

Coronavirus report from Slovakia

*by Sarah Tesfayeova,
Slovak-American International Student*

For the past two years I have been residing in Bratislava, Slovakia. To think I would go through a pandemic while studying abroad was unimaginable, especially with plans of returning home for the summer.

Being an international student, I faced many challenges, and my situation was especially difficult because I attend a French university

taught mostly by French teachers who travel back and forth between France and Slovakia.

On March 8th I received an email from the school's administrator stating that the University was going to follow the recommendation of the Regional Public Health Authority and close for the upcoming

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



REGULARLY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In the fall semester we will return to our regular weekly schedule. . Classes will be held virtually. Check CSHA's web and Facebook pages for details and schedule.

FAMILY FUN NIGHTS

The Children's School hosts Family Fun Nights every month or two, a chance for all CSHA members to get together and share a potluck dinner while celebrating our Czech and Slovak heritage. These events won't be possible this fall, but we hope to return to them as soon as it is safe.

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 virtually at this time. See registration form insert.

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. When it is safe to resume, rehearsals will be announced on our web and Facebook page.

HLAS - If you have any suggestions or comments about the Hlas, 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).

AUGUST 2020

GENERAL BOARD MEETING - August 30th at 4 PM - CSHA
Video conference - please wait for email invitation.

SEPTEMBER 2020

The Annual CSHA Picnic - September 13th, 2020 will likely be canceled due to ongoing pandemic. Final decision will be made at August Board meeting.

OCTOBER 2020

Currently scheduled for October 25th, 2020 at American Legion Hall, 125 York Rd, Baltimore, MD 21204. However, the festival is likely to be cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, making this the first year without a festival since the 1980s. Please stay tuned for possible online activities, fundraisers, and more.

DECEMBER 2020

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

CHRISTMAS CONCERT - - The Czech and Slovak Heritage Singers hope to present a program of traditional Czech and Slovak "koledy" at St. Wenceslaus Church, 2111 Ashland Avenue, Baltimore in early December. Date TBD.

JANUARY 2021

GENERAL BOARD MEETING - Date TBD.

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President's message:

Dear friends,

At the end of April, my second month working from home, I became intrigued by the many people out there who are successfully finishing a challenge. You may have seen on social media that some people are doing 100 pushups a day, some are picking up yoga, joining virtual book clubs, or trying to learn how to play a guitar. Some men are even trying to grow a beard. Well, I have tried that one, but my family put a quick end to this experiment. Ultimately, I decided I will go for a walk each day in the month of May. I wanted to see if I could reach every corner of our neighborhood, walk every street and if I could do it, rain or shine, 31 times in a row. And I am proud to report, you guessed right, I did it. Was it hard? Some days it took effort to leave the house, but I still appreciated being outside and the exercise. There were days when I just sneaked out to visit a food truck and sometimes I listened to a podcast to make the time pass faster. My family joined me on most walks and I was happy to have them support me in my challenge. We cherished the time spent together, waving to our neighbors, enjoying blossoming flowers in the front yards, and discovering streets we never visited. I realized how a simple activity such as walking can be so very uplifting.

I hope that you all have been able to make the best out of this difficult time and found an activity that makes your days brighter. While we are now drawn outside even more to enjoy the beautiful summer weather, please remember to take precautions and follow the recommendations from public health officials. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, and the danger is still very much real.

You may be missing familiar activities like those we usually provide for our community. I recognize that there are limits

on what can be done at this time, but I am confident we still have a lot to offer. CSHA board members, our Language School teachers and our volunteers are staying active and working on numerous issues arising from the pandemic. We are facing more challenges, but with new online tools we are able to meet and keep planning our future events for you. The language schools still conduct their classes, and our HLAS is bringing you articles about the Czech and Slovak communities.

On the last Sunday of August, our Association's General Meeting will take place in a video conference format, and all current members are invited to attend. We would love to know how everyone is doing and what activities would you like our Association to bring to friends of Czechia and Slovakia in Maryland in these unusual times. I hope to see many of you at the meeting.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and stay safe.

Oh, and I almost forgot. I walked 106 miles on those 31 days of May and our family still tries to go for a walk most evenings. My hope is that we emerge from this pandemic stronger together.

Thank you and keep on walking,

S pozdravem,



Petr Justin - CSHA president

Children's School News

by Dana Petran

Dear friends,

It has been many months since our last class at Woodbrook Church in Baltimore.

