



SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON D.C.

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

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Greetings from Slovak Ambassador Radovan Javorčík

Dear SASW Friends,

As a still fresh Slovak Ambassador to the United States of America, I'm very pleased to share with you a few thoughts in this newsletter. This year it has been already 33 years since the Slovak American Society of Washington, D.C. has been established enhancing the cultural and educational visibility of Slovakia in the "New World." I greatly appreciated the last talk organized by the SASW featuring Professor Josette Baer who introduced her last book, *Seven Slovak Women: Portraits of Courage, Humanism, and Enlightenment*. Even for me the fate of these seven ladies, three of whom I met personally and one who gave her name to a street I lived near in Israel, was highly inspirational to me seeing it through the lens of Professor Baer.

Just in the spirit of the book by Sarah Hinlicky Wilson which you presented lately, you act in many ways as the Brave Bridge between Slovakia and United States. My Embassy is grateful for that. Sadly, the pandemics have prevented us from enjoying each other's presence, but we don't give up and I look forward to greeting the children during the Svätý Mikuláš celebration, recalling our most colourful tradition and reading them one of my favourite winter Christmas fairy tales with my little surprise which is yet to be seen.



In only a few months in this country, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has become almost my second home. In September, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of our building dedication by presidents Clinton, Havel, and Kováč. All three presidents became part of my professional life, including through their famous picture on board of the HMS Britannia for the D-Day celebration in 1994. Their appearance in Cedar Rapids, the heart of the United States, highlights a tight bond between our nations. We cherished the memory of that day and I was glad to see that the vision and the dream of the first pioneers, children of Slovak and Czech immigrants who longed to bring and save a bit of homeland across the ocean still lives on and continues to flourish.

I had the opportunity to meet with a number of great people who are firmly upholding the legacy of the Slovak pioneers in America of all generations. No matter when almost 2 million Slovaks decided to move to American soil, all of them, or rather you, wish to keep our heritage and spread the word about the country in the heart of Europe and help to shape America where everybody can say "I have a dream and I can make it happen for the benefit of all." We, at the Embassy and in Slovakia, are proud about all of those who rise to the challenges of modern times. Just like we are grateful for you and other fraternal organisations who in diverse way keep the image of our homeland in the US.

National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library 25th Anniversary Celebration

In September 2021, SASW members Ken Bombara, Helen Fedor, and Georgene Chastain traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to attend the NCSML's 25th Anniversary Celebration weekend. The museum was dedicated in 1995 by U.S. President Bill Clinton, Czech Republic President Václav Havel, and Slovak Republic President Michal Kováč. The events were organized under the direction of NCSML President/CEO Cecilia Rokusek. The anniversary celebration had been delayed a year due to the pandemic. The weekend started outdoors with BrewNost on the grounds of the museum on a beautiful Friday evening. Guests mingled while sampling local beers, wine, spirits, and food, along with live music and auctions.

On Saturday, renowned folklorist and world traveler Helene Cincebeaux gave a presentation about her new exhibit, "Crowning Glory: A Feast of Slovak & Moravian Headdresses" (open through February 27, 2022), which was followed by a parade of *kroje*. Slovak Ambassador Radovan Javorčík and his wife Michelle Joanne Javorčíková were among the models dressed in *kroje*. The exhibit features some of the many headdresses from Helene's personal collection of Slovak and Moravian headdresses that she and her mother collected over many years of travel in Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic. We were given a tour of the Library by David Muhlena, Library Director. Mr. Muhlena noted that he is actively collecting books and other artifacts from Slovaks living in the U.S. If you have something you wish to donate, contact him at DMuhlena@NCSML.org.



Saturday evening's highlights included the ribbon-cutting for the new exhibit "Treasures of Slovakia: 1000 Years of History" (open through March 20, 2022). This exhibit features artifacts from the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava that represent the history and culture of Slovakia. After the ribbon-cutting and a cocktail hour, the attendees were welcomed to the Gala 25th Anniversary Dinner, with many special guest presentations, some in-person, such as Iowa Senator Charles Grassley, and some via video, such as President Bill Clinton, Secretary Madeline Albright, and Slovak Foreign Minister Ivan Korčok. During dessert, guests were treated to the premiere of a piano piece written by pianist and composer Jacob Beranek, which he wrote especially in honor of the NCSML anniversary celebration. On Sunday, Branislav Panis, General Director of the Slovak National Museum and curator of the Treasures of Slovakia exhibit, gave a presentation about his museum and led a tour of the exhibit, pointing out many of the highlights.

