

Here For You When You Need Us

- Family Medicine Clinics in Crete, Friend, and Wilber
- New Labor and Delivery Suites
- 27 Outpatient Specialists
- New Surgical Wing
- 24-Hour Emergency Care
- Acute and Swingbed Services
- Laboratory and Radiology
- Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy
- And much more!





CRETE • FRIEND • WILBER

2910 Betten Drive | Crete, NE | 402-826-2102 www.bryanhealth.com/CAMC

63rd Annual WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Theme: Together We Can

Table of Contents

Royalty Candidate: Emma Carlin, Kansas	Page 4
Royalty Candidate: Aspen Hein, Oklahoma	Page 5
Czech Dancers	Page 6
Royalty Candidate: Andrea Kobylkova, Illinois	Page 8
Royalty Candidate: Katie Kostelnik, Texas	Page 8
Wilber Hotel	Pages 15-16
Czech Bingo	Page 18
Royalty Candidate: Camille Kotouc, Nebraska	Page 19
Sokol Hall Dumplings	Pages 20-21
Bohemian Tractor Pull	Page 23
Royalty Candidate: Katherine McGee, Missouri	Page 24
Accordion Tradition	Page 25
Children's Parade	Page 25
Royalty Candidate: Ellaina Novak, Minnesota	Page 26
Royalty Candidate: Trinity Pesko, Wisconsin	Page 27
Royalty Candidate: Morgan Simoneau, Iowa	Page 27
Outgoing Royalty: Drew Hejna	Page 28
Outgoing Royalty: Destiny Hollingsworth	Page 29
Outgoing Royalty: Lauren Luchetti	Page 30

Candidates contend for royalty

State Czech queens from around the country will vie for the Miss Czech-Slovak U.S. title during Czech Days in Wilber. Meet the queen candidates throughout the magazine..

Emma Carlin

Kansas Czech-Slovak Queen Parents: Darin and

Debbie Carlin

Hometown: Beloit,

Kansas

Talent: Clarinet solo **Sponsor:** Miss Czech-Slovak Kansas Pageant **Why do you want to be**

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US for my family - let me elaborate. The beginnings of my pageant



Emma Carlin

participation were rooted within a desire to represent and love my close relatives, particularly my grandmother, but it did not stop there.

My definition of "family" has expanded over the years, especially as I traveled and met fellow Czechs, Moravians, Slovaks, and Rusyns during my first state reign in 2018. More people were added when I competed at the national pageant for the first time in 2019, and I have enjoyed participating in my local and state Czech and Slovak communities since then.

In spring 2023, I realized I had the opportunity to once again serve my heritage family by participating in my state pageant. Returning has been the most wonderful experience – the family I gained the first time is still present and has once again been full of support with the additional generosity of my new members.

This year, I have also been fortunate to meet several Czech dignitaries, which has strengthened my belief in the importance of preserving ancestral heritage across borders to encourage a global mindset as the world faces ongoing challenges.

In short, I have been blessed by my heritage family, and it would be an honor to return their love and generosity by serving and representing them as Miss Czech-Slovak US.

Future Goals: To use her accounting degree while working in higher education.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activity: She assisted the Kansas Czechs, Inc., in preparing the new Betty Kepka Art Museum & Gallery.

Little Sister: Emma Wollenburg



FRANK'S SMOKEHOUSE.

Homemade Smoked Products

Wieners • Beef Jerky • Sulz Jaternice • Jelita Czech Kolace & Bread

Serving Frank's Polish & Wieners with Kraut Sandwiches
OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK 402-821-2647

Vítáme Vás Barnas Drug, Inc.

124 West 3rd • Wilber

402-821-2834 • Find us on Facebook **■**

www.barnasdrug.com

Czech glass, garnets, gifts, sundries, Wilber T-shirts

Proud to support the Czech community!



224 W 4th Street • PO Box 703 • Wilber, NE 68465 chuck41autoparts@gmail.com

Schuerman Welding Inc.

Russ & Betty Schuerman 245 Washington Street Clatonia, NE 68328 Phone: 402-989-4835

Cell: 402-239-1445 Fax: 402-989-4027

Email: russ@schuermanwelding.com



Candidates

Aspen Hein

Oklahoma Czech-Slovak Queen

Parents: Scott and Annetta Hein

Hometown: Yukon, Oklahoma

Talent: Vocal and dance solo

Sponsor: Oklahoma Czechs, Inc.

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I aspire to serve as Miss Czech-Slovak US because I want to serve as an ambassador for a community that has changed my life.

My local and regional



Aspen Hein

experiences have taught me about Czech-Slovak history and traditions in America. Through festivals and performances, I have gained friendships and memories that I will carry with me forever. My experiences with Czech-Slovak communities have had a massive impact on my life and representing this wonderful community nationally would be an honor.

If it weren't for organizations like Oklahoma Czechs, Inc., and Miss Czech Slovak US, I would have never become interested in my family heritage and it could have been lost. If I were given the opportunity to serve as an ambassador with this platform, I would spread my story of helping to save and pre-

serve my family heritage, with the hope of inspiring others to keep their heritage alive.

If I can help one family preserve their Czech-Slovak heritage, my journey and efforts will have been worth it.

Future goals: To pursue a degree in Environmental Geology.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activity: She has been an active member of the Oklahoma Czech-Slovak Folk Dancers and an Oklahoma Beseda Dancer.

Little Sister: Tessa Lytle





Dance through festival history with the "Czech Dancing Couple"

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN

scire porter @seward in dependent.com

The "Czech Dancing Couple" is a design that can be spotted all over Wilber during Czech Days. It was crafted by a late Wilber resident and is the national symbol of the Wilber Czechs.

Elizabeth "Liz" Zikmund created numerous authentic Czech designs for the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber, including the "Czech Dancing Couple" in 1962.

Zikmund made sketches for programs, downtown storefronts and more. Nebraska Czechs of Wilber member Sheryl Kastanek said Zikmund did not charge people for the designs, she simply enjoyed making them and helping Wilber.

"She would draw anything. I heard that if her daughters came home with friends, she would just do a quick sketch of them sitting at the table," Kastanek said.

Zikmund's
"Czech Dancing Couple"
design quickly
became such
a crowd favorite
that it was adopted as Wiber's
logo.

Kastanek said she believes the artwork stood out to people because dancing is such an integral part of Czech culture and the Dancing Couple features both a man and a woman. Additionally, Zikmund took the time to ensure the subject's clothes reflected Czech heritage.

Joe Vosoba, the last living founder of Wilber Czech Days, said the Dancing Couple design typifies the Czechs.

"The Czechs are generally happy people, they like to dance, they like music, they like good food and they like good beer," he said. "So, it kind of expresses one of the good things about the Czech people."

Zikmund died in 1975, and her daughters later gave the Wilber Czechs the legal right to

own and register the design. Kastanek said Zikmund's daughters did this free of charge and were simply honored to see it used.

"Art just came naturally to Liz," Vosoba said. "For these designs, she did a lot of research in libraries to find authentic designs, and she left it as a gift for the Wilber Czechs."

Many of her designs are on dis-

play at the Wilber Czech Museum, and lots of Wilber businesses had shutters adorned with Zikmund's Czech designs in the past, Kathy of Joe Vosoba, said.

