



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

UPCOMING EVENTS

February Slovo articles
due January 1

Sokol Singers
Tuesdays, 10 a.m.-noon

First and
Third
Tuesdays Dec 2, 16
Jan 6, 20

**Friendly Friday
Evening Social**
Friday, Dec 12, Jan 9
7 p.m. See page 11

**Sokol Volunteer
Opportunities**
See page 12

**Language Classes
for Adults** See page 16

Sokol Gift Shop
open during events
and by appointment
giftshop@sokolmn.org



Wishing you
Happy
Holidays
and
a Happy
New Year!
from your
Sokol Minnesota
Board of Directors

Sokol Children's Holiday Party Friday December 5²⁰²⁵ 7 p.m. program

Hosted by Czech and Slovak
Sokol Minnesota
383 Michigan St., Saint Paul



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

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

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

Svíčková Dinner

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

Saturday, January 24²⁰²⁶
5 p.m. serving (doors open 4:30 p.m.)

Price: \$35 per person

Menu:

Svíčková s knedlíkem (beef in cream sauce with bread dumplings),
dessert, and coffee. Beer, wine, pop available for sale.

Prepay and reserve dinner
online by January 16,
credit/debit card go to:
www.sokolmn.org/cc/

If paying by check contact
651-210-0401 by voice/text
or activities@sokolmn.org
two weeks before
January 16 deadline



Reserve early.
Limited number of
dinners available.



Saturday
February 7²⁰²⁶
12:15 - 1 p.m.



Sokol Minnesota Youth Link
meet in the C.S.P.S. Hall's
dining room to make cards
for neighborhood seniors.
Art supplies
and snack provided.

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

Prezidentův komentář/President's Notes by Bob Kotek

Greetings and happy holidays to all Sokol Minnesota members!

As we are nearing the end of 2025 and the holidays are upon us, I am inclined to reflect on my first year as president of this time-honored organization. I invite everyone to take a look back at activities you participated in, which you enjoyed the most, and the people you may have met as a result. What can we do more of or do differently in the new year?

Let me know: President@sokolmn.org

Nearly every month had a celebration of some sort, be it a dinner prepared by our talented volunteer kitchen crew, Urban Expedition at the Landmark Center to showcase our Czech and Slovak cultures, or *The Accidental Hero* performance by Patrick Dewane. There were many language classes, gymnastics classes, Saturday morning youth language (*škola*) classes, along with youth folk dance too! The 28th Children's Czech and Slovak Cultural Day Camp was held in June, as well as other youth group activities. Three youth leaders won monetary awards for their commitment to volunteering at Sokol Minnesota, plus two college-aged students were awarded tuition scholarships for a summer trip to the Czech Republic to explore Czech culture and tour Czechia.

Who can forget Sokol's C&S Festival in September? What a great turnout of membership and the community to experience our Czech and Slovak cultures and cuisine! I think it is safe to say Sokol broke the record for attendance and revenue generated as a result.

Improvements to the C.S.P.S. Hall are an ongoing effort. Seven new windows were installed on the first and second floors, and a door was added to provide safer access to the roof and HVAC equipment. Work has begun on the cleaning and refurbishing of the precious historic art work backdrops on the stage. The primary boiler unit that heats the hall is in the process of being replaced. To put all this in perspective, these three initiatives represent \$200,000 in capital investments!



Sokol President Bob Kotek accepted Ed Hamernik's donation check, designated for boiler replacement, on November 4, during a meeting of the Gaming Committee to count pull tabs from our two gaming sites, the 620 Club and Bad Weather Brewing,

All this being said, I must share my thanks and gratitude for all the financial support by Sokol members and non-members that made all this possible! Grants from the City of Saint Paul, the J.A. Wedum Foundation, and the American Sokol Foundation, a donation from the former St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran church, Patrick Dewane's performance donation, and Joe Landsberger's donation of book sales proceeds, and the very generous gift to the boiler fund from Sokol members Ed and (the late) Arlene Hamernik and family in early November, have all gone a long way to keeping Sokol Minnesota a viable resource for all of us to enjoy.

I want to add that Sokol volunteers are the cornerstone of who we are and what we do! The untold hours by the many talented individuals truly make a huge difference in our ability to provide the many varied programs for everyone to enjoy.

There is always more to do, more to accomplish and more things to support. With all of us working together, we can move mountains and have the best Sokol experience for everyone. Thank you! *Nazdar!*

Veselé vánoce a šťastný nový rok! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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



Bob Kotek

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



Use this
QR code
to go to
sokolmn.org

Czech Glass and Beadmaking Lecture and Class on February 1 by Sally Lieberman, Education Director

On February 1, 1-2:30 p.m., Andrea Turini, Minnesota jewelry artist, presents **Heirloom Fire: Czech Glasswork** for an inside look at the rich history and living traditions of Czech glass and beadmaking. Based on her travels to Jablonec nad Nisou, the heart of the Czech glass industry, Andrea shares original photos and video from local workshops and factories, exploring how a small cottage industry evolved through communism and globalization, while continuing to shape modern design today. The presentation includes a hands-on demonstration of bead and button production and examples of finished Czech glass jewelry. C.S.P.S. Hall, Second Floor. Cost to attend is \$5 Sokol members* or \$10 non-members* (*Free with registration for the Jewelry Design Class).



Following her *Heirloom Fire: Czech Glasswork* presentation, Andrea leads a hands-on **Czech Jewelry Design Class** where participants can create their own Czech glass jewelry.

You can choose to make an earring and necklace set or an earring and bracelet set using authentic Czech beads from Andrea's collection.

Participants will select their beads and design their pieces; Andrea will complete the technical finishing during class. All skill levels are welcome. Class participants are expected to have attended the *Heritage Fire* presentation first. Sunday, February 1, 3-4 p.m. C.S.P.S. Hall, Second Floor. Class is limited to 12 participants, ages 16+. Cost is \$35 Sokol members or \$45 non-members (includes the presentation).

