



# New mall owner

*Lompensenteret purchased by Norway's largest owner of malls; company vague about plans*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

'Tis the season for mall shopping and hopeful surprises, so this week's announced sale of Lompensenteret is both timely and welcome news to some merchants hoping the new owners make improvements that attract more year-round customers.

Amfi Drift AS, which manages 74 shopping centers in Norway, will become the new owner of Longyearbyen's biggest retail center on Jan. 1. The price of the center, assessed at 52 million kroner when Store Norske put it in on the market a year ago, was not disclosed.

"We hope to believe that any of our 3,700 tenants will find it interesting to establish themselves at Lompensenteret," wrote Lars Løseth, Amfi's general manager, in an e-mail interview. "We also hope that our experience with the operation of our other shopping centers can benefit customers and tenants in Lompensenteret."

Upgrades are being considered, Løseth  
**See LOMPENSENTERET, page 4**



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Longyearbyen youths practice forming a human pyramid in preparation for Saturday's annual Sirkus Svalnardo. More than 50 kids will perform in shows at 3 and 5 p.m. at Kulturhuset.

## WEE-RING SIRKUS

*More than 50 youths ready to swing, tumble, twirl and fall in annual Sirkus Svalnardo show*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

Fear of heights doesn't seem to be a problem for this group of young circus performers. Intentionally falling from them, however, can be a different story.

A center ring featuring trapeze artists, high-flying gymnasts, choreographed routines on stilts and more will be filled by 52 Longyearbyen youths ranging from tots to teenagers during the annual Sirkus Svalnardo at Kulturhuset on Saturday. Proceeds from the performances, scheduled at 3 and 5 p.m., will go to benefit victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

The circus will also feature an elaborate  
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## A chilly attitude toward families?

*Proposed elimination of extra child assistance payments for Svalbard troubles some parents*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
**Editor**

Helen Sundström and Eike Müller won't go broke if they lose 320 kroner a month in child assistance. But they say a government proposal to remove that benefit for Svalbard residents sends an ominous message.

"They should be thinking about the consequences with families because (Parliament)  
**See ASSISTANCE, page 4**



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Helen Sundström, left, and Eike Müller, keep their eight-month-old son, Eskild Sundström, entertained while visiting a friend at Fruene.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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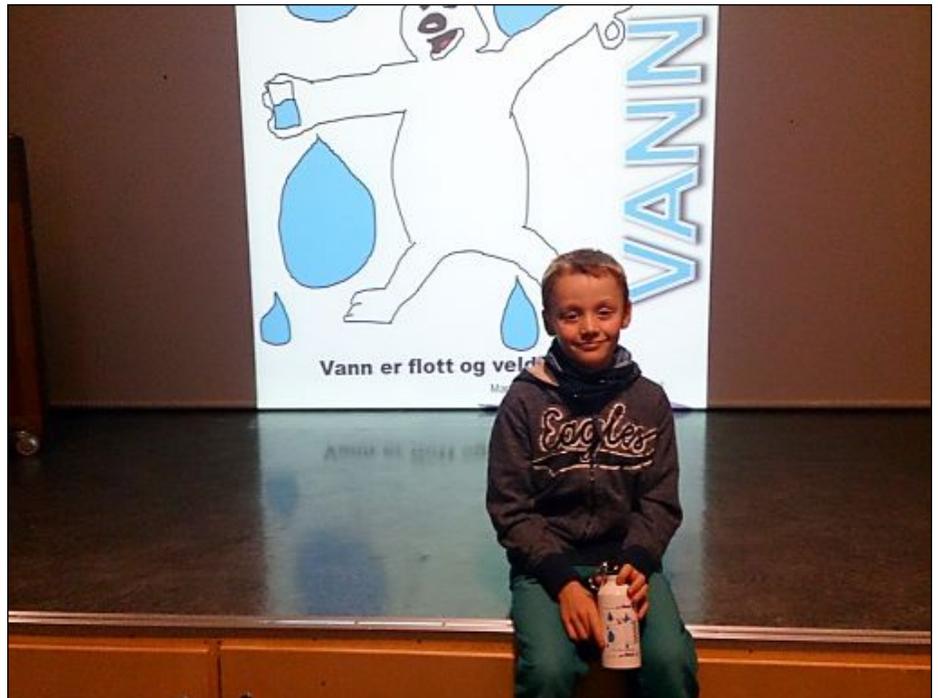
## Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

## Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

## Winning wet work



THOMAS SKOGVOLD / LONGYEARBYEN LOKALSTYRE

Martin Higrav, a fifth-grade student at Longyearbyen School, sits in front of his drawing of a polar bear surrounded by water droplets, which won a competition sponsored by Bydrift, the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and the school during the spring. His design will be featured on water bottles used to promote drinking tap water. "We hope the bottles provide an increased focus on recycling and the environment, and encourage drinking tap water instead of soft drinks and bottled water long before it is transported and arrives at Svalbard," the contest organizers wrote in a prepared statement. The water bottles are available at Longyearbyen's main municipal building.