Vosoba, wife of Joe Vosoba, said.
She said Zikmund and her
husband, Adrian, were very

the Wilber Czech community and helped a lot with parades and other Czech activities.

active in the early days of

Joe Vosoba said Zikmund's generous contributions are a shining example of what makes

Wilber and its Czech history so special.

"Wilber is
the only place in
America where their
population is 2,000
and every year they
bring in thousands,
50,000 or more,
and it's all done with
volunteers," he said.
"That's the crucial part
of it. There's no place in
America that does these
things with volunteers
except Wilber, Nebraska."

COURTESY IMAGE
Elizabeth "Liz" Zikmund's iconic "Czech
Dancing Couple"
design has become a
Wilber staple.









First State Realty
Broker
402-792-2820

novakauctionservice.com



Home isn't a location, it's a feeling



It's the people, places and opportunities you'll find across our campus locations. And the flexibility and support you receive as you earn your bachelor's degree on your time.

Come see why Doane is home to students eager to grow and lead — like you.

Immerse yourself as a full-time student on our Crete campus or balance work, family and education and attend courses in Lincoln or online.

Crete student experience

- 23 intercollegiate athletic teams
- 7 vocal and instrumental ensembles
- 30+ clubs and organizations
- Undergraduate research opportunities
- Newly renovated dinning hall coming August 2024

Flexible student experience

- 8-week terms
- Hybrid classes
- 1:1 connections with professors
- Professional peer interactions
- Convenient course schedules



Doane Theater's 'A Bright New Boise

Homecoming October 19, 2024

We Build Leaders Symposium January 22, 2025 Accepted Student Visit Days

March 21, 2025 April 4, 2025

Sophomore/Junior Day April 4, 2025

Sign up for visit day events:

doane.edu/visit | 402.826.6767

Candidates

Andrea Kobylkova

Illinois Czech-Slovak Queen Parent: Petra Cilja-

kova

Hometown: Lake In The Hills, Illinois

Talent: Oratory **Sponsor:** United Moravian Societies

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I want to be Miss Czech Slovak US because it is a way of representing our culture and keeping it alive in places other than Slovak and Czech Republic. It is a way to show the younger generation that they should be proud of their roots and where they come from no matter where they were born.



Andrea Kobylkova

Future goals: To graduate high school and then continue her education to find her career.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activity: She was a proud 2023 graduate of the Slovak Academy of Chicago.

Little Sister: Ayla Vavra

Katie Kostelnik

Texas

Czech-Slovak Queen

Parent: Jennifer Loudon Hometown: Halletts-

ville, Texas

Talent: Oratory

Sponsor: Czech Heritage

Society of Texas

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I want to be the next Miss Czech-Slovak US to celebrate and raise awareness for my Czech heritage. As a direct descendant of Czech heritage, it is my duty as a member of my generation to continue the knowledge of our ancestry, not only in my community and state but across our nation.

During my reign as Miss Texas Czech-Slovak queen, I have been astonished to learn how vast and numerous our Czech ancestry reaches around the United States. I want to raise aware-



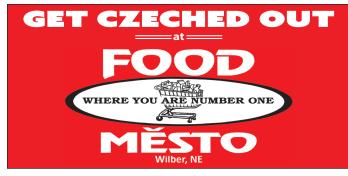
Katie Kostelnik

ness, particularly among young people, so our Czech heritage and values live on in the future.

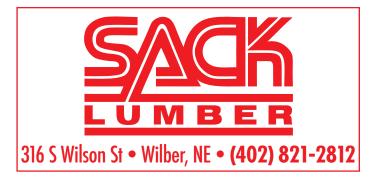
Future goals: To earn a degree in marketing.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activities: She recently began singing the Czech, Slovak and US national anthems at local meetings and events.

Little Sister: Evelyn Ourecky









63rd Annual WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Theme: Together We Can

Pre-Festival Celebration Thursday, August 1

7:10 p.m.	Legion Bingo - All ages 25¢ per card	3rd & Wilson
7:30-11:30 p.m.	Hotel Wilber	
7:30-11:30 p.m.	Angie Kriz and the Polkatoons	
	Featuring the Wilber Czech Dancers at Hotel Wilber at 7:30 p.m.	
	Special appearance by Wilber-Clatonia Alumni Band	

Friday, August 2

	. .		_
	1 p.m.	Vendors Open for Business.	Downtown
	1-3 p.m.	Czech Bingo	Czech Cultural Center
9	1-9 p.m.	Art Show	
	2-5 p.m.	Costume / Accordion Exhibit	Kuncl Funeral Home
	3-4 p.m.	Czech Sing-a-long	Czech Cultural Center
	2-5 p.m. 3-4 p.m. 4 p.m.	Memories of Christine Janda by June Kucera	Czech Cultural Center
		Accordion Jamboree	Sokol Hall
М	5-6:30 p.m. 5-8 p.m. 5-11 p.m.	Red Raven Orchestra	
7	5-11 p.m.	Gary Moore Amusements	3rd & Harris Street
3	6:15 p.m.	Wilber Alumni Dancers	Bandstand
H	6:15 p.m. 6:30 p.m.	Community Awards	Bandstand
	7 p.m.	Children's Parade	
	7-11 p.m.	Dan Bruha Band	
	8-9:30 p.m.	Wilber Czech Dancers	Outdoor Theater
	8-11 p.m.	Legion Bingo - All ages. 25¢ per card	3rd & Wilson
	■ 8 p.m.	Gold Star Martial Arts	Bandstand
9	8 p.m. 8-12 p.m.	Custom 20 Band	Beer Garden, Wil-Bol Lanes
ā,	8 p.mClose	Barry Boyce Band, Omaha, NE	Hotel Wilber
	9-12 p.m.	Leo Lonnie Trio	Fox Hole
	9:30 p.m.	Tales of the Czechs, Historical Production	Outdoor Theater



Call the team at Friend Fertilizer today!

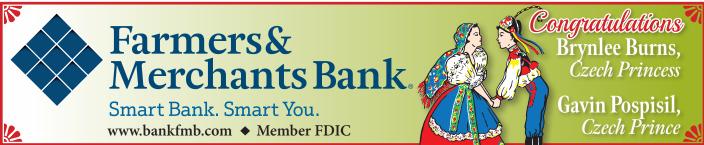
Friend Fertilizer, Inc.

102 N. Chestnut, Friend

402-947-2681 · www.friendfert.com









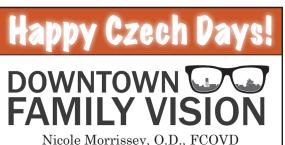
63rd Annual WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Theme: Together We Can

Saturday, August 3

	I	Saturday, mugust c	
Ω.	7:30 a.m.	Duck & Dumpling Run	
	8 a.m.	Sand Volleyball Tournament (Saturday only)	Legion Park
	9 a.m9 p.m.	Art Show	Czech Cultural Center
	9-1 p.m.	Costume / Accordion Exhibit	Kuncl Funeral Home
	9:30-12:30 p.m.	Czech Festival Show & Shine For info gina@kgbodyshop.com	In Front of Dvoracek Library
. X.	10 a.m.	Czech Heritage Demonstration, Program on King Wence	slaus,
		Rachel Taylor	
201	10-11:30 a.m.	Accordion Jamboree	
	10 a.m5 p.m.	Quilt Show	Extension Office
	11:15 a.m.	Wilber Czech Dancers	Bandstand
-	11:30 a.m.	Czechland Trio	T.J. Sokol Hall
	Noon-11 p.m.	Gary Moore Amusements	3rd & Harris Street
	Noon	Czech Heritage Demonstration, Garlic Soup or known as	Hangover Soup,
W.		Kris Linder	
	12:15 p.m.	Introductions-Czech Queens	
	1 p.m.	Flag-Raising Ceremony	
ж.		American Legion Post No. 101 & Wilber-Clatonia H	
	2 p.m.	PARADE	Together We Can
Ω.		Sponsored by Kalkwarf & Smith Law Office LLC	
مينت	3:15 p.m.	Program	Outdoor Theater
	I	Introductions by Nebraska Czechs of Wilber President Ra	
		Mayor Roger Chrans and special guests throughout the a	
	3:30-5 p.m.	Talent Contest	
	4-5 p.m.	Concert Milligan Brass Band	
W.	4-7 p.m.	Costume / Accordion Exhibit	
	4-8 p.m.	Czechlanders , Grand Island, NE	
	4 p.m.	18th Annual Bohemian Tractor Pull	3rd & School St.