Renew your Sokol Minnesota Membership for 2026

Renewal letters for 2026 membership are sent out each year around Thanksgiving. If you would like to renew by paying online instead of returning your renewal form in the mail, you can renew anytime at sokolmn.org/membership

In addition to paying your 2026 dues, you can use this web page to change your address, change how you receive the *Slovo* newsletter, express activities you would like to become more involved in, and provide other feedback. Since 1882, Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota has been a place to find community, fitness, and fun through physical, cultural, educational, and social activities. Please renew today.

Upcoming December *Svatý Mikuláš* Celebrations with St. Nick, Angel, and Devil

In preparation for the two *Mikuláš* events at C.S.P.S./Sokol Hall on December 5 and 6, Markéta Pálková and her team of Czech and Slovak bakers will be busy on December 4 baking *vánočky*, Christmas bread: \$15, and *makovky*, poppy seeds rolls: \$18, as a fundraiser to support Sokol Minnesota activities. Limited Supply.

Order yours: <https://sokolmn.org/all-events/>

Friday, December 5, 7 p.m., Sokol Children's Holiday Party, special program of dance and song for families and friends by the *Taneční Mládež* and *Taneční Teens*, Louise Wessinger, Director. Also a performance by Sokol Czech and Slovak Singers, Don Haselbauer, Director. Everyone loves it when *Svatý Mikuláš*, *anděl*, and *čert* suddenly appear with gifts for all the good children. *Čert* does his best to tempt the kids to be naughty, but all the children sign white-winged *anděl's* book, then all receive a gift. Held at C.S.P.S. Hall.

Saturday, December 6, starting at 3 p.m., ***Mikulášská besídka*/St. Nicholas Party**, Czech and Slovak compatriots gather to celebrate and introduce shared traditions to the younger generation, making holiday crafts, enjoying a festive potluck, singing traditional and contemporary Czech and Slovak carols, and looking forward to visits by *Svatý Mikuláš*, *anděl*, and *čert*. Held at C.S.P.S. Hall.

Sunday, December 7, 4th annual *Svatý Mikuláš* celebration, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the historic Rustic Farmer/Revival on Main, **downtown Montgomery**. Music, dancing, holiday food, hot mulled wine, Czech *pivo*, door prizes, treats and crafts for children, Christmas market, plus performances by St. Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers. Sokol Minnesota Gift Shop will have a table, selling Christmas ornaments and much more. Of course, *Svatý Mikuláš*, *anděl*, and *čert* will be there for all the children (of all ages).



Caroling for St. Nicholas with St. Nick, the Angel, and the Devil by Jitka Sebek

Just as most families enjoy sharing favorite holiday movies, special tree ornaments, or unique customs, we Czech and Slovak *škola* families who gather at C.S.P.S. Hall cherish events where children and adults come together to celebrate ***Mikulášská besídka*/St. Nicholas Party**. This favorite tradition is held each year on the first Saturday in December. Czech- and Slovak-speaking attendees gather to reconnect, to celebrate and introduce shared traditions to the younger generation, to make holiday crafts, and to enjoy a festive potluck. Together, we create the magical atmosphere that makes *Mikulášská besídka* special for the children.



Another highlight of the evening is the singing and playing of traditional and contemporary Czech and Slovak carols. What began many years ago as a simple addition to the program has grown into an opportunity for the children to perform their musical skills outside of school or private lessons. Whether they are just beginning with their first notes and scales or already confident players, students welcome each other into this eclectic ensemble, including violins, saxophone, trumpet, clarinet, and accordion! We owe special thanks to our favorite local band, *SlovCzech*, whose early support and musical guidance helped make this tradition possible.

Like all of you, we look forward to this year's caroling and festivities. ***Veselé vánoce a šťastný nový rok! Veselé vianoce a šťastný nový rok!***

Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival

By Louise Wessinger, Program Organizer, and Joyce Tesarek, Event Co-Chair



What a beautiful day Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota had for our 36th Annual Czech and Slovak Festival on September 28. The skies were bright blue, the dancers were beautiful, the gymnasts were in top form, the singers and musicians were perfect, the food was superb, and the crowds enjoyed every moment. The whole day was a resounding success! Just ask Jitka and Jarda!

Our outdoor stage with Richard Sargent as our highly esteemed audio/technical expert.



Sokol member Ryan Cihlar put guests in a festive spirit with accordion music before events officially began at 11:30 a.m.

Both outdoor and inside programs had enthusiastic participants and drew large audiences.



Events opened with our traditional flag ceremony with American, Czech, Slovak, Minnesota, American Sokol, and Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota flags on parade.

2024 Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota Sarah Langridge sang our National Anthem (Emcee Dave Stepan behind), followed by the Sokol Minnesota Singers leading both the Czech and Slovak national anthems.



Let's divert here to talk about the food, all made, baked, grilled, fried, and served by Sokol volunteers.

Miša Kotek and Markéta Pálková prepared the delicious *guláš*, chicken *paprikáš*, and *langoš* (fry bread), fried by Sokol President Bob Kotek (center photo below).



The baking of 160 dozen *koláče* was led by Doreen McKenney. Yes, all sold!

Sausage by Cynthia in New Hope again donated the *jitrnice*. Tickets were used for all food and beverage purchases so that even when the food lines were long, the food was quickly served (below left).

The Beer Garden outside (left) and bar upstairs were busy all day long.

The Sweet Shoppe (below right) sold *koláče*, cream horns, and delicious donated sweets.



Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival: part 2



Program Emcee Dave Stepan introduced **Sokol President Bob Kotek**, who warmly welcomed everyone to our 36th Czech & Slovak Festival.

Bob introduced Marit Lee Kucera, Honorary Consul for the Czech Republic, who in turn introduced special guests: Josef Dvořáček, Head of the Economic Section, Consulate General of the Czech Republic/Chicago, and Chuck Nickolay, Mayor of New Prague.



