



News from the Czech & Slovak Club
 c/o Terry Smitka
 1205 Wellington Way
 Liberty, MO 64068
 Address service requested

Annual Club Meeting - March 4 - Come join the fun!

Please mark the date for our club's annual meeting. It will once again be potluck and we ask that members and guests bring food based on the guidelines mentioned below. The club will provide the setup and drinks. Entertainment will be provided by Freda Kossyk, who we all recognize as the egg lady. She will be giving a demonstration on the old custom of egg decorating. We will also have our election of officers as listed below. Please mail your ballot to the address on the newsletter or bring it to the meeting.

Club Meeting

Sunday, March 4, 2:00-5:00 p.m. 2:00 Social time, 2:30 Meal, 3:15 Meeting, 3:30 Egg decorating demo, 4:30 Cleanup

Location

Prairie Village Community Center
 7720 Mission Road
 Prairie Village, Kansas 66208
 913-381-6464

Potluck - bring enough for 8 servings

- A-K = dessert/appetizer
- J-R = meat/main dish
- S-Z = salad/vegetable

Note: We will vote on proposed changes to our by-laws.

Election of Officers - Czech & Slovak Club of Greater Kansas City

Please mail your ballot to Czech & Slovak Club, c/o Jana Rooney, 3353 W. 129th Terr., Leawood, KS 66209 - or bring it to the meeting. If you have any questions, contact Terry Smitka at 816-480-4227.

Slate of officers

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> President – Terry Smitka | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1st VP (Membership) – John Brungardt | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd VP (Social/Programs)– Jana Hubbard | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd VPs – Jirina LaVine and Mike Kalny Commissioners to Ethnic Enrichment Commission | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recording Secretary – Joyce Cox | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corresponding Secretary – Linda Vlasak | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treasurer – Jana Rooney | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historian – Gene Simon | <input type="checkbox"/> Write-in _____ |

Your signature/date _____



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CONTACT

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Jirina LaVine Honored by Czech Republic

Even though she left her home more than 50 years ago, Jirina LaVine has always kept her homeland close to her heart. For her efforts to promote the culture of the Czech Republic, LaVine was recently presented with the Czernin Palace Memorial Bronze Medal.

The medal is an honor conferred by the Czech ambassador in Washington, D.C., to an individual or entity that has made significant contributions to fostering Czech-U.S. relations. The award is given once a year, according to Sharon Valasek, who is the honorary consul for the Czech Republic in Kansas City. She nominated LaVine for the honor. "I chose to nominate LaVine because she exemplifies international and citizen diplomacy," Valasek said. "She tirelessly promotes and shares the heritage, culture and customs of her Czech homeland. At 82, LaVine has the energy of someone half her age. Most everyone she interacts with admires how well she represents the Czech Republic, yet she also embraces individuals representing other countries, their culture and customs."



Terry Smitka congratulates Jirina LaVine for being awarded the Czernin Palace Medal



Sheryl, Marcel & Ellen Janda, David & Lori Kurovski & Sharon Valasek attended the November 4 event

The ambassador may choose more than one person a year for the award, but that usually does not happen, Valasek said. "It was surprising," LaVine said of the award. "I am very proud to have received it." In 1948, LaVine moved to the United States from the then-communist Czechoslovakia. Her hometown, Plzen, is famous for being the home of Pilsner beer. "There was a big exodus of people who didn't want to live under the communist regime," LaVine said.

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Diplomatic Ball - February 24 - Hosted by Slavic Countries

This year the mayor's Ethnic Enrichment Commission Diplomatic Ball will celebrate its 24th anniversary at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Crown Center (2345 McGee), Kansas City, MO. The Slavic countries will host the ball, which is Saturday, February 24th. Cocktails are at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Entertainment, in the Slavic tradition, will be provided by the host countries and the Don Lipovac Orchestra. To obtain tickets, contact Jirina LaVine at 816-753-2540.

The Tragedy of Slovak Jews - An Exhibit

The creation and course of the holocaust in Slovakia is presented in an exhibition entitled *The Tragedy of Slovak Jews*. The exhibit will be on display at the Jewish Community Center in Overland Park, KS during the months of April and May 2007. The official opening of the exhibit is **Sunday April 15, 2007** to coincide with Holocaust Remembrance Day "Yom Hashoah" program.

The exhibition focuses on the key milestones of the Slovak story including the acceptance of the Jewish Codex in 1941, a series of laws and regulations that stripped Slovakia's Jews of their civil rights and means of economic survival. The exhibit chronicles the first wave of deportations (March-October 1942), the origin and activity of working and prison camps, the second wave of deportations in 1944, the resistance movement, participation in the Slovak National Uprising, and the reprisals of the Nazis in 1944 – 1945.

The exhibit is on loan from the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library (NCSML) in Cedar Rapids. This is the first time it will be shown outside of Cedar Rapids (in the USA). Prior to being displayed at NCSML, it was on display at the Auschwitz-Buirkenau Museum in Germany.

