



*Providing fitness and community
for individuals and families
through physical, educational,
cultural, and social programs*

UPCOMING EVENTS

**February 2025 Slovo
articles due January 2**

Sokol Singers

Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-noon
First and Third Tuesdays
December 3, 17
January 7, 21

Škola Holiday Party (Mikuláš)

Saturday, December 7
3-9 p.m.

Friendly Friday Evening Social

Dec. 13 and Jan. 10
7 p.m. See page 13

Czech and Slovak Language Classes for Adults

See page 16

Sokol Gift Shop

Open by appointment



**Wishing you
Happy
Holidays
and
a Happy
New Year!**

from your
**Sokol Minnesota
Board of Directors**

Sokol Children's Holiday Party

7 p.m. Friday, December 6 **2024**

Sokol families and friends
are invited to a special
program of song and dance
by the *Taneční Mládež*
and *Taneční Teens*.

Louise Wessinger, Director.

Visit from:

Svatý Mikuláš (St. Nicholas),
anděl (angel),
and *čert* (devil).

Performance by: Sokol
Czech and Slovak Singers.
Don Haselbauer, Director.



Hosted by
Czech and Slovak
Sokol Minnesota
C.S.P.S. Hall
383 Michigan St.
Saint Paul, MN



New Year's Dinner *Svíčková s knedlíkem*

Hosted by: Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota • C.S.P.S. Hall, 383 Michigan St., Saint Paul, MN

Saturday, January 25 **2025**

5 p.m. (doors open 4:30 p.m.)

Price: \$30 per person

Menu: Beef in cream sauce with bread dumplings,
dessert, and coffee.

Prepay dinner online:
credit/debit card go to,
www.sokolmn.org/cc/

Prepaid dinner reservation
cut-off is Friday, January 17.



Voice/text: 651-210-0401 or
food@sokolmn.org
if reserving
and paying by check.
Limited number
of dinners available.

Donate to the
Legacy Fund



**Support Sokol Minnesota
and the C.S.P.S. Hall
with a Year-End Donation**
sokolmn.org/fundraising/

Donate to the
General Fund



Prezidentčin komentář/President's Notes by Lucy Rose

We are coming up on the end of another eventful year, and I want to express my sincere gratitude for your continued membership in Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, whether 2024 was your first year as a member or your 70th. (Believe it or not, we do have several members who have been with us for over 60 years!) It has been a truly busy year for our organization. Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, we were able to offer a wide variety of special events, including ethnic dinners, theatre productions, lectures, concerts, dances, holiday celebrations, summer camps, mushroom hunts, cooking classes, bike tours, and festivals, all in addition to our regular weekly programming for adults and children.

I am so grateful to those of our members who take it upon themselves to organize and lead these wonderful events; they ensure that Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota remains a place where all of our members have the opportunity to learn about and celebrate our shared culture.

As I reflect back on 2024 and the insights that I've gained this year as president of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, I can't emphasize enough just how much I appreciate the level of commitment to our organization that exists among so many of our members.

As a Minnesota Sokol, you should be enormously proud that your membership maintains our C.S.P.S. Hall as the longest-serving Czech-Slovak hall in continuous use in the United States, for 137 years! Your support of our organization, whether it comes in the form of volunteering your skills and time, donating items, or through financial support, makes you an integral piece of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota's long and proud history.

As the popularity of fraternal organizations has declined in the United States over the last several decades, the sense of community, fellowship, and common purpose that membership in such organizations brings has been increasingly tested. I hope that your continued membership in Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota is a sign that the efforts of our talented and dedicated volunteers are succeeding in fulfilling that sense of community, fellowship, common purpose, and pride in our shared cultural heritage.

You are an important part of our Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota community, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as president of our organization during the past year. While I will be stepping away from that role for now, I will of course remain an active Sokol member and will work to keep Sokol Minnesota the thriving cultural organization that it is and always has been.

I am proud to be your Sokol sister and I hope that in 2025 and beyond, you will join me in striving to make Sokol Minnesota better and better each year!

Nazdar!



Lucy
Brudnak Rose

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota 2024 BOD (Board of Directors)

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Telephone: 651-290-0542

Past issues of *Slovo* and
Hall Calendar of Events:
www.sokolmn.org

Sokol Minnesota Member News

- Congratulations to Tom Aubrecht on the birth of his first grandchild, Lucas Dean, to daughter and son-in-law Jen and David.
- Get well wishes to Ed Hamernik for a speedy recovery from recent surgery.
- Condolences to Anne Smisek Jans and family upon the death of her father John G. Smisek on November 8.

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota provides fitness and community for individuals and families through physical, educational, cultural, and social programs for children, teens, and adults.

Information on our programs, calendar of events, membership, C.S.P.S. Hall rentals, and gift shop, plus e-addresses for our board, program directors, volunteer staff, and the Czech Honorary Consul, as well as *Slovo* past issues, are available at
www.sokolmn.org or www.facebook.com/sokolminnesota



Use this
QR code
to go to
sokolmn.org

2024 Sokol Minnesota Youth Leadership Award Winners by Doreen McKenney

The Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota Youth Leadership Award recognizes outstanding youth members who participate and volunteer within Sokol Minnesota. The goal is to foster a future generation of leaders and members for our Sokol organization.



Kris Gurgel, 2024 YLA recipient.

Sokol's Czech community offered Kris Gurgel a connection to her Czech family abroad, learning more about her mother Martina's ancestry. She feels that these influences were all essential to her identity and how the community was special to her in so many ways.

Kris joined the dance group at a very young age; when she entered middle school, she started helping out with the children's dance group. Kris danced with the *Tanční Mládež* group, *Tanční Teens* group, and Festival of Nations; volunteered and participated at Sokol-sponsored events; attended the Czech and Slovak Children's Cultural Day Camp as a camper, junior leader, and camp director assistant; was a member of the Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SMYL) group; and attended *škola* family events. SMYL co-advistor Glynis Grostephan summed up Kris' outstanding character as a kind, hardworking, and helpful leader within the Sokol community.



Juna Krikava, 2024 YLA recipient.

Juna Krikava enthusiastically started Czech and Slovak folk dancing at a young age, joining the dance group because she wanted to perform for her *Babi* and *Deda*. What started out as a hobby to her became a memorable ten years making friends along the way, and she is thankful that her grandparents supported her through her cultural journey.

Juna expressed that her life was especially impacted when she became old enough to move up to the teen dance group and be a camp junior leader, where she could help the younger kids adjust and feel comfortable in their surroundings.

Throughout the years Juna participated and volunteered at Sokol-sponsored events such as Festival of Nations and Czech and Slovak Children's Cultural Day Camp (as both a camper and a junior leader), was a Sokol Minnesota Youth Link member, and danced with the *Tanční Mládež* and *Tanční Teens* groups. Dance director Louise Wessinger described Juna as a quick and enthusiastic learner, patient and helpful to younger dancers, and with natural teaching and leadership skills.

