary Doctor of Medicine degree from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. Dean Elde has focused most of his tenure as dean on applying research to enhance human health, the environment, and agriculture in Minnesota.

[Norwegian Centennial Interdisciplinary Chair Fact Sheet](#)

November 3, 2007

Speakers: *Ellen Ruiters, founder of AfricaJam*



Topic: Do you ever feel like it is hard to make an impact? Do you wonder what you can do as an individual that will truly benefit the less fortunate? We want to inspire you with the story of a local Norwegian-American, Ellen Ruiters, who has made a difference in South Africa.

What does this have to do with Norway & America, you might ask? Stories like Ellen's reflect the essence of the Lakselaget motto. Ellen is an example of a woman who "swims against the current". Norway has a long history of supporting development cooperation that dates back to 1952 and arguably, even longer if you consider the early mission work of the Norwegian Lutheran Church. Norway is the 3rd most generous country in the world in terms of the amount of foreign aid it gives to developing countries and international aid organizations each year. To add perspective, the US ranks number 21 on this list.

Ellen's work in South Africa is but one example of how a person can make a tremendous impact upon the lives of many others. She moved from Edina, MN to Cape Town, South Africa. In 2001, Ellen founded Africa Jam after recognizing a need for safe, youth-empowering activities for kids after school. She served as an inner-city educator for Right Step Academy and has held leadership positions with Young Life, Tree House, and the Youth Forum Summer Festival and received the 2007 alumni service award from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN.

Africa Jam has three core program goals: social upliftment, faith enrichment, and arts & education. For example, Africa Jam host programs about HIV/AIDS education, drug & alcohol prevention, self-esteem & making healthy decisions, community service outreach, and mentoring & youth development.

Some of Africa Jam's successes in the lives of historically disadvantaged children in South Africa include:

- Partnering with more than 50 schools and adding more than 20 schools to its network of service;
- Receiving the South Africa Department of Education endorsement in 2004 for excellence in after school programming;

- Reaching more than 10,000 young people in 2006.

You may read more about Africa Jam at:
www.myafricajam.org.

For information about foreign aid rankings,
[click here](#).

December 1, 2007



Speaker: *Dawn Sonntag, Lyric Soprano, Director of Mindekirken's Music Program*

Topic: The year 2007 marks the one hundred year anniversary of the death of the famous Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg. Celebrations commemorating his works have been held all over the world during 2007. We are honoring him by having a program focused on his contributions to music on December 1st. The Director of Mindekirken's Music Program, Dawn Sonntag, will sing music composed by Edvard Grieg.

Lyric soprano Dawn Sonntag has performed as a concert soloist in Europe and the US, and has appeared with the Florentine Opera, Opera Columbus, and the Heidelberg Gilbert and Sullivan Ensemble. She earned graduate degrees in both voice performance and collaborative piano at the Hochschule für Kirchenmusik in Heidelberg and in choral conducting at the Ohio State University. In December, Dawn will complete the Doctor of Musical Arts in vocal performance at the University of Minnesota, with secondary areas in composition and choral conducting. Dawn was a winner of the Inge Pitler lied competition in Heidelberg, Germany, and she was a finalist in the southwest regional competitions for both the Metropolitan Opera and National Association of Teachers of Singing. Last March, Dawn performed four Grieg orchestral songs with the Kenwood Symphony Orchestra as a winner of their Masters Aria and Concerto Competition. She is also a composer, and her vocal and instrumental compositions have been performed in several venues across the US and in Europe. She has conducted college, community and church choirs in Germany, Norway, and the US, and recently competed as a semi-finalist in the American Choral Director's Association national graduate conducting competition in Miami. Since September, 2005, Dawn has served as

director of music at the Norwegian Memorial Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

January 5, 2008



Speaker: *Ambassador Ben Whitney, US Ambassador to Norway*

Topic: *Educational Exchange*

Benson K. Whitney was nominated as the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway by President George W. Bush on September 23, 2005. His nomination was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on October 28, 2005, and he was sworn in by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on November 28, 2005. He arrived in Norway January 9, 2006.

Ambassador Whitney's career has included extensive experience in business, law, and community affairs. He received his BA magna cum laude from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York and earned his JD from the University of Minnesota Law School in Minneapolis, graduating as an editor of the Law Review, Order of the Coif, magna cum laude, and winner of the Amos Deinand Award for Scholarship.

Ambassador Whitney practiced law with Popham, Haik, Schnobrich, Kaufman and Doty Ltd. specializing in health care, cable television and other regulated industries as well as election law. He then served as Managing General Partner of the Gideon Hixon Fund, an evergreen venture capital fund focused on early stage technology and health care companies in Minnesota and California. Ambassador Whitney was elected President of the Minnesota Venture Capital Association and advised and managed several other venture funds. He has served as Chief Executive Officer of Whitney Management Company, a private investment advisory firm.

