

Czechs demonstrate an exemplary response to coronavirus

text by Dick Mendel, photo by Olga Mendel

On March 12, as the U.S., Europe and the rest of the world were struggling for a response to the rapidly spreading coronavirus epidemic, the Czech Republic took decisive action.

On March 12, the government announced a state of emergency. It closed all schools nationwide, then ordered all restaurants and bars to close their doors, and most stores too. Only grocery stores, drug stores, and supermarkets that sell food were allowed to stay open. And within those stores, the government urged citizens to remain 2 meters (6.5 feet) apart from each other and wear gloves while shopping. The Czechs also created a designated shopping period for

senior citizens (early mornings), to minimize their chance of catching the virus.

In mid-March, the rules were tightened further. All residents were ordered to shelter in place, meaning they could leave their homes only to shop for essential supplies or go for a walk in nature, and they were required to wear face masks at all times when they were out of doors.

By establishing such strict quarantine rules, and imposing them so early in the pandemic's development, the Czechs stood apart from most other European nations, and especially from the United States.

continues on page 4



EMPTY-Empty city, empty streets, empty tourist destinations-Prague in the time of Coronavirus

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In the fall semester we hope to return to our weekly schedule of classes at our new location, Woodbrook Baptist Church on Stevenson Lane. Regular language classes for children aged 3 and up will be held every Friday from 6 to 7:30 PM. There are two levels of instruction in Czech (from beginning to advanced). We are seeking students for Slovak classes as well.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

The Children's School hosts Family Fun Nights every month or two, offering all CSHA members a chance to get together and share a potluck dinner while celebrating our Czech and Slovak heritage. Visit our Facebook page or website (see addresses below) for detailed schedule information, and to register. CSHA hopes to resume these events in the fall.

ADULT LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Do you like the sound of the Czech and Slovak languages? Are you interested in taking Czech or Slovak classes? CSHA is one of the few organizations in the USA that offers language instruction for adults. Beginning, intermediate and advanced classes are offered on Saturdays in the spring and fall at the Gribbin Center on Bel Air Road in Perry Hall. More on current adult language learning on page 8.

HERITAGE SINGERS

If you like to sing and enjoy Czech and Slovak songs, carols and hymns, please consider joining the CSHA Heritage Singers. All voice parts are welcome. The group meets on Mondays from 7 to 9 PM in the months before our Christmas concert and Memorial Day performance.

SEPTEMBER 2020

The CSHA picnic and Back to School picnic will be combined to one event - The Annual CSHA Picnic - hopefully held on September 13th, 2020. More information on page 6.

OCTOBER 2020

34rd ANNUAL CZECH AND SLOVAK FESTIVAL - October 25th, 2020 noon to 6PM, American Legion Hall, 125 York Rd, Baltimore, MD 21204. The location and time has been reserved and we hope the world pandemic will be over by then and we will be all able to meet and celebrate

DECEMBER 2020

MIKULÁŠSKÁ - at Children's School location at Woodbrook Baptist Church, 25 Stevenson Lane, Baltimore, MD 21212 - *Mikuláš, Anděl, and Čert* will make an appearance. Date TBD.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT - - The Czech and Slovak Heritage Singers will present a program of traditional Czech and Slovak "*koledy*" at St. Wenceslaus Church, 2111 Ashland Avenue, Baltimore. A reception will follow the program. Date TBD.

JANUARY 2021

GENERAL BOARD MEETING - Date TBD.

HLAS - If you have any suggestions or comments about the CSHA newsletter, email us at info@cshamaryland.org. You can find back issues of Hlas at www.cshamaryland.org.

CSHA ONLINE - For more information about any of these activities or to register for classes, you can contact CSHA at: info@cshamaryland.org. CSHA's Communication Committee will respond promptly to answer your questions and provide information, and we are eager to hear your ideas and suggestions. Also, please check our website www.cshamaryland.org and follow us on Facebook at [Czech and Slovak Heritage Association of Baltimore](https://www.facebook.com/CzechandSlovakHeritageAssociationofBaltimore).

President's message:

Dear friends,
The president's message in each issue of HLAS traditionally serves as a reflection on our Czech and Slovak community and as a reminder of upcoming events we have planned for you.

This time is different. We face unprecedented challenges while dealing with the worldwide spread of the novel coronavirus. This situation has completely changed our daily activities and transformed our lives. I am sure all of you take it very seriously. There is plenty of local news and public health information that can help us to keep ourselves, our families and friends safe. Please follow the governor's orders regarding social distancing; it will save lives. We recognize that many of you continue to work in essential jobs in healthcare, food industry, and other vital areas and we are truly grateful for all you do for us.

