

The Midnight Sun

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Calendar of Events

- Charlotte World Soccer Tournament
Date and Times TBA
- UNCC Int'l Festival
Featuring Café Scandinavia
Barnhardt Student Activity Center
Saturday, September 27
10 am - 6 pm
- ScanFest 2008!
Wachovia Atrium
301 S. Tryon Street
Saturday, November 8
11 am - 5 pm

Join SAGA for Some Upcoming Events!

ScanFest of the Carolinas is celebrating its 5th Anniversary on November 8, 2008! Come and join us to celebrate in an all day party at the Wachovia Atrium, 301 S. Tryon Street, Charlotte NC.

SAGA is seeking volunteers for several upcoming events. Even if you are unable to lend a hand, please mark your calendars and join us for some good times! Look for us at:

- The Charlotte World Soccer Tournament in May 2008
- UNCC IFest on Saturday, September



27, 2008

- Set up for ScanFest on Friday, November 7, 2008 5.00 PM
- ScanFest 2008 on Saturday, November 8, 2008, 9 AM – 8 PM
- Welcoming and Info booth coordinator for ScanFest is also needed!

Are you able to help out? If so, please contact

ulrika@scandinavianconnection.org.

SAGA's decorating committee is looking for Sami/Lapland items for ScanFest 2008. If you have something you'd be willing to lend, please contact Isabella at mwiel4@hotmail.com

Wooden Canoe Building Workshop

On July 6 through July 11, Professor Torben Hanson of the Danish School of Craft, Copenhagen, Denmark will be artist in residence for a couples hands on workshop. Go to www.buildacanoec.com for more information. \$1300 per couple for the week includes materials, lodging and



Easter in Denmark - Denmark's Easter Traditions

From Scandinavia Travel

So how is Easter celebrated in Denmark?

In Denmark, many homes and shops are decorated for Easter in green and yellow, especially with new-leaved branches and daffodils. Eggs are colored and are often added as decoration. Keep the national holidays in mind when you plan your trip and activities.

There is a unique Danish Easter tradition: the custom of sending teaser letters. A few weeks before Easter (generally done on Valentine's



Day), Danes cut out letters on which they write a teaser verse. The letter is anonymous,

but signed with a number of dots corresponding to the number of letters in the sender's name, so that the recipient has a chance of

Massage Away the Winter Blues

Massages are so important for our sense of well being. It is a natural way to improve our vitality and state-of-mind. It promotes circulation, alleviates joint pain, relaxes tight muscles, and relieves stress and tension from everyday living. It's a great way to revive our entire body, and not at least - it feels so good!!

My name is Lisbet Kan and I am a licensed massage therapist located in Ballantyne. Originally from Norway, I have lived in Charlotte for ten years. I offer Swedish, Deep Tissue, Movement Therapy (gentle rocking and joint mobilizations), Energy Work, and Chair Massage (in my massage studio or on-site).

First visit (one hr massage) is \$40,

thereafter \$50. Chair massage: dollar-per-minute rate - you choose the minutes. Remember that each massage is tailored and any of the above modalities may be combined to your need. Gift Certificates are also available!



Call 704 651 6704 for an appointment!
Or, e-mail

lisbetkan@hotmail.com

Lisbet Kan, LMBT
NC License 7108

guessing who sent it. The reward is an egg at Easter. The letter is accompanied by a snowdrop, which is regarded as the first flower of the year.

Denmark's traditional Easter food consists of eggs in many different versions, but Danish locals often eat chicken, fish, or lamb at Easter.

"Easter" in Danish is *Påske*.

Let's Get Ready for the 5th Annual ScanFest of the Carolinas!!!

But wait... ScanFest costs almost \$22,000 a year to organize and operate! SAGA's bank account balance does not match that amount. We are actually \$16,000 away from our goal. SAGA does not have members to generate income, so we rely on donations and fundraising to make ScanFest a reality. But as 501 C 3 nonprofit corporation we can offer tax deductions to anyone willing and able to contribute and as always, we greatly appreciate your support. We have set up a Paypal payment system on our website (www.ScandinavianConnection.org) to accept donations at any time. Donating to SAGA is easier than ever! Again, all of your donations are tax deductible. Would you please help us create an even better and bigger ScanFest?

For more information, please visit our website or email info@scandinavianconnection.org

And The Happiest Place On Earth Is...

From CBS

Happiness is that quirky, elusive emotion that the Declaration of Independence maintains we have every right to pursue. And we do pursue it: we are suckers for an endless stream of self-help books that promise a carefree existence for a mere \$24.95; and television hucksters of every kind claim they have the key to Nirvana. So the happiness business, at least, is one big smiley face.