Cheryl Nelson Theuninck greeted the crowd as our Slovak representative.



The Czech and Slovak Singers, directed by Don Haselbauer, sang a selection of favorite Sokol, Czech and Slovak songs (see photo page 4).

Joe Landsberger, Sokol President from 2006 to 2010, spoke about the chapters on Little Bohemia, C.S.P.S. Hall, and Sokol in his 2024 book, *The Origins of Fort Road/West 7th Street/Township/City of Saint. Paul/Territory/State of Minnesota from the Glacial Age Forward*. His continuing research has discovered more history about Sokol in Saint Paul, now added to the book's latest edition. Joe (left) spent the afternoon at the Sokol Membership Table with Tom Aubrecht.



A new group at our festival this year, the recently-formed *Klub loveckých rohů/ Jagdhornverein/ Hunting Horns Twin Cities* treated us to several fanfares on traditional hunting horns (see page 11, August 2025 Slovo). *Jagdhornverein*, as it is officially known, is part of the Twin Cities Horn Club, founded in 1963. Several members of the Horn Club performed at our "Dvořák's New World at 130" program in September 2023.

Sokol Minnesota Youth Leadership Awards were presented to Izabela Carlson* (father on left), Jas Gillman (center), and Marius Elias Morse* (parents on right) by Sokol President Bob Kotek and Czech Honorary Consul Marit Lee Kucera.

Each recipient received a \$500 check. (Sokol Minnesota provided \$400 for which Sokol member Blanka Brichta gave a generous donation for this year's awards; \$100 came from the Czech Honorary Consul). Marius also was awarded \$100 for the best essay, a separate award sponsored by Louise Wessinger. (*away at college)



Taneční Mládež and *Taneční Teens*, our Sokol Minnesota children and teen dancers presented a variety of Czech and Slovak dances in their colorful *kroje* (folk dress). Group director (for 35 years), Louise Wessinger was assisted by teen dancer Sara, as well as Emily Fiamová, Katka Svensson, and Renáta Tichá.



Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival: part 3



Česká a slovenská škola Twin Cities/Czech Slovak School Twin Cities were represented by Slovak teacher Barbora Carlson, who presented student awards (see article, page 13).

Sokol President Bob Kotek and Sokol Education Director Sally Liberman introduced

twin brothers Connor and Luke Skluzacek from Montgomery, who spoke about their experiences and adventures at the 2025 Cross-Cultural Pathways for Young Leaders conference in Prague in July, hosted by the Mestenhauser Institute for International Collaboration (MIIC). Both were awarded scholarship support by Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota to cover their tuitions (see page 5, October *Slovo*).

Throughout the afternoon, there were greetings from Bechyn Czech Festival (Tim Kojetin), Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota (Renáta Tichá), Czech Heritage Club (Violet Chromy), Miss Czech Slovak Minnesota Royalty and the Heritage Junior Ambassadors (Heather Vikla Dobias along with 2024 Queen Sarah Langridge and 2025 Queen Gianna Olsen), Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (Tim Kojetin), Minnesota Sokol Camp Association (Kari and Scott Muyres), Montgomery Kolacky Royalty, and Rusin Association of Minnesota (Karen Varian).

The outdoor program had a spectacular new backdrop designed by Sokol member Doreen McKenney. In the afternoon, Program Organizer Louise Wessinger presented a bouquet of flowers to Doreen to recognize and thank her for designing the new fence wind screen backdrop, seen in the background of many of the pictures in this article (see page 7, November *Slovo*).



KSTP Minnesota Live host Chris Egert with Sokol members Tereza Treanor (Publicity Director) and Katka Svensson (with daughters Victoria and Karlonia), and KSTP host Kelsey Christensen on the live Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota promotional segment on September 25. Katka played her accordion as her daughters danced to the *Mazurka* that the Sokol children's folk dancers performed at the C&S Festival on September 28. Tereza brought samples of apricot *koláče* and *segedínský guláš* and bread dumplings made by Sokol bakers and cooks. The Channel 5 hosts were impressed!



Our friends from Ethnic Dance Theatre (EDT) offered dances from the Liptov area of Slovakia and a suite of dances from Southern Bohemia. Congratulations to Don LaCourse and EDT for their stunning and exciting performances.



Sokol members Tom and Penny Tesarek, also known as the Mondo Jugglers, entertained with their exciting and astounding juggling routines.

Lipa Slovak Dancers of Minneapolis gave a beautiful performance of authentic Slovak and Carpatho-Rusyn folk dances under the direction of Lara Ciganko. Several Lipa alumni were introduced to the audience, which responded with great applause.



Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival: part 4

The ever-popular Kolache Eating Contests had three winners, one in each category: children, teen and adults. Although there were age limits, one group was “whoever wants to.” It was great fun for all, plus a free *koláč*!



The St. Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers, directed by Louise Wessinger, closed the outdoor program with a fast paced 45-minute program that featured many dances they relearned this summer and also a polka which debuted in Chicago in late June at the American Sokol *Slet*, at which Megan and Jason Brozovich danced and brought back to Minnesota. Always a crowd pleaser, the dancers also invited the audience to join them for two of their dances.

Special thanks to SPC&SFD for the \$500 donation check to Sokol Minnesota.



Inside our historic C.S.P.S. Hall, Rick Palma served as audio expert and technician volunteer.

The program began with a demonstration of our Sokol gymnastic programs on the gym floor. Our young gymnasts presented some of their tumbling routines under the supervision of Men's Physical Director Jason Brozovich.



Gym participants included gymnastic participants Eddie and Vivien, plus Maeve (junior instructor and participant), Sylvie and Jas (assistant coaches and participants), and Siri Schroeder (coach).



After the Miss Czech Slovak Royalty and Czech Slovak Heritage Ambassadors presented a program to the indoor audience, under the direction of Anne Jans and Heather Vikla Dobias (both former Minnesota Pageant Queens), they were introduced outdoors by Heather.