Nicole Morrissey, O.D., FCOVD

220 W. 3rd • Wilber • 402-821-2008







Vero's Tax Service LLC

Veronica Ortiz | Business Owner 1005 East Hwy 33 Suite #2 Crete, NE 68333 402-826-3630 vero.ortizdm@gmail.com



8

63rd Annual WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Theme: Together We Can

Continued Saturday, August 3

	,	
4 p.m.	Stein Holding Contest	Fox Hole
5 p.m.	W-C Alumni Band Concert	Sokol Hall
5-5:15 p.m.	Talent by Wilber Czech Queen, Prince & Princess	Outdoor Theater
5-8 p.m.	Brad Husak Combo	Fox Hole
5:15-6:15 p.m.	Wilber Sr. & Jr. Czech Dancers/Beseda	Outdoor Theater
6-11 p.m.	Legion Bingo - All ages. 25¢ per card	3rd & Wilson
7-11 p.m.	Band: Mark Vyhlidal	T.J. Sokol Hall
7 p.m.	Miss Czech-Slovak U.S. Pageant	Outdoor Theater
8 p.mClose	Barry Boyce Band, Omaha, NE	Hotel Wilber
8 p.m12 a.m.	Live Entertainment - Ken Siebe	Legion Park Building
8 p.m12 a.m.	City Limit Band	Beer Garden, Wil-Bol Lanes
9 p.m.	Tales of the Czechs, Historical Production	Outdoor Theater
9-12 pm.	Leo Lonnie Trio	Fox Hole

Sunday, August 4

	_
Breakfast	Catholic Church
Community Worship	Outdoor Theater
Costume / Accordion Exhibit	
Art Show	Czech Cultural Center
Motorcycle Show	Food Mesto
Accordion Jamboree	
Czech Heritage Demonstration, Cimbal Band	
Horňácká cimbálová muzika Marka Potešila	Czech Cultural Center
Quilt Show	Extension Office
Wilber Czech Dancers	Bandstand
Czechland Trio	TJ Sokol Hall
Czech Heritage Demonstration, Poppy Seed Pizza.	

Carmelee Tuma and Lorelei Edwards......Czech Cultural Center



7:15-11:15 a.m. 8:15 a.m. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 10-11:30 a.m.

10 a.m.-5 p.m. 11:15 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Noon







1FSB.BANK 402.821.2241



63rd Annual WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

Theme: Together We Can

Continued Sunday, August 4

		bullady, 1145450	•
X	Noon- 3 p.m.	Lenny "Trey" Blecha Trio	Fox Hole
20.0	12:15 p.m.	Introductions-Czech Queens	Bandstand
400	Noon-5 p.m.	Gary Moore Amusements	3rd & Harris Street
Ω	1 p.m.	Flag-Raising Ceremony	Post Office
		American Legion Post No. 101 & Wilber-Clatonia H.S. Band	d
30 0	2 p.m.	PARADE	Together We Can
8 6 - 1		Sponsored by Kalkwarf & Smith Law Office LLC	
	4 p.m.	Cornhole Tournament	Food Mesto
X1.		To Preregister call 402-418-0508 or 402-217-7547	
20.0	4-5 p.m.	Concert: Milligan Brass Band	Sokol Hall
* **	4-6 p.m.	Barry Boyce Band	Fox Hole
0	4-6 p.m.	Costume / Accordion Exhibit	. Kuncl Funeral Home
i ka	4-8 p.m.	Angie Kriz Band, Papillion	
X 1.	4:30 p.m.	Program	Outdoor Theater
8 6 - 1		Introductions by Nebraska Czechs of Wilber President Randy Ko	zeal;
		Mayor Roger Chrans and special guests throughout the afternoor	
X1.	4:45-5:45 p.m.	Wilber Jr. & Sr. Czech Dancers/Beseda	
20.0	5 p.m.	Kolače Eating Contest	Bandstand
400	5:45-6:15 p.m.	Music by Sue & Friends	
Ω	6 p.m.	Wilber Chamber of Commerce Drawing	Bandstand
	6-8 p.m.	Legion Bingo	
7 00	6:30-7 p.m.	Dance ContestOutdoor Theater, Music by Maure	
10	7-11 p.m.	Kenny Shuda Band	
	7 p.m.	Miss Czech-Slovak U.S. Pageant	
X	9 p.m.	Miss Czech-Slovak U.S Queen Reception	T.J. Sokol



for the '24-'25 Season www.cretesdancecompany.com Tamara Reiber, Tayler Stewart.

Owner (402) 430-6086 Tayler Stewart, Director (402) 430-8647

STUDIO LOCATION: 136 W 13th • Crete, NE 68333



*Water Softeners * Specialty Systems *RO Systems
*New Sales, Installation or No-Contract Monthly Rentals

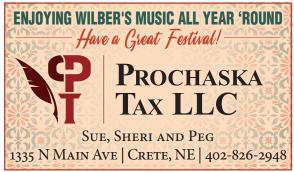
WE SERVICE & REPAIR

MOST BRANDS OF EQUIPMENT!



Call or Text (402) 560-2901 • watertreatmentpros.com







Map of WILBER. NEBRASKA Wilber Care Center ★ St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church E. County Rd. Hickory St. Court (103) Railroad Ash St. Franklin Elm St. S ŝ Š. Schoo 1st St Court Main 1st St. Evangelical Lutheran 2nd St Saline County Court House 2nd St. Church 74 m 🛣 9 3rd St. $\overline{41}$ 41 3rd St. Kuncl Funeral Home * OD 🕹 🗯 000 Memorial Library T.J. Sokol Hall * 4th St 4th St. United ★ Keystone St. Rescue Methodist Š Š 5th St. 5th St. Pool Railroad East Ճ → Outdoor → Circle Shimerda St **8**1 6th St. W 6th St. š š 7th St. 7th St. School 3 Harris Wilson ŝ Franklin 9 8th St. 8th St. 9th St. #{# RV DUMP STATION * ★ Saline County Sheriff's Office Wilber-Clatonia **Public Schools** Legion Viemorial Memor Park Main Louis-Milan Post 101 Building ★ (103)m W. Legion Memorial Dr.

These businesses and locations of interest are indicated on the map with a star:

American Legion Louis-Milan Post 101 Building (in the Legion Memorial Park) - 310 W. Legion Memorial Dr.

