

Lithuanian Citizens' Society of W. Pennsylvania



**NEWSLETTER**

Serving the Lithuanian American  
Community in Western PA since 1912

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March/April 2009

**Former LCS President,  
Ben Burdulis,  
1930-2008**



*Ben and Ruth Burdulis*

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Ben Burdulis, former LCS President, who died on Saturday, December 27, 2008. Ben was active in the Lithuanian Society for

many years and served as President for a number of years. Although ill health hindered his active participation in LCS events in recent years, thoughts of him were always near.

Ben introduced a number of social events to the Society over the years. He was also an active force in donating to many charities on the Society's behalf including Lithuanian charities. Ben oversaw many improvements to our South Side building too.

Computer-saavy, Ben helped automate our membership list by creating a database that kept our records up-to-date.

Ben was also active in a number of organizations including the St. Casimir Alumni Association, where he served as their first President and was an active Board member.

With each event, his wife (and high school sweetheart) Ruth, was always by his side showing her love and support.

Ben passed away while visiting his son and family in Philadelphia. He is survived by his wife, Ruth, son Craig (Joanne), and grandchildren Craig, Jr., and William Burdulis.

We know that in spirit, Ben is still with us. We shall miss his spunk and veracity. May he rest in peace.

**Lithuanian Spring  
Celebration  
scheduled for 3/28**



The LCS will hold a Lithuanian Spring Celebration on Saturday March 28, beginning at 4:00 p.m. The evening will feature a social hour, dance performance by Slavjana at 5:00 p.m.,

and a Lithuanian-style dinner at 6:00 p.m.

The event will include folk dancing as led by Neris dancer John Baltrus as well as door prizes, Basket of Cheer raffle, and bake sale.

Musical performance during the evening will be provided by violinist Ruth Thon and Kankles performance by Ana Bird.

There will also be amber jewelry for sale during the event.

Cost is \$12/adults and \$6/children age 6-12. Children under 6 are free.

Make your reservation today by phoning Mildred Sukys at 412-341-7925.

**Tiger's tale takes  
turn to West**

*The following article appeared in the February 22, 2009, edition of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and featured Society Member Kathy Suthard and her interaction with the zoo's tiger that she raised from a cub. Written by Don Hopey.*

The once-tiny Amur tiger cub that was rejected by its mother and hand-raised by humans



*LCS Member Kathy Suthard shown holding the tiger cub for the Pittsburgh Zoo.*

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*Upcoming Events*

**March 28, 2009, 4:00 p.m.**

Lithuanian Spring Celebration, Lithuanian Hall, South Side.

**April 5, 2009, 2:00 p.m.**

Monthly Members' Meeting, Lithuanian Hall, South Side.

**June 20, 2009, 3:00 p.m. - dark**

Annual Jonines Picnic, Lithuanian Country Club, Jefferson Hills

**September, 2009 (note date change!)**

Pittsburgh Folk Festival, Sandcastle Fairgrounds. Details to be announced in upcoming newsletters.

**Every Saturday September through**

**June, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon**

Lithuanian language classes, Lithuanian Hall, South Side

*Editor's Column*

Congratulations to Joan Zekas on the publication of her story "An Immigrant Life: Snapshots" in the Oasis Journal. Joan is also featured on the web in a YouTube video where she narrates a story she had written about her Lithuanian American Grandparents who came to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, by way of Ellis Island in the early 1900s.

You can view the video at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJAADw2M5jA>.

Joan has contributed numerous stories to our LCS newsletter, and we are thrilled for her with the publication of her story!

Congratulations to Clement Stanislaus on receiving the award for "best in it's class" for his American Legion Post 106 Newsletter. Clem is the Editor of the newsletter. This is the second year that the newsletter has won the award.

Remember to sign up to receive your newsletter through email. Contact Janet Petrauskas at [pittsburghlithuanians@yahoo.com](mailto:pittsburghlithuanians@yahoo.com) and provide your email address. (NOTE: Newsletter sent in PDF Format. Download the newest PDF reader at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>)



become one of the Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium's prime attractions is growing -- and gone.

The now 9-month-old, 135-pound tiger cub named Billy Ray (Cyrus) by zoo donors but always called Grom by zookeepers, was trucked to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Jan. 17. He went on exhibit there Feb. 5 with Zoya, a female Amur tiger cub five weeks his junior whose mother also failed to nurse her.

He won't be coming back. That saddens **LCS Society Member Kathy Suthard**, the zoo's lead carnivore keeper who, when the cat was much, much smaller, took him home to Carrick at night, occasionally shocking other motorists who saw the baby tiger lying in his favorite spot on the back window ledge of her moving car.