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, which is now a Smithsonian Affiliate, is a first-class museum with interesting exhibits and a well-stocked gift shop that has many unique items. It is well worth a visit if you find yourself in the eastern Iowa area.

A Fond Farewell and a Warm Welcome



On August 31, SASW bid farewell to Terézia Filipejová, the cultural counselor at the Slovak Embassy, who was about to return to Slovakia after her four-year tour of duty in Washington. For two and a half years before the pandemic hit, SASW worked with Terézia on scheduling talks at the embassy, as well as on our Svätý Mikuláš party, to which we invited all embassy staff and their families as our guests. Terézia's posting at the embassy was the first time she had represented Slovakia in the U.S. She kept the embassy's cultural events running smoothly, and was always eager to learn about the country, Slovak-Americans, and Americans in general. She especially enjoyed learning English-language idioms she hadn't come across in her textbooks, such as "herding cats."

Her successor is Stanislava Buchtová, or Stanka. She comes to the embassy from her last assignment in Bratislava, but this isn't her first time in Washington. She spent a year here, in 2019, as part of a diplomatic fellowship program at the U.S. Department of State. We look forward to working with Stanka on future SASW presentations at the embassy, and, of course, our Svätý Mikuláš parties. (The 2021 party will again be online, but the embassy will take part in it.) We hope that, when we're all finally able to gather at embassy events, you'll greet Stanka warmly and get to know her.

2021 Stephen Matula Service Award Winner

The SASW board is pleased to announce Kathryn Tatko as the winner of this year's Matula Award.

Kathryn was a founding member of the SASW and has served as president (2008-2011), vice president (1996-1997), and treasurer (1998-2004). She was a driving force behind the establishment of the SASW's long-running City University scholarship fund, a cause to which she has been a generous supporter over the years. During her time on the board, she helped the society to obtain non-profit status, assisted in the revision of the society's bylaws, and actively recruited board members. Kathryn also organized the annual Svätý Mikuláš party on numerous occasions.

Even after her tenure on the board ended, she has remained active in the society's affairs and has always been willing to share her past experiences and knowledge. Kathryn's past leadership and continuing involvement has significantly contributed to the success of the SASW in fulfilling its mission as a social, cultural, and educational organization. We truly appreciate her past efforts and continuing presence, and are pleased to recognize her as the recipient of this year's Stephen Matula award.

The SASW board would like to thank David Baron, George Swisko, and Rich Palaschak for serving on this year's award selection committee.



What's Cooking? A Slovak Cookbook Update

Our cookbook committee has been hard at work testing, editing, and designing the first-ever SASW Cookbook!

We were thrilled to receive so many scrumptious recipes—thank you to all who submitted them. It's been a fun adventure bringing together this collection of treasured family recipes. We're carefully sifting (Get it? Sifting?) through each submission to make sure our cookbook is accessible for today's modern Slovak cooks. (After all, who has the moxie to pick their own mushrooms from the woods these days?)

This year, as we've been compiling and editing the cookbook, we also hosted two cook-alongs ("*Varíme spolu*"). We demonstrated how to make two authentic Slovak recipes—*halušky* and *holubky*. Stay tuned for future cook-alongs in the new year. We think you're going to appreciate the charm and spirit of each cookbook recipe as much as we do. We're looking forward to the release of the cookbook in the future. Thank you for your patience.

In the meantime, enjoy this delicious holiday recipe, submitted by Kathryn Tatko, this year's Stephen Matula Award recipient. The recipe is from Dr. Eva Kellerová, wife of the late Branislav Lichardus, first Slovak Ambassador to the United States (1994–1999). At an event at the Ambassador's residence in McLean, Virginia, Dr. Kellerová talked about Slovak food and shared samples and recipes.