I, along with my family, spend all our time at home these days. While coping with teleworking and homeschooling, we are trying to make the best out of this new "normal." We are discovering that the situation presents an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and enjoy activities that often fall by the wayside in our busy lives. We are finding more time to check, albeit only digitally, on our family and friends in the US, Czechia, and Slovakia. We have more opportunities to watch Czech and Slovak movies on Netflix and Amazon and listen to great music from these countries. We also spend more time baking traditional "Czechoslovak" pastries these days. "Rohliky" are particularly successful. I shared soccer highlights from 1976 with my son Denis to show him Karol Dobias and Antonin Panenka bringing home the European title. We are watching recordings of past Olympic Games and championships in different sports. It is still amazing to witness the achievements of men and women who came before us.

I hope you are healthy and can find some time to reconnect with your roots and friends. Look up recent news on how our fellow Czechs and Slovaks overseas are coping with the current situation. Since these are small nations in the heart of Europe, one might think the Czech and Slovak communities in the US would be small and negligible. Quite the contrary is true. When you are responding to the US Census, consider that more than 1.5 million people in the U.S. declared Czech ancestry and more than 730,000 people declared Slovak ancestry in the past decade.

We miss getting together with you, the CSHA members and the entire Czech and Slovak community, for our events. And while we unfortunately had to cancel our traditional Easter Celebration event, you still have an opportunity to join our Language school, which is providing online classes to its students. We have booked a new venue for our Annual CSHA Picnic in September and hope we will be able to hold it.

I hope that all of us – your Czech and Slovak Heritage Association, its Board members, and volunteers – will use the time we have now to recharge, so we can hit the ground running when we are safely able to restart our activities. We will beat COVID-19 and come out of this stronger together.

As always, don't hesitate to write if you have questions or suggestions for us. You can reach us through our website and our Facebook page.

Please take care of yourself and your families, and be safe.

Warm regards,



Petr Justin - CSHA president

Note about Hlas

by Olga Mendel

The world is changing all the time. I'm sure that changes due to the Coronavirus pandemic were a shock, surprise and came along way too fast. It's been teaching us to adjust to new situations not weekly, but almost hourly.

I apologize for the delay in Spring 2020 Hlas. But it gave us more time to be more clear on plans that our CSHA can dream to have for the fall. It also allows us to report that CSHA'S Adult School has quickly adapted to the crisis by adapting online learning. You can read more about that in Lois Hybl's article on page 8.

Let's use this time as an opportunity to learn from you, if you would prefer to receive Hlas only in electronic format.

Anyone who is interested in this option, please write us an email at info@cshamaryland.org to let us know.



Climbing towards Prague Castle



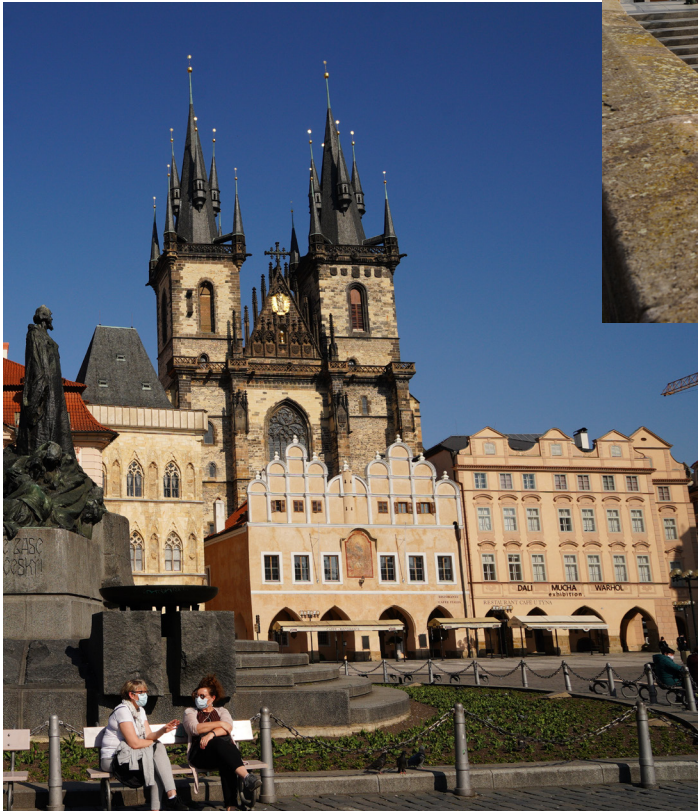
View of Strahov Monastery from Prague Castle

More than one month later, the Czech response has produced encouraging results. The curve of new cases of coronavirus grew far slower in the Czech Republic than in other European states or the U.S.