The other visiting royalty represented 2025 Kolacky Days.



A large indoor crowd enjoyed the performance of Doma Dance Theatre of Minneapolis, which combines Rusyn and Slovak folk dances with Modern dance. Alexandre Bodnarchuk is Artistic Director. Doma was the Festival's second new performance group for 2025.

The St. Paul South Bohemian Bagpipe Ensemble, directed by Frank Trnka (*dudy*), (second left), took over the inside entertainment at 1 p.m. with a variety of Bohemian music played on traditional instruments. Band members also include Jason Brozovich (*dudy* and *fanfrnoch*), Maria Neuzil (E-flat clarinet), Dawn Bulera (violin), and John Topic (vocals, *vozembouch*, *fanfrnoch*, and *hrábě*).



Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival: part 5



Finishing off the afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m., George's Concertina Band entertained for dancing, as well as music for guests and also for the volunteers in the Sweet Shoppe, the Silent Auction, the kitchen, and the bar.

Third Floor: Exhibit of Czech Pottery: *Remembering Collectors Susie and John Smisek*, organized by Sally Lieberman, Education



Director. The Smiseks' daughter, Sokol member Anne Jans, and granddaughter, Alenka, were on hand throughout the day to chat with visitors and answer questions (see page 6, November *Slovo*).



Other attractions were Ticket Sales Table (left), Volunteer Sign-in Table (middle left), Information/Membership Tent; Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SMYL) booth selling books (lower right), t-shirts, and gift items. Czech Honorary Consul, Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota, and Rusin Association of Minnesota shared information tables and a tent (lower left); Charles Mara with his 1970 Velorex car (right); and providing the always favorite photo-op, Sokol's Jitka and Jarda Puppets in Rick Palma's pick-up at the corner of Michigan and West 7th (see photo on page 4).



The Sokol Gift Shop on the main floor was packed with shoppers the whole day. Outdoor vendors included Czech Sis Kitchen (Markéta and Ludmila Pálková); Industrious Gnomes, Baba Tillie's Treasures; The European Rhapsody Tours; Sokol Minnesota Camp; Czech Cards original designs;



Jim Chladek seeking host families for Youth For Understanding (YFU), an international exchange organization for high school students from around the world.

Fun and games for children were provided by the Philips Children's Museum, Phillips, Wisconsin.



Czech & Slovak Festival Silent Auction was a Spectacular FundraiSer By Denise Stibal



This year's silent auction exceeded expectations both with the number of items (77) and the resulting proceeds (\$3,386), about three times more than last year!

A huge thanks to all who donated and all who won!

Business Donors: 620 Club, Bad Weather Brewing, DeGidio's, Downtowner Grill, Gnome/Hope Restaurants, Robert Bokuvka of Midwest Jelinek Spirits, Kramarczuk's, Leitner's Garden Center, Mancini's Steak House, National Czech and Slovak Museum, Pajarito, Shamrock/Nook Restaurants, Skinner's Pub and Eatery, The Lexington, The Joint Chiropractic, and Yum Kitchen. Please thank these businesses with your business and patronage.

Individual Donors: Judith Benton, Mark Bigouette, Roger and Nancy Green, Janet Howey, Lucy and Michael Jasek, Miša and Bob Kotek, Marit Kucera, Joe Landsberger, Libby Imbrone and Anita McKearn, Simone Neimova, Markéta Pálková, Brenda Rogers, Bonnie Simon, Dave Stepan, Denise Stibal, and Joyce Tesarek. We received some items

without a name attached; apologies to you if your name is not included. Be assured that your generosity was greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all of the Sokol Minnesota members and friends who also purchased items. Extra thanks to Roger Green who solicited many restaurant gift cards. We had almost \$1,000 in gift cards from local businesses. Sokol Minnesota's pull tab partners, the 620 Club and Bad Weather Brewing, also donated generous gifts. Special thanks to Jelinek distributors for the Czech liquor donations. We had many people ask to sample the plum brandy; our response was "Sorry, no samples. But please bid on it!"

Among our Silent Auction heroes were Tom and Penny Tesarek, who prepared bid sheets, organized and helped to price and set up the auction items, plus tallied all the bids at the close of the auction. Other volunteers were Barbora Carlson, Marlene Hinshaw, Jay Lieberman, and Joyce Tesarek.

Moc děkuji to everyone.

Program Highlights from the 2025 Czech and Slovak Festival: part 6

Although the festival is our chance to share an afternoon of culture, fun, food, and community, it is also an important fundraiser for our C.S.P.S. Hall and Sokol organization. Finance Committee Chair Joyce Tesarek is pleased to report that this year Sokol Minnesota showed a total profit of over \$19,000, a new record. Kudos to all!

We also thank all who attended and helped to make this event such a total success. It was truly a great day for our Czech and Slovak community, friends, and the West 7th Street area.



Saint Paul Czech and Slovak Folk Dancers delighted the crowds at the end of the festival.



Final clean-up details on Monday morning after the Festival by BPTC members Dan Bednar, Bob Kotek, and Dave Stepan involved scrubbing, hosing down, sweeping, blowing (and much more!). Thanks, guys.

We invite you to next year's festival. Mark September 27, 2026, on your calendar!

Thanks to ALL our wonderful VOLUNTEERS:

Our 36th annual C&S Festival could not happen without all our volunteers, with extra thanks to the team leaders, highlighted in bold.