Legion Memorial Park - South on School St. **Dvoracek Memorial Library** - 419 W. 3rd St.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church - 204 S. School St.

Hotel Wilber - 203 S. Wilson St. Kuncl Funeral Home - 607 W. 3rd St

Outdoor Theater - 510 S. Wilson St.

Post Office - 224 W. 3rd St.

Saline County Court House - 215 S. Court St.

Sheriff's Office - 911 S. Main St.

St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church - 501 N. Wilson St.

T.J. Sokol Hall - 317 S. Wilson St. United Methodist Church - 215 W. 4th St.

Wilber Care Center - 611 N. Main St.
Wilber-Clatonia Public Schools - 900 S. Franklin St.

Wilber Czech Museum - 102 W. 3rd St.

Wilber Fire & Rescue/First Aid - 401 S. Main St.

Wilber Pool - 500 S. Wilson St

to 8th St.)

These businesses and locations of interest are indicated on the map with a corresponding number:

- 1. Bandstand & Information/Registration Booth Corner of 3rd St. & Wilson St.
- 2. Czech Cultural Center 110 W. 3rd St.
- 3. Wilber Czech Craft Shop 216 W. 3rd St.
- 4. Saline County Extension Office (Quilt Show) 306 W. 3rd St.
- 5. American Legion Downtown Building 415 S. Main St.
- 6. Food Mesto (grocery store) 319 W. 3rd St.
- 7. Shop Qwik (gas station/convenience store) 324 W. 3rd St.
- Casey's General Store (gas station/convenience store) 521
 S. Main St.

9. Farmers Cooperative (gas station) - 216 E. 3rd St.
Food & Vendor Courts - Indicated in Light Red (on 3rd St. from
School St. to Main St. and on Wilson St. from 2nd St. to 5th St.)
Parade Route - Indicated by Black Arrows (starts are the Legior
Memorial Park, north to 3rd St., east to Main St. and back south

Port-A-Potties - Indicated by Bath Room Icons and are located at the following locations:

- 211 S. Wilson St.
- 224 W. 3rd St. (Harris St.)
- 316 S. Wilson St.
- 6th & Main St.
- 219 W. 3rd St.
- 319 W. 3rd St.
- 419 W. 3rd St., Dvoracek Memorial Library for the Children's Parade Friday evening, then moved to Legion Memorial Park by the Volleyball Court
- 6th & School St.
- Parking Lot at Wilber-Clatonia Public Schools, 900 S. Franklin

Handicap Parking – Indicated by Handicapped Icons and located at the following locations:

- Parking lot on the east side of S. Main St., between 3rd St. and 4th St.
- Parking lot of the Dvoracek Memorial Library, 419 W. 3rd St.









From home buying, to saving for college, to maintaining an agriculture operation, our professional bankers can help put your financial goals in motion.

CHECKING | SAVINGS | BUSINESS **LENDING | MORTGAGE**



Beatrice | Blue Springs | Clatonia | Cortland

security1stbank.com



NMLS#505011





The Wilber Hotel has been a fixture of the town since 1895.

FHO 103 BT AINT HAUSINIAIN/WF

Wilber Hotel: New management, same traditions

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN

Scireporter@sewardindependent.com

Although the Wilber Hotel is under new management, its long-standing Czech Days traditions will remain.

Melissa Smith took over the hotel in March and said she loves interacting with the community through events like this.

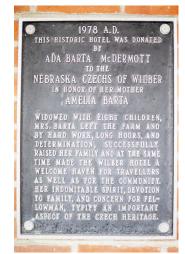
The hotel will host its annual duck and dumpling dinner run by volunteers throughout Czech Days. Attendees will pay at the door, choose between duck, pork or polish for their meat dish and have their plates filled. They will have sides of dumplings, rye

"With my husband's family being Czech, it's kind of interesting to know more about the different foods. We've found several recipe books here in the hotel from years and years and years ago that are very interesting. Just the choices of flavors and things that they put together are a lot different than even anything that you find researching Czech foods online."

Nicole Jasper, Wilber Hotel employee

bread, a kolache and the choice between green beans or sauerkraut.

Diners can eat anywhere that is open in the hotel or in the beer garden. "We're trying to keep all of the old traditions alive," Smith said. "If we wouldn't have done (the dinner), I don't think anybody else was going to do it. I know



that was important to the town to keep that tradition alive, so we decided we were going to go ahead and try our hand at it this year."

See Hotel, page 16

Continued from page 15

The meal will be served from Friday, Aug. 2, to Sunday, Aug. 4, or until the food is gone. Smith said, based on past years, it is common for the hotel to run out of food before Sunday. The price of the meal has not yet been determined because it will depend on meat prices at the time of purchase.

Nicole Jasper, parttime worker at the hotel, will head up the duck and dumpling dinner effort.

She said she is looking forward to being immersed in the experience of the dinner and learning more about Czech recipes. Smith revamped the kitchen upon taking over the hotel, which Jasper said has also been a great bonus.

"With my husband's family being Czech, it's kind of interesting to know more about the different foods," Jasper said. "We've found several recipe books here in the hotel from years and years and years ago that are very interesting.

"Just the choices of flavors and things that they put together are a lot different than even anything that you find researching Czech foods online."

The hotel bar, called the Czech Cellar Bar and Lounge, is open just in time for Czech Days. Smith said she knows someone has always tried to make sure the cellar was open during Czech Days in the past, so she felt it was important to get it up and running under her liquor license in time for the festivities.

The cellar will feature a full bar, air conditioning



and accept cash and card on Czech Days.

Smith said, as long as a staff member is available, visitors will be welcome to go on guided tours of the permitted areas of the hotel, which was built in 1895.

Smith said the hotel burned down a couple of times over the years and Wilber rebuilt it to be a little bigger each time.

The Barta family donated the hotel to the Nebraska Czechs of Wilber in 1978, and the organization renovated it into more of a bed-and-breakfast feel.

"It was renovated but they kept a lot of the original pieces in the hotel so everything has been kept up really nice," Smith said. "Basically, when you walk in the door, it's like stepping back in time. There's a lot of stuff like history of different visitors to the area on the walls, and I know a lot of people like to read



The hotel features many items from its long and rich history.

that."

As usual, the hotel will host all of the Czech queens throughout the celebration, so all of its rooms will be full.

The hotel coffee shop, Ambition Coffee, will be open in the morning with limited hours during Czech Days.

Smith said she has enjoyed growing closer with the community since starting running the hotel and is

looking forward to meeting all of the people who visit it during Czech Days. She has visited the beer garden during past Czech Days but has not gone inside, so she said she is excited to see what it is like.

"I'm pretty interested this year to see how many people are actually going to show up and be at the hotel and how important the hotel actually is to the community," she said.

Crete's 10th Annual **Sat., Oct. 5 – Sun., Oct. 6** Food Vendors Demonstrations Carnival Games Farmyard Petting Zoo Car Show N Shine Kid & Pet Parade Craft Show Zipline Activities Weekend!

Paid for in part by the Saline County Tourism Fund

Czech out this form of bingo

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN

scireporter@sewardindependent.com

Czech bingo, an educational tradition that puts a cultural twist on a classic game, will return as a highlight of Czech Days this year on Friday, Aug. 9, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Cultural Center.