Isabel Splichalova-Espinosa, 2024 YLA recipient.

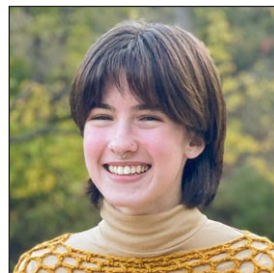
Around the age of five, Izzy Splichalova-Espinosa joined the Sokol dance group, which practices at the C.S.P.S. Hall on Saturday mornings. When she entered middle school, she attended Czech & Slovak School Twin Cities which is held at the Hall. An important part of going to Sokol Hall every Saturday for dance and language school was that she and her mom, Olga, cherished and explored their Czech heritage together.

Izzy danced with the *Tanční Mládež* and *Tanční Teens* groups and especially enjoyed the Festival of Nations, volunteered and participated at Sokol-sponsored events, attended the Czech and Slovak Children's Cultural Day Camp as a camper and a language teacher, was a member of the Sokol Minnesota Youth Link group, and attended family events of Czech & Slovak School Twin Cities. Louise Wessinger, dance director, said that when Izzy moved up to the teen dance group, she was always positive and joyful, helpful with the other children (even her brother!), and danced with whomever needed a partner.

Congratulations to 2024 American Sokol National Merit Award Winners

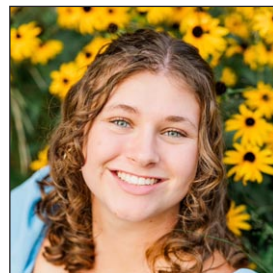
Aaron Armstrong and Lily Callanan by Sokol Minnesota Board of Instructors

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota is proud to recognize Aaron Armstrong and Lily Callanan, both long-time gymnasts, junior instructors with our gymnastics program, and volunteers with our Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SMYL) group. These were the two applicants from our unit, and both were selected as recipients of a 2024 American Sokol National Merit Award. Kudos to Lily and Aaron!



Aaron Armstrong

The award is a \$1,000 scholarship for each recipient. The American Sokol National Merit Award has been offered to Sokol members since 1975 and is funded by the American Sokol Future Leaders Fund. The merit award is based on a variety of criteria and qualifications, such as participation in cultural, educational, and fitness activities at unit, district, and national levels. The award is designed to assist American Sokol Members pursuing higher education full time at an accredited two-year or four-year college, trade school, or university. Applicants for this award need not be limited to those who just recently graduated from high school. This award can be applied for an unlimited number of times, but can be received only once.



Lily Callanan

This program is a function of the American Sokol National Education Committee. Both Lily and Aaron are 2024 high school graduating seniors and are pursuing college degrees; Aaron at Union College, Schenectady, New York, and Lily at Colby College, Waterville, Maine.

Sokols Celebrated Czech Independence Day 2024 in Chicago



At the 2024 Czech Independence Day celebration hosted by the Consulate of the Czech Republic in Chicago on October 28, Consul General Jakub Utěšený pointed out the many contributions of the Czech-American community to Czechoslovakia's founding in 1918 and how these same values of freedom and democracy are guiding Czechia today. Adam Wilt, President of American Sokol, shared inspiring words about preserving Czech heritage and invited everyone to the American Sokol *Slet* in Chicago next summer, June 25-29.

Several American Sokol members held a mini reunion. (Front, L-R) Brad Hess, Cedar Rapids and Board of Bohemian National Cemetery in Cedar Rapids; Chuck Michalek, Sokol Chicagoland and Board of Bohemian National Cemetery in Chicago; Meribeth Tooke, Sokol Spirit, American Sokol Foundation Director; Vera Wilt, Sokol Spirit, Education Director; Dave Stephan, Sokol Minnesota, Building and Property Trustees Committee; Ally Mangia, Sokolice Tabor, Public Relations Director, and American Sokol Public Relations Committee. Back: John Tooke, Sokol Spirit, Past President; Adam Wilt, Sokol Spirit, By-laws Chair, and American Sokol President; M. L. Kucera, Sokol Minnesota, Western District's representative to the American Sokol Foundation, and Czech Honorary Consul/Minneapolis. (All Chicago Sokol units belong to Central District.)

Czech Deputy Consul General/Chicago Visited Twin Cities

Copy for this article provided by Sally Lieberman, Joyce Tesarek, and M. L. Kucera

Ondřej Pometlo, Deputy Consul General of the Czech Republic/Chicago, visited C.S.P.S. Hall on November 8 and 9. He offered information from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the local Czech-American community and consular services to Czech citizens.

On Friday morning, Mr. Pometlo presented Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota members a sneak peek of a new program to send Czech students of language pedagogy abroad for practical experience teaching in Czech compatriot communities. The program is being developed as part of the Programme for the Support of Czech Cultural Heritage Abroad. More details will be forthcoming.

Mr. Pometlo heard from members of our local Czech community about how we here in Minnesota would like our Czech experience and culture enhanced. Local organizations represented included Sokol Minnesota, Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota, Czech & Slovak School Twin Cities, Czech Heritage Club, Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers.

Mr. Pometlo also visited the Minneapolis St. Paul Film Society in Minneapolis to discuss reviving *Czech that Film* here in the Twin Cities in 2025. He met with Susan Smoluchowski, Executive Director, and Jesse Bishop, Programming Director. Fred Simon, Sokol Minnesota Vice President and Czech Heritage Club President, and M. L. Kucera, Honorary Consul of the Czech republic/Minneapolis, accompanied DCG Pometlo.



(From Center going Left to Right) DCG Consulate of the Czech Republic/Chicago Ondřej Pometlo, Richard Sargent, Pam Langworthy, Patricia Mestenhauser Bergh, Fred Simon, Michael Trittipio, Louise Wessinger, Pavlína Tesch, Jitka Sebek, Sally Lieberman, Gwen Willems. Missing: M. L. Kucera.



Deputy Consul General Pometlo spent Friday evening at the C.S.P.S. Hall, discussing "Czech Citizenship: History, Laws, Examples." He shared information on the requirements and procedure to obtain dual citizenship with the Czech Republic. Over 40 individuals watched the informative presentation, asked questions, and shared some of their connections to Czechoslovakia and now

the Czech Republic, then continued afterwards with conversation and questions at a reception for Mr. Pometlo.

Food, wine, and beer were provided by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, Czech and Slovak Cultural Center, Tricia Mestenhauser Bergh, M. L. Kucera, and Joyce Tesarek. Miša Kotek baked *koláče* and made *chlebičky* (Czech open-faced sandwiches). Richard Sargent provided tech support. Special thanks to volunteers Mary Cahill, M. L. Kucera, Bob Kotek, Miša Kotek, Doreen McKenny, Richard Sargent, Joan Sedlacek, Brittany Stepan, and Joyce Tesarek. See page 15 for Czech Basketball Foundation award to Charles Mencil.