Kapustnica (Sauerkraut Soup)

- 1 large can (27 oz.) sauerkraut
- 2 qt. water
- Salt, according to your taste
- 10–15 black peppercorns (ground)
- 1 tsp. caraway
- 10 dried plums
- 1 small handful dried mushrooms or 4–5 white mushrooms
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. paprika
- 4–5 slices chopped bacon
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 4–5 links Hillshire Farm smoked sausage
- 4 Tbsp. oil
- 4 Tbsp. flour
- 2/3 c. sour cream

Pour the sauerkraut brine into a cup and set it aside. Use it later to sour the soup according to your taste. Add the sauerkraut to a large saucepan, and add the water, salt, ground black peppercorns, caraway seeds, dried plums, mushrooms, garlic, and paprika. Start to heat uncovered, since you have to add the remaining ingredients.

Fry the bacon in a pan. "Fish out" the cracklings and put them into the soup. Fry the onion in the remaining fat until soft and then add to the soup. Slice the sausage and fry the pieces on both sides in a pan, and then add them to the soup. Bring the soup to a boil and then lower the heat to simmer. Mix the oil with the flour in a pan and fry until golden, and add to the soup. Cook until the sauerkraut is tender.

Stir the sour cream into the soup and heat thoroughly for 5–10 minutes. Add the sauerkraut juice when the soup is almost finished, using as much or as little as you prefer, as this will determine the final flavor. Remove from the stove and serve.

As the main course of a meal, this serves about 12. As a side, you can get as many as 30 or 35 small servings out of it.

A note from Kathryn: "I tried [this] recipe for Kapustnica and now make it almost every Christmas. I also made it for a group of Slovaks from Bratislava who visited DC on Easter weekend in 1998 and received many compliments."

Dobrá chut!

SASW Board and Officer Elections

At the October 19 general meeting, Georgene Chastain, Stacey Galik and Brian Belensky were re-elected to the board for a three-year term. At the November 9 board meeting, the following were selected to serve as SASW officers for the coming year: Georgene Chastain, President; Marta Szotakova Galysh, Vice President; Tom Marton, Treasurer; and Stacey Galik, Secretary.

A Virtual Svätý Mikuláš Party: Sunday, December 5



Please join us on Sunday, December 5, for a virtual celebration of the tradition of Svätý Mikuláš, in the comfort of your home via Zoom, from 4:00 to 5:30 pm (ET).

Our program will include: a live special presentation from Slovakia by Global Slovakia on holiday traditions and music;

Slovak Ambassador Radovan Javorčík reading a Slovak folk tale; the presentation of the Matula Service Award; and, of course, a visit from Svätý Mikuláš, with children reciting a short poem or singing a song.

If you have a child (or children) who'd like to recite a poem or sing a song for Svätý Mikuláš, please contact us at info@dcslovaks.com (by 11:59 pm ET, on Friday, December 3) to let us know the name and age of your child or children. All children who sing or recite will receive a gift for their efforts from Svätý Mikuláš.

Register in advance for the festivities on Zoom by visiting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudequrjoiE90nYNr6q43y68zjv3QlihqZ>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the party.

Please contact us at info@dcslovaks.org if you have questions.

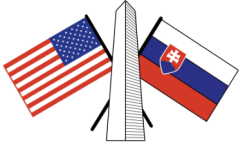
We hope to see you there!

Thank You to our Outgoing President

As the new President of the Slovak American Society of Washington, DC, and as a representative of the SASW Board, I would like to commend and thank our outgoing President, Brian Belensky, for all he has done while President. It seems like Brian has always been President of SASW, but he was elected by the Board in 2015 and served for six years. Some of his accomplishments during his Presidency include the development of a multifunctional SASW website, as well as starting Facebook and Twitter accounts. SASW also worked with a young graphic designer to produce a marketing brochure. When the Covid 19 pandemic ended our in-person events, he spearheaded use of the Zoom platform for speakers' presentations, Board meetings, online Slovak conversation groups, and the Slovak Genealogy Discussion Group. In addition, he came up with the idea for compiling a cookbook of Slovak recipes submitted by SASW members, which is still in development. He also introduced the idea of supporting the online Slovak cook-alongs.

We will all miss Brian's composure and fairness in leading our Board meetings, and his untiring support of all things Slovak, even during difficult times. He is still a member of the SASW Board and we look forward to making use of his technical and marketing expertise, as well as his institutional knowledge, in support of future SASW initiatives. Thank you for a job well done, Brian!

Georgene Chastain, President



SLOVAK AMERICAN SOCIETY
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New membership or 2022 renewal runs through 12/31/2022. Contributions and memberships are tax deductible.

Individual membership (\$25/year) \$ _____

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