As of April 22, despite an aggressive testing program, the Czech Republic had just 7,132 cases nationwide (666 confirmed cases per million people). By comparison, the U.S. had 2,564 confirmed cases per million people (nearly four times the Czech rate) despite a less comprehensive approach to testing. Maryland had 2,461 confirmed cases per million. (All figures come from the Worldometer website.)

In terms of deaths, there have been only 208 in the Czech Republic (19 per million people), less than one-seventh the US death rate (144 per million people) and one-sixth the death rate in Maryland (116 per million). In pure numbers, 698 people have died from COVID in Maryland, as of April 22, compared to 208 in the Czech Republic. The Maryland population (6 million) is just a little over half the population of Czech Rep. (nearly 11 million).

In retrospect, it seems clear that the strict face-mask requirement has played an important role in the Czechs' success. Whereas U.S. authorities initially downplayed the value of face masks, the Czechs made masks mandatory almost immediately after declaring a state of emergency.



Old Town Square, resting with face masks



Kampa island - just birds, trees and empty benches

By late March, it was becoming clear that masks are indeed a beneficial tool in controlling the virus' spread. In fact, on March 28 the *Washington Post* published an article explaining the growing evidence about face masks' value, and citing the Czech Republic as a model, and lauding the nation's citizens for "an extraordinary mobilization by nearly the whole population" to sew and distribute home-made face masks.

"Within three days, there were enough masks for everyone in the country," the story noted, "and most people were wearing them. This was an entirely grass-roots community effort."

On April 6, *USA Today* also printed an article lauding the Czech response. Its title: "Coronavirus: Czech Republic imposed a face mask requirement and the U.S should too."



Charles Bridge in the middle of the day, the sun is high but the bridge is almost empty

The Annual CSHA Picnic

by Olga Mendel

The date and place has been selected. Last year's Back to School Picnic was a huge success with great attendance. So we are crossing our fingers and hoping that we will be able to meet again this fall and celebrate our heritage together.

To make sure we bring all the generations together, we plan to combine the Annual Adult Appreciation Picnic (usually held in July) with the Back to School Family Picnic.

We all know that the current situation with the world pandemic makes us more cautious to make plans, but we at CSHA will work towards being ready to hold this event.

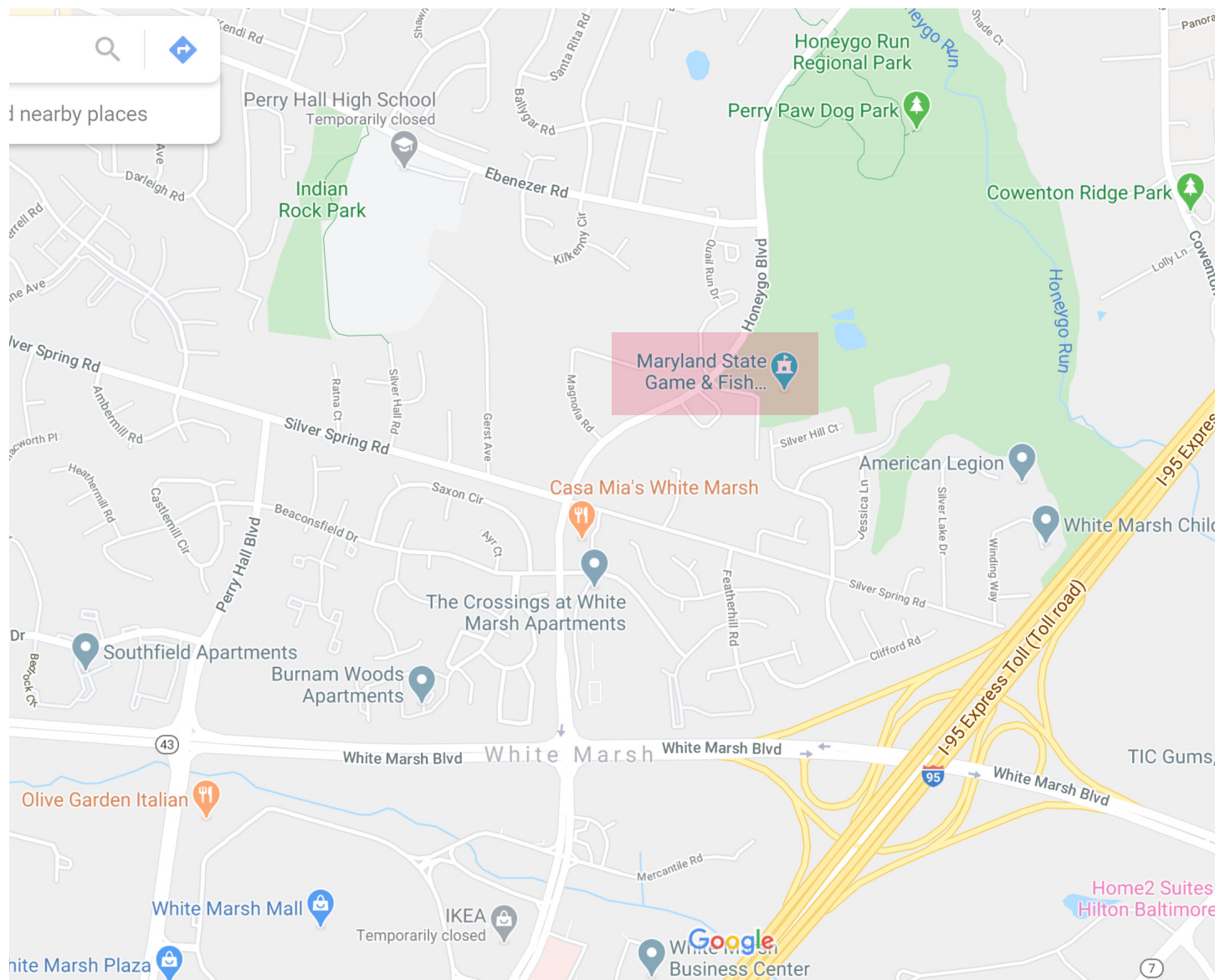
As always we are looking for volunteers to help us prepare, buy and serve food, decorate, help with clean up, and more.