The exhibit gallery opens at 12:30 p.m. and the Remembrance Day program on Sunday April 15 begins at 1:30 p.m. in the Center's theatre. **Gail Naughton**, President & CEO of the NCSML, will attend the opening. On April 19, from 6 to 8 p.m., there will be a special reception and viewing of the exhibit for members of the club, invited guests and financial sponsors. H.E. Rastislav Kacer, Slovak Ambassador to the US, has been invited to attend the opening. The exhibit was secured due to the efforts of our club and **Ross Marine**, club member and the honorary consul of the Slovak Republic. A club event is being planned in conjunction with the ambassador's visit.

Jirina LaVine Honored by Czech Republic

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As the youngest of six children, LaVine said it was natural to be the one who ventured to the new world. "I was the youngest, and I wasn't settled down yet," LaVine said. "All my brothers and sisters were married and had already started families. They agreed that one of the family should live in freedom. "The immigration office was here and you had to register every year, so it made sense to live in Kansas City," LaVine said. Eventually, she was granted political asylum in the United States and became a citizen in 1955. Until the late 1980s, she was unable to return to her home country to see her family.



Sugar Creek Mayor Stan Salva honors Jirina

"I was afraid I would not be let back into the country if I left," she said. When she did get to visit for the first time, the threat of not being able to return to the country that granted her asylum lingered over her head. "It was very, very hard and scary," she said. "The whole time I was scared they wouldn't let me come back." In 1989, the communist regime in Czechoslovakia fell.

LaVine said she always knew communism would collapse. "Of course, it takes time," she said. "Like anything else, nothing lasts forever." Throughout her homeland's turbulent 20th century, LaVine carried on traditions and maintained contact with family and friends. "Her efforts in promoting



Sharon Valasek gets ready to present the medal to Jirina



Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Brooks presents a proclamation

Czech-American relations began in earnest more than 20 years ago with her appointment as commissioner to the Mayor's Ethnic Enrichment Commission," Valasek said.

LaVine also has held important positions with the Czech-Slovak Club of Kansas City. LaVine's work also extends back to her homeland. She was instrumental in flood relief fundraising for the 1997 and 2002 floods in the Czech Republic. After the 1997 flood, she delivered the money personally to Mrs. Nadace Olga Havlove, former first lady of the Czech Republic. The funds raised helped affected senior citizens. LaVine also travels to schools to teach children about her country.

The Czech Republic's history is a favorite subject of LaVine's. "We have a very rich history," she said. "These people were humble and hard workers and very honest. We were always known as hard workers." LaVine said everyone should embrace their history and keep its memory alive. "It is something that is part of the person," LaVine said. "I am proud of my country. The idea is to promote that we are good people."



Paul LaVine, Jirina's son, chats with club member Barbara Vesely Kelly



Saint Mikulas and the angel arrive to the awe of the children



Drew and Joanne Bodner enjoy the holiday celebration



Gene Simon and Joyce Cox greet club members and friends

SVU – Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences

The 2007 SVU Conference is scheduled to take place at Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA, on 8-10 June, 2007. The general theme of the conference is “Moravian Brethren and their Contribution to the USA.”

Detailed up-to-date information about the conference can be found on SVU's website (www.SVU2000.org). For information about presenting a paper, contact Zdenek David, (202)396-8108, or E-mail: Zdenek.David@wilsoncenter.org.

Thank You!

Do you like the new look of our newsletter? It's been redesigned by Sarah Smitka of Pink Pear Design (www.pinkpear.com). Sarah (wife of Steve Smitka) also created our club's new logo, which we've been using on

our stationery for a few months now. Gary Lofstrom and Sharon Valasek again handled the editorial and graphic production work. Please let them know we appreciate their efforts.

Club Membership Renewal

Help support your local Czech-Slovak club. If you haven't paid 2007 dues yet, please send a check (\$15 single, \$20 family) to Jana Rooney (see her address on p. 4), or bring your payment to the annual meeting.

St. Mikulas 2006

Our club's annual St. Mikulas celebration was held last year on Sunday, December 3, at St. Ann's church in Independence, MO. More than 65 club members and guests were in attendance. Everyone enjoyed the wide variety of food prepared by the attendees and also the Czech and Slovak music, beer, and wine provided by the club.

St. Mikulas (Steve Smitka) once again made an appearance and brought with him his two accomplices, the angel (Jana Hubbard) and the devil (Sean McCann). Despite the best efforts of the devil, all of the children were apparently good last year because each of them received a gift from St. Mikulas. Both the adults and the children had a good time as we celebrated this longstanding Czech and Slovak Christmas tradition.



The devil looks on as the angel presents Ellen Janda a gift

Welcome New Members

Beal, Carol, Newton, KS

Bruenger, Jennifer, Kansas City, MO

de la Fuente, David and Bonnie,

Kansas City, MO

Felling, Jon & Gabriella, Lawrence, KS

Harris-Boggess, Adrienne, Lawrence, KS

Martinovich, Meletha, Sugar Creek, MO

Martinovich, Mildred, Sugar Creek, MO

Parrish, Klara & Mark, Lee's Summit, MO

Sheen, Edward, Bluff City, KS

Sheen, Louise, Bluff City, KS

Sheen, Margaret, Lihue, HI

Stephens, Joanne & Jerry, Olathe, KS

Zvacek, Susan, Lawrence, KS