

Rockford Area Economic Development Council

# Hälsningar

*från Rockford, Illinois, USA* Global Partners Build Local Wealth

The RAEDC is a proud member of Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce/Chicago



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## LIDKÖPING MAKES LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO ROCKFORD

The City of Lidköping hired Linnea Bengtsson to be its full-time international business developer in Rockford, Illinois until 2014. She will promote a broad range of international collaboration and exchange opportunities between Lidköping and Rockford, emphasizing Lidköping as an ideal entry point to Sweden and the European market.

Bengtsson's office is in Rockford's City Hall; she will be stationed there with three visits to Lidköping each year. Previously Bengtsson developed a student exchange program between Lidköping's De la Gardie Gymnasiet and Rockford's East High School. She will expand the exchange program to include other areas such as the alternative energy and community sustainability.

If you are interested in developing business or community partnerships in the Rockford area, just 90 minutes from Chicago, Milwaukee or Madison, contact Linnea at [Linnea.Bengtsson@lidkoping.se](mailto:Linnea.Bengtsson@lidkoping.se).



## DE LA GARDIE GYMNASIET STUDENTS WORK ON THIRD ROCKFORD HOUSE

Construction students from Lidköping's De la Gardie Gymnasiet will work on their third house in Rockford this October. This will be a 100 percent Swedish house; the previous house was an energy-efficient "Swedish-influenced" house with Swedish products. The house project is sponsored in part by SwedishAmerican Foundation in Rockford, part of the SwedishAmerican Health System.



## INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER OFFICE OPENS IN ROCKFORD

Good news for Swedish companies that want business partners in the Rockford area, access to the region's strong supply chain or sourcing of manufactured products from Rockford: The newest International Trade Center office just opened in Rockford, thanks to the Illinois Small Business Development Centers program.



Another benefit is that the ITC will hold training events for Rockford companies that want to export to Sweden and Europe. So Swedish companies that want to participate in a supplier symposium can contact Carrie Zethmayr, manager of international relations & client solutions for the Rockford Area Economic Development Council at [czethmayr@rockfordil.com](mailto:czethmayr@rockfordil.com).

## VALUABLE INTERN/TRAINEE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Coordinated through the SwedishAmerican Chambers of Commerce, the J-1Trainee program provides U.S. companies with highly qualified trainees from Sweden. It benefits the host company with cultural diversity and benefits the trainee with an excellent opportunity to learn the business environment of the United States, firsthand. This is a reliable way to develop partnership opportunities for both companies and applicants. More information is also available at [www.sacc-usa.org](http://www.sacc-usa.org).

Rockford Region companies that are interested in utilizing this beneficial program should contact Mark Podemski, RAEDC vice president for development at [mpodemski@rockfordil.com](mailto:mpodemski@rockfordil.com).



## PERSONAL CONNECTION IS THE KEY

As Mark Podemski looks back on his three-year term as chairman of the board of Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce-Chicago (SACC), HALSNINGAR asked him what stood out most in his tenure?

"Given that SACC-CHICAGO's mission is to promote exchange of technology, trade and culture between Sweden and Midwest U.S.A., I think organizations like SACC can be even more powerful," said Mark.

"We tend to think of SACC-type groups as social organizations, but it's more. It's a potent combination of cultural, historical and economic forces that can help us accelerate all types of change and growth. Once we recognize that, you can really leverage or unleash SACC's power. Today, speed is of the essence, and in SACC, we have the resources to harness that speed and differentiate you, your product or your region from others who do not have the benefit of SACC," he explained.

"When we celebrate our personal backgrounds and bring it into our business relationships, we can have better interactions, and that is what will help us be successful, the all-important personal connections. I encourage all my colleagues to really dive in and get to know each other better, attend events and connect with each other," he concluded. Contact Mark at [mpodemski@rockfordil.com](mailto:mpodemski@rockfordil.com).



## AMBASSADOR HAFSTRÖM'S VISIT TO ROCKFORD

The Honorable Jonas Hafström, Swedish Ambassador to the United States, visited Rockford in September 2010 as a keynote speaker for International Bioenergy Days and to speak at a special dinner for the Swedish Historical Society of Rockford. "The relationship between Sweden and Rockford was greatly strengthened as a result of his two days here and the important connections he made with Rockford," said Barbara Lunde, board member of the SHSR. The ambassador visited the students from Lidköping's De la Gardie who helped build a Swedish-style home in Rockford. Said Lunde, "The ambassador knows he has an open invitation to return to Rockford anytime!"