4 December 2024-January 2025 *Slovo*

**June 25-29
2025**

CHICAGO

2 0 2 5

XXV AMERICAN SOKOL SLET

**We can't wait
to see you at
our first ASO
Slet in 8 years!**

Stay tuned for more details.

**Interested in learning the senior prostrna
(calisthenic moves that are choreographed
to music) for the 2025 American Slet?
Please email fitness@sokolmn.org**

Membership Anniversaries from 5 Years to 70 Years Recognized

Compiled by Steve Ernest

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota acknowledges and thanks our members for their continued support. We are especially proud to have twelve members who have been members for over 50 years, nine of whom are recognized as we celebrate these 2023 and 2024 anniversaries. Fifty-two members have belonged for over 20 years. Our total membership is 334 as we end 2024.

2023 Membership Anniversaries

55 Years since 1968: Ann Andrlé, Patricia Andrlé.
50 Years since 1973: Roberta Chandler.
45 Years since 1978: Linda Nicoli.
40 Years since 1983: Richard Verner.
35 Years since 1988: Bryan Wyberg.
30 Years since 1993: Thomas Aubrecht, Nancy Green, Sharon Shonka.
20 Years since 2003: James G. Chlebeczek, William E. Jech, Lloyd F. Krocak, Susan Lindoo, Nancy L. Siewert, David M. Sladek.
15 Years since 2008: Dawn Bulera, Charles Draheim, Arlene Hamernik, Lenka Hester, Vince Jirik, Bob Kostichka, Charles Rusnacko, Audrey Spiess, Frank R. Trnka, Robert Vanasek.
10 Years since 2013: Joe Gindele, John Gindele, Martina Gurgel, Markéta Pálková, Jan Roers, Mike Roers, Beverly A. Sutherland, Alena Youngberg.
5 Years since 2018: Edward Andrajack, Jr., Peggy Andrajack, Heather Vikla Dobias, Jean Keogh, Jay Lieberman, Sally Lieberman, Jitka Sebek, Fred A. Simon, Sam Simmons, Kristi Simmons, Rich Smith, Karen Varian.

2024 Membership Anniversaries

70 Years since 1954: Richard Saliny.
60 Years since 1964: Robert Marabella, Louise E. Wessinger.
50 Years since 1974: Mary Cahill, Catherine Haselbauer.
40 Years since 1984: Roger Green, James Kohout, Philothea T. Sweet.
35 Years since 1989: Marlene Hinshaw.
25 Years since 1999: Dennis Cahill, Kay Hromadka Edquist.
20 Years since 2004: Tim Curtis, Kevin Hurbanis, Darla Kolb, Doris Moravetz, Teresa Pojar, Kathy Roushar Jorgenson.
15 Years since 2009: Geneva Adams, Christina Banks, Ann Janda, Ken Janda, Christine Maghrak, Michaela Makarianová-Wentz, Irene Vondrasek Thayer.
10 Years since 2014: Nancy Blume, Stephanie Callanan, Steve Ernest, Mary Kucera, Karolina Peterson, Lewis Peterson, Carolyn J. Sorensen, Cinnamon Whaley.
5 Years since 2019: Helen Bond, Daren Carlson, Mary Conway, Kathy Donohue, Patricia Hampl, Lucy Brudnak Rose, Stephen Rose, Dasa Rosenthal, Mike Rosenthal, Renata Scholtz, Rolf Scholtz, Steven Shimer, Darnell Stepan, Kathy Weese.

Sokol Minnesota Thanks Donors

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota greatly appreciates your donations supporting Sokol programs and the maintenance of our historic C.S.P.S. Hall.

GENERAL FUND TOTAL \$755

Under \$99: Wayne Zbytovsky (belatedly acknowledging June, July, August donations).

\$100-\$499: M. L. Kucera (2024 Youth Leadership Awards); **Sandy Prochaska; Škola Easter Event; Škola Remarkable Mushroom Fundraiser; Silvie Nemes, Martina Gurgel, Michaela Giancarlo Kotek.**

LEGACY FUND TOTAL \$240

Under \$99: Becky Green.

\$100-\$499: M. L. Kucera (in memory of Terry Shima); **Delores Speidel.**

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Gift Shop: Don Prohaska (handmade man's shirt and vest).

Sokol Minnesota Welcomes New Members

Sokol Minnesota welcomes the following new members, accepted by the board in October.

Igor Nestršil, Saint Anthony.

Adrian and Beth Novak, Onalaska, Wisconsin, with interests in the literature group, language classes, and history and genealogy.

John Rapos, West Saint Paul, with interest in language classes.

Jennifer Comfort, Oak Grove, with interests in adult dance, adult singing, the bicycle group, music and dance, history and genealogy, plus language, cooking, and crafting classes, as well as event help in the kitchen, serving, staffing booths, and cleanup.

Welcome to our newest members!

<https://sokolmn.org/membership/>

RENEW YOUR SOKOL MINNESOTA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2025

Now is the time to renew your membership in Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota for 2025. Return the renewal form mailed to you or save a stamp by using our online membership page at www.sokolmn.org/membership to:

- Pay your 2025 dues
- Update your contact information
- Share your ideas and feedback
- Update the activities where you have interest in participating or attending

Please renew your membership by the end of January and continue being part of the Sokol family in 2025!

35th Annual Czech & Slovak Festival Enormous Success

by Co-Chairs Theresa Hudachek and Joyce Tesarek



What a beautiful day we had on Sunday, September 29, for our 35th annual Czech & Slovak Festival! We filled the building, parking lot, and blocked-off part of Michigan Street at West 7th to offer our usual food, beer garden, programs, kids' games, and vendors to the happy crowd. The silent auction was live again this year!



We are especially grateful for the *Segedínský guláš* (goulash), chicken *paprikáš*, *bramborová polévka* (potato soup), and *langoš* (plain or loaded with garlic, sour cream and shredded cheese), prepared for us by Míša Kotek and Markéta Pálková. Other food offered from the grill in 2024 included hotdogs and Czech sausages. Of course, bottled water, pop, wine, and Czech *pivo* from the bar! Plus dozens of Sokol-baked *koláče*, led by Doreen McKenney, and much more in the Sweet Shoppe.

Louise Wessinger organized another fine program of speakers, gym demos, folk dance performances, and musicians.



"Scenic Art Treasures of the

C.S.P.S. Hall," the special third-floor display featured the history and examples of the wonderful and historic hand-painted

backdrops and other works by renowned scenic artist Victor Hubal, Sr., and their 100+ year history on our stage, curated by Sally Lieberman, with posters created by Sally with help from Doreen McKenney.