As for the rest of us, the main scientific survey of international happiness carried out by Leicester University in England ranks the U.S. a distant 23rd, well behind Canada and Costa Rica. But you'll be pleased to know we beat Iraq and Pakistan.

And the winner, once again, is Denmark.

Over the past 30 years, in survey after survey, this nation of five and a half million people, the land that produced Hans Christian Andersen, the people who consume herring by the ton, consistently beat the rest of the world in the happiness stakes. It's hard to figure: the weather is only so-so, they are heavy drinkers and smokers, their neighbors, the Norwegians, are richer, and their other neighbors, the Swedes, are healthier.

So it's ironic or something that the unhappiest man in history, or at least literary history, was that Prince of Denmark, Hamlet.

Of course Hamlet had every right to be depressed. After all, his uncle murdered his father and seduced and married his mother and was an all around perfect scoundrel. But Hamlet aside, what makes a Dane so happy and why isn't he wallowing in misery and self-doubt like so many of the rest of us?

That's a question that also intrigued Professor Kaare Christensen at the University of Southern Denmark.

"If you ask people on the street where they think the happiest country in the world, they'll say, you know, like, tropical islands and nice places, like Italy or Spain. Places with nice weather and good

food. But in Europe, they're actually the most unhappy people," Dr. Christensen explains.

So Christensen and a team of researchers tried to discover just why Denmark finds itself on top of the happiness heap.

"We made fun of it by suggesting it could be because blondes have more fun. But then we could prove that the Swedes have more blondes than the Danes, and they were not as happy. So we tested different hypotheses," Christensen says.

After careful study, Christensen thinks he isolated the key to Danish anti-depression. "What we basically figured out that although the Danes were very happy with their life, when we looked at

their expectations they were pretty modest," he says.

By having low expectations, one is rarely disappointed.

Christensen's study was called "Why Danes Are Smug," and essentially his answer was it's because they're so glum and get happy when things turn out not quite as badly as they expected. "And I was thinking about, What if it was opposite? That Denmark made the worst, number 20, and another country was number one. I'm pretty sure the Danish television would have said, 'Well, number 20's not too bad. You know it's still in the top 25, that's not so bad,'" he says.

History may also play a role in the country's culture of low expectations. If you go to the government's own Web site, it proudly proclaims "the present configuration of the country is the result of 400 years of forced relinquishments of land, surrenders and lost battles."

Could it be that the true secret of happiness is a swift kick in the pants, or a large dose of humiliation?

"Do you think there's some kind of inverse relationship between the more powerful you are, the more unhappy you are? And the

weaker you are, the happier you are?" Safer asks.

"Well, at least the pressure's off you, you know?" Christensen says. "And if you're doing pretty well and once in awhile there's outstanding, you're very happy about it. But if your starting point is you should be outstanding, that's not good."

Asked if he thinks Danes like being slightly in the shadows, Christensen says, "I think it's a little bit like in bicycle race. You like to come from behind."

Which is exactly what the underdog Danes did in the 1992 European Soccer Championship; Christensen says it created such a state of euphoria that the country has not been the same since.

But is there more to it? *60 Minutes* asked Danish newspaper columnist Sebastian Dorset what he thought about Denmark's number one status.

"If you didn't tell me about the survey I wouldn't believe that Denmark was the happiest place. Because everybody complains all the time," Dorset says.

"But I find it fascinating that you say people complain. But there is a real sense of contentment here," Safer remarks.

"Yeah," Dorset agrees.

Dorset says that contentment may stem from the fact that Denmark is almost totally homogenous, has no large disparities of wealth, and has had very little national turmoil for more than a half century. "We have very little violence. We have very little murders. So people are, feel very safe," he says.

He says people feel secure. "[A] knife stabbing makes the front page every time. Yeah, I don't think that happens in America very often," Dorset says.

Happy as they may be, Dorset says Danes rarely show it. "People are not looking very happy in the street. They don't talk very much," he says.

"So people don't just strike up casual conversations on the train?" Safer asks.

"No. No, never. I think, actually, there's a very highly developed body language. When, if you are stuck on the window seat of a bus, and wants to get out, and there's a person next to you on the aisle seat, then you don't say, 'Excuse me, could I please get off?' You start rattling your bags and

Happiest Place on Earth (con't)

make sort of a gesture saying, 'I'm about to get up so please get up so I don't have to talk to you,'" Dorset says.

Asked if it might be shyness, Dorset says, "I don't know, it's considered a right by Danish people not to be talked to."

