

DID YOU KNOW? KAS TEATE?

• EANC now has a Facebook page: www.Facebook.com/EstonianAmerican. Come "like" us!

• Tallinn University's Academic Library has a digital database of Estonians abroad containing brief biographical data summaries of noted Estonians living (or having lived) outside of Estonia. To browse the alphabetical listing, use this link: <http://isik.tlulib.ee/index.php?m=browse>. Check to see if there is an entry for yourself, your friends and relatives. Send any corrections and additions to Eve.Siirman@tlulib.ee.

UPCOMING EVENTS • TULEVASED ÜRITUSED



ESTO 2013 Festival / Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad: June 28 – July 1, 2013 in San Francisco

The Estonian League of the West Coast and the Northern Californian Estonian community invite you and your family to this summer's ESTO festival in San Francisco. Tickets are on sale now at www.lep-esto2013.com.

Eesti Organisatsioonide Liit Läänerannikul ja Põhja-California eestlased kutsuvad Sind sel suvel koos pere ja sõpradega ESTO festivalile San Franciscos. Pileti ostmiseks külasta www.lep-esto2013.com.

Joint Baltic American Council (JBANC) conference.

Friday/Saturday April 19-20, at the Crystal City Marriott (VA), in conjunction with an April 18 Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill. More details soon at www.jbanc.org!



Milestone Year, continued from page 4

events.

• EANC took steps to strengthen our communications with Estonian Americans.

- We developed a printed **brochure** about the EANC's history and activities.

- A new quarterly bulletin, **EANC Newsletter**, was mailed to over 4,400 Estonian-Americans.

- We regularly provided information about our activities to the *Free Estonian Word*.

- Our **website**, www.estosite.org, was completely revamped and is now continually updated with news, articles and resources of interest to Estonian Americans and others.

• Finally, we strengthened our internal operations by hiring Linda Rink as Executive Director to manage our fundraising, communications, and other marketing and administrative activities.

• Võtsime samme sidemete tugevdamiseks ameerika eestlastega:

- Koostasime **broshüüri** ERKÜ ajaloost ja tegevusest.

- Andsime välja uue, kvartalis ilmuva ringkirja, **ERKÜ Teataja**, ja saatsime selle üle 4400 Ameerika eestlasele.

- Avaldasime informatsiooni meie tegevuse kohta *Vaba Eesti Sõnas*.

- Täielikult uuendasime **ERKÜ kodulehekülge**, www.estosite.org, ja pidevalt lisame informatsiooni uudistest, artiklitest ja ressursidest, mis pakuksid huvi Ameerika eestlastele ja teistele.

• Lõpuks, meie tugevdasime ERKÜ sisemist tegevust, palgates tegevjuhi Linda Rinki, kes korraldab korjandust, sidet, turustamist ja administratiivset tegevust.



Marju Rink-Abel,
EANC's President

ESTONIAN AMERICAN NATIONAL COUNCIL, INC.

1420 Locust St., Suite 31N
Philadelphia, PA 19102

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2012 – EANC's Milestone Year
- Can You Be Estonian Without Estonian?
- Did You Know?
- Upcoming Events

- 2012 - ERKÜ tähisaasta
- Kas saab olla eestlane eestikeeleta?
- Kas Teate?
- Tulevased Üritused

EANC NEWSLETTER - March 2013 ERKÜ TEATAJA - Märts 2013



EANC board members and friends at Arvo Pärt Project reception, New York Estonian House, December 2012



EANC Board member Ilmar Vanderer presents checks to Leena Kangro and Tina Fischgrund for Estonian American scouts and girl guides.



EANC Gala keynote speaker H.E. Toomas Henrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

EANC NEWSLETTER ERKÜ TEATAJA

March 2013



2012 - EANC'S MILESTONE YEAR

2012 - ERKÜ TÄHISAASTA

The past year marked a major milestone for EANC, as we celebrated our 60th anniversary and actively supported Estonian-American aims on both the political and cultural fronts. Here are highlights of EANC's 2012 accomplishments:

• **Our 60th anniversary gala celebration** was a great success, with over 200 guests. The president of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, was the keynote speaker.

• We instituted a **new awards program** to honor the accomplishments of Estonian Americans. The five recipients for 2012 were past EANC presidents Juhan Simonson and Mati Kõiva, Estonian Archives in the U.S., philanthropist Olga Ritso Kistler, and Ambassador Melissa Wells.

• As part of our mission to preserve and foster our Estonian heritage, EANC gave out **grants totaling over a quarter million dollars to:**

- **Estonian American scouts, girl guides**, and the **Long Island Children's Summer Camp**, who received our regular annual support plus a portion of our gala income.