The ticket crew, under Steve Ernest and Mary Cahill, sold thousands of tickets.

Although the festival is our chance to share an afternoon of culture, entertainment, fun, food, and community, it is also an important fundraiser for our historic C.S.P.S. Hall and Sokol organization. Festival income this year was \$14,790.26

Of course, none of this could happen without all our great volunteers, before, during, and after the festival. We give a special thanks to the team leaders, highlighted in bold.



2024 C&S Festival Volunteers:

Pat Andrie, Tom Aubrecht, Christy Banks, **Dan Bednar**, Kim Bednar, William Bednar, **Jason Brozovich**, **Dawn Bulera**, Dennis Cahill, **Mary Cahill**, Mikayla Carlson, Jana Castillon, **Chuck Draheim**, **Jean Draheim**, Shannon Duffy, **Steve Ernest**, Olga Splichalova Espinosa, Renae Andrie Faunce, Julie Feola, John Gerlach, Stana Gerlach, Abra Gillman and Jas, Sue Goodspeed, Roger Green, Dave Grostephan, **Glynis Grostephan**, Emilie Greull, **Martina Gurgel**, **Ed Hamernik**, Julianna Harris, Don Haselbauer, Katie Haselbauer, Marlene Hinshaw, Hannah Holzschoh, **Theresa Hudachek**, Kevin Hurbanis, Robert (Jake) Jacobson, Constance Jandrich, Henry Jandrich, Darla Kolb, Jyni Koschak, Bob Kostichka, **Bob Kotek**, **Míša Kotek**, **Marit Lee Kucera**, Joe Landsberger, Ann Leland, **Sally Lieberman**, Gina Roers-Liemandt, Luboš Mareš, **Doreen McKenney**, Aaron Mislivec, Kari Muyres, Scott Muyres, Brad Narr, **Cheryl Nelson**, Claire Nemes, Lucas Nemes, Igor Nestrašil, Maria Neuzil, Mark Neuzil, Gary Novak, Becky Olson, Ben Olson, Nick Olson, Anna Overbo, **Markéta Pálková**, Matthew Resong, Rick Palma, Radmilla Rassmussen, Lucy Rose and Sylvie, **Richard Sargent**, **Jitka Sebek**, Joan Sedlacek, Steve Shimer, Bonnie Simon, Fred Simon, Ron Simon, **Barbara Skrivanek**, Brittany Stepan, **Dave Stepan**, **Denise Stibal**, Rod Sykora, Cheri Tesarek, John Tesarek, **Joyce Tesarek**, Penny Tesarek, Tom Tesarek, John Topic, Michael Topic, Tereza Treanor, University of Minnesota Gymnasts, Kate Weeks and Izzy, Michaela Makarianová Wentz, **Louise Wessinger**, Bryan Wyberg, Alena Youngberg, Gary Zweber, and extra thanks to the "Recycling Hero" Phillip, who spent over five hours standing by one recycling bin to make sure that Festival guests recycled properly! (photo left)

35th Annual Czech & Slovak Festival continued



The silent auction at the C&S Festival was another great success; the total sales on donated items were over \$1,200. Extra thanks to Denise Stibal who make the silent auction a success and to Doreen McKenney, Joyce Tesarek, Penny Tesarek, and Tom Tesarek who helped with pricing and set-up.

Special thanks to Sausage by Cynthia at Forster's Meats & Catering for again donating our *jitrnice* sausage, Robert Bokova of Midwest Jelinek Beverages, and to Tom Aubrecht, Blanka Brichta, Michael Jasek, Urei Jasek, Leos Janocsek, Bob Kotek, Miša Kotek, Cynthia McArthur, Jitka Sebek, Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota (several bottles of wine), Dave Stepan, Denise Stibal, Joyce Tesarek, Penny Tesarek, The Joint Chiropractic Clinic, Utepils Brewing Co., and Louise Wessinger.

Booths included Sokol Minnesota Membership and Event Information,



Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SYML), Czech Cards, Sokol Camp Booya, Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic/Minneapolis, Czech and Slovak Culture Center of Minnesota,



Rusin Association of Minnesota, Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International, Baba Tillie's, Czech Sis Kitchen, Lynn Hoffmeyer Woodcrafts, Mirwood Cottage, Mariann's Hook & Thread, Cartoon Portraits by Mike Wilke, and Rachelle's Pen.

Philips Children's Museum provided games and entertainment for kids.

The Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota Gift Shop was also open for the day.

Again, we also want to thank all of you who attended and helped make this event such a success. It was a great day for our Czech and Slovak community, friends, and the West 7th area.

We look forward to next year's festival on Sunday, September 28, 2025. Save the date!



Program Highlights from the Czech & Slovak Festival by Louise Wessinger, Program Director

Although I have been at every Czech & Slovak Festival since it was started thirty-five years ago, this year my husband and I got Covid (for the first time) on the Thursday before the Festival. Needless to say, I was unable to attend. I am forever grateful for the people who stepped in to keep things running smoothly. The show went on! We

offered two programs to entertain our festival guests. One program was outdoors in the warm sunshine and the other in the air-conditioned gym.

Our outdoor stage opened with our traditional flag ceremony at 11 a.m. Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota **Sarah Landridge** sang our American National Anthem followed by the **Sokol Minnesota Czech and Slovak Singers** leading the **Czech and Slovak National Anthems.**

Program Emcee Dave Stepan introduced our **Sokol President Lucy Rose**, who welcomed our guests. Dave next introduced **M. L. Kucera, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic**, and **Cheryl Nelson Theuninck, our Slovak representative**, who both greeted the crowd.



continued on page 8

Program Highlights from the Czech & Slovak Festival

continued from page 7

The Czech and Slovak Singers, directed by Don Haselbauer, entertained with a selection of Sokol songs.



Taneční Mládež a Taneční Teens, our Sokol Minnesota children and teen dancers, presented a variety of Czech and Slovak dances in their colorful *kroje* (folk dress.) Since Director Louise Wessinger was home sick, teen dancer Sara,



Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota Sarah Langridge and the



Czech Slovak royalty presented their talents and described their visits to local festivals as representatives of our history and culture. **Heather Vikla Dobias**, a Pageant director accompanied them.



Miss Emily Fiamova, and Miss Katka Svensson helped the children and teens with their program.

Jitka Sebek and Barborka Carlson of the Czech & Slovak Language School Twin Cities gave a presentation about their classes.



Our new Festival performer this year was Sokol member **Ryan Cihlar** with his accordion, he presented an entertaining program of music and fun!



Sokol President Lucy Rose, along with Czech Honorary Consul Kucera, presented a certificate and a \$500 **Sokol Minnesota Youth Leadership Award** each to Kris Gurgel (L), Juna Krikava (R), and Isabel Espinosa (not present). Kris received \$100 for the winning essay, donated by Louise Wessinger.



