



How to Spend a Million Dollars

By Gregg White

Just imagine that you had \$1,000,000 to give to worthy projects as they promote knowledge and appreciation of all things Swedish in North America. How would you make the greatest impact? Would you focus on the big institutions, known for their professionalism and large audiences, or would you seek out smaller groups who might be slightly less polished but represent a perhaps overlooked grass-roots constituency?

Since it first started providing grants over 40 years ago, Swedish Council of America has grappled with this dichotomy. In 1975, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra was to perform in the United States in conjunction with a royal visit. This was a very expensive enterprise and SCA provided \$5,000 in support. The next year, Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Church in Philadelphia was hosting a concert by a traveling Swedish choir. SCA was pleased to provide \$500 in support of that project. Both grants were proportionate to the projects in question, and both had significant impact on their respective audiences.

Some SCA grants have been offered to start-up groups, such as the \$500 given in 2012 to the American Association of Runic Studies. Their president, Lorraine Jenson, loves to tell anyone and everyone that the organization wouldn’t exist if it hadn’t been for that initial indication of trust from SCA. Other larger regional institutions, such as the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia and the Nordic Heritage Museum in Seattle, have received a series of SCA grants in support of special exhibits, performances, residencies and more. In fact, both of these notable centers of Swedishness have each received over 20 SCA grants totaling around \$60,000.

SCA grants have been the catalyst for some remarkable achievements far beyond any expectations based on the amount of funding received. For example, a \$2,000 grant to the Joe Hill CD Project in 2015 led to “live performances at several locations in Chicago, including a concert attended by Swedish trade union officials visiting Chicago for the annual May Day celebration, and additional performances in, among others, Madison, Green Bay, Sheboygan, Kenosha, Oshkosh and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; St. Paul, Minnesota; Carterville, Chicago, and Chillicothe, Illinois; and Peterborough, Ontario. These concerts brought the songs and writings by Swedish labor songwriter and martyr Joe Hill (1879 – 1915) to audiences who knew little about Hill or his music, other than “I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill”, sung by Joan Baez at Woodstock. In total, nearly 40 artists have been part of the CD effort and several thousand people have heard Joe Hill’s music and learned about his life.” That’s a whole lot from a \$2,000 grant!



Since 1975, SCA has made 388 grants to 184 organizations and projects in 35 states or provinces. These grants have totaled \$1,000,000 in promoting and strengthening Swedishness in North America. No matter where you are as you read this magazine, chances are there is a nearby group or project that has received financial support from SCA. Isn’t this what you would have done with your million dollars?

SCA is Swedish America’s community foundation. Our mission is to promote knowledge and appreciation of Swedish heritage and culture in North American life and to strengthen contemporary cultural and educational ties between North America and Sweden. We achieve this by providing grants to organizations, scholarships to youth, recognition to leaders and communications to the community – all focused on furthering our mission. www.swedishcouncil.org



\$1,000,000
Promoting & Strengthening Swedishness