

# bridges



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Storks contribute to the beauty of the Lithuanian countryside.

Photo by Jeanne Dorr.

# A Home Away from Home

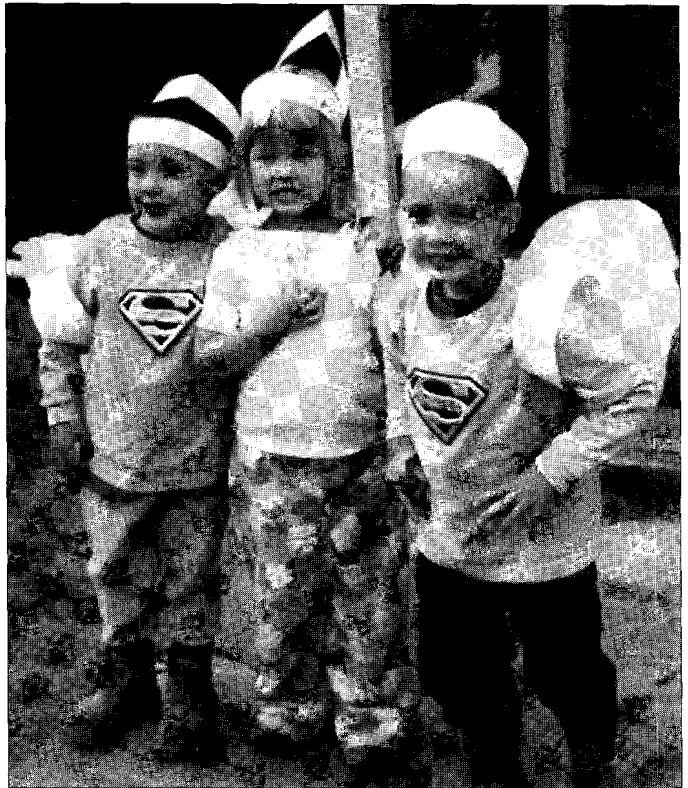
Camp Neringa in Marlboro, Vermont has been an integral part of my life for almost fourteen years. The relationships I established during my two-week experiences at camp are the bonds I cherish the most in my life. One of my best friends today was the first person I met at Neringa as an eight year old camper. Neringa has become, over the years, the place where I have learned a tremendous amount of information about my heritage and myself.

The driving forces behind the success of Camp Neringa are the staff and counselors. Every Neringa employee I have ever worked with has made it explicitly clear that they love being a part of the Neringa family, and are there primarily to ensure that the campers have a memorable and meaningful experience. We are aware that there are vast differences in the ages of the campers, and make sure that programs are geared toward being educating, exciting, and fun for all of the age groups.



The activities at Neringa range from serious to silly, but they always aim to educate campers about their unique heritage through learning traditional dances, songs, art, and cooking. Since the language is incorporated into daily activities, campers learn new words, songs, prayers, and sayings. Lithuanian history comes alive in the hills of Vermont. The English-speaking Lithuanian Heritage Children's Camp has made me feel a true connection to my Lithuanian roots. I have come away from each of my summers at Neringa with a greater understanding of my culture.

Sending children away from home for two weeks is daunt-



ing for parents. I was eight years old when I first went to Neringa, and was incredibly frightened of being away from home for two whole weeks. Thankfully, I was quickly distracted by numerous activities. Now as a staff member, I can attest that all counselors want to ensure that homesickness is not a serious factor in any camper's stay at Neringa. For this reason we even have classes devoted to the vanishing art of writing letters home for our younger campers.

A friend once sent me the following quote: "Sometimes the best way to find out who you are is to get to that place where you can't be anything else." Neringa has been this place for me. Because people come to Neringa from many different places, children can learn important lessons about diversity there. However, a single attribute that we all share is our Lithuanian heritage. Neringa leads its children not only to develop a better understanding on how to relate to many different types of people, but also to celebrate a common culture. There are no real words that can describe how deeply I cherish and love my Neringa friends and campers; they are my extended family and will always have a special place in my heart.