Ambassador Whitney has been involved throughout his life in public affairs and government reform efforts in both professional and volunteer capacities on the local, state and national levels. He served as Minnesota Executive Director and Minnesota Finance Chair for Bush-Cheney '04, as well as Minnesota Finance Chair for the Republican National Committee.

Ambassador Whitney has been a trustee,

director, chairman or advisor of a number of non-profits including the Guthrie Theater, Wilderness Inquiry, Persephone Fund, Headwaters Fund, Minnesotans for Term Limits, and the Minneapolis Academy. He is a member of the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis where he has served as a liturgical minister.

Ambassador Whitney and his wife Mary have four children.

February 2, 2008



Photo: Bill Kelley

Speaker: *Brenda Langton of Café Brenda & the Spoon River Restaurant*

Brenda Langton, owner and operator of Spoonriver, was at the forefront of popular American vegetarian cooking when she began her career as a teenager in the early 1970s. As the youngest member of the cooperative vegetarian restaurant, Commonplace, she was determined to learn the nuts and bolts of running the establishment.

Langton had risen to the position of manager by the time she left Commonplace in 1976. She then traveled to Europe where she spent the following year exploring markets and restaurants all over the continent, experiencing cuisine rooted in the finest local ingredients. Upon her return, she opened Cafe Kardamena, a gourmet vegetarian and fresh seafood restaurant located in the Cathedral Hill district of St. Paul. She was twenty-one. Over the next eight years she built her cafe into the premiere vegetarian restaurant of the Upper Midwest. When it became apparent that the size of her restaurant had outgrown demand, she opened Cafe Brenda in the heart of the warehouse district in Minneapolis. Cafe Brenda received national recognition as one of the finest restaurants in the country, and as an innovator in gourmet vegetarian cooking. Jane and Michael Stern's 1999 Gourmet Magazine column, Two For the Road, cited Langton as significant force in the health food movement. In an earlier review (1996) they noted that Cafe Brenda is "where elevated nutritional consciousness inspires the best kind of creativity – the kind that tastes good."

In 1992 Langton published *The Cafe Brenda Cookbook – Redefining Seafood and*

Vegetarian Cuisine. The book has become a popular standard for those seeking a healthy alternative in their own home.

Over the years, Langton has immersed herself in the study of Macrobiotics, Eastern philosophies and ethnic cooking techniques. Langton teaches cooking classes and is in demand to consult on the topic of natural foods and diet.

She operates her restaurants with her husband, Timothy Kane. They live in Minneapolis with their daughter, Celina.

March 1, 2008



Speakers: *Tove I. Dahl, Dean of Skogfjorden Concordia Language Village, and Krista "Huldra" Schweppe, Assistant Dean and Credit Facilitator*

Topic: What is Skogfjorden and where is it headed these days? Join us to learn more about current projects and programs associated with the Norwegian program of the Concordia Language Villages.

Tove Dahl has been on staff for 30 years (as of 2008), dean for 26. Dean "by summer", associate professor and educational psychologist in the psychology department at the University of Tromsø "by winter."

Krista Schweppe has been involved with Skogfjorden for the past 11 years. Throughout the year she works with a variety of learners ranging from kids at Barnehage to adults at Mindekirken's Norwegian Language and Culture Program. Krista is currently pursuing a Masters in teaching ESL at Hamline University.



April 5, 2008

Speaker: *Anne Helene Skinstad, PhD*

Topic: If *Nille* drinks alcohol, she will drink less and differently than "*Jeppe paa Bjerget.*"

I grew up with the Norwegian answer to the



French playwright, Moliere, who portrayed Nille as the keeper of a typical women's drinking pattern, responsible and modest. That picture has stayed with me for many years. However, after I started treating and doing research on women with drinking problems, I have had to markedly change my ideas of how women drink.

Drinking patterns for women and men have changed through history and vary from culture to culture. Norwegian and American drinking patterns used to be different years ago, but because of media influence and more frequent travel between these countries, these differences are becoming less and less pronounced. Furthermore, Norway's financial situation has made it possible for people to afford buying alcohol.

The goal for this presentation is to discuss differences between the two countries in drinking patterns with specific focus on women's way of consuming alcohol. Experiences from treatment and research on substance use in women will also be recalled. The physical, emotional and medical consequences for women who consume too much alcohol and meet criteria for alcohol dependence will be considered in detail.

May 3, 2008

Speakers: *Scholarship Winners*

June 7, 2008

Members Only Picnic at Ingeborg Sundet and Consul Rolf Willy Hanson's residence.