We miss you, and we miss our fun activities. Hopefully, we can begin again soon. We would like to see you at our Back to School Picnic, but so far, this gathering looks rather unlikely. For sure we would like to offer our classes for children of all ages again though. It may not be in person at first, but we can start meeting online. We are certain that many of you are very proficient in this new, technology based way of education. And we are trying to prepare a program that will suit you.

Even the 9th Conference of the Czech and Slovak Schools in North America and Canada had to be cancelled, yet, we met anyway. Thanks to amazing work of all organizers, we were able to participate on virtual "Bursa nápadů" online on May 30-31, 2020.

Please keep checking your emails for additional information in the coming month. If your contact email changed, kindly provide us with an update.

Thank you, see you all soon!

RIP Charles Supik - and Thank You

Sadly, we must share with you the news that Charles Supik, a pivotal figure in the history of CSHA, has passed away. Charles was one of the organization's founders and CSHA's first president. His passing is a great loss to the CSHA community, and we offer our deepest condolences to the whole family. To honor him, we are sharing with you parts of the eulogy delivered by his stepdaughter, Ellen Dees, and also a portion of the obituary published about Charles in the Baltimore Sun.

From Ellen Dees' Eulogy

"Charles was an old school gentleman, a man of quiet strength. Our mother didn't pump her own gas for at least 25 years. He bought her flowers, usually roses, EVERY week. He eagerly cleared the dinner table every night, probably largely motivated by the thought of dessert, his favorite part of the meal. Charles had such a generous spirit! He loved his weekly visits to his brother Mark's shop with McDonald's in hand for the whole crew. He volunteered for the Red Cross for many years as a driver during blood drives, and made sure to provide donuts for all.

"Charles had a great sense of humor and saw the humor in everyday life situations. He loved to tell stories about growing up in Baltimore, adventures with his father the police officer (clearing tree stumps with dynamite for example), and his run-ins with Air Jamaica as a US Customs agent.

"Charles' love for our mom was evident every day. We are forever grateful for that love, and for the many years of happiness, travel and music that they shared.

"Love of music was a theme that was woven through their entire relationship. They met through the choir at St. Margaret's and they continued singing through 31 years of marriage. Charles had a beautiful bass voice and was a member of many choirs throughout the years. For a long time he sang at one mass here at the cathedral every Sunday and a second at St Wenceslas, his childhood parish.

"Some highlights of his singing were performing at Notre Dame, Carnegie Hall and with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Over the last couple of years, friends John and Jane Nelson sang with Charles when they visited him at Grand Oasis, the assisted living facility where he resided.

"When Charles became too ill to joint in, they sang to him ensuring that he still got to hear the music he loved. Within the music community, Charles and our mom had many friends, and she has received so many letters of support and condolence from his fellow musicians..

"The most important, and most meaningful thing to Charles was family. He had a giant heart and we are all better people for being in his life. His oldest son, Edward, passed away several years ago,



and this was devastating to him. He had close relationships with his daughter Carla and son Howard, and was very proud of his children. His brothers, Paul, Edward and Mark and sisters, Betsy and Jane were all close to his heart as were his many nieces and nephews.

"One of the highlights of the year for Charles was his birthday party/family Christmas party held on December 26th. Seeing all of his family, and the food they shared, really made his day!

"The last few years have been difficult and painful for Charles and for all of us who loved him. Lewy body dementia stole his physical strength and mobility, and eventually his memory.

"We want to recognize our mom for the Herculean efforts she made to keep Charles as active and engaged as he could be for so long, much longer than most of us could manage. And of course, she did not do this alone. When our mom married Charles 31 years ago she got more than a devoted husband, she got his whole loving and accepting family.

"We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Supik family. The support and help you have given to our mom and Charles, especially over these last few years, means more than we can say.

"While Charles' passing leaves a void, we take comfort that he is no longer suffering. We like to think that he is at peace, and that he is now healthy once again. So we end by saying Na zdravi (pronounced NaStravi) to a life well lived. May Charles enjoy a low flyer and a long walk with his dog, Hugo."

From the Baltimore Sun Obituary, July 31, 2020

"Charles W. Supik, a retired chemist who became a customs inspector and who was active in the Czech and Slovak community, died of Lewy body dementia July 16 at Grand Oasis Assisted Living in Towson. He was 85 and had resided in Guilford.