Denisa Acs, Pat Andrlé, Tom Aubrecht, Christy Banks, **Dan Bednar**, Mary Benedict, Jason Brozovich, **Dawn Bulera**, Dennis Cahill, **Mary Cahill**, Barbora Carlson and Natalie, Jana Castillon, Bruce Chuchel, Jennifer Comfort, **Chuck Draheim**, **Jean Draheim**, Shannon Duffy, **Steve Ernest**, Olga Splichalova Espinosa and Lucien, Jen Evenson, Renae Andrlé Faunce, Eva Giese, John Gerlach, Stáňa Gerlach, Abra Gillman, Roger Green, Dave Grostephan, **Glynis Grostephan**, Emilie Greull, **Martina Gurgel**, Ed Hamernik, Don Haselbauer, Katie Haselbauer, Marlene Hinshaw, **Theresa Hudachek**, Jen Iverson, Robert (Jake) Jacobson, Constance Jandrich, Henry Jandrich, Anne Jans and Alenka, Lisa Johnson, Kája Jost and Honza, Darla Kolb, Carla Korb, Jyni Koschak, Bob Kostichka, **Bob Kotek**, **Miša Kotek**, **Marit Kucera**, Zdenek Kuhn, Pam Langworthy, Joe Landsberger, Diana Langridge, Sarah Langridge, Anne Leland, Jay Lieberman, **Sally Lieberman**, Luboš Mareš, Linda Maxey, **Doreen McKenney**, Kari Muyres, Scott Muyres, Brad Narr, Terry Narr and Tristan, **Cheryl Nelson**, Igor Nestršil, Mark Neužil, Gary Novak, Becky Olson, Ben Olson, Nick Olson, Āna Overbo, Ludmila Pálková, **Markéta Pálková**, Rick Palma, Ross Peterson, Petra Riedel, Jan Roers, **Richard Sargent**, Siri Schroeder, **Joan Sedlacek**, Steve Shimer, Bonnie Simon, Ron Simon, Pat Slaber, **Dave Stepan**, **Denise Stibal**, Katka Svensson, Rod Sykora, Cheri Tesarek, John Tesarek, **Joyce Tesarek**, Penny Tesarek, Tom Tesarek, John Topic, Michael Topic, Tereza Treanor, Kate Weeks, Kathy Weese, Adriana Wenberg and Sophie and Michaela, Michaela Makarianova Wentz, **Louise Wessinger**, Bryan Wyberg, Georgina Yates, Wayne Zbytovsky, plus additional Sokol and SMYL youth members: Adele, Claire, Eddie, Izzy, Jas, Lili, Lucas, Maeve, Matthew, Phillip, Sara, Sylvie, and Vivien.



Western District of American Sokol is the XXIII American Sokol Convention host with the Twin Cities as the location and Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota as the local unit

You are invited to volunteer to help Sokol Minnesota welcome the national delegates to C.S.P.S. Hall for a social evening on Friday, June 12.
Contact: Mary.Cahill@sokolmn.org and Joan@sokolmn.org



Over 150 people sat down for the *Tastes from the Czech Republic*, our 43rd Annual Czech Dinner at Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota on Sunday, October 26. It was our best-attended dinner in years! The guests were thrilled with the superbly prepared delicious food and by the surprise of being called to dinner by hunting horns, *Klub loveckých rohů/ Jagdhornverein/ Hunting Horns Twin Cities* (the group's names in Czech, German, and English).

The meal began with *česneláčka* (garlic soup with croutons) and rye bread, next came delicious *řízek* (pork schnitzel) and *bramborový salát* (traditional Czech potato salad) for the main course, and apple strudel with whipped cream for dessert. Beer and wine were available from the bar. According to Tereza Treanor, Sokol Publicity Director and leader of the volunteer servers, "The feedback was overwhelmingly positive in person, as well as on social media under the follow-up post with pictures." Czech-born Michaela Giancarlo Kotek was the head chef, with several compatriots helping her, along with Dawn Bulera who was in over-all charge of the kitchen and the dinner. Mary Cahill headed the set-up of tables and settings, plus decorations on Saturday afternoon.



The Main Hall was decorated in white, red, and blue to commemorate Czech National Day, which is officially on October 28. Each table had white plates, red napkins, and blue placemats, along

with crossed 6"-wide white/red/ blue grosgrain ribbon (donated by the Czech Consulate/ Chicago) at the center of each table and a standing small Czech flag. Three large bows made with the 6" wide ribbon hung from the stage. The American and Czech flags stood at center stage. Also decorating the stage during the meal were the six shining brass hunting horns in a neat row.

Sold-out Crowd Loved the 43rd Annual Czech Dinner

Officially known as *Jagdhornverein*, the hunting horns played three more Czech and German hunting calls (see page 11, August 2025 *Slovo*).

Near the end of the meal, Sokol President Bob Kotek first greeted all the guests and then invited everyone to upcoming Sokol Minnesota events. He also spoke about the importance of fundraising dinners like this one, plus he named and thanked the many partners who have generously supported Sokol Minnesota and our 1887 building this year.

Honorary Czech Consul Marit Lee Kucera greeted the guests on behalf of the Consulate General of the Czech Republic/ Chicago. She asked 2024 Czech-Slovak Minnesota Pageant Queen Sarah Langridge to sing both the American and Czech national anthems, with diners joining her.



Honorary Consul Kucera talked about Czech National Day and the part the United States had in the formation of Czechoslovakia through the connections of the first Czech President T. G. Masaryk with the American President Woodrow Wilson at the end of World War I. It is noteworthy that when the Czech Republic became a nation in 1993, it chose to keep the day of the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918 for its National Day.



Horn Players: (L to R) Ken Lovely, Amy Urberg, Bob Olsen, Ethan Nueva, Laura Maxwell, and Jeff Ohlmann.

Rhode Island resident and loyal Sokol Minnesota member, James Chlebecek again donated one of his hand-blown glass pumpkins as a door prize.

Bob Kotek presented it to the lucky winner, Nancy Raymond. She and her two



guests were among scores of friends and neighbors who regularly attend our dinners.

All those who worked to get the meal prepared and onto the tables were called out to receive a hearty round of applause by all the diners in appreciation of this great traditional Czech dinner. This dinner is most often associated with Christmas Eve in Czechia, but also popular for Sunday dinners.

Many guests took advantage of the opportunity to purchase extra rye bread and strudel from the Czech dinner, as well as food left over from the Czech and Slovak Festival.

