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News from the Swenson Center

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News from the Swenson Center

The Swenson Center now has a page on www.facebook.com.

Facebook is a social networking website for individuals and groups. *Jill Seaholm* thought it would be a fast and modern way to spread the word about the Swenson Center. She learned about it through a course about how libraries can use the Internet, and now its popularity has spread like wildfire. Through her own personal page she had also seen what a tremendous outlet it can be for spreading Swenson Center news about Swenson Center events and other items of interest.

The way it works is that an individual becomes a "Fan" of an organization. Individuals receive messages on their own pages from individuals they befriend and organizations of which they are fans. If you are a fan of the Swenson Center, whenever we post news, photos, or information from the Swenson Center, it will appear on your page immediately. Your friends will also automatically

Swenson Center Facebook page.

see what organizations and friends you have attached yourself to as you do it, and they can in turn become friends or fans. That is how fan numbers increase rapidly.

If you have a Facebook page, please look for the Swenson Swedish Immigration Research Center and "become a fan" and ask all of your Swedish American friends to do the same!

The 2009 O. Fritiof Ander lecture

This year's *O. Fritiof Ander Lecture in Immigration History* was presented by Professor Emerita *Anne-Charlotte Harvey* of San Diego State University on the campus of Augustana College in October 2009. Harvey has enjoyed a distinguished career and been active in the field of Swedish-American popular culture since the 1960s. She has also received numerous awards, including the recent recognition as the 2009 Swedish-American of the Year.

In her talk entitled *Yon Yonson — The Original Dumb Swede But Not So Dumb: Swedish-American Comic Stereotypes in American Popular Culture*, Harvey illustrated how the character of Yon Yonson was created by a German-American playwright in 1889. Her research suggests that



the portrayal of the Swede as a thoroughly honest but sometimes slow character laid the foundation for the American characterization of the

Swedish stereotype. Harvey also noted that despite the negative description of being slow, Yon was portrayed as a positive character which also represented promise.

Members of the audience nodded along as Harvey spoke and afterwards one man testified that this stereotype certainly fit his own grandparents even though, as Harvey claims, it was created by a German-American to attract an audience for the 1890s theatre in America. The lecture provided for a most stimulating evening and the Swenson Center staff was pleased to have attracted both Anne-Charlotte Harvey as this year's presenter and with the positive feed-back generated by the audience.

Christina Johansson