Danish students can fairly be described as utterly laid-back. Even so, they're surprised to be told they live in "happiness-ville."

"When I go abroad, I usually see people look much more happy. For example, in southern Europe. They go about in the streets laughing much more than we do. I think you could say maybe we are more content," one male student tells Safer.

"What's the distinction you make between happiness and contentedness?" Safer asks.

"Well, if you're content you don't have so much to worry about. That's what I think," the student says.

For example: they have no student loans hanging over their heads. All education is free in Denmark, right on through university. And students can take as long as they like to complete their studies.

"And we get paid to go to school actually. Instead of in the U.S. you pay to go to school, we get paid to go to school if we pass our exams," a student explains.

"Americans watching this particularly people your age would be bowled over by the very idea that the government pays you to go to school," Safer remarks.

"Yeah," the student acknowledges.

"I'm being paid right now for not going to school. I'm being paid for parenting," another male student tells Safer. "It's 100 percent paid for by the government for half a year."

Denmark also provides free health care, subsidized child care and elder care, a social safety net spread the length and breadth of the country.

"I mean, we're pretty much free to do whatever we want. We're secure from the day we're born. For a Dane who lives in Denmark," a male tells Safer.

Fish and beer-a-holics they may be, but

workaholics they are not: Dr. Christensen says the average work week is 37 hours, and workers get six weeks of vacation.

But in getting all of these wonderful gifts from the government, the Danes do pay a price. Christensen says a middle income person would pay about 50 percent - half - in taxes.

And that is one trade-off most Americans are not willing to make. Americans, according to Harvard Psychology lecturer Tal Ben-Shahar, want it all.

"In America, part of the ethos, part of the American dream, is that more is better and the more is better usually applies to the material realm. And that doesn't pan out. That doesn't work. It doesn't make us happier," he says.

Ben-Shahar teaches a course at Harvard called "Positive Psychology," the science of happiness. He began the class four years ago, and it has become the most popular course on campus, enrolling some 1,400 students. In the U.S., the quest for happiness begins in what's alleged to be the happiest years of our lives.

"There's a lot of unhappiness on college campuses. And it's not just at Harvard. Over 94 percent of college students nationwide are stressed and overwhelmed. And students are paying a very high price for this pressure," Ben-Shahar says.

That pressure is a result of high expectations; wanting it all is a bacterium that stays with us from youth to old age - wanting a bigger house, fancier car, more stuff. And when we get more, there's always someone with even more stuff, who's just as unhappy. Some suggest that the unhappiest zip codes in the country are the wealthiest, like the Upper East Side of New York.

"The number one predictor of well-being is close friendships and close relationships in general, which includes of course, family relationships. Much better predictor of well-being than affluence is," Ben-Shahar says.

Ben-Shahar says Americans could learn a lot about happiness from the Danes. "It is about having realistic expectations. It's about not trying to fit in more than we can handle. We can't handle it all. We can't have it all. But we can have a lot," he says.

"You've lived in the states. You visited the states," Safer asked a man. "Would you live there?"

"It's got a grandness to it that you can never imagine here in Denmark. Because it's on a much larger scale. And the differences are much, much bigger. But I wouldn't want my children to grow up there," the man replied.

"Just describe for me the qualities that a successful person would have in this country," Safer asked.

"Well, in order to see myself as a success I would want to be happy and have a lot of time with my family. I think that's very important to me. And the money is not that important," he replied.

"It is more about the softer values, such as not being stressed, and feeling passionate about what I'm doing. 'Maybe this job is not gonna pay me a lot of money. But I'm gonna love getting up and doing it every day,'" another said.

Asked if one can equate money with happiness, a man told Safer, "No."

"If you have a sufficient amount of money, then I don't think it will make you a lot happier to get really rich. And we're already at a good level here in Denmark. So I don't think we'll be happier if we increase our wealth," another remarked.

But these un-melancholy Danes, as laid back as they are, do not lack ambition. "I think that we have very high hopes. Just like any other people who, we just don't get so disappointed when we don't see them through," a man explained.

Asked what he would advise Americans to do, the man said, "Well, okay. I have an advice. Don't depend too much on the American dream. Yeah. I think you might get disappointed."



News from Sons of Norway

From: New SON Lodge 3 – 679 (soon to be named) Charlotte, NC and the Carolinas

Our February 23rd meeting went so well! Lots of time to mingle, meet new people and share things that we'd brought such as "real" maps of Norway, a special large photo of an area of Norway where some had relatives, cartoon books, Bunad books, hand made sweaters with unique stories about them, fabrics and much more. We also shared great food. Vafler and Krumkaker were brought in as well as making our own Surkaal

during the meeting for everyone to share! Pretty simple but uniquely different!