Volunteers: Pat Andrlé, Katarina Bílá, Dawn Bulera, Mary Cahill, Jana Castillon, Chuck Draheim, Jean Draheim, Eva Giese, Julianne Feola, Eva Giese, Roger Green, Lisa Johnson, Míša Giancarlo Kotek, Bob Kotek, Marit Kucera, Sarah Langridge, Luboš Mareš, Doreen McKenney, Karmen McQuitty, Aaron Mislivec, Anna Overbo, Markéta Pálková, Joyce Tesarek, Tereza Treanor, Mike Topic, Kate Weeks, and Georgina Yates, plus these Sokol and SMYL youth volunteers: Emma, Isis, Jas, and Matthew.

Spooky Blast from the Past

The Spooky Blast from the Past on October 18 saw many party-goers in scary costumes and makeup (some not!) enjoy a night of dancing to the disco music that live DJ Izzy mixed from the 80s, 90s, and more. A huge orange spider crawled up a web on the west wall and another glowing giant spider tried to get on the stage of C.S.P.S. Hall. Fog machines and pulsating lights created ever-spooky shadows and high drama. A good (scary!) time was had by all!! Watch for another Dance Blast coming in 2026.



Spooky organizers (L-R) Markéta Pálková, Katka Svensson, Ludmila Pálková, and Linda Maxey.



In Memory: Lloyd Krocak



Lloyd Krocak, age 92, of Prior Lake, formerly of Montgomery, died November 11. He was born June 17, 1933, on the family farm in Lanesburgh Township, Le Sueur County, in the heart of Czech Country Minnesota. He graduated from Montgomery High School and went on to complete his degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Minnesota.

Lloyd was particularly proud of three things in his life. His family topped that list, then antique tractors, and his Czech heritage followed closely behind. He was active at our St. Paul Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota for 22 years, serving on the Property Trustees Committee where his skills as a mechanical engineer volunteer since 2010 were greatly appreciated. He also regularly volunteered at our Sokol dinners, often serving as a bartender. In this picture from 2022 Kolacky Day Parade in Montgomery, Lloyd chauffeured Czech Heritage Club members and the Czech Honorary Consul in his 1949 Plymouth convertible.

His family wrote, "Lloyd's indomitable spirit and fierce independence saw him see 92 years with energy, determination, and an unflinching sense of humor! His legacy lives on in his family." He is survived by a son and a daughter, plus five grand and three great-grandchildren, as well as many relatives and friends.

A Memorial Celebration of Life Service will be held Saturday, December 6, 2025, at 11 a.m. at Bruzek Funeral Home in New Prague. <https://bruzekfuneralhome.com/lloyd-crock/>

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

**Free Social for
Members, Families, and Friends
at the C.S.P.S. Hall
December 12 and January 9.**
Family friendly card and board games,
fun, food, and friends.
Bring a snack to share!

Cross-Cultural Pathways for Young Leaders

**This 12-day, all-inclusive program, July 20-31,
in Prague, Czech Republic.**

**Designed for young people aged 17-22
with Czech heritage or an interest
in learning more about Czech culture
and studying in Czechia.**

Early-bird fee: \$1,850 for students
who apply by December 19, 2025;
regular fee: \$2,000 with March 15 deadline.

Fee covers tuition, accommodations,
local transport, and social activities.
Scholarships available. Transportation to and
from home country to Czechia is additional.

Learn more at <https://miic.world/summer-school/>
Three Minnesotans attended in 2025, the inaugural
year of C-CPYL (see page 5, October *Slovo*).

Fifth Annual Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest

By Glynis Grostephan and Doreen McKenney



SMYL Youths Jas, Silvie, Victoria, Isis, Sara, Emma.
Not pictured: Adam, Honza, and Olivia.

Sokol Minnesota Youth Link (SMYL) sells donated second-hand books at the Czech & Slovak Festival in September to raise money to buy treats and prizes for Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest in October and supplies to make Valentines for Seniors in February.

SMYL held our fifth Trunks with Treats event, for families and friends of Sokol, on Saturday, October 25, 2025. Because of rain, the outdoor event pivoted to indoors with the help

of Louise Wessinger, who offered to share the gym with her regularly scheduled folk dance classes. We are very grateful to Louise for her support of SMYL's Annual Trunks with Treats Harvest Fest.

Sokol's President Bob Kotek gave welcome bags to the children as they came indoors. The bags contained Halloween mazes and word-search activity sheets, plus there was room to collect additional treats and prizes. Sixteen festive themed stations lined one side of the gym where children played games and received a treat or a prize.

The activities for the 40-some children started with a Minions bean bag toss, followed by Skee-Ball, say "Trick or Treat" to choose a lollipop, Spin the Wheel for a prize, Wheel of Fate fortune telling, Halloween scratch-off ornaments, Snoopy bean bag toss, Snoopy disc drop, Witch Hat ring toss, Catch a fish, Spider ring toss, Bowling, Cauldron Stir, photo-op and a special goodie bag as you exited. When dance groups took breaks, all children (and adults) were entertained by jugglers Penny and Tom Tesarek.

Thank you to the many Sokol volunteers who led a game and or donated candy and prizes to Trunks with Treats. Adult volunteers: Mary Cahill, Chuck Draheim, Jean Draheim, Dave Grostephan, Glynis Grostephan (SMYL Co-Advisor), Bob Kotek, Doreen McKenney (SMYL Co-Advisor), Judy Metcalf, Claire Press, Victoria Schousek, Dave Stepan, Penny Tesarek, Tom Tesarek, and Kate Weeks. Sokol and SMYL youth volunteers: Adam, Emma, Honza, Izzy, Jas, Olivia, Sara, and Sylvie.



Honza and Adam assisted with
Peanuts games.



Sokol volunteers Dave Grostephan, Kate Weeks, Judy Metcalf, and Glynis Grostephan assisted with games for the kids.