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Reality TV is infamous for its extreme, bizarre and often dangerous challenges, so those signing up for a series of extreme adventures in Norway's far north had to figure they'd be in for some rough moments. But no matter how many breathtaking dangers on the show 71 Degrees North a participant named Caroline overcomes, **she's likely to be mostly remembered for her "blind" sighting of a target during rifle training.** Footage shows her repeatedly closes her left eye while lowering it to the sight at Svalbard's shooting range and bewildered about why she can't see anything. When an instructor finally points out the problem, her response – besides embarrassed laughter – includes covering both eyes with her hand to see if that improves things. Those really in suspense about how the snafu turns out can see the footage at [www.tvnorge.no/programmer/71-nord](http://www.tvnorge.no/programmer/71-nord) ... Sticking with the wide world of sports and turning the tables a bit, a group of **four Svalbard residents participated in Spain's Divina Pastora Valencia Marathon last weekend.** While they received much love from the Spanish press, they won't be coming home with any trophies. The fastest of the four, Leif-Erik Stormoen, completed the 42-kilometer race in three hours, 48 minutes and 37 seconds, good for 5,380th place overall. Still, before you scoff, that would have beat the winner of this year's North Pole Marathon by about a minute ... Finally, limited space last



TVNORGE

**To her credit, she knows which end of a rifle is which:** It's the looking part that's apparently one of those reality TV challenges that's too tough a test to overcome.

week meant cutting perhaps our favorite passage in our review of Sir Ranulph Fiennes' new book "Cold: Extreme Adventures at the Lowest Temperatures on Earth." The man the Guinness Book of Records calls "the world's greatest living explorer" was leading a team in a quest many years ago to become the first to reach the North Pole only by surface means, competing with several teams from other countries for the honor. **A Svalbardposten article claimed Fiennes decided to bring a little extra warmth in the form of prostitutes.** "Scott had horses with him on his tragic South Pole expedition," the newspaper reported. "The question now is whether prostitutes will bring better luck to the expedition team than horses." The paper issued a quick retraction after expedition officials denounced the story as "bunk."



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

August Snibsøer, right, practices a yo-yo trick while walking on stilts during a rehearsal for Sirkus Svalnardo this week at Kulturhuset. He said he learned to walk – and jump – on the stilts in one day.

## Sirkus – with new threads – is in town

### CIRCUS, from page 1

array of costumes, twirling flags and other hand-sewn embellishments, with different themes for each type of performance, said Birgitte Dahl Knutsen, a volunteer assistant. The scarf routine, for instance will feature a red "fire in the sky" theme.

"We started Monday, so we are sewing in the middle of the night, the middle of the day," she said.

The costumes will be a notable change from all previous years since the show debuted in 2000, said Kristine Myrbostad, Sirkus Svalnardo's lead instructor.

"The first year we started we got some clown costumes and that was it," she said.

Most of the youths also started rehearsing their routines on Monday, but most have participated in the show before, Myrbostad said. About 10 to 15 of the youths are regular participants in the program at other times during the year.

Learning a new routine was no trouble for August Snibsøer, 10, who said he was able to walk on stilts the first day of rehearsals. He and four others will perform a robot-like march during the show.

"I can also jump," he said.

Being up high also isn't a worry for Liv-Anna Ringheim, 11, an acrobatic scarf performer, due to activities such as climbing in



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Froya Holtet Gunhildberget, 9, left, and Emma Sofia Petterson, 9, practice a gymnastics routine with assistance from Birgitte Dahl Knutsen.

the mountains. The tough part, she said, is unwrapping herself during the drops.

"Then you're in free-fall," she said, according to a translation by Myrbostad.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Flying to Tromsø may cost 457 percent more next year

Scandinavian Airlines is eliminating stopovers in Tromsø for its flights between Longyearbyen and Oslo on Wednesdays and Fridays starting next year, meaning the trip will be hours longer and up to 457 percent more expensive for travelers who need to reach Tromsø on those days. Heidi Jorunn Brun said she will need to travel to Oslo and wait 55 minutes before taking a flight back to Tromsø, which will take a total of 5 hours and 35 minutes, and cost 8,868 kroner. She paid 1,500 kroner for a recent round-trip ticket directly between Longyearbyen and Tromsø. SAS officials said the change is being made because fewer people are traveling to Tromsø and more to Oslo.

### New Museumsveien bridge OK'd; motorists to pay for it

A new one-lane bridge to replace the damaged one on Museumsveien, approved by the Longyearbyen Municipal Council last week after a contentious debate about its cost, will likely cost motorists an extra 200 kroner in their annual vehicle tax. Supporters of the five-million-kroner bridge, which features a separate pedestrian walkway, say it costs less than the former two-lane bridge and is sufficient for the volume of traffic using it. City Manager Lars Ole Saugnes said it also offers an emergency option if other at-risk bridges in the city suffer damage. "This bridge is constructed so that it can be moved to another place by crane, should the need arise," he said.