We welcome everyone who wants to bring an instrument, so that we can all join in singing in Czech and Slovak songs. If you have any interest in organizing games for children, sports, races, or other fun activities, please let us know.

We hope to see you there.
So please save the date.

Sunday, September 13, 2020, noon to 6PM

**Maryland State Game & Fish Protective Association
8735 Honeygo Blvd, Perry Hall, MD 21128**



Annual Fall Festival 2020

by Olga Mendel

Preparations for the 34th Czech and Slovak Festival are underway.

The Festival will again take place at the American Legion Hall - Post #22 (125 York Road, Towson, MD 21204). The Pajtáši band is already reserved and we are working on planning other parts of the program, like the always-popular dance lessons. Bistro Bohem will return as our caterer, and there will be a variety of pastries and Czech and Slovak beer and drinks. The Children's Corner will have fun activities.

Please join us on Sunday, October 25th between noon and 6 pm. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

If you can offer a helping hand, please contact us at info@cshamaryland.org. We need and value assistance from all of you.



Czech and Slovak Recipe Corner:

by Dana Havlik

Easter Lamb Cake (Velikonoční beránek)

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/4 cup flour
1 cup) sugar

1/3 cup milk
3 large eggs with whites
and yolks separated

1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup (one stick) butter
1/2 teaspoon grinded lemon peel
2/3 cup ground almonds

DIRECTIONS:

Whip softened butter and half of the sugar for 10 minutes and add the egg yolks one by one until creamy and foamy. In a separate bowl, mix flower, salt, grinded lemon and almonds, then add this mixture slowly to the butter. Whip egg whites until stiff, add the rest of the sugar, and combine with the rest of the batter. Grease the baking form with butter, cover with flour, and then pour in the batter. Bake for 60 minutes at 300 F. When finished, let it cool for 10 minutes before removing the cake from the form. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.



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Adult Language School goes digital

by Lois Hybl

If April 4 had been the end of an ordinary semester, the adult language school would have celebrated its last day with the traditional potluck lunch.

But Covid-19 restrictions prevented such in-person classes and celebrations.

Beginning on March 14, each teacher's class arranged to use an online platform. Thanks to the students and teachers who made the arrangements.

First, Zoe Hruban set up classes on FreeConference.com for Andrea Kletetchka's Czech classes. Later, Barbara Vann set up Zoom for the same classes. Student Raymond Novak arranged a Zoom link for Natalie Karlinsky's Slovak classes. And Iva Zicha arranged the Zoom link for her Czech classes.

We all missed sharing doughnuts and coffee and mingling between classes. But most of us were able to get online and enjoy lessons.

Zoom even has a feature allowing the teacher to share her screen or use a "whiteboard" to spell a word. Unfortunately, a few students had problems with internet connections or their home computers. But overall, the distance learning proved fun and effective.

In fact, students wanted extra online classes this spring because so many regular spring activities were cancelled.

We made up a snow day on April 18, and we will offer a mini-semester of 5 more classes from April 25 to May 23.