Kelly Gifford started leading Czech bingo in place of her late mother, Nancy Linhart, in 2018. Linhart had started the tradition over a decade prior and the family had worked together to create the game.

Gwen Anderson-Beck has attended the free event with her daughter, Anna, every year during Czech Days since 2007 when it was held at the museum. She said she remembers Linhart explaining how she, Gifford and Gifford's daughter made the Czech bingo cards together as a family during a particularly long winter.

In Czech bingo, the letters across the top of the bingo cards spell "CZECH" instead of "BINGO," and the squares contain words, such as "dumpling," "duck" or "potato," written in English and in Czech. Anderson said cards with the words "potato" and "ice cream" are lucky for her.

After pulling a letter and word combination, Gifford announces the word in English, and "Growing up and going out to my grandparents, we would pick up on some of those Czech words. Some of them we would mistakenly hear when grandpa was a little upset and we just had to figure out what those meant on our own."

Czech bingo leader Kelly Gifford

John Kastanek, who has a strong command of the Czech pronunciations, reads it in Czech.

"Growing up and going out to my grandparents, we would pick up on some of those Czech words," Gifford said. "Some of them we would mistakenly hear when grandpa was a little upset and we just had to figure out what those meant on our own."

Gifford and Kastanek often ask the bingo players to repeat the words in Czech to get practice.

Anderson-Beck, who is not Czech but enjoys learning about the culture, said the event allows attendees to have fun, spend time with friends and learn some Czech at the same time.

"I've picked up some words over the years, and it's kind of enjoyable remembering a couple of words from what I learned Czech bingo," she said.

Sometimes, players win Czech bingo the same way they would win in regular Bingo, by marking off spaces in a straight line. Other times, Gifford switches things up by having them make a heart shape, an "x" shape or the letters in the word "Czech." They end the event with a blackout game.

Anderson-Beck said she enjoys the variety of prizes the event has to offer, which range from snacks and drinks to candles, decks of cards, potholders and notebooks. Everyone typically walks out with a prize, and Gifford said the snacks are always a fan favorite.

"It's a nice variety of different things that you wouldn't get at a regular bingo when you win money," Anderson-Beck said.

Anderson-Beck said Kastanek, Gifford and event helper Pat Carpenter are always very friendly and welcoming to everyone who attends. People can come and go throughout the event as they wish, and the room, which fits about 40-50 people, typically fills up before it is over. "I like just watching people play and we get a lot of the same people come back and they usually sit in the same seats that they always sit in, so it's fun to see the people come back every year," Gifford said.

As usual, this year's event will be followed by the Czech sing-a-long. At the sing-a-long, local band members will perform the songs, and audience members will receive lyrics to follow

Linhart started planning the addition of the sing-a-long in 2018 but died before that year's Czech Days. So, Gifford carries on the tradition for her. Linhart also started Chat with the Czech and the Czech heritage demonstrations.

Gifford said she enjoys being able to carry on the traditions her mother started.

"I'm keeping up that Czech heritage because my ancestors did come from the Czech Republic," she said. "My mom and my uncle growing up didn't know English until when they went to school. They only spoke Czech at home because it was kind of a family home.

Their grandparents lived there, their parents and then them on the farmstead. At home, they would speak Czech, and in school, they had to learn English."



Candidates

Camille Kotouc

Nebraska Czech-Slovak Queen Parents: John and

Wende Kotouc

Hometown: Omaha Talent: Oratory Sponsor: Nebraska Czechs, Inc.

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I want to serve as Miss Czech-Slovak US because my Slavic heritage has become an indelible part of my identity and my relationship with the international community posits me to be an effective international ambassador.

As I propel forward, I'm committed to preserving and promoting my Czech heritage, whether through



Camille Kotouc

everyday interactions with neighbors, classmates, teachers, Slavic community members, or through exciting new policy projects with the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. I loved collaborating with Czech Government members on policy projects like the Council of the Future of Europe (COFE) and exploring energy autonomy in the Czech Republic during its green transition, and managing diplomatic relationships between Czechia and Taiwan.

These experiences equip me with effective diplomacy and pertinent avenues to make an impact. In January, I was granted the opportunity to attend Strakova Akademie in Prague to meet with Jacob Janek, my commissioner and European Policy Officer in the Section for European Affairs. I was also granted access to the Cernin Palace under the leadership of Ivan Dubovicky in 2022. I'm

empowered by history that constitutes our independence, and stories that make Czech and Slovak heritage unreplicable and resilient.

I'd be honored to serve as Queen because I'm empowered by the history of my ancestors, and eager to continue preserving and promoting Czech relationships, both in the community and at the transnational level.

Future goals: To attend law school following her undergraduate degree.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activities: She is entering her third year of Czech language collegiate studies.

Little Sister: Libby Stohs



Weber Feed Yards

1173 State Hwy. 33 • Dorchester

402-946-4551







Angie Murray-Pate & Associates, LLC
1290 Quince St
Crete, NE 68333
angie-murray-pate-associates-mail@amfam.com



PHOTOS BY AMY HAUSMAN/WR

Volunteers gather to make dumplings in the T.J. Sokol Hall for Czech Days. From left: Cheri Birkett, Kay Sukovaty, Lumir Sukovaty, Cheri Mager, Dave Packer, Kelsey Togstad and Tammy Packer. Not pictured: Bob Mager, Barb Petracek and Leon Slama.

The kneaded tradition

BY AMY HAUSMAN amy@friendsentinel.com

For the last 10 years, members of the T.J. Sokol Hall made their way downstairs to the basement kitchen of the hall two weeks before the Czech Days Festival with 82 lbs. of potato flakes, a 100 lbs. of flour, half a gallon of oil, two containers of salt and approximately 40 dozen eggs.

That is what it takes to make 3,000 dumplings, which are served within two and half days during the festival weekend.

That number had jumped dramatically from when the T.J. Sokol Hall made their first batch of 500

dumplings ten years ago. Now, each year, the hall sells out.

"The first thing we do is get the kettles going," Kay Sukovaty said. After the five kettles are lit and boiling, the volunteers start on mixing the dough.

Dumplings are a mixture of potato flakes, flour, eggs, water and salt. The mixture is beat together in an industrial mixer. Then six volunteers plop the dough on the table and get to the real work of rolling and cutting the dumplings.

"We measure each dumpling with a dowel to make sure they are all the same size," Tammy Packer said. "We do not want anyone to worry about size."

Dave Packer and Lumir Sukovaty man the kettles and boil each cut dumpling for 10 minutes. The dumplings are then cooled and oiled before being placed in the freezer.

"When they start to float, they are done," Dave Packer said. "It is not rocket science, but I always have been assigned the kettles. It does get a little warm without having AC in the basement."

The day before the festival begins on Aug. 2, the volunteers will begin thawing and unpacking an entire deep freezer of dumplings and warming them in roasters.

The T.J. Sokol Hall will be open

See Dumplings, page 21

Dumplings







Continued from page 20

Friday, Aug. 2 at 4 p.m. to midnight. They will reopen on Saturday and Sunday at 9 a.m and begin serving meals, including dumplings, at 10 a.m.

This year's dumpling crew included the hall's fearless leader Leon Slama, Barb Petracek, Tammy Packer, Dave Packer, Kelsey Togstad, Cheri Mager, Cheri Birkett, Kay Sukovaty, Lumir Sukovaty and Bob Mager.