Spider ring toss with Isis and
bowling with Olivia and Victoria.



Silvie helped with the Witch Hat
ring toss. Behind is Fisherman
Dave Stepan, complete with net,
casting rod, and waders.

Sokol Volunteer Opportunities

**Sokol Children's
Holiday Party
on December 5**

**Svíčková
Dinner
on January 24**

**Volunteer to help
set-up and run
IT Equipment
at Sokol Events**

**Help Slovo
as an
Event Reporter**
email:
slovo@sokolmn.org

To volunteer email: activities@sokolmn.org

News from Slovak Section of Česká a slovenská škola Twin Cities/ Czech and Slovak School Twin Cities by Barbora Carlson

Language classes for children in our *Česká a slovenská škola Twin Cities* are again in full swing for 2025-2026, but at the *Czech & Slovak Festival* this September, we took time to recognize the achievements of our students from the past school year.



Although small in numbers, the Slovak section of *škola* won many awards. Vivien Makoviny and Maja Batalden, two high school students, were awarded *Minnesota Seals of Biliteracy* in the Slovak language for their performance in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Congratulations! Both girls grew up in Slovak-speaking families. Vivien also attended Saturday language classes at

škola leading up to her test in the spring of 2025. She is now a freshman at the University of Minnesota studying kinesiology, on track to be a radiation therapist. Maja is now a senior at Southwest High School in Minneapolis,

Our older students also participated in a literary contest, *Prečo mám rád slovenčinu, prečo mám rád Slovensko/Why I Love the Slovak Language, Why I Love Slovakia*. Every year students from all over Slovakia submit essays and literary pieces to this contest. They compete within three age categories; students of Slovak heritage living abroad are grouped in a fourth category. You can imagine how surprised and thrilled we were to be notified that our *škola* had a winner in this fourth category. Out of 115 literary pieces from Romania, Hungary, Cyprus, Germany, Croatia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Australia, a poem by Natalia Carlson, *This is me in Slovakia, this is Slovakia in me*, won the main prize. Natalia was invited to the award ceremony in Nové Zámky, the home city of Matica Slovenská, the oldest Slovak national, cultural, and scientific organization, and also to a five-day stay at Slnčné Jazerá, Slovakia, in early June, where she enjoyed visiting museums and Devín Castle, taking a boat tour of the Danube River, plus interacting with other Slovak students from all over Europe. What a great experience and what a great achievement!

The younger students of our *škola* were not far behind. For the second time they participated in the literary and art contest



Včielka Meduľka/Honey the Bee sponsored by the Croatian organization Apidora to promote pollinators. Our students who won prizes were Miška Novosad with her illustrated acrostic poem, Eliška Novosad who wrote about her grandpa the beekeeper, and Mason Fiam with his beekeeping poster. We were not able to share their art at the C&S Festival because these pieces were requested by the organizers in Našice, Croatia, for public display in September. But, what an honor!

2026 IIHF World Junior Hockey Championship

in the Twin Cities **December 26-January 5**
including **Team Czechia** and **Team Slovakia**

Tentative plan: meet the teams at C.S.P.S. Hall

★ **Sunday, December 28** ★

For more information: mrs.barca@gmail.com

Also watch for more details on Sokol E-Blast

www.iihf.com/en/events/2026/wm20/teams

Sokol Minnesota Welcomes New Members

The Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota Board of Directors approved four new members in October:

Janine Hradsky of Fridley, with interest in adult calisthenics, the literature group, language classes, cooking classes, crafting classes, films and theater, music and dances, history and genealogy.

Laurie Erickson of Saint Joseph, with interest in youth culture camp, the literature group, cooking classes, and events organization.

Steven Blaha of West Saint Paul.

Stephen Maresh of Saint Paul, with interest in language classes and cooking classes.

These four bring our current membership to 331.

Welcome to Sokol Minnesota!

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

Sokol Minnesota Thanks Donors

Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota greatly appreciates donations received in October 2025 supporting Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota programs and the maintenance of our historic C.S.P.S. Hall.

GENERAL FUND **TOTAL \$375**

Under \$99: Richard Sargent; Susan Susienka

(Stage Backdrop Restoration).

\$100-\$499: Marek Minov.

LEGACY FUND **TOTAL \$37,025**

\$100-\$499: M.L. Kucera (2025 Youth Leadership Awards).

\$500-\$999: Samuel and Kristi Simmons (Boiler Fund);
Marshall and Gretchen Toman; Don Zatroch
(in memory of John and Adella Zatroch, Sokol Greater Cleveland).

\$35,000: Ed and (the late) Arlene Hamernik and family
(Boiler Fund).

IN-KIND DONATIONS

James Chlebeczek (mouth-blown glass pumpkin);

Janet Howey (table setting); **Mary Cahill,**

Marit Kucera, Sally Lieberman, Joyce Tesarek

(books and items for SMYL fundraiser at C&S Festival).

My First Loves by Ivan Klima, translated by Ewald Osers. W.W. Norton & Company: New York and London, 168 pages, 1986, published in Czech in 1985 and earlier in samizdat. Available at bookstores and libraries.

Writer, teacher, and dissident Ivan Klima died on October 4 at the age of 94. He was born Ivan Kauders in Prague on September 9, 1931. His family changed their last name to one less German-sounding after World War II. Klima was not aware of his Jewish heritage until after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938. He was incarcerated in the Terezin concentration camp from 1941 to 1945 and lived with the possibility of being transported to Auschwitz at any time. Some of his best work, including *Judge on Trial*, reflected on those horrors.

In 1986, *My First Loves* was Klima's first book published in the United States. At the time, he was enduring a two-decade "period of silence," blacklisted by the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia and forced to take menial jobs until 1989. Unlike some Czech authors who left their country or were pushed out after the suppression of the Prague Spring, Klima had returned to Prague in 1970 from a sabbatical at the University of Michigan. He then found himself prevented from publishing in the state-run printing houses and official media.