- the *Free Estonian Word* newspaper's projects.

- the **Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC)**, which represents our interests in Washington on a full-time basis.

Milestone Year, continued on page 4



Juhan Simonson† accepting "Outstanding Contributions to EANC Award" from Marju Rink-Abel



Ambassador Marina Kaljurand and EANC President Marju Rink-Abel at the Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington DC



EANC members at annual meeting, September 2012

Läinud aasta oli ERKÜ-i märkimisväärne. Pühitsesime oma 60. a. juubelit ja aktiivselt toetasime Ameerika eestlaste sihte nii poliitilisel kui ka kultuurilisel alal. Heidame pilgu mõningatele ERKÜ saavutustele:

• **ERKÜ 60. juubeli pidulik gala** läks igati korda. Kohal oli üle 200 külalise ja peakõnelejaks oli Eesti Vabariigi president Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

• Alustasime **uut ERKÜ auhinna programmi** tunnustamaks ameerika eestlaste teeneid. Viis auhinna saajat olid endised ERKÜ esimehed Juhan Simonson ja Mati Kõiva, Eesti Arhiiv Ühendriikides, filantroop Olga Ritso Kistler, ningSuursaadik Melissa Wells.

• **Andsime toetusi mis ületasid veerand miljonit dollarit:**

- **skautidele ja gaididele ning Long Islandi Laste Suvekodule** - lisaks ERKÜ tavapärastele toetustele andsime osa gala sissetulekust.

- ajaleht *Vaba Eesti Sõna* projektidele.

- **Ühendatud Balti Ameerika Komiteele (JBANC)**, mis esindab täisajaliselt meie huvisid Washingtonis.

Milestone Year, continued on page 4

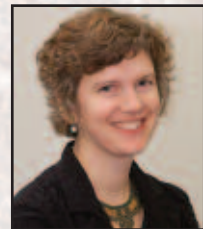
According to U.S. Census data for the year 2000, 25,000 Americans self-identify as of Estonian origin or descent. Unfortunately, only a fraction of these are active in organized Estonian life. How can we reach those who are not? What does it mean to be an Estonian American?

In this issue, we pose an ongoing challenging question:

"Do you need Estonian to be Estonian?"

In other words, do you need to maintain the language to carry the culture? Or is there more to Estonian heritage than just knowing the language? Virve Vihman, a transplanted Estonian-American now at the University of Tartu offers her views, buttressed by commentaries from four Estonian Americans.

What are your thoughts on this? Send us your comments in the enclosed envelope or go to our website www.estosite.org. We will publish selected comments in future newsletters.



Can you be Estonian without Estonian?

Virve Vihman

I had been living in Tartu, Estonia, for about a year in the mid-90's, teaching English in a high school, when a colleague of mine asked why I was there, adding that he suspected I was only there to improve my language. I was immediately on the defensive: not only for my language! It's more about the culture, about finding my roots... "Well, what is Estonian culture then, apart from language? What kinds of roots have you found?" he asked.

I have to admit, at that point I was stumped. I groped for the things I'd been brought up to connect with my Estonian-American identity: Eesti Päevad? Rahvatants, laulupidu? None of these seemed convincing, or relevant to my everyday life in Estonia as a low-paid secondary school teacher. My colleague laughed at me: "It's the language, I knew it." But why shouldn't it be the language? Why was I defensive? Perhaps it meant admitting my language was less than adequate. Or maybe I didn't want to accept the equation that Estonian culture equals language, nothing more and nothing less.

It was about more than the language, though. I was learning something every day: about the world of my students, who seemed to have a sense of group cohesion I'd never

known; about the early post-Soviet economy and its effects on people in different walks of life; about the Peace Corps volunteers who were teaching English like me, but conceiving of it as a project to bring American values to emerging democracies. But my personal aims were certainly also linguistic: it was about finding a world and a role for the private language I'd grown up with. I relished figuring out how to pronounce an American brand (Snickers, Camel, Pantene) in an Estonian store.

I later realized my colleague was genuinely curious, and just as interested in the question of what constitutes Estonian culture as he was in my reasons for being there. The Estonian sense of identity is strongly connected with language, but perhaps not as exclusively as one might think: in a recent survey, almost half of the participants who live in Estonia said 'yes' when asked whether someone who was not fluent in the language could be considered to be an Estonian. The results were substantially different among Estonians living abroad: a whopping 84% of the those who left Estonia in the wave of WWII-era emigration said yes, one can be Estonian without having command of the language, whereas among people who emigrated recently, only a third (34%) agreed.