"People on Route 28 might have had some accidents when they saw him lying by the back window. Some would drive close and pull out their cell phones to get a picture," said Ms. Suthard, who took the tiny tiger home to bottle feed him after his mother, Toma, was unable to nurse him.

He weighed just 2.2 pounds when he was born on May 11 during a Mother's Day thunderstorm and dubbed Grom, a Slavic word for thunder. The zoo's veterinary staff placed him in intensive care, a regimen that included round-the-clock monitoring.

"When he couldn't nurse, we almost lost him," Ms. Suthard said. "We didn't dare leave him alone overnight."

From the second day after the cub was born, he went home each night for weeks with Dr. Cindy Stadler, then the zoo's chief veterinarian, veterinary technician Libby Galvanek or Ms. Suthard.

At first, the tiny tiger was transported in a Rubbermaid container. But as he grew, he had the run of her car, Ms. Suthard said.

"He stayed with me the most because I had my dog for backup," said Ms. Suthard, whose four cats mostly ignored the tiger but whose 80-pound black Labrador retriever, Bella, would run with Grom in her fenced-in back yard.

"The cats thought he was bizarre. They'd swat him and he'd jump back even though he was bigger than them," she said.

"And Grom respected Bella more than [the tiger] respected us. He never messed with Bella. He'd sleep with the dog next to the sofa where I would sleep."

To substitute for his mother's missing milk, he was fed a milk-replacement product commonly used to feed domestic kittens, which he didn't like much. As he grew, his feedings expanded to include strained chicken baby food, which he liked a lot, and then horse meat, which he loved even more.

Grom's sleepovers with Ms. Suthard and the other zoo employees ended by mid-July.

*Continued next column*

"He'd grown to 25 pounds and, although I was still able to handle him, the furniture was at risk," she said. "He also was getting very willful in the car, moaning and crying and wanting to crawl into my lap while I was driving and biting my head. That wasn't safe."

Grom roamed the Highland Park zoo's snow leopard enclosure for most of the summer and fall, delighting visitors and growing quickly. Adult Amur tigers -- formerly known as Siberian Tigers until they became extinct there -- grow to about 11 feet long and weigh more than 450 pounds.

The Amur tiger is the world's largest cat and one of five subspecies of tigers still alive today. All five are threatened with extinction; three others have gone extinct in the last 70 years. Only about 400 Amur tigers now are living in the wild, where they are threatened by poachers, habitat destruction and loss of prey.

The Pittsburgh zoo had plans to eventually breed Grom. But the Association of Zoos & Aquarium's Species Survival Plan Program, which manages breeding programs for species threatened with extinction, suggested the move to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, where he would be teamed with the young female, Zoya.

"It was tough when I heard he was leaving," Ms. Suthard said. "I wasn't really ready to see him go, but he got a 'bud' and we thought that would be good for him to have contact with another young tiger. It would be selfish not to send him."

Grom will remain at the zoo in Colorado Springs until he reaches maturity, at age 2 1/2 to 3. Then he will be bred, possibly with Zoya, or with another female tiger at a different zoo.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo near Pikes Peak was founded in 1926 and is home to more than 800 animals representing approximately 142 species, 30 of which are endangered. In addition to Zoya and Grom, the zoo has two adult Amur tigers, Helga and George, in its collection.

All reports Ms. Suthard has received from Colorado -- and there have been many -- indicate Grom is thriving. After spending 10 days in side-by-side cages while getting accustomed to one another, Grom and his new playmate now roam and run in the zoo's Asian Highlands exhibit.

"Because he's so much bigger -- she's just 90 pounds -- she was a little intimidated at first, but not that much," Ms. Suthard said. "When it was time to go out in the exhibit the first day, she went out but he didn't. He was afraid. She kept going back inside to entice him and eventually coaxed him out."

Ms. Suthard said she's planning a trip this year to visit and hang out with Grom.

Will he recognize her?

"Oh yeah, I have no doubt," said Ms.

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## ***Franciscan Child Day Care Center offering Indoor Easter Egg Hunt & Breakfast***

The Franciscan Child Day Care Center is sponsoring their 3rd Annual Indoor Easter Egg Hunt and Breakfast with the Easter Bunny on Saturday, March 28, at the Center, located at 1401 Hamilton Road in the Whitehall section of Pittsburgh's South Hills (15234).