Our guest performers, the **Lipa Slovak Dancers** of Minneapolis gave a beautiful performance of their authentic Slovak folk dances under the direction of Lara Ciganko.



Sokol members **Tom and Penny Tesarek**, also known as the **Mondo Jugglers**, entertained with their always exciting juggling program.



Our friends from **Ethnic Dance Theatre (EDT)** offered dances from Northern Bulgaria as they celebrate their 50 years of dancing. Congratulations to Don LaCourse and EDT!



Next were the ever-popular **Koláče Eating Contests**, monitored by Dave Stepan and Darnell Stepan. There were winners in each of three categories: children, teens, and adults.



Nineteen members of **The St. Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers (STCSFD)** were invited to dance in a *Hody* in Moravia in August, where they presented two programs of their own dances, plus they also learned two *beseda* regional dances to

perform alongside their hosts. For our festival, STCSFD presented the *Česka Beseda* which has not been danced here for many years.



Michelle Stepan and James Metcalf also presented an EDT Slovak duet that they performed in Moravia. STCFD gave a

lively performance in their beautiful *kroje*. At the end, they invited audience members to dance with them.



Our friends, the very popular **SlovCzech Band** closed the program with an hour performance which brought out lots of joyful dancers.

Inside our historic hall, the program began at noon with a demonstration of our **Sokol gymnastic programs**, under the direction of **Jason Brozovich**, Board of Instructor Director.

We also had a demonstration of **American Kung Fu and Tai Chi** which is being taught at our hall by **John Allen** and **Luboš Mares**.

The **Miss Czech Slovak Royalty** presented their program for the indoor audience under the direction of Director **Heather Vikla Dobios**.

The **St. Paul South Bohemian Ensemble**, directed by **Frank Trnka**, took over the stage with an entertaining variety of Bohemian music played on traditional instruments, including the *dudy*.

From 2-4 p.m. **George's Concertina Band** entertained for dancing and listening to music. The music was enjoyed also by the shoppers as well as the volunteers working in the Sweet Shoppe, the Silent Auction, the kitchen, and the bar.

Thank you, again, to all the fabulous volunteers who made this program happen for the 35th time!

At the end of the C&S Festival, Jack Gagamov and three fellow University of Minnesota gymnasts Kellen Ryan, Anthony Nicholas, Justin Lancisi stacked chairs while they talked with Jason Brozovich (center back).



Sokol Minnesota Youth Link

Valentines For Seniors

Saturday February 8 2025 12-2 p.m.

383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, MN

Drop by the dining room starting at 12 p.m to make cards for seniors. Art supplies and snack provided.

Interested in volunteering to make cards? Contact: youths@sokolmn.org or teens sign up with your class instructor.



Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest Hosted by Sokol Minnesota Youth Link

by Co-Advisors Glynis Grostephan
and Doreen McKenney

The fourth annual Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest was held Saturday, October 26, 2024, in the parking lot at the C.S.P.S. Hall. Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest is for Sokol families and friends, hosted by Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SMYL) advisors and teen members.

Children were welcomed with a bag that contained word searches, mazes, and room for treats and prizes. The Trunk with Treaters then visited the activities and games led by Sokol volunteers. Fifteen activity stations with games and treats were decorated with a festive fall theme. The youngsters visited the Candyland trunk, learned about tropical birds, tried their skills with "The Claw," played M&M's tic-tac-toe, spun the wheel for a prize, had their fortunes told, tossed rings at spider legs, tried their luck with a disk drop, stirred a cauldron, chose a lollipop, learned how to complete Halloween scratch-off ornaments, sunk a bean bag with Bob the Builder, cast a line to hook a fish, stopped to take a family photo, and were entertained by jugglers Penny and Tom Tesarek. Treaters also received a bag of goodies from SMYL when they exited.

Thank you to our Sokol volunteers who designed a trunk, led a game, or donated candy and prizes to Trunks with Treats: Mary Cahill, Bruce Chuchel, Chuck Draheim, Jean Draheim, Dave Grostephan, Glynis Grostephan (SMYL Co-Advisor), Miša Kotek, Marit Lee Kucera, Doreen McKenney (SMYL Co-Advisor), Lucy Rose, Victoria Schousek, Dave Stepan, Penny Tesarek, Tom Tesarek, Kate Weeks,



and the Sokol teens (photo above) who led activities: Olivia, Liliana, Vicky, Sylvie, Sara, Jas, Izzy, and Mathew.



Czech-Slovak Pageant Seeks 2025 Queen and Junior Ambassador Candidates

The Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant is now accepting candidates for royalty and also Junior Ambassadors for the 36th Annual Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant. Entries are due by February 15, 2025.

All contestants must have Czech, Slovak, Moravian, Silesian, or Rusyn descent to participate in the pageant. Young women, ages 16 to 25, compete to be queen, princesses, and Miss Congeniality. Girls and boys, ages 11 to 15, can vie to be a Junior Ambassador. Pageant organizers proudly point out that both the royalty and the junior leaders learn about their heritage and share their common passion and interest in it, as well as gaining public speaking and interpersonal skills.

Royalty winners receive a cash award, crown, and a year of memorable appearances throughout Minnesota and other states. The 2025 Minnesota queen competes in the Miss Czech-Slovak U.S. Pageant in Wilber, Nebraska, in August 2026.

For applications and more information, contact the Board of Directors: MissCzechSlovakMNPageant@gmail.com

For more information about the pageant:
MissCzechSlovakMinnesotaPageant.com or
<https://www.facebook.com/MissCzechSlovakMN>

The 36th Annual Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant will be held at the Montgomery American Legion on April 12, 2025, with a dinner at 5 p.m. and the pageant starting at 7 p.m.

Czech 1948 Tatra T87



(Back L-R) Marshall Toman, Gretchen Toman, Ken Janda, Nancy Blume, Jake Jacobson. (Middle) Bea Flaming, Ann Janda. (Front) Pam Langworthy, Richard Sargent.

In preparation for the November 16 Literary Ventures book discussion at the C.S.P.S. Hall on the book *Tatra: the Legacy of Hans Ledwinka* by John G. Margolius and John G. Henry, several members of Literary Ventures on October 27 viewed the streamlined Czech 1948 Tatra T87 four-door sedan on permanent display at the Minnesota Institute of Arts, Minneapolis. Now considered a work of art, it was designed in 1936 and was one of the fastest cars in its day.

Sokol Minnesota Gymnastics Classes at the C.S.P.S. Hall

383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul

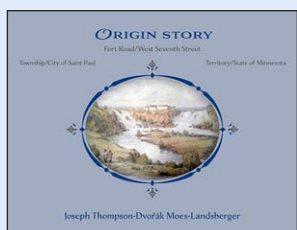
No experience necessary!