### Arctic fox killed by dogs at Hopen doesn't have rabies

An Arctic fox killed by dogs outside the Hopen meteorological station earlier this month does not have rabies, according to the Svalbard governor's office. Harsh restrictions – including a ban on unsupervised dogs outside and killing as many foxes as possible near Longyearbyen – were enacted after several wild animals tested positive for the disease in 2011. The fox was discovered with bite marks, but Hopen officials did not know if it attacked the dogs first. The fox was sent to the National Veterinary Institute for testing and the dogs, already vaccinated, were given a second shot as a precaution.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High -8C (-12C wind chill), low -9C (-14C wind chill).	Snow. S winds to 29 km/h. High -4C (-10C wind chill), low -9C (-14C wind chill).	Rain/snow. E winds to 65 km/h. High 1C (-7C wind chill), low -4C (-10C wind chill).	Snow. E winds to 62 km/h. High 0C (-9C wind chill), low -3C (-8C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, p. cloudy, -2C (-9C), -11C (-18C), light 0:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -11C (-17C), -15C (-21C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, 0C (-6C), -13C (-19C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, 0C (-8C), -7C (-17C), light 0:00h

Data provided by storm.no



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A lone shopper walks through Lompensenteret, where businesses often struggle during the winter. An official with Amfi Drift AS, which announced the purchase of the shopping center this week and is considering possible upgrades, said he believes it can attract more businesses from the mainland.

## New mall owner mum about plans

### LOMPENSENTERET, from page 1

wrote, but he declined to give specifics. He said rents paid by tenants will not be affected under their current leases.

While some merchants said they are taking a wait-and-see approach toward the new owners, others hope they will benefit from the company's expertise as Norway's largest owner of shopping malls.

"It's a positive because these people know how to run shopping malls," said Merete Alstad-Jensen, owner of Gullgruva Arctic Design, a jewelry and souvenir store. "They

will hopefully put some money into it and make it look better."

Store Norske has made some recent improvements, but there are numerous vacant spaces – especially on the second floor – and businesses often struggle during non-tourist months. Alstad-Jensen said she thinks "there's great potential" for the center if marketed properly to travelers as well as businesses.

"I want Svalbard to be more of a duty-free destination year-round," she said.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Extra child support may be eliminated

### ASSISTANCE, from page 1

says this is going to be a family-oriented community," Sundström said. The couple has a son, Eskild Sundström, who is eight months old.

The proposal from the new Conservative-led government would eliminate the supplement residents of Svalbard, Finnmark and Nord-Troms receive in addition to the 970 kroner Norway families receive for each child under 18 years old.

"The new government believes the median income for households with children in Finnmark is above the national average, and the calculations show that the median income in the county would still be above the national average if the Finnmark supplement is removed," NRK reported this week.

The proposal would save about 80 million in the 2014 budget, according to NRK. Opposition within the four-party ruling coalition has been expressed by the Christian Democratic Party, with the Liberal Party wanting compensating adjustments for low-income families to things such as kindergarten fees.

Eliminating the supplement in child assistance adds to a list of potentially troubling issues for families living in Svalbard, especially

for expected benefits that are being removed, said Müller, a German national who moved here seven years ago. The situation is worse for foreigners since pension contributions are lower and the loss of a job can mean the termination of health insurance.

As a result, the couple is considering moving to the mainland.

"It's too much insecurity," his mother said. "We can't afford it if he loses his arm in an accident."

Anne Line Bjørke, who moved to Longyearbyen with her husband and two young daughters in May, said she didn't know about the child assistance supplement so "it was a bonus when we got here." But, like many families who move to Svalbard because of a job obtained by one parent, "to be here we need to be able to live without my working."

There's significant differences in the cost of raising children in Svalbard compared to Oslo, although it's not necessarily higher, Bjørke said.

"In the beginning getting all the things you need is expensive, but then you don't spend that much money in everyday life," she said.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Nov. 20

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 21

7 p.m.: Lecture by Dag Nævestad about whaling and other activities in Svalbard during the 17th and 18th centuries. Svalbard Museum.

### Nov. 23

3 and 5 p.m.: Sirkus Svalbardo, featuring more than 50 youths. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 24

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ baptism. Svalbard Church.

4 p.m.: Movie: "Wadжда," Arab/German film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Vi Er Best!" Swedish drama, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 25

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

### Nov. 26

7 p.m.: Presentation of and singing from new hymnals for the Norwegian Church. Svalbard Church.

### Nov. 27

6 p.m.: Movie: "Tusen Gamger God Natt," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 28

7:30 p.m.: Holiday concert featuring multiple performers. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 29

9 p.m.: Concert by Gluten Free Mama, a rock covers band. Barentz Pub.

### Nov. 30

7:30 p.m.: Gala performance featuring "polar heroines." A music/story presentation of noteworthy women in polar areas during the past 100 years. Kulturhuset.

## What's online

**Icepeople.net** provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Climate change: Terrorism of the poor?*
- *Greenhouse gas: 2/3 from 90 companies*
- *Active volcano found under Antarctic ice*
- *Polar bear poses for, tries to eat photog*