Why such vastly different responses? When your identity feels threatened, it takes on a heightened value. Someone moving abroad develops a much stronger sense of national identity and searches for ways of expressing it, celebrating Estonia and connecting with other Estonians. With children, the question of language, taken for granted back home, becomes a crucial parenting issue. Hence, it is not surprising that two-thirds of recent emigrants feel that being Estonian requires speaking the language. The great gap between the old and new emigrants illustrates how fundamentally living abroad can change a person.

Attitudes of people who left Estonia more than a generation ago, like my father, may have changed considerably. They have seen their children grow up and have generally accepted the dominance of English in America or other languages elsewhere. My father spent over half his life abroad. He maintained a connection with Estonia, but found other ways to do this than reconstructing an Estonian world inside his home. Many Estonians in the USA have realized that the connection with Estonia is only part of their Estonian-American identity. Considering Estonia's small size and strategic geopolitical position, a continued connection between domestic and

global Estonians is crucial. Beyond that, however, Estonian-American society includes activities meaningful in their own right, not simply as a stand-in for an out-of-reach, "original" culture. My father moved back to Estonia at the end of his life, only to discover that he was no longer at home there. Only then did he realize that not only his kids, but he himself had truly become Estonian-American.

Culture exists in our minds, in our relationships, and in opposition to what we see ourselves as not being. To understand ourselves, we need to understand those around us. Americans with Estonian "roots" will gain a better sense of their own place in the world if they investigate what being Estonian might mean to them. This could involve travelling to Estonia, or just meeting other people with an Estonian background. Choirs and dance groups are not for everyone, but economists, engineers, educators may find other ways to make connections with Estonia, to help build bridges between the USA and Estonia.

We solicited input from four Estonian Americans about Virve Vihman's article; excerpts are printed below. For the full comments – and to post your own – go to www.estosite.org.

Inevitability of Language Loss



"...Despite the restoration of the Republic, the battle over the seemingly radical notion of speaking Estonian in Estonia is very much alive. Because this aspect of Estonian identity is perceived as under threat, the opinions of recent Estonian emigrants will reflect this defensive position. So, can one be an Estonian without knowing Estonian? The answer will depend upon what the Estonian answering is most fearful of losing – a shared heritage or a mother tongue."

- Leif Erik Fritzell

Non-verbal Estonian Communication

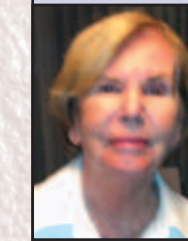


"...Since so much communication happens nonverbally, this seems to suggest that it is possible to communicate in (nonverbal) Estonian without a knowledge of the Estonian language. In this sense, it is entirely possible to be an Estonian (or Estonian-American) without speaking the Estonian language. One can still behave as an Estonian, sing and dance as an Estonian, and even communicate as an Estonian."

- Maia Linask

Language Fluency is Essential

"...I think we assume that someone who identifies himself as 'Estonian' can also speak the language... For global Estonians,...the question is more complex. Fluency in the language can no longer be assumed. Nevertheless, all hyphenated Estonians should be encouraged to take pride in the Estonian part of their heritage whether or not they are fluent in the language... In my opinion fluency in the language is essential for identifying oneself as 'Estonian' without the hyphenated addendum. Our unique language is our greatest treasure. It is the basis of our heritage and culture."



- Madli Puhvel

What are Estonian-speaking Russians?

"...Estonia has been independent for more than 20 years, and the first generation of Russian-Estonians born, raised, and schooled in Estonia are graduating from school, going to university, and entering the workforce. Though there are exceptions, most of these young people are able to use the Estonian language, but still are not 100% Estonian nor should anyone expect them to be. It is possible to be an Estonian language user and not be an Estonian..."

- Edgar Kaskla

Milestone Year, continued from cover page

- **ESTO 2013 school curriculum materials** based on the film, *The Singing Revolution*
- the Estonian film *Crosswinds* (about the 1949 deportations)
- the **book** *Estonians in Michigan*
- **Lakewood's** Atlantic St. John's Eve Festival
- the **Estonian Heritage Society** anniversary album
- **As board members, we took an active role** in the work of the Estonian World Council, the Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC), the Baltic Institute, and the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC). EANC president Marju Rink-Abel was also president of JBANC for a year term ending in July 2012.
- With the CEEC, we participated in several Advocacy Days, **meeting with US Congressmen and their staff** to discuss their assistance with Baltic and Eastern European issues.
- With JBANC's help, there is a strong possibility of having **Black Ribbon Day** officially recognized by Congress.
- **We took part in commemorations** for victims of communism and deportations, and other related

Milestone Year, continued on page 5