*Ambassador Hafström, right, with John Mecklenburg of SwedishAmerican Foundation, a sponsor of the Swedish-style home in Rockford.*

## TOURISM MANAGER CREDITS SWEDISH RELATIONSHIPS FOR SUCCESS

Persuading many Swedish groups to visit Rockford has been easy for Lindsay Arellano, a tourism manager with the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. She credits her membership in the Swedish Historical Society of Rockford and her service as a member of its board of directors as being a big help.

"I was able to market Rockford when the RACVB exhibited at the TUR trade fair in Gothenburg because through the historical society I knew the Rockford attractions that would interest Swedish visitors. And whenever I needed help with a Swedish group, my fellow board members were always there for me," she said.

"My experience with the historical society has been very valuable. The board members are a wealth of information. I would not have been as successful if I had not been involved with them. I highly recommend people get involved in cultural groups. If you have a personal interest in a field and get involved, you can help each other," she advised.



## NORDICS AMONG HAPPIEST IN THE WORLD

It's official. The Gallup Organization surveyed 132 countries in its Gallup World Poll, and rated the Nordic countries at the top. Denmark and Finland tied for the top spot at 7.7 with Norway at 7.6 and Sweden at 7.3.

The poll found that there are two types of prosperity—economic and social psychological—that best predict various types of well-being. In other "happiness" surveys, Nordic countries have also fared well. These results were reported in the July 2010 issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association.



## HALDEX CONSOLIDATES OPERATIONS IN ROCKFORD

Haldex, a leading global provider of proprietary products for the vehicle industry, consolidated its North American operations into its Rockford facility. It is now the North American hydraulics center for Haldex Hydraulic Systems, one of three Haldex divisions. The company is headquartered in Stockholm.

As part of the consolidation, the company made substantial investments to create a state-of-the-art facility that is aligned with lean-manufacturing principles. Haldex's North American customers



now have one point of contact for all business services. "We invested in the U.S. market because of the growth opportunities that are available to us," said Brian Nelson, Haldex Hydraulics senior vice president, business strategy. For more information, contact him at [brian.nelson@haldex.com](mailto:brian.nelson@haldex.com).

## STICKING TOGETHER

Another connection between Sweden and Rockford is Testor Corp., a leading manufacturer of hobby finishing materials and paints, model kits and airbrushes to a worldwide market. Young Axel Karlson from Stockholm immigrated to Rockford in 1928 and started a company that manufactured an adhesive to repair women's stockings, Karlson's Klister. Another young Swede joined his company, Nils Testor, bought the company and changed the name to Testor Chemical Company the following year.

The product was also used by cobblers to mend shoes and soon was marketed for a variety of household and hobby uses. Testor diversified its product line with wood and plastic model kits, model engines and craft paint. It established a branch in Stockholm in 1956. Today Testor has 300 employees, still has its headquarters in Rockford and is part of RPM Inc.

Mr. Karlson returned to Sweden and likely re-introduced the product as Karlson's Klister, which is still available.



## "THE GREAT SWEDISH ADVENTURE"

Meter Television AB, a leading Swedish film production company, will work on a new reality television series called "The Great Swedish Adventure." They are now advertising in the U.S. for Americans with Swedish ancestry to be on the show. Chosen participants will travel to Sweden to compete in "extreme cultural exchanges to discover their roots while trying to win the grand prize, meet their Swedish relatives." The show will be shot and broadcast in Sweden. Will Rockfordians be chosen? Stay tuned.



[www.greatswedishadventure.com](http://www.greatswedishadventure.com)

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## ABOUT THE RAEDC

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council is to enhance wealth creation in the Rockford Region by marketing the area and helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to serve as a one-stop resource for clients, to improve the competitiveness of the region and to engage the community in the work of economic development.

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**Rockford**  
I L L I N O I S  U S A

ROCKFORD AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



Helping Employers Retain & Create Quality Jobs