"Born in Baltimore and raised on North Port Street at Eager, he was the son of Edward Supik, a police officer, and his wife Elsie Svec, a housewife.

"Both his parents were of Czech descent. He initially lived with his parents, a brother, grandmother, great-grandmother, uncle and aunt in 14-foot-wide rowhouse,' said his brother, Mark D. Supik.

"Eventually the house next door became available and my parents bought it. They raised their six children there and Charles lived with them until he got married. In those days, you didn't move ten miles away.'

"He attended St. Wenceslaus School and was a 1952 graduate of Mount Saint Joseph High School, where he was a member of its wrestling team. He earned a degree in chemistry at what is now Loyola University Maryland.

"He worked at Pemco Porcelain Enamel Co. on Eastern Avenue in

Bayview and helped make dyes and pigments for ceramic coatings. He later joined American Bitumuls, a division of Chevron Oil, making asphalt products.

"Mr. Supik changed careers in 1969 and became a U.S. customers inspector and worked from an office at the Customs House on Gay Street...

"Mr. Supik was a founder and former president of the Czech and Slovak Heritage Association and the Czech and Slovak Heritage Singers. He was instrumental in organizing the Czech-Slovak Festival for the last 34 years...

"He started visiting the Czech Republic soon after the Velvet Revolution. He attended Czech language school at Charles University in the Czech Republic.

"In addition to his brother, survivors include his wife of 31 years, Margaret Dees, a retired North Harford High School English teacher; a son, Howard Supik of Port Deposit; a daughter, Carla Supik also of Port Deposit; a stepson, James H. Dees of North Carolina; two stepdaughters, Peggy Dees of Baltimore and Ellen Dees of Nashville; two other brothers, Paul Supik of Rock Hall and Edward Supik of Hickory; two sisters, Elizabeth Hale of Haddam, Connecticut and Jane Craven of Baltimore; and 13 grandchildren. A son, Edward Supik, died in 2015."



Charles with his wife Margaret (left), singing in Olney in 2017 (up), last signing with Heritage singers in Towson, December 2019 (down)

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week. From then on, all classes would be taught online. Students were permitted to remain at school through the spring and continue living together in the dormitories, but that idea scared me. It was frightening to see a once-calm and collected environment come to a sudden halt.

So the next day, March 9, I packed a bag with a week's worth of clothes and traveled to Košice, where my grandparents live. To



Sarah Tesfayeova

my surprise, those few days turned into three months. Due to the uncertainty and my apprehension about the virus, I did not make it back to Bratislava until mid-June. Although I faced minor inconveniences, I have to say that I have been fortunate to have family in Košice. Otherwise I would have been quarantining at my dormitory for months.

I also had to decide whether to come back home to the U.S. If I did so during the school year, I would have had to wake up at 3 am for my classes due to the time difference. And given the threat of a second wave, I wasn't sure it would be possible to return in September in time for the new school year. I considered flying back to the states in mid-June after my classes ended, but the only reasonable option I found was an indirect flight from Vienna which would have posed a great threat due to the highly transmittable environments.

In the end, I was unable to travel home, unfortunately. But on a positive note, this time has given me opportunity to reconnect with nature and to reflect.

One thing the pandemic has taught me is how positive an influence strong leadership can have in a crisis.

After the first cases were confirmed in the country on March 6, Slovak government leaders took quick action to combat the spread of COVID-19. Face masks became mandatory in all public spaces, indoors or outdoors. Schools began to close and other restrictions were put in place to protect the elderly. Fare-free public transit for students and senior citizens were no longer in service.

All shops were required to close on Sundays. Empty streets, caution tapes around playgrounds, and restaurants only operating on take-out became the new normal. Plexiglass was installed in supermarkets to protect both shoppers and employees.

All three of Slovakia's airports were closed completely to in-bound commercial flights, though they have since reopened. As of early August, Slovak residents may travel to many countries without a COVID-19 test, and citizens from most other European nations can visit Slovakia without a test. Borders to neighboring countries which remained closed through the peak of the pandemic have reopened.

As of early August, Slovak authorities still request that people not come to hospitals with COVID-19 concerns, and that those who worry that may have COVID-19 should contact local health authorities. In June, all businesses were permitted to re-open, but they are required to respect health and sanitation requirements designed to limit the spread of COVID-19. Pre-schools, elementary and high schools reopened, and students have since completed the school year. Hospitals have resumed treating non-emergency patients.