402-826-2197 cretelumberandfarmsupply.com W. Hwy 33 • Crete, NE 68333





Kuncl FUNERAL HOME

Being a family-owned firm, we take great pride in providing our families with the highest level of personal attention.
Whether you are interested in traditional services, cremation, pre-planning, or just exploring options available to you, we are available to help.

Jeffrey R. Kuncl, Funeral Director

402.821.3275

402.826.5178

Serving Crete and the surrounding area since 1907

Crete • Wilber • Western

-Vítáme Vás-

First Tri-County Bank

Two Locations To Serve You:

105 Main St., Swanton, NE (402) 448-2285

402 E. Main St., Plymouth, NE (402) 656-3885

We Are Here For All Your Banking Needs

Member FDIC



Ready, set ... pull!

Bohemian Tractor Pull returns for 18th year

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN

scireporter@sewardindependent.com

Get ready to pull your team to the finish line at this year's 18th annual Bohemian Tractor Pull.

The pull will be Saturday, Aug. 3, at 4 p.m. during Wilber Czech Days and is put on by the Wilber-Clatonia Future Farmers of America Alumni and spearheaded by the Pospisil family.

There is an entry fee of \$10 per four-person team, and the money raised goes toward the W-C FFA Alumni. The alumni use that money to provide kids with scholarships and help pay for FFA students to get their FFA jackets, attend competitions and more.

Sandy Koll has been participating in the pull for several years and said she was drawn to the activity simply because it sounded like a fun time.

The event is done in teams, which are made up of four people competing against other teams to determine who can pull a tractor for 100 feet the fastest. Teams of three are allowed if a team cannot find another player. Koll said she remembers a man doing the pull by himself one year.

At the pull, there are four ropes tied to the front of the tractor and everyone pulls one rope. The two middle ropes are longer so the team members are not shoulder-to-shoulder when pulling, which Koll said provides for a nice setup in which people do not have to worry about tripping over one another.

"Most people just put (the ropes) over their shoulders and then barrel forward," said WC FFA Alumni member Lynette Pospisil. "It's right after the parade, and it's fun and it's



FILE PHOTO

Participants from the 2023 Bohemian Tractor Pull pose with their ribbons in front of the tractor.

something to experience. If not, it's always fun and thrilling to watch."

Pospisil suggests participants wear tennis shoes or closed-toed shoes.

Koll said although she does not know of anyone who trains in preparation for the event, there are a couple of techniques to it that are helpful to know.

"You don't want to get slack on the line from one of the people, and you want to try to keep your rope tight and not trip over it," she said. "You want to stay a distance away from it, you know, so that you don't have too much rope in front of you. You can get a little technical about it if you want to."

Koll said the pull is not too difficult with the help of teammates. About 10 teams usually take part in it, and she has seen all ages participate. There is a men's division, women's division, mixed division, 65 and older division and a younger

division.

"It takes a little bit to get it going but then once you get it the tires rotating, you can get it going pretty good," she said. "Usually, there's a group of older ladies that do it, and I think they normally beat us."

Pospisil said the hardest part is getting the tractor to start rolling.

"Just try your best," she said.
"Start out strong, then once you get the tractor rolling, just keep going.
Don't look back, don't hesitate."

Pospisil said her favorite part of the event, which is conducted on the west side of Food Mesto, is watching people pull a tractor for the first time. She said many participants have never heard of tractor pulling before and are intrigued when they walk past and see it happening, so they ask to sign up.

"It's fun to see, especially the outof-towners, coming in and trying to do it for the first time," she said.

Candidates

Katherine McGee

Missouri Czech-Slovak Queen

Parent: Nicole McGee
Hometown: Kansas City, Mis-

souri

Talent: Oratory

Sponsor: Miss Czech Slovak Mis-

souri

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

Winning the title of Miss Czech-Slovak would be a tribute to my family history as well as providing me with an even deeper connection to the larger Slavic Community.

I would be honored to be Miss Czech-Slovak US, as it



Katherine McGee

would provide a platform for me to promote cultural heritage and educate people of all backgrounds on the history and richness of the Slavic people.

My ancestors immigrated to the United States with nothing and through hard work and dedication, were able to create successful and happy lives for themselves, and all that have come after them.

I understand that this title requires hard work and dedication, and I am prepared for this challenge because I would be living out two important characteristics I inherited from my Slavic roots.

Future goals: To continue her education.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activities: She has been a member of her local ethnic dance troop for 10 years.

Little Sister: Krislin Ourecky



Edward Jones[®]

> edwardjones.com | Member SIPC

Build the future of your dreams with us

Let's start building the future today.

At Edward Jones, we're in it for the long haul. We'll be with you every step of the way as you celebrate life's biggest milestones. Let us help you work toward them.



Brent S Cole Financial Advisor 1132 Main Ave Crete, NE 68333 402-826-5104



Eric Thornburg Financial Advisor 975 E Hwy 33, Ste 1 Crete, NE 68333 402-826-4719





Preston Meints Financial Advisor 511 2nd St, Ste D Friend, NE 68359 402-947-2104



Tom Sorensen Financial Advisor 1132 Main Ave Crete, NE 68333 402-826-5104

MKT-5894P-A AECSPAD

Wilber's accordion tradition thrives

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN

scireporter@sewardindependent.com

The accordion holds a special place in the history of the Czech Republic and is cemented in Wilber's culture of Czech appreciation.

Learning and continuing to play the accordion is one way some Wilber residents keep the Czech musical traditions alive. Kelly Homolka, who helps lead the Wilber-Clatonia Czech Alumni Band, learned the accordion as he grew up in Wilber.

He said he enjoys passing on the knowledge and love of Czech music.

"It's something I think that (the Czechs) brought over with them when they immigrated here to the United States," he said. "Accordions are in most bands – I mean, different regions, probably not as much – but here in the Midwest, a lot of bands have accordions."

Homolka said, as with most things, learning the accordion is not particularly difficult, it just takes a lot of practice. He said he enjoys watching kids try to pick up the lifetime skill.

"You're probably not going to play basketball when you're 85, but you



COURTESY PHOTO

Due to the rich Czech tradition learning accordion is a timeless tradition across the ages.

sure can still play an accordion," he said. "It's an art that everybody can enjoy and get together with friends and make some music."

An accordion is a wind instrument with folding bellows connecting two reed organs. Pushing or pulling the bellows faster makes a louder sound, while pushing or pulling them slower makes a softer sound.

Homolka said Czechs typically play a button accordion, also known as a diatonic, meaning pushing in and pulling out are two different notes.

Each row in an accordion is a different key. At Accordian Jam, the Czechs play F flat, D flat, E flat and A flat, he said.

Homolka helped teach accordion at this year's Czech camp and showed kids how to play Czech songs using those four rows.

"It's kind of fun to see the young ones take over the tradition that we all have playing," he said.

Czech Festival Children's Parade is Aug. 2

The annual Children's Parade during the Wilber Czech Festival will be Friday, Aug. 2, at 7 p.m. Categories are Best Czech-Dressed Girl; Best Czech-Dressed Boy, Bikes/Trikes/Wagons/Buggies, Miscellaneous (motorized and pets), Groups (three or more) and Floats.

Pre-register by calling Mary Homolka at (402) 826-7194 or Kay Sukovaty at (402) 821-2429. Leave name, category, age and phone number.