Gymnastics for everyone ages 4-18

Monday
Tuesday
& Thursday
evenings



More details: fitness@sokolmn.org



**Origin Story of Fort Road/
West Seventh Street,
the Township/City of Saint Paul,
the Territory/State of Minnesota,
Glacial Age Forward
by Joe Landsberger**

The history contains 400+ pages, 1000+ images, and documented with 240 endnotes, all are about the West Seventh neighborhoods, zip codes 55102 and 55116.

Hardcover: \$150 in a limited keepsake (quantity of 50).
Softcover: \$40 (sold two-for-one: buyer gets one, the second goes to libraries, schools, public housing in an educational program).

Available by advanced subscription: joe@josfland.com

All proceeds from the sale of the books benefit the Legacy Fund of the C.S.P.S./Sokol Hall.

Online Czech University Course Starting in January 2025 *Genealogy: Looking for Our Ancestors (Genealogie: hledáme své předky)*

Are you interested in Czech genealogy? Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI) is partnering with Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota to offer this online course through the Virtual University for the Third Age (VU3V), a respected Czech academic program for older adults 50+ or adults with disabilities. Sokol Minnesota is a North American host site (consultation center) for VU3V.

The course consists of video lectures (presented in Czech with English subtitles) combined with online discussion sessions in English moderated by CGSI volunteers. Since the course is online, it is open to participants anywhere with an internet connection. Registration opens January 1. The course runs from January to June. Expected cost: \$97. For more information, "Classes" tab: <https://sokolmn.org> or CGSI.org VU3V website: <https://vu3v.com>

"Tastes from the Czech Republic" celebrated Czech Independence Day

by Joyce Tesarek and M. L. Kucera

For the second year, homemade Czech potato salad (*bramborový salát*), breaded pork schnitzel (*řízek*), delicious garlic soup (*česnečka*) new this year, and home-made rye bread, with apple strudel for dessert, delighted the diners at Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota's 42nd annual Czech dinner on October 27. It was a special time to enjoy a delicious traditional Czech meal in person and to visit with new and old friends. Nearly 100 meals were served.

The superb dinner was prepared by Miša Kotek and Dawn Bulera with help from Jana Castillon and Alena Youngberg. Diners gave the kitchen team a standing ovation. Other Czech dinner event volunteers included Pat



Markéta Pálková with a tray of apple strudel desserts.

Andrle, Mary Vetter Benedict, Chuck Draheim, Jean Draheim, Jas Gillman, Roger Green, Mia Gringon, Jan Kostal, Bob Kotek, M. L. Kucera, Sally Lieberman, Luboš Mareš, Doreen McKenney, Markéta Pálková, Richard Sargent, Fred Simon, Barbara Skrivanek, Joyce Tesarek, Kathy Weese, and Louise

Wessinger. Doreen McKenney had the Gift Shop open.

A brief program, during dessert time, started with the Honorary Czech Consul Marit Lee Kucera. She explained that the Czech Republic, which emerged after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, still celebrates the historic founding of the first independent Czechoslovak state on October 28, 1918. This national holiday serves as a reminder of that nation's journey to freedom and sovereignty. In commemoration of Czech Independence



Standing in front of the Prague Castle scenery, Sally Lieberman described the Hubal stage backdrops.

Hubal, Sr., created our spectacular, century-old collection of scenic art specifically for the stage at C.S.P.S. Hall. On display along the east wall of the hall were six interpretive posters, prepared by Sally along with Doreen McKenney. They provided information about the stage backdrops, their creator, and the lively history of immigrant community theater for which they were made in the early 20th century. Many guests took advantage of the invitation to look closely at these posters after the dinner; all were amazed by these marvelous pieces of art that Sokol Minnesota has used continuously for a century.

Ronald Spika won the hand-blown glass pumpkin door prize, donated by glass artist and Sokol Minnesota member Jim Chlebec. Thanks to all who attended!

Day, each of the twelve dining tables had a small Czech flag in the center of fall foliage.

Sokol Minnesota Vice President Fred Simon welcomed our guests and invited everyone to upcoming events at Sokol Minnesota and other Czech organizations.

Sally Lieberman gave a short history of the extraordinary art treasures of which Sokol Minnesota is so proud. Nationally-recognized artist Victor



Mary Vetter Benedict with dinner plates of *bramborový salát* and *řízek*.

Slovo Publication Information and Committees

The *Slovo* is published ten times per year by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, a non-profit organization, 383 West Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102. Phone: 651-290-0542.

Sokol Minnesota members receive the *Slovo* with their membership.

To receive your *Slovo* in color via email instead of the black-and-white mail version, contact slovo@sokolmn.org

Non-member *Slovo* subscription: \$20 annually. Please include name, address, phone number, and email address with a \$20 check payable to Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota; mail to *Slovo* at the above address.

The *Slovo* staff welcomes submissions.

Copy deadline for each issue is the first day of

the prior month. Send news, articles, and pictures digitally to slovo@sokolmn.org

Advertising: For information on due dates and rates, please email slovo@sokolmn.org

Moving or temporarily away: Please notify us via email or USPS mail of your change of address to make sure you continue to receive the *Slovo*.

The *Slovo* is bulk mailed; non-deliverable copies are not forwarded or held by the post office. Non-delivered copies are returned to Sokol Minnesota and billed to us at the first-class mail rate. For this reason, we will not send issues until we have a current, correct mailing address on record for you.

Member volunteer *Slovo* staff:

***Slovo* team:** Mary Cahill, M. L. Kucera, Kelly Rynda, and Joyce Tesarek.

Mailing: Mary Cahill and Joan Sedlacek.

Mailing/Email lists: Penny and Tom Tesarek.

Minnesota ad designer: Doreen McKenney (1, 7, 9, 16).

Production layout: Mary Kucera.

December/January issue contributors:

Mary Cahill, Jean Draheim, Steve Ernest, Glynis Grostephan, Theresa Hudacek, Jean Keogh, M. L. Kucera, Joe Landsberger, Pam Langworthy, Sally Lieberman, Doreen McKenney, Lucy Rose, Sokol Minnesota Board of Instructors, Jitka Sebek, Bonnie Simon, Carolyn Sorensen, Joyce Tesarek, Pavlína Tesch, and Gwen Willems.

December/January issue photographs, ads, or illustrations: Martina Gurgel, M. L. Kucera, Joe Landsberger, Pam Langworthy, Doreen McKenney, Jitka Sebek, Dave Stepan, and Joyce Tesarek.

More information at www.sokolmn.org

Montgomery's Third Annual *Svatý Mikuláš* Celebration on December 8 by Jean Keogh

Montgomery's third annual *Svatý Mikuláš* (Saint Nicholas) celebration is Sunday, December 8, 2024, from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Rustic Farmer/Revival, located at 209/213 First Street South. Event partners are the Rustic Farmer and Revival on Main, Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant, Czech Heritage Club, Veseli Area Lions Club, and Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic/ Minneapolis.