Participants can choose to attend either the 9:00 AM or the 10:15 AM egg hunt & breakfast. Admission is \$3.50 for children and \$6.50 for adults. Due to limited seating, reservations must be made at (412) 882-5085 by Friday, March 20. Proceeds from the event benefit the Franciscan Child Day Care Center, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

## ***March (Kovas) & April (Balandis) Birthdays Listed***

Among members with March birthdays are: Robert Savinis (1); Ruth Burdulis (3); Veronica Martello (3); Geraldine Todd (3); Joseph Rozman (5); Paul Stanny (8); Ray Sabo Jr. (9); Gladys Zimmerly (9); Janet Carlisle (10); Jane Sipp (10).

Paul Yucius (16); Lara Melesky (17); Ruta Trakumiene (18); Frances Petkunas (19); Jerome Kvederis (20); Greg Baurnes (21); John Kaclik (24); Amy Pederson (26); Phyllis Poliski (27); Nancy Labushes Hokay (27); Andrew Marculaitis (28); Joyce Ann Ruediger (28); Anthony Zusinias (29); Laima Spokauskienė (29); Bridget Lane (30).

Among members with April birthdays are: Dalia Yucius (1); Richard Marcavitch (2); Aldona Montanaro (5); Leonard Marculaitis (7); Nancy Patton (7); Walt Pikunas (7); Arunas Nesavas (9); Charles Degrosky (9); Marcia Hurl (10); Sylvia Hraychuck (10); Jurgita Bakutyte (12); Emilia MacPhail (13); Leonora Kusleikiene (14); Ann Hyman (15).

Sheila Mollica (16); Barbara Degyansky (18); Alice Lewellen (21); Niles Slavin (21); Olive Frances Zalesky (25); Kathleen Skalka (25); David Melesky (26); Jane Dansevich (27); Beth DeFilippo (29); Albin Vareha Jr. (30)

***Linksmu Gimtadienių!***

The Lithuanian language is closely related to Sanskrit - the language of India and Persia of more than 4,000 years ago! It uses the Latin alphabet.

## Christa Harmotto, ESPN Academic All American Award Winner

Thank you to Society member Rich Mutkus for submitting the following article on his granddaughter. Article written by Joe Savrock from Jan. 2009 Penn State University, School of Education News page: <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/news/news-items-folder/harmotto-2008>

Christa Harmotto is mastering the challenges of both the academic and the athletic worlds.



Christa Harmotto

Harmotto, a senior elementary education major, is a gifted student-athlete who has accomplished plenty during her College

of Education career. She has been a regular fixture on the Dean's List throughout her college years. She carries a 3.47 GPA. She has also been a key player on the Penn State Lady Lions hugely successful volleyball team, which last month won its second consecutive NCAA Division I championship.

For her outstanding performance both in the classroom and on the volleyball court, Harmotto was named winner of the 2008 ESPN The Magazine Academic All-America of the Year award. With this award, ESPN The Magazine regards Harmotto as the very best member of this season's Academic All-America team.

"I was very humbled and honored to receive such a prestigious award," says Harmotto. "I believe that it is important to excel in both academics and athletics as a student-athlete. I was proud to represent my family, Penn State Volleyball, and the College of Education."

The ESPN award is the latest of a long string of honors Harmotto has collected throughout her playing career. She has been recognized by the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) as a four-time AVCA All-American as well as a four-time AVCA First Team All-Mideast Region member. She also is a four-time First Team All-Big Ten Team selection, and in her junior season she was named the Big Ten Conference Player of the Year. She also was nominated for the prestigious Honda Award in both 2007 and 2008.

Harmotto has made her mark on the volleyball court. The 6-foot-2 middle hitter had 275 kills and a .486 hitting percentage last season, ranking her among the best in the nation. Her intimidating, hard-hitting kills were at times unstoppable, a skill that gave her team a tremendous edge over many opponents.

The Lady Lions won the 2008 NCAA title with a three-game sweep over No.

*Harmotto con't. from col. 1*

2 Stanford in Omaha, Neb., last month. They rolled through the season undefeated (38-0), and in fact they won every individual set of every single game throughout the regular season. This feat supports a general nationwide consensus that the 2008 Lady Lions squad was the best collegiate team ever assembled.

During Harmotto's collegiate career, the Lady Lions have consistently been ranked near or at the top of the NCAA rankings.

Harmotto's achievements are apparent in her academic career as well. She sought, and earned, an opportunity to do her student teaching in Europe. Currently she's in England, getting first-hand classroom teaching experience at Yapton Church of England Primary School.

"England is lovely, and I absolutely adore my new class and school," says Harmotto. "The children at Yapton Primary are such a joy to work with, and I am looking forward to continuing my experience here in England."