Thanks to all of these steps by the government, Slovakia's infection and death rates from COVID-19 remain among the lowest in Europe, and they are far, far lower than the rates in Maryland or anywhere else in the U.S.

More stories on the web:

www.cshamaryland.org

Please check our website to read two more stories from Slovakia, both in English and Slovak, reporting on people's experiences during Corona-virus pandemic. Written by Kristina Alaksova from Banská Bystrica and Silvia Sulterova from Nitra.

Slovak Homemade Potato Pancakes

by Zuzana LaBuff

Zemiakové placky (potato pancakes) are a traditional Slovak food with a long history. Potatoes were like a "second bread," a staple of the Slovak diet in hungrier times.

Potato pancakes go by different names in different regions of Slovakia. In my hometown of Banská Bystrica, we call them harula. Elsewhere you may hear them called bramborák, nalečniky, or other names.

Regardless the name used, zemiakové placky are made in most every Slovakian household. Each family has its own variation of the recipe and there are many ways to serve them. My mom used to eat placky topped only with sour cream. My Dad would create fancier placky, adding shredded cheese, ham, and a sunny-side-up egg.

When I make them for my family, we pile on cheese, ham, and eggs, with sliced tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers on the side. You can invent your own combinations, or the placky are also quite tasty all by themselves.

You can probably find similar recipes in Slovak cookbooks, but following is the basic recipe we follow in our home. The amounts are estimates (like most Slovaks, I never measure) and you should plan to adjust them to your tastes.



Czech and Slovak Recipe Corner:

by Zuzana LaBuff

Zemiakové Placky (Harula, Bramborák)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Peel and grate the potatoes. Place them in a bowl, add salt, and mix well. Let the mixture sit for about 5 minutes until the salt draws the water out of the potatoes.
2. Add the eggs and the rest of the seasoning (the more the better) and stir. The batter should be quite watery.
3. Add flour and stir with a wooden spoon. The flour should absorb the water. The batter should be smooth but should stick to your spoon as you hold it over the bowl. If the batter is too runny, add a little more flour. If it is clumpy, add more shredded potatoes.
4. Heat shortening or oil in a skillet (or two skillets, if you can manage it) over medium high heat. Use plenty of oil.
5. With a wooden spoon, add a spoonful of batter to the skillet. Press the batter to make it flat. Oil should cover the pancakes and rapidly bubble as soon as you add the batter. (If it doesn't, it's not hot enough.)
6. Fry until the pancake is crispy and golden brown on the bottom. Using tongs, flip and fry on the other side. They are done when crispy on the outsides and just a little bit soft on the inside. (Usually it takes 1 or 2 minutes on each side to be done, but it depends on the size and thickness.)
7. Keep pancakes warm in a casserole dish or something with a lid until you are ready to serve.
8. Leftovers (unlikely) can be refrigerated for a day or two. Reheat in a toaster oven or regular oven, not the microwave.

INGREDIENTS:

3 lbs. potatoes
Salt
Pepper
3 T marjoram
6 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
2 eggs
1 C flour (more or less)
Shortening, lard, or frying oil

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Town of Kroměříž

by Petr Justin, photo by Olga Mendel

Welcome to Kroměříž, a historic town often called the Athens of Haná, in the eastern part of Czechia.

Visitors come to this Moravian town of almost thirty thousand specifically to admire the Archbishop's Chateau and its adjacent gardens, which are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site (together with the nearby Flower Garden).

As soon as you reach the center square, you find yourself surrounded by an exceptional atmosphere. Kroměříž is not a big town, but one can enjoy various gems of world-class art and architecture, including cultural and natural sites and monuments. The art was collected for centuries by Olomouc bishops and archbishops, who had chosen the town as their summer residence back in the 12th century. I recommend visiting the Palace Gallery inside the castle, which houses one of the most valuable art collections in

the Czech Republic, including the famous painting Apollo and Marsyas by Titian Vecellio.

Kroměříž's extraordinary assets include not only its captivating beauty, but also its peace, culture, fine restaurants, and the

quality wine from the archbishop's wine cellars. You can reach all corners of this town by foot, while meeting friendly people and enjoying yourselves in a mild climate. Kroměříž is a wonderful town, which is definitely worth a visit while you are in Czechia. I'm sure you will like it.

