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## **Chicago's Swedish American Museum Launches 50th Anniversary Year—Celebrating Five Decades of Nordic Culture, Community, and Connection**

*The Andersonville cultural landmark will mark its golden anniversary with a year-long series of events honoring its past and charting a bold path forward.*

CHICAGO (April-2026) — The Swedish American Museum in Andersonville is turning 50 in 2026, and the celebration will last all year, marking five decades as a beloved cultural hub in Chicago and one of the leading institutions in the United States dedicated to preserving and sharing Swedish and Nordic culture. Founded in 1976, the 28,000 square-foot Museum has grown from a grassroots effort into a nationally recognized destination welcoming visitors from across the country and around the world for exhibitions, festivals, language classes, and cultural programs.

The anniversary year will feature a full calendar of celebrations throughout 2026. **Festivities begin with a 50th Anniversary Community Kickoff on Sunday, April 19, at 3 p.m.**, a free afternoon gathering where friends, neighbors, and supporters are invited to enjoy a celebratory “first look” to hear about exciting plans for the anniversary year, raise a glass in honor of the Museum’s 50th birthday, and share in a slice of cake. Part of the “first look” is ribbon cutting of the finished connection of our two buildings on the second floor, sponsored by a grant from City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. Other event details will be announced soon.

Guests will enjoy a new exhibition in the Museum’s main gallery: ***My Future Heritage: Artwork by Sofia Hagström Møller (Friday, April 17 – Sunday, Aug. 7, 2026)***, in which the textile artist explores weaving as a carrier of memory, tradition, and transformation. For hours, admission, and tours—and information about the children’s museum, store, café, and upcoming events—visit the Museum’s [website](#).

Additional events throughout the year include special activities during the beloved neighborhood Midsommarfest, June 12–14—celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the August opening of a special exhibition in the main gallery honoring 50 years of legacy and

community, a retro 1970s themed dance party being planned for Saturday, Aug. 15 (ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” was also released in 1976.), the Museum’s annual Aspire! Gala in November, and expanded Holiday festivities during December. The anniversary celebration will culminate in March 2027 with a closing event, which may include news about the Museum’s future expansion and the results of an ambitious fundraising campaign.

“This anniversary is a celebration not just of the Museum, but of the community that built it,” said **Joy Thorbjornsen-Coates, Board Chair and Co-Chair of the 50th Anniversary Committee**. “For 50 years, neighbors, volunteers, and supporters from Chicago and far beyond have come together here to share traditions, stories, and culture. Throughout this anniversary year, we look forward to welcoming friends and neighbors from near and far—everyone is invited to celebrate with us.”

“Reaching 50 years is a remarkable moment, but it’s also a launchpad,” said **Matt Olaveson, Trustee Vice Chair and Co-Chair of the anniversary committee**. “This anniversary year will help us build momentum for bold plans ahead—potentially expanding our footprint on Clark St. while strengthening the Museum’s role as a national hub for Nordic culture.”

**Executive Director Karin Moen Abercrombie** noted that the milestone reflects decades of dedication from the Museum’s community:

“This anniversary is an opportunity to honor the people who made the Museum what it is today—our staff, board members, volunteers, and supporters who have worked tirelessly to preserve and share Swedish culture,” Abercrombie said. “As we celebrate the past, we are equally excited to build the next chapter of this remarkable institution.”

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### **About the Swedish American Museum**

Founded in 1976, the Swedish American Museum in Chicago’s Andersonville neighborhood is the preeminent Swedish American immigration museum in the greater Chicago area and a leading cultural center for the Midwest’s Nordic community. Through exhibitions, arts and educational programs, festivals, and its permanent collection, the Museum (5211 N. Clark St., [SwedishAmericanMuseum.org](http://SwedishAmericanMuseum.org)) preserves and interprets the Swedish immigrant experience while celebrating the traditions, stories, and contributions of Swedish Americans.

Founded by Kurt Mathiasson to preserve and celebrate Swedish American heritage, the Museum grew out of a community effort to safeguard the stories and traditions of generations of Swedish immigrants and their descendants. That same year, the Museum reached an extraordinary milestone when King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden officially dedicated the institution during his visit in April 1976, lending international recognition to the project and underscoring the deep cultural ties between Sweden and the Swedish American community.