Judging will be done on the use of Czech colors of red, white and blue; Czech dress and the development



DOUG CARROLL/WR

Spectators rush for candy during the kids parade.

of this year's Czech Festival theme, "Together We Can." Parade assembly will be

Festival at 6 p.m. at the Dvoracek Ye Can." Memorial Library parking will be lot. The parade route will go east down Third Street starting at School Street and ending at Main Street. Be on time, as the parade will start immediately at 7 p.m.

Designated areas for line-up are: Boys and girls – brick road west of Library; bikes/trikes/wagons/buggies – library parking lot; floats – highway west of library; groups – street east of the courthouse; and miscellaneous – south of the library.

Parade results and prize money can be picked up at the information booth shortly after the parade.

Candidates

Ellaina Novak

Minnesota Czech-Slovak Queen

Parents: Gary and Tami Novak Hometown: Montgomery, Min-

nesota

Talent: Tap dance solo

Sponsor: Miss Czech-Slovak Min-

nesota Pageant

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

I would like to be Miss Czech-Slovak U.S. because I believe that sharing heritage and culture is very important.

Although I am still learning myself, I want to continue teaching others about my heritage and cul-



Ellaina Novak

ture. I initially wanted to start learning more about my heritage when I saw other girls wearing kroje and crowns. I want to be able to inspire others to want to learn more about

their heritage by having the opportunity to wear my kroj and crown.

One of the best parts is letting little girls try on my crown. Their faces light up when they get to wear a real princess crown. It makes my day. I love walking around Czech and Slovak festivals while wearing kroj and a crown because other people notice you and ask why you are wearing this dress and a crown.

I love explaining about the authentic Czech dresses and the opportunity that young ladies have to run in pageants and learn about their heritage.

Future goals: To become a nurse. **Spotlight Czech-Slovak activity:** She attended Culture Camp at Sokol Minnesota.

Little Sister: Harper Brahm





Candidates

Trinity Pesko

Wisconsin Czech-Slovak Queen

Parents: Jon and Sherry Pesko

Hometown: Phillips, Wisconsin

Talent: Vocal solo **Sponsor:** Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Festival

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

Representing my Czech and Slovak heritage as Miss Czech-Slovak US would be more than just an honor. It would give me the opportunity to continue the work I've started as Miss Czech-Slovak Wisconsin and take it to the next level.

I've reached tens of thousands of people through my travels and social media posts, and as Miss Czech-Slovak US, I hope to reach hundreds of thousands more. It is important to me to reach as many people as possible through my title and using social media has been a great help to reach people who may not attend heritage events, as well as keep the people I have met through my travels in the loop about my engagements and outreach.

The beauty of this title is getting to meet so many fabulous people, from little girls at polka dances who want to try on my crown, to grandparents and greatgrandparent at festivals who are so excited that a



Trinity Pesko

young person is passionate about their heritage and sharing it with others. I love to hear their stories and inspire them to learn more about their heritage and become more involved.

But the real treat is that through this organization, I am able to learn more about my heritage just as much as I am able to teach others. My work both learning about and promoting my heritage is far from over, and it would be a great honor to do it with the title of Miss Czech-Slovak US.

Future goals: To continue her career as an actor, singer, musician, teacher, and director.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activities: She performed as a ballet dancer during her youth at her hometown festival.

Little Sister: Olivia Kitt

Morgan Simoneau

Iowa
Czech-Slovak Queen
Parents: Michelle and
Jeff Simoneau

Hometown: Marion, Iowa

Talent: Alto sax solo **Sponsor:** Czech Heritage Foundation

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US?

My desire to be Miss Czech-Slovak US, acknowledges my aspiration to share my interests in Czech and Slovak culture; to reach out to those unfamiliar with the traditions and celebrate events hosted by those involved in the preservation of their heritage.

My objective is to focus on younger generations to highlight the benefits of knowing your ancestry and inspire them to become immersed in their heritage. Supporting the Czech Heritage Foundation and the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library, through the programs they provide to the community, is a great start.

Still, this title gives me a broader stage to attend other events across the United States and reach out to people who need to learn more about what this community offers. I want



Morgan Simoneau

to be an ambassador for the Czech community by providing a pen-pal program for students, to form connections with students abroad and to learn more about the Czech and Slovak cultures.

I have become highly aware of many traditions now unique to American Czechs and Slovaks, and I hope this program can bring back some traditions, which were lost over time.

Future goals: To obtain her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and work within the heating, ventilation and air conditioning industry.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak activities: She participated in the Czech Heritage Foundation's student exchange program.

Little Sister: Remington Maryska









Outgoing Royalty

Drew Hejna

Miss Czech-Slovak US 1st Runner-Up 2023-2024

Drew Hejna is the current Miss Czech-Slovak US 1st Runner-up. She is the daughter of Andrew and Erin Hejna of Tabor, South Dakota.

Drew is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in kinesiology and exercise science with a minor in coaching at the University of South Dakota. Aspiring to become a licensed Doctor of Physical



Drew Heina

Therapy, she envisions a future where she can positively impact lives through rehabilitation and exercise.

At last year's Miss Czech-Slovak US Pageant, Drew was awarded her current title and Miss Congeniality. Drew traveled thousands of miles throughout her incredible reign to celebrate and share her love and knowledge of her heritage. She has attended various events nationwide, participated in festivals and Kroje fashion shows, visited both the Czech and Slovak Embassies in Washington, DC., gave numerous educational presentations, and even judged other Czech and Slovak pageants.

Drew is honored and humbled to have been able to serve as Miss Czech-Slovak US 1st Runner-up this past year. She has continued to grow her love for her heritage. She plans to continue embracing it after she passes down her crown by staying actively involved in the Czech and Slovak communities, becoming a co-chairman of the South Dakota Royalty, and studying abroad at Charles University in Prague in the spring of 2025.

Little Sister: Emaline Rinaker















★ Bulk Tankwagon Service ★ Propane Gas and Diesel ★ Tire Sales ★ Custom Exhaust Work ★ Bottle Filling for Propane & Campers

402-826-2980



Brad L. Christian, FIC, LUTCF, CLU, CLTC Insurance & Investments

> 120 Washington Clatonia, NE 68328-0188

402-989-4795 888-988-4795

Outgoing Royalty

Destiny Hollingsworth

Miss Czech-Slovak US Queen 2023-2024

Destiny Hollingsworth is the daughter of Justin and Marianna Hollingsworth and was the representative of her home state of Texas at the 2023 Miss Czech-Slovak US Pageant.

Her Slovak heritage comes from her mother, who immigrated to the United States at the age of 23. Her mother was born in Štúrovo, Slovakia, which is in the Nitra region of Southern, Slovakia, and was raised in her ancestral town of Dol'any, Slovakia, which is in the Trnava region of Western Slovakia.

Destiny currently attends college in Texas. After she completes her prerequisite courses, she plans to attend the University of Texas Health-Science Center nursing school to attain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, with the ultimate goal of becoming a Pediatrician.

Destiny has been active in her cultural celebrations since the age of 5. She began by singing and dancing with a Bexar County Chapter Czech Heritage Society of Texas folk group her mother helped lead. She later began to assist at many heritage events, including participation in cleanup and setup, program development, emceeing, skit narration, singing the Czech, Slovak, and U.S. National anthems with her 2022 Little Sister, and more.

