



A sound mind in a sound body

December 2022

Dear Sokol Members and Dear Friends of Sokol Washington,

I would like to wish you a healthy and prosperous 2023. We are one year older and perhaps a little bit wiser. The post-pandemic year 2022 is behind us, and we can say that it was a successful year. Our regular weekday activities in 2022 included Friday Czech and Slovak language classes from 6:45 to 8pm, followed by sports for children, 8:00 to 9pm. We also had our Tuesday activity, 'Se Sokolem do Zivota,' which is for preschoolers aged 3 to 6, focusing on developing physical skills through games. Finally, we had volleyball for adults, which stopped early this year in June. As of now, we no longer have a volunteer who is able to step in and continue organizing volleyball for our members.

Along with our weekly events, we had success with many of our annual events this year. Our first annual event occurred in early January with the Great Falls hiking trip, which we concluded with a Polar bear plunge into the Falls. In March, we organized two events: the Masquerade ball on ice and the Ester District volleyball tournament. After the tournament, we also had a picnic in Norwood Park, Bethesda MD, at which we presented the tournament's winners with trophies. In April, we had an annual hiking memorial for Olga Hudlicka and an annual Easter Egg hunt. Our Spring 2022 season ended with a performance by our children at the European Union Open House at the Czech Embassy, the annual tennis tournament, and, finally, the two-day canoe trip in Shenandoah. At the end of the Summer, we organized a three-day family camping trip at Cape Henlopen Park.

Every year, we express gratitude to the members of our organization by inviting them to the Sokol Picnic. The same thing happened this year. At the end of September, we organized the membership appreciation picnic at Fletcher Boat House Park. The weather was nice, and families and friends of our organization enjoyed a pleasant time together on the bank of the Potomac River. They played volleyball, ate klobasky, and chatted about life in our Czech and Slovak community, here in the Washington DC area.

October 2022 began with unwelcome cold and rainy weather. Because of that, we had to cancel our annual Libor Kozaka biking memorial, which had been scheduled for the 1st weekend of October. Luckily, later in October, the weather changed just in time for the 4th annual 'Beh republiky' event. This 5km run celebrates the establishment of the 1st Czechoslovak state on October 28th 1918. Our Sokol unit proudly organizes this event under the umbrella of Sokol Czech Republic, and we are grateful to celebrate the establishment of the Czechoslovak state alongside Sokol units across the world.

Back in 2020 and 2021, we couldn't host our Mikulasska party indoors because of Covid restrictions. This year, Mikulasska Nadielka finally returned to its original setting, organized as a traditional Sunday afternoon gathering of parents and children in the comfort of a church. This time, we rented a church located on River Road, Bethesda, MD. Everyone who came got to enjoy a traditional Czech-Slovak meal for dinner; this included klobasy, jaternice, sauerkraut, beer, and traditional pastry. After dinner and after a performance by children from Sokolik, Mikulas arrived, accompa-

nied by an angel and a devil. Children formed a line, and then each of them came to Mikulas to get their present. Before getting their present, some would sing a song, some would recite a short poem, and some would just hide their face in their mother's arms. Once they received their gift, the stocking full of goodies, they were all able to bring it home, along with the life-long memory of this special Czech-Slovak Mikulasska Nadielka party.

Mikulasska, along with all other events and weekly activities, is made possible by our volunteers. I am very grateful for all these wonderful, dedicated, and hard-working people who contribute to our Sokol organization. Alongside them, we also have many Sokol members and friends, such as the parents of Friday-activity participants, who are willing to step in and help when help is needed. I'd like to express my fullest gratitude to everyone volunteering for our community. I THANK YOU all for your work.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Czech Embassy, the Slovak Embassy, the Czech and Slovak governments, SVU and ASO for their financial and non-financial support of our organization. We could not make many of our activities happen without the aid which you provide. Before I conclude this New Year wish, I have a few words about our Friday's Czech-Slovak school. Many of you know that our American Sokol Washington DC unit is now 75 years old. The Czech-Slovak School, which is an inseparable part of ASW, is about 9 years younger; it was founded in 1956, but later ceased its activities for about 10 years, restarting again in 1986. There are three special people who, once the school restarted again, contributed tremendously to this school's growth. These people are sister Dana Sablikova, brother Jan Kocvara, and sister Lucia Levendis. We have not forgotten all that they did for our school, and we are very glad that they are a part of our community. We THANK THEM for all of their past work!

Our current Friday activities are held at Carderock Elementary School, and we cannot go without appreciating all those who make Sokol's relationship with Carderock work. In order for us to remain on good standing with Carderock and Montgomery County overall, teachers and students need to leave their classrooms as they found them and respect the facilities. If there is ever any complaint from Carderock or MC, Sokol's school director has to step in to resolve the issue. Therefore, with relationship management and resolution, being the director of the Czech-Slovak school is a challenging task. We appreciate their hard work, and we also appreciate everything that school leadership and the teachers do for our Friday's activities at Carderock. On top of that, thank you to the parents who are present on Fridays and make the volunteers' work easier. We notice your help and we appreciate it!

We have great school leadership, and we have a great group of dedicated teachers. We also have substitute teachers for when the regular teachers cannot teach. I became a substitute teacher for Slovak class this year, and I must say that I enjoy the classes and that I always look forward to working with the 4-to-7 year-old children. Those children say things straight, and one Friday evening when I came to teach a class, the children began to ask me why their regular teacher was not there. I simply said, "She went to a concert...". "No toto!!!!..." was the spontaneous reaction of several of those kids. Their faces expressed their indignation. "I wanted to go to a concert too, but I am here!" said the one of the kids. It seemed that the children would prefer to have their teacher with them.

Teachers, think twice when you need to skip your Friday class. The children love you and they will not excuse your absence easily.

It has been a fun and rewarding experience for me to spend time as a teacher in our Czech-Slovak School. We are teaching our kids our language; we are exposing them to our culture and raising them to be proud of their heritage. We hope that whatever they learn during their weekly classes will stick with them throughout their lives.

As I conclude this writing, I would like to direct you towards resources for learning more about Sokol activities and supporting our organization. For detailed information about Sokol Washington, including calendars and event descriptions, please visit our website. If you like what our organization provides to Washington DC's Czech, Slovak, and Moravian community, please support us. Sokol is run by unpaid volunteers, but in order to run our events and activities, we still need funding. If you are graciously willing to financially support our organization, please donate through our website www.sokolwashington.org. On the upper right corner, click on the red 'Donate Now' button.

Thank you! I wish you a happy, healthy, and relaxed 2023. May it be free of stress and full of love and fun.

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