We participated in our first community event, a table at Harrison Elementary School for their Diversity extravaganza. Members provided a Viking ship and books, a real Bunad and all the wonderful accessories, hand crafted Nissen, a beautiful brodboks (bread box), several hand made sweaters from Norway, crafts and trolls to share with the children and their families. It was a big hit. We were also able to provide handouts on SON and Ralph had provided 150

Viking for Kids magazines. We may have picked up some interested in membership from our participation in this event.

We have officers elect to be formalized when we have our 40 members and are "official". They are Carol King, President, Ron Olszewski, Vice President, Deb McConaghy, Secretary/ Membership, and Nina Olszewski, Treasurer. Isn't this wonderful!!

For more information, please contact Carol King at 704-674-2778 or Mette Andersen at 704-678-2360.

The Past meets the Present in Fox's International 'New Amsterdam'

From USA Today:

Fox's *New Amsterdam* (premiering Tuesday, 9 ET/PT) may have a New World feel, but the cop drama has a decidedly Old World flavor.

Swedish film great Lasse Hallström (*The Cider House Rules*, *Chocolat*) directs the pilot episode. Lead Nikolaj Coster-Waldau is Danish. Co-star Zuleikha Robinson is British.

And while Coster-Waldau's John Amsterdam is more than 400 years old, he lives a decidedly 21st-century life as a savvy homicide detective.

The concept: As a Dutch soldier, he died in 1642 saving

the life of a Native American woman in the pre-New York colony of New Amsterdam. She revived him with a spell that makes him immortal — and ageless — until he finds his one true love.

Four centuries later, a contemporary, streetwise Amsterdam is still searching for the perfect woman.

New Amsterdam combines themes of immortality with crime-solving, history and humor set in New York City, where the eight-episode series was filmed.

The concept initially felt like a bit of a stretch to Coster-

Would you like to see your friends and family in *The Midnight Sun*? We would, too!

Send your photo or recipe submissions to Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org

by Friday, April 4.

Waldau (*Kingdom of Heaven*, *Wimbledon*), whose wry, melancholy character comes off as part Renaissance Man, part MacGyver.

"When I was told about the plot, I wasn't sure I was going to do it," he says. "Then I heard Lasse was involved. I read the script and got really excited."

Immortality "gives you the

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The Midnight Sun
P.O. Box 1416
Huntersville, NC 28070

Phone: 704-763-9152
E-mail: Ulrika@ScandinavianConnection.org
Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org

We're on the Web!

www.ScandinavianConnection.org



Mission Statement

SAGA of the Carolinas, a non-profit organization, is organized to promote cultural exchange between the United States and the Nordic Countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden; to preserve and enjoy the Scandinavian traditions, customs, history and cultural heritage; to increase understanding of the Nordic people and societies among Americans; and to provide a forum where people interested in Scandinavia can meet and enjoy Nordic culture and activities.

Calling all Scan-Am Groups!

If your group or organization would like to have your events or news included in the next issue of The Midnight Sun, please send your submission of 100-200 words to Jenn@ScandinavianConnection.org by Friday, April 4.

'New Amsterdam' (con't)

freedom to explore the history of New York, to learn from your past mistakes. That's very much what John does," Coster-Waldau says.

All those centuries hanging around what would become the Big Apple provide Amsterdam the historical and cultural context to help solve crimes. The time also provides comic relief, such as when Amsterdam deflects his new partner's jabs, saying she "sounds just like my last 609 girlfriends."

Amsterdam is also trying to move forward, at least to some end, as

the novelty of immortality has given way to isolation. When he has a heart attack while chasing a suspect, he believes his true love

must be close and could ultimately help break what has become a five-century curse.

"What he wants is some kind of normality — to experience a relationship and grow old

with someone," says Coster-Waldau, 37.

The pilot was shot last spring for a fall 2007 launch. Instead, some scenes were rewritten and re-shot, largely to lighten up Amsterdam's persona and hasten the

story line, says executive producer David Manson.

Immortality has a lengthy literary and Hollywood pedigree, says Manson. "It poses rich existential questions. How do you find meaning in the journey of life if life is not finite?"

Manson is banking on Coster-Waldau's fan appeal as much as the show's premise. "Whenever you're dealing with a concept show, it's always a challenge," Manson says.

"One of the interesting things about Nikolaj is that he's Danish and his character is Dutch," he says. "There's a certain sense of otherness about him that works for us and works for the character."