Harmotto noted some basic differences between British schools and American schools. "The curriculum in England is based on a National Standard," she continues, "and many of the teachers teach every subject—including physical education, art, and music. The schools are run by head teachers, who act as principals. And all the students are required to wear uniforms."

Harmotto hopes to play professional volleyball someday, perhaps in Brazil, Italy, or Puerto Rico. She also aspires to play for the United States in the next Olympics.

"In fact, I was recently invited to train with the U.S. National Team this summer," she says. "I will most likely report sometime in May to either Colorado Springs or Anaheim, California. I hope to begin my professional career in the fall."

At some point further down the road, after she has completed her volleyball career, Harmotto hopes to become an elementary school teacher and coach. "I believe teaching is one of the most rewarding jobs in the world," she says. "You have the opportunity to affect so many children who pass through your classroom, and you can help steer them in a direction that offers a bright future."

## Quick Facts

Did you know that Lithuania was once the largest and most powerful country in Europe?

Under the leadership of its greatest king, Vytautas the Great (1410-1430), Lithuania expanded its borders to Moscow, in Russia, and the Black Sea, near Turkey. Lithuanians protected Europe against the Mongols and Tartars and succeeded in checking the German drive to the east.

## Lithuanian Language Courses offered again this year in Michigan

The 24th annual Lithuanian language courses at Camp Dainava, Manchester, Michigan, will take place June 20-27, 2009. These one-week intensive courses, operating under the auspices of the Lithuanian Educational Council of the USA, are designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian. The courses are taught by experienced instructors in vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere. There are no limitations regarding age or formal education.

For more information, please contact Ausrele Sakalaite, 1388 Overton Drive, Lemont, IL 60439; phone 630-243-6302; email: [ausreles@comcast.net](mailto:ausreles@comcast.net), or search the web for Dainava language courses.

## Mozart's Requiem Performance on 3/29

Dennis Cunningham, husband of Society Member Ausra Cunningham, will perform Mozart's Requiem on Sunday, March 29, at 7:00 p.m. at the Southminster Presbyterian Church on Washington Road in Mt Lebanon.

The piece is hauntingly beautiful—and brief—some 50 minutes. If you've seen Amadeus, and you liked the music from the film, you'll love this.

*Editor's note:* Dennis has an awesome singing voice. It would be great to have the pews filled for the event as he's been working hard to have the bass section resonate brightly.

### Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western PA

.....  
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.....  
Newsletter - Janet Petrauskas  
1010 Arch Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15234  
412-341-7925

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## St. Casimir's Feast Day Celebrated with Knights of Lithuania Members



Members from the Knights of Lithuania celebrated St. Casimir's feast on March 1. After mass, a brunch was held at the St. Francis Motherhouse. Note: All K of L members present at the mass and brunch not featured in the photo. (photo by Kathie Skalka)

### *Tiger Tale continued from Page 2*

Suthard, who readily volunteers that last year was her best at the zoo because of the time she spent with Grom.

"The hands-on experience made it the most amazing summer I ever had," said Ms. Suthard, who has worked at the zoo for 29 years. "A friend called it 'The Summer of Grom,' and it was great."

## Your LCS Dues are now due for 2009!

Don't forget, your dues are now due for 2009. Dues increased for 2009 to \$30/year with social membership at \$15/year.

Payment may be submitted to: Bill Kolicius at the business meeting or mailed to Bill's attention at: LCS, 1725 Jane Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

## Franciscan Sisters active in mission in Utena, Lithuania

As a followup to our article in the January/February issue of the LCS News, Robyn Gallentine from the Srs. of St. Francis forwarded the following information to the newsletter.

Sister Michele Garas and Sister Dolorita Butkus from the Srs. of St. Francis are in Utena, Lithuania, involved in youth projects, catechetics with children along with their parents, and religion classes as taught in a local school. Pastoral services are also offered at the 45-bed St. Clare Hospice and the Sisters distribute over 200 food baskets each month to needy families.

Additional information may be found on the Internet at: <http://www.subsventaklara.w3.lt>.

## Lithuanian Citizens' Society of W. Pennsylvania

1725 Jane Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

### • Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, March 5, 5:30 p.m.  
Thursday, April 2, 5:30 p.m.

### • Members' Meeting

Sunday, March 8, at 2 p.m.  
Sunday, April 5, at 2 p.m.

### • BINGO

Sunday & Wednesday from 7 - 10 p.m.

### • Echoes of Lithuania

[echoes98@hotmail.com](mailto:echoes98@hotmail.com)

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