

FARGO: Sons of Norway boasts more than 2,000 members

Lodge largest in the country
Associated Press

FARGO - After a two-month membership drive, the Sons of Norway lodge here is billing itself as the country's largest.

The Kringen Lodge said its membership drive brought in 849 members, to put its total at 2,100.

Kringen President Steve Halverson said members decided a year ago to try to become the largest Sons of Norway lodge. Leaders say people join the fraternal organization to learn about their Norwegian heritage and to meet others.

During November and December, the Kringen Lodge reduced its yearly membership fee from \$37 to \$5 for new members.

John Lund, the Sons of Norway chief executive officer, said Seattle's Leif Erickson Lodge may be wincing at being bumped to No. 2 in membership.

"I wouldn't count Seattle out," Lund said. "But a little competition can be a good thing."

Janet Fruchtl, the financial secretary for the Leif Erikson Lodge, said its membership has stayed at 1,700 for about 10 years.

"The trick is to keep them once they join," Fruchtl said Tuesday. "It's hard to hang on to a large membership."

Moorhead, Minn., resident Tammy Sakrismo joined the Kringen Lodge because her husband, Stephen, is already a member. An initiation ceremony was held Tuesday night.

Sakrismo, 42, is younger than the average Sons of Norway member. She said she is interested in its social events.

"We'll meet people here that will be our friends for a long time," Sakrismo said.

Sons of Norway has more than 400 lodges in the United States, Canada and Norway with about 60,000 members, Lund said.