Destiny was blessed to grow up speaking Slovak with her mother. She has dual American and Slovakian citizenship and has



Destiny Hollingsworth

traveled to Slovakia and Czechia as often as she could, making for nine trips total. In addition to speaking the Slovak language, she actively practices cultural traditions, including cooking and baking traditional Czech and Slovak foods such as buchty and langoše, eating vianočné oblátky, and fried fish on Christmas Eve, learning Czech and Slovak songs, polka dancing, and regularly wearing kroje.

During the National pageant, Destiny modeled an authentic Slovakian kroj, from the town of Dol'any in the Western Slovakian region of Trnava. All of the materials that make up the kroj were obtained in Trnava, where the kroj itself was constructed. Destiny had the joy of traveling to Slovakia to design the kroj. Many of the pieces on the kroj are authentic family heirlooms, including the blouse laces (ruákvce), apron (zástera), petticoat (spodnica), collar bow (mašla), and collar (golierec). Some of these pieces were adjusted or created by seamstress Marta Schwarcova, who made the skirt (suknica), blouse

(rukavce), vest (lajblík), hair bow (mašla), and waist bow (mašla).

To honor her mother's Slovak ancestry and her father's Irish ancestry, Destiny's talent consisted of singing in Slovak, playing violin, and dancing an original Irish Jig to a karaoke version of a modern Slovak song "Ta ne" by Kristína Peláková. She was proud to perform a song she loves while creating a fusion of all of the elements that make up her cultural roots.

Destiny was overjoyed to have won the title of last year's Miss Czech-Slovak US, along with the kroj knowledge award, oratory award and talent runner-up award. She was absolutely ecstatic to take on this journey. During her reign, Destiny was able to begin and complete many exciting endeavors that included spreading her love for her culture, involving youth, and traveling the United States, along with other countries.

Throughout her National reign, Destiny attended over 30 events, festivals, and meetings, throughout the states of Texas, Illinois, South Dakota, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Washington D.C., and Kansas. In traveling, she made appearances at the Czech and Slovak Embassies in Washington D.C., the National Czech and Slovak Museum in Iowa, and much more.

Toward the end of her reign, Destiny was able to make a month-long visit to Czechia and Slovakia. She traveled to Prague, Kunovice, Dol'any, Michalovce, Ťahyňa, Košice, Žilina, Dolný Hričov, Rusovce, and Bratislava. Here, she made connections with Slovaks and Czechs through official

meetings with several organizations and businesses in Slovakia, along with official interviews with both Czech and Slovak news channels.

In total, she traveled over 27,000 miles as U.S. queen. Including both her Texas and U.S. reigns, she's traveled over 50,000 miles, attending 70 events. During her queenship, she was able to create a video demonstrating her experience at the pageant, two presentations describing the pageant, a pageant resources page, contact and event resources, dancing, singing and baking activities for children and adults, online language and cultural lessons with her royal court and is currently working on the establishment of an official Texas dance group.

Throughout her time as queen, she was able to participate in six interviews, some of which included KSAT news, TV Mistral, Televize tvs, Televiza Markíza, and more.

She is so grateful for the sponsors and donors who have helped her so tremendously along the way, especially the Czech Heritage Society of Texas. She is also extremely appreciative of her Texas Pageant Director, Kathy Podsednik, along with her family, namely her mother, Marianna, father, Justin, and sister, Natalie, in addition to the friends, and supporters who have all aided her every step of the wav.

This opportunity has filled her with gratitude, and she is so excited to crown the next queen at the pageant this August, and continue future involvement in the community she holds so dear.

Little Sister: Emilee Brueggemann

Outgoing Royalty

Lauren Luchetti

Miss Czech-Slovak US 2nd Runner-Up 2023-2024

Lauren Luchetti is the current Miss Czech-Slovak US 2nd Runner-Up 2023-2024. She is the daughter of Scott and Angela Luchetti of Downers Grove, Illinois.

For her talent, she performed a traditional Czech folk dance to an adaptation of the cymbal-style song Variation on East Slovak Karička by Štefan Čikoš. Lauren is a proud dual citizen of America and the Czech Republic and is half-Czech on her maternal side. Her maternal grandmother is from Strakonice, Czech Republic, and her grandfather is from Maňovice, Czech Republic.

After leaving the Czech Republic at the end of World War II, her grand-parents both spent time in refugee camps and various countries before ultimately ending up in the Chicagoland area where they met and had six children, one of which is Lauren's mother. Lauren traveled to the Czech Republic several times throughout her life to visit her family,



Lauren Luchetti

spending time in both of her grandparents' hometowns.

Lauren's kroj is an authentic, vintage Kyjovský kroj. This kroj is comprised of three layers of heavily starched petticoats underneath the red skirt. On top is the handstitched navy-blue apron which is lined with bobbin lace. The apron Lauren wears is over 100 years old. Intricate beadwork and hand-embroidery can be seen throughout the kroj. To complete the outfit. Lauren wears a flower wreath, which traditionally symbolized an unmarried woman.

Although Lauren is Czech on her mother's side, her father was raised by his aunt and uncle, and his aunt was 100 percent Czech. As a nod to her paternal side, Lauren wears garnet earrings, inherited from her greataunt Joyce. The matching garnet broach is proudly displayed on Lauren's Miss Czech-Slovak US 2nd Runner-Up sash.

In 2019, Lauren graduated Magna Cum Laude from North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, with a bachelor's degree in psychology. In 2024, Lauren received her master's degree in psychology from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. In 2025, she will receive a Ph.D. in industrial-organizational psychology with minors in social psychology and quantitative methods. Her research focuses on improving work experiences for individuals with disabilities.

This past year she coauthored two book chapters set to be published in 2024. Upon graduation, her career goal is to be a psychology professor at a college or university.

Throughout her reign,
Lauren traveled across
America and had the pleasure of meeting Czech and
Slovak people across the
United States. She traveled to events in Washington, DC, Oklahoma,
Missouri, Wisconsin and
of course, Illinois. After

her reign, she will have attended nearly 10 events in her home state of Illinois.

She had the pleasure of being invited to both the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, DC and the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chicago. Additionally, she will travel to the Czech Republic in July to visit her family.

Lauren had an incredible year that left her feeling proud to be part of such an amazing community. She thanks all those who celebrated this year alongside her and is thankful to the many people across the country working to preserve our heritage.

Although she will miss her Miss Czech-Slovak US 2nd Runner-Up title, she is confident that an incredible young lady will take her place, and, in the near future, she's excited about trading the title of Miss Czech-Slovak US 2nd Runner-Up for Doctor of Psychology.

Thank you to her family who supported her every step of the way and to the members of the United Moravian Societies who helped make this year possible.

Little Sister: Sidney Davis



BACK TO SCHOOL COMICS



Schedule HPV, Tdap, and Meningococcal vaccines at ———

CRETE: 402-826-7980 FRIEND: 402-947-2021 WILBER: 402-821-3293





Great home, life & auto rates for any budget.

Erin Vyhnalek Agent

1260 Quince Avenue Crete, NE 68333 Bus: 402-826-5000 www.go2erin.com

Se habla Español.







Surprisingly great rates await when you have options like bundling your home, life and auto insurance. Call me for a quote today.

Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.®

Individual premiums and budgets will vary by customer. All applicants subject to State Farm® underwriting requirements. Availability and amount of discounts and savings vary by state.