Klima wrote more than 40 books. He received the Franz Kafka Award in 2002 and the Magnesia Litera, a Czech literary prize, in 2010 for his memoir, *My Crazy Century*.

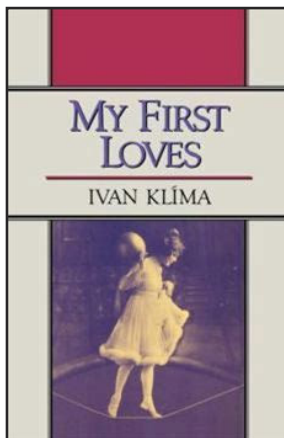
The author looked back on his youth in *My First Loves*, a collection of four stories he wrote in middle age. They were first issued in Prague in the 1980s in *samizdat*, the

underground literary network that circulated typescript copies of banned authors' works to readers in the Eastern Bloc.

In the story "Miriam," the protagonist is among nine people cramped into his aunt's little room. They managed to celebrate a relative's engagement despite being in ghetto lodging infected with bed bugs and fleas, as they waited for

deportation orders to Terezin. Miriam, the girl who ladles out the milk ration, starts smiling at him and giving him larger portions. Very young and shy, he imagines what he'd say to her, but doesn't work up the courage until it is too late. I found this story, the shortest, to be the most moving.

In another story, "My Country," the war is over and the young man and his family are on vacation. He becomes infatuated with a doctor's pretty wife. He accompanies her to an opera, and when she speaks to him, "she smiled at me in such a way that I immediately if only for a moment, soared upwards and out of the hall. I was flying with her like a bird, like a balloon, across the wide sky, and our arms entwined and our lips touched." I found Klima's writing throughout the book to be gentle, sensual, and charming.



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., Saturday, December 20, to view the film *To See the Sea*.

MEMBER NEWS



Four classmates from the 2024 summer *Poděbrady* Czech-language class in Czechia were reunited at the 2025 Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International conference in Kansas City, October 28 to November 1.

(L-R) Adrian Novak, La Crosse, Wisconsin; Jocelyn Kojzak, Washington, D.C.; Tim Kojetin, Deephaven, Minnesota, and Debra Polacek, Harvard, Nebraska. Tim and Adrian are both members of the Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota.

Other Sokol Minnesota members attending the 22nd CGSI Conference were Nancy Blume, Marit Kucera, and Jean Hall Sykora.

14 December 2025-January 2026 *Slovo*

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

Czech Honorary Consul News

December 2025
January 2026

At the Czech National Day Celebration on October 24 at the Consulate of the Czech Republic in Chicago, a mural of sister cities Chicago and Prague, with the Charles Bridge connecting the two cities, welcomed everyone as they got off the elevator to go into the Consulate offices. Posing here are Sharon Valasek, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic/Kansas City, Deputy Consul General Ondřej Pometlo, and myself. Sharon and I



were able to personally thank and say goodbye to DCG Pometlo for his four-plus years as our primary consular contact at the Consulate. He has since returned to Prague for his next diplomatic assignment. Our new Deputy Head of Mission and Head of the Consular Department is Karel Pažourek, who has come to Chicago from a similar post in Los Angeles.



Also at this same Czech National Day Celebration, it was an unexpected delight to meet two others with direct connections to the Kucera name, which is the eighth most common name in Czechia, but not so common in the United States. Both are University of Chicago Czech language students of Czech-born Irena Čajková, who has taught mainly Spanish for 20 years at the University of Chicago and also Czech since 2020. Irena introduced us. She is also involved as a very active volunteer with the T.G. Masaryk Czech School in Chicago.
<https://czechschoollchicago.org>

Eliška Levisohn (left) is a heritage Czech speaker who wants to learn how to write Czech and understand better both its structure and complex grammar; her mother's birth name was Kučerová. Ethan Kucera (center), born in Chicago, had great-grandparents (John and Marie Kučera) who came to Chicago in 1892. He is learning Czech to expand his Czech background and connections.

It was 7:15 a.m. on Halloween at the 20th Genealogical/Cultural Conference of the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI) in Kansas City, (October 28 to November 1). Three Honorary Consuls, two Czech and one Slovak, handed out freshly-baked koláče to conference attendees.



(L-R) Sharon Valasek, Czech/Kansas City;
Marit Kucera, Czech/Minneapolis; and Terry Smitka, Slovak/Kansas City.

Veselé vánoce a šťastný nový rok!



Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic/
Minneapolis

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



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

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The *Slovo* staff welcomes submissions.

Copy deadline for each issue is the first day of the prior month. Send news, articles, and pictures (uncropped) 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.

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More information at www.sokolmn.org

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383 Michigan Street
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C.S.P.S. HALL LEGACY FUND

We ask for your support for maintenance and renovation to C.S.P.S. Hall as we celebrate the Hall's 139th year in 2026. Contact Joyce Tesarek to discuss your tax-deductible donation: 612-232-2993 or email: finance@sokolmn.org Thank you!

Name: _____

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City: _____ State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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Make checks payable to **Sokol Minnesota**

Write **Legacy Fund** in the memo line.

Mail to **C.S.P.S. Hall Legacy Fund. Attn: Treasurer**

Or donate online: www.sokolmn.org use the "Who We Are" tab.



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Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota *SLOVO* December 2025 - January 2026

Czech and Slovak Language Classes for Adults

Winter trimester registration
opens in December

Classes begin the week of January 5
and end the week of March 9, 2026

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Visit the website for the
schedule and registration
form for online and in-person
options:
www.sokolmn.org

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Email questions to: education@sokolmn.org

28th annual Children's Czech and Slovak Cultural Day Camp

June 15 - 19 2026

Registration opens February 1
www.sokolmn.org

Cultural Landscape
In the
Czech and Slovak
LANDS

(the forest feeds us more than food)

C.S.P.S. Hall 383 Michigan St., Saint Paul