FINLANDIA FOUNDATION NATIONAL ACQUIRES FINNISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE ASSETS

PASADENA, CA – Finlandia Foundation National (FFN) is pleased to announce that it has completed the first critical phase of its mission to save the cultural and historical assets of the Finnish American Heritage Center (FAHC), on the campus of Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan.

On June 15, 2023, FFN reached the agreement with Finlandia University’s court-appointed receiver, Patrick O’Keefe and O’Keefe and Associates Consulting, LLC, which is handling the disbursement of the university’s goods and properties. This agreement ensures that the collection will not be dissolved and sold in pieces, or discarded. It is the first critical piece of a multi-phased plan by FFN to preserve these artifacts and historical collections, and make them more accessible to researchers across the country.

Subsequent phases include plans for the purchase of a building from Finlandia University’s campus to house the collection; the digitization of records to make them more accessible to researchers across the globe; and the creation of an endowment to ensure that these entities can thrive in years to come.

Finlandia University was a small, private school founded as Suomi College in 1896 by Finnish immigrants to the Upper Peninsula. Its closing this year jeopardized the most extensive collection of Finnish-American archives and artifacts. Since March, when notice of the school’s closure was made, FFN has been financially supporting the operation of the FAHC and its archives, Finlandia University Art Gallery, Price of Freedom Museum, Finnish American Folk School, North Wind Books and the monthly Finnish American Reporter.

“It is never easy—especially after 126 years of history—to see a university fail, but it is not unusual for small colleges today,” says Patrick O’Keefe, founder and CEO of Patrick O’Keefe and Associates. “We are charged with liquidating Finlandia University’s assets, and finding the best outcome for the stakeholders. To that end, we have had the pleasure of working with Finlandia Foundation National to secure the best caretaker for the cultural and heritage items. We have accomplished that first step.”

“This is a positive outcome for what could have been an unacceptable fate for these precious materials, programs and resources,” says Anne-Mari Paster, president of the Pasadena, California-based non-profit Finlandia Foundation, which is dedicated to supporting the Finnish-American community in the U.S. “This marks not the end, but the beginning of a new and meaningful project. We have our work to do in caring for these heritage items and planning for their future. We call this effort, ‘Saving Finland in America.’

“It is absolutely compatible with why Finlandia Foundation was founded 70 years ago. We are here to preserve our roots in Finland, and at the same time build on that connection with the current and future generations. We consider this new purpose an honor and duty.”
Information about this project will continue to be made available at the FFN website, FinlandiaFoundation.org.

About Finlandia Foundation National, Inc.

Fiercely Finnish since 1953, we champion our culture and heritage across the United States by supporting educational opportunities and promoting diverse, relevant, and enriching programs.

Finlandia Foundation National, Inc. aims to connect, inspire and strengthen the Finnish-American community in the United States through a network of chapters. The foundation raises funds to strengthen its endowment and ensure the continuation of its programs, which highlight outstanding contributions and achievements of Finnish-American artists and academics.

Finlandia Foundation National awards dozens of grants and scholarships each year, and provides critical funding to maintain cultural traditions that represent the heritage of Finlandia and the diverse interests of Finnish America.

For more: FinlandiaFoundation.org

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