Carrying on the tradition, *Svatý Mikuláš*, *anděl* (angel), and *čert* (devil) will visit with all children attending. Each child receives a bag to decorate for treats from *Svatý Mikuláš*, as well as several make-and-take craft stations.

Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant royalty and the Kolacky Days royalty will greet visitors. The Czech dancer topiaries, Alenka and Vlada, will be on display. Other

highlights will be the Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers, both Sokol Minnesota's *Taneční Mládež* children's folk dancers and *Taneční Teens* groups, and a Czech Country Christmas Market featuring a variety of Czech merchandise, baked goods, and gift items, including the Sokol Minnesota Gift Shop.

There will be music for dancing and listening, door prize drawings, and plenty of great Czech food, including Czech hotdogs, *vomáčka* (vegetable soup) with *zelníčky* (sauerkraut crackers), *halušky* (cabbage and dumplings), hot mulled wine, and Czech *pivo* (beer). No admission charge, but free-will donations are appreciated, as well as canned goods/personal hygiene products/paper products for the Montgomery Food Shelf. Everyone is welcome!

Highlights From August Through October Monthly Unit Meetings

Theresa Hudachek is Recording Secretary

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota's Board of Directors (BOD) met on August 15, 2024.

Officer and Committee Report information included: availability of an American Sokol Emergency Assistance Fund, a recommendation that references to gaming be removed from the bylaws, establishment of the Nominating Committee with nominations for BOD positions to be available prior to the November 22 annual meeting, updates on various maintenance and repairs to the C.S.P.S. Hall, including a request for a five-year maintenance interval checks and repair proposal for the sprinkler system (\$4,000), five applications for membership, gaming reports on the proposed budget for September and the actual expenditures for July, finance reports on income and expense and profit loss statement.

Action items included approval of dedicating funds received from Give to the Max Day to the stage backdrop repair initiative; gaming reports; acceptance of five new members; approval of the five-year boiler system contract.

Sokol Minnesota BOD met on September 19, 2024.

Officer and Committee Report information included: a presentation by Dave Stepan on digitization of the Edison music rolls and discussion about the usage, storage, and ownership of the rolls. Joe Landsberger presented an update on

the Bus Rapid Transit project along West Seventh Street; the Unit will discuss having a formal stance on this project. American Sokol has sent out a survey to Units, BOD members to review and send responses to President Lucy Rose for compilation; finance reports on income and expense and profit loss statement; gymnastics classes have resumed and numbers are similar to last year but not rebounding to pre- Covid numbers and new junior instructors this year; Luboš Mareš will be offering two stretch classes and a self-defense class; building repairs on the alarm system, hot water heater, LED lighting in kitchen and stage area are next, parking lot resurfaced and striped; a report on membership milestones has been prepared by Steve Ernest; fall language classes are almost full.

Czech language teacher Michael Trittipio attended a two-week teaching-Czech workshop in the Czech Republic supported by a Czech government scholarship; he will be sharing information with other language teachers and writing an article for *Slovo*.

Action items included a decision that Sokol Minnesota will not donate to or organize fundraisers for personal requests. A contribution for food and beverages for the upcoming *Book of Prague* event was approved. Gaming reports for August's actual expenditures and also \$10,000 for allowable combined expenses for the month of October's proposed budget

were approved. Six new membership requests were approved.

The Sokol BOD met on October 17, 2024.

Office and Committee Report information included notification by Czech Honorary Consul M. L. Kucera of upcoming visit on November 8 by Czech Deputy Consul General Ondřej Pometlo. In two separate sessions, he will speak about availability of native Czech language teachers and also how to obtain Czech citizenship. Finance reports on income and expense and profit loss statement were presented. There was a discussion on how to handle requests for sponsorships.

Action items: A contribution for refreshments for a reception for Ondřej Pometlo was approved. A sponsorship request in the amount of \$250 for the 20th CGSI Conference was approved. Five new membership requests were approved. Gaming reports for November's expenses and a \$15,000 transfer of gaming funds to Sokol Minnesota was approved.

Sokol Minnesota Friendly Friday Evenings 7-10 p.m.

Social for
Members, Families, and Friends
at the C.S.P.S. Hall
December 13 and January 10
with board games and activities.

The Book of Prague: A City in Short Fiction edited by Ivana Myšková and Jan Zikmund. Comma Press: Great Britain, 140 pages, 2023. For information on book availability, contact gwen@cs-center.org

This excellent anthology of short writings in English has something for everyone. It has a variety of short-story styles, topics, lengths, and translators, but all focus on parts of Prague. I thought I had read almost all of the numerous books with the word “Prague” in their titles, but this is a welcome addition to the list.

Edited by Ivana Myšková and Jan Zikmund, *The Book of Prague: A City in Short Fiction* features ten short stories by ten Czech writers: Simona Bohatá, Jan Zábřana, Marie Stryjová, Petr Borkovec, Bohumil Hrabal, Michal Ajvaz, Irena Dousková, Marek Šindelka, Patrik Banga, and Veronika Bendová. All of the stories are translated into English for the first time.

The authors offer multigenerational perspectives. One was born in the 1910s, two in the 1930s, one in the 1940s, and two each in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

The first story I read was Patrik Banga’s “Žižkovite” because I was eager to read about Žižkov, where I lived for a month in 2001. My apartment was one of many “privatized,” returned to a family’s ownership, with landlords eager to overcharge renters. Banga writes about growing up in the 1980s and 1990s in Žižkov’s two cultures, both his Romani and the *gadjo* (non-Romani); he’s made it his “life’s task to search for a balance between those worlds.” When he returns today to Žižkov, he finds “The magic has faded.... But we, the true Žižkovites, carry the old Žižkov with us wherever we go. The place where we learned to share everything and that everyone has their place.... And though everything disappears in time, just like the old Jewish cemetery, we will always remember our state within a state. Our home.”

Banga has gone on to a highly successful career as a writer, journalist, and musician. His memoir *Skutečná cesta ven* (*The Real Way Out*) was published in 2022 and won a prestigious Magnesia Litera Award the next year. Its English translation is expected to be available soon.

Žižkov is also pivotal in “Everyone Has Their Reasons” by Simona Bohatá. A man recently released from prison revisits his old haunts, avoiding but finally going to Žižkov. Why did he steer clear of Žižkov? “He didn’t know why himself. Maybe he didn’t want to see the big change in his old neighborhood and maybe he was afraid of seeing what stayed behind and lived on without him.”