To learn more about Camp Neringa's programs for children and families in both Lithuanian and English, visit [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org) or call Camp Director Vida Strazdis at 978-582-5592.

Mary Pyc

# News and Views

Please visit St. Peter's website at:  
[www.savestpeter.org](http://www.savestpeter.org)

According to [www.nbc17.com](http://www.nbc17.com) Statesville Christian's Zygis Sestokas scored either 75 or 76 points of his team's 117 points in a basketball game between two private high schools.

Either point total breaks the record for a North Carolina private high school.

Statesville Christian coach John Jordan said they wanted to showcase Zygis for a college scout.

Covenant Day coach Steve Dinsbeer said his school's scoring book showed Sestokas with 72 points, but that the totals for all players in that book didn't add up to the final score. He said Sestokas should have been credited with a 3-pointer that was inadvertently dropped from his book, bringing his total points to at least 75.

Jordan said that in addition, a free throw was wrongly credited to another player instead of Sestokas, bringing Sestokas' point total to 76. He said the official scoring book would credit Sestokas with 76 points.

Dinsbeer said his school would not dispute the 76-point total.

*Submitted by: Reda Pliura*

## Buyer Beware



Barbara and Ray at the high school play in Jurbarkas at Christmas (2003). Ray made the angels in his workshop.

I didn't have a copy of my grandparents' birth certificates or any other Lithuanian document that said they were born in Lithuania. Both the churches which could have grandparents' certificates of birth had been burned, and the Vilnius archives did not have any records. There were no old people left who knew my grandparents to testify about it. We even had seven reference letters from vari-

ous people and organizations that we had been helping through the years, but to no avail.

So in July 2004, just before our visa expired, we crossed the border into Latvia for one day, so that we could re-enter Lithuania as tourists. We needed more time to dispose of our house, car, garden and possessions. We ended up selling the property with

everything in it at a great loss. Also about the same time the motor vehicle registration department took our car registration away from us because they said we couldn't have it without bearing a valid visa. So we lost our insurance and had to give our car away. Also we gave away our garden and returned to the USA on September 2, 2004...

We are currently staying with our daughter Tereasa Setser in California, as we are "homeless". My husband, Ray, is so bitter against Lithuania that it is unclear when he will return. He has vowed not to spend one more cent on anything for Lithuania. For myself, I can't stay away, and will be returning there most probably even this year (2005).

It makes no sense to us or to anyone else who has heard our story, that Lithuania, who is losing population every year, won't let healthy pensioners who contribute daily to their economy live there. After all, it's no paradise even being part of European Union since May 1st, 2004! The moral of this story is: Don't try to live in Lithuania if you are not a citizen.

*Barbara Clow as told to  
Eugenija Fedosejeva*



# Aidas

## DANCERS Kansas City

The AIDAS Dancers were founded in 1982. They chose the name, AIDAS, (echo) because it was symbolic of the Lithuanian history in Kansas City. The group was an outgrowth of the rebirth of the Lithuanian Community a few years ago.

In 1981, the Lithuanians of America sponsored it's first Lithuanian Festival at Wyandotte County Park. The AUSRA Dance group of Omaha came and performed for this festival and was the inspiration for the Kansas City group to be formed. Members of the Omaha group graciously came to Kansas City and helped them with initial steps. The AIDAS Dancers became a reality and made it's debut at the Lithuanian Independence Day celebration the following February.

Currently the dance group consists of 25 members

ranging in age from teenagers through adults. The AIDAS Dancers are very proud of the fact that we are family oriented.

The AIDAS Dancers are under the direction of Anita M. Strumillo.

We have participated in the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals.

Performed in Vilnius and Kaunas (1992).

Danced at the "Lithuanian Days" in Los Angeles, Ca.

Performed for half-time ceremonies at the Kansas City Chiefs Football Game.

Since its inception AIDAS has performed over 280 times for Lithuanian and American audiences.

This year we are proud to have started the AIDAS Junior Group. They are under the direction of Amy Zemaityte Newman and Michelle Mazaityte Morgan. They performed at their first Lithuanian Festival this year.