Similarly, in the story “My Libeň,” renowned author Bohumil Hrabal revisits this neighborhood on the outskirts of Prague where he lived for a quarter of a century, enjoyed good friends and food, started a marriage, and was a prolific writer. He returns when the rotten dwellings are being

demolished, and he looks back happily on his days there: “I can savor the moment of the old Libeň’s sweet apocalyptic demise, my memories providing the key to the beauty I once lived by, and will go on living by until I’m buried by time ...”

Noting the 100th anniversary of Franz Kafka’s death, I recently reread his novella *The Metamorphosis* for the umpteenth time. With that storyline and symbolism in mind, I thoroughly enjoyed reading Michal Ajvaz’s story “A Summer Night” about an eight-foot-long clam stalking the story’s protagonist.

He thought to himself, “In all the years I’d been wandering about Prague lost in thoughts of phenomenology, surrealism, Hegel and Mala Strana dandyism, I’d often asked myself: where will all this end? I’d reckoned with all kinds of things—from terrible defeats to brilliant victories—but the possibility of being devoured by a clam on the night tram had never occurred to me.” Ajvaz’s story includes the requisite horror, as the clam snaps voraciously and the protagonist thinks it will kill him, but unlike *The Metamorphosis*, this story also has bits of humor that made me laugh out loud.

In “Waiting for Patrik,” we feel the flurry of activities experienced by a young shop assistant catering to tourists she can’t stand. Looking across the Vltava River, she thinks about how there would be ugly prefab structures everywhere instead of the beauty of Prague buildings if the Czechoslovaks had defended themselves against the Nazis in 1938.

“All’s Well in the End” by Irena Dousková tells the bittersweet story of a responsible son trying to fulfill the final wishes of his mother, who had converted to Judaism. When his plans to bury her remains in one cemetery don’t work out, he finds another solution.

This collection includes a valuable introduction and information about the authors, editors, and translators. Translations vary, with some, such as those by Paul Wilson, Alex Zucker, and Julia and Peter Sherwood, smoother than others. Overall, *The Book of Prague* is an enjoyable sample of Czech short stories written over the last few decades and will help readers choose authors to continue reading.

Gwen is coordinator of the Czech and Slovak Literary Ventures book discussion group. Literary Ventures is cosponsored by the Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota, Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, and the Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic/Minneapolis. Find information and updates at cs-center.org or contact gwen@cs-center.org

Join Literary Ventures at 10 a.m.
on Saturday, December 28, for a showing of the film *Toman*.

Czech Honorary Consul News

December 2024
January 2025

One of the most interesting duties that I have had as Honorary Czech Consul was presenting, along with Deputy Consul General Ondřej Pometlo, an award from the Czech Basketball Federation on November 8 to Charles Mencil at his home in Rogers, Minnesota. Born in 1933, Charlie was a University of Minnesota star basketball player (1951-1955), making the Hall of Fame at the U, plus having his jersey

#30 retired. He also played for the Minneapolis Lakers (before that team moved to Los Angeles in 1960). He was not able to travel to Prague for the award this summer. Jan Woska, Cultural Attaché at the Czech Embassy in Washington, D.C., contacted me to help. The Czech Basketball Federation, which celebrated 100 years in 2024, honored eight American basketball players for their Czechoslovak footprint, their contributions to the game, and their relationship to the homeland of their forefathers. Even though the Iron Curtain of the communists prevented them from ever playing in Czechlands, these American-born athletes with Czechoslovak surnames were known and revered in the homeland. And now they are recognized and honored with this Fatherland Order of Excellence Award.

Gary Pikal played his concertina during the event, including both the Czech and the American National Anthems. Vi and Ondřej led in singing the Czech anthem. Small American and Czech flags were waved during the two anthems.

CHC furnished two dozen small Czech flags as a gift to the Mencil family. Many family members and friends attended the award ceremony.



Front: Charles Mencil (holding a Czech flag), Ann Mencil, Ondřej Pometlo (Deputy Consul General of the Czech Republic/Chicago) holding the trophy (hand-cut glass for which Czechs are famous), Violet Chromy (in *kroje* from New Prague, Minnesota, who baked five dozen prune, poppyseed, and apricot *koláče*. Like Charlie, Vi grew up in a Czech-speaking household; they visited in Czech).

Back: Andy Kozak (Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota), Marit Lee Kucera (Honorary Czech Consul/ Minneapolis), Kiara Buford (UofM Women's BB (#30), 2008-2012, and current Director of M-Club at the University of Minnesota), Peter Jay Kierdrowski (UofM BB star, 1968-1971), Gary Pikal (concertina musician), Fred Simon (current president of Czech Heritage Club, New Prague, and current vice president of Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota. Vi and Gary are past presidents of CHC).



After attending a reception by the Consulate of the Czech Republic/Chicago to celebrate Czech Independence Day on October 28, I had a briefing with the Consular Department, Consulate of the Czech Republic/Chicago the next day.

(L-R) Kateřina Dolejšová (intern for three months from Prague), Lucie Horak, Kateřina Nwankwo, Deputy Consul General Ondřej Pometlo, M. L. Kucera, and Štěpánka Hasilová. We stood in front of flags from the European Union, Czech Republic, and Ukraine.

On November 2 at Concordia College in Saint Paul, Kenwood Symphony Orchestra performed Czech composer Leoš Janáček's *Sinfonietta*, also known as "Sokol Festival," as well as a world premier by Viktor Telychko's *Suite of Carpatho-Rusyn Songs*, commissioned for this concert by the John and Helen Timo Foundation, which promotes and supports Carpatho-Rusyn culture. Ukraine-born Yuri Ivan is both artistic director and conductor for the orchestra. The concert also featured cimbalom artist Györhy Lakatos accompanying the orchestra for *Hungarian Dance No. 5* by Johannes Brahms. If you have never heard or seen a cimbalom being played, put it on your to-do list! It's a fantastic musical instrument.

Many members and friends of the local Rusyn community attended, including (L-R front): Kay Handley, Katarina Grajcar, Karen Kokosh Doten, Karen Varian, and M. L. Kucera. (Back) Sue O'Reilly, Dorothy O'Reilly, Brandon Musser, Alexandra Bodnarchuk, Maria Silvestri (Executive Director of John and Helen Timo Foundation, based in Pittsburgh), Maestro Yuri Ivan, and Cathy Silvestri.



Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic/
Minneapolis

Marit Lee Kucera, Honorary Consul
651-238-0447
minneapolis@honorary.mzv.gov.cz
OR mlkucera@outlook.com





383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102
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For status of events scheduled for the C.S.P.S. Hall, check our calendar at
sokolmn.org/at-our-hall/hall-calendar/

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota *SLOVO* December 2024-January 2025

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Czech and Slovak Language Classes for Adults

Winter trimester registration
opens in December

Classes begin the week of January 6,
and end the week of March 10, 2025

Visit the website for the schedule and registration form
for online and in-person options:

www.sokolmn.org

Email questions to: education@sokolmn.org

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