



LA GRANGE, TEXAS

NÁŠ ČESKÝ ŽIVOT

“OUR CZECH LIFE”

(Centrum českého kulturního dědictví v Texasu)

FALL 2023

VOL 27 NUMBER 3



**HERITAGE
FEST 2023**



Dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the history, language, culture, and heritage of Texans of Czech ethnicity.

Náš Český Život "Our Czech Life"

TEXAS CZECH HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER

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Newsletter Policy: The purpose of Náš Český Život is to disseminate news of the development and activities of the center, as well as to publish material on the history, culture, and accomplishments of Texas Czechs. Náš Český Život does not involve itself in matters of a political nature.

Newsletter Address: All articles, photographs, advertising and correspondence should be directed to Retta Chandler or Janis Hrnecir, co-editors, P. O. Box 6, La Grange, Texas 78945 (979) 968-9399.

Articles: Anyone may submit articles, which will be accepted for inclusion as space permits and subject to review and editing as necessary. All articles must be typewritten. The publication is not responsible for the return of unsolicited material not submitted with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Ads: Contact the co-editors regarding advertising. Advertising Rates: We will accept limited advertising-only standard business card size (3 1/2" X 2") - \$20.00 per issue; Send camera-ready business cards to co-editors.

The Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center, Inc. does not endorse or guarantee the products or services that are advertised in this publication.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the TEXAS CZECH HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER, INC. is to provide a central facility for the preservation and promotion of the history, language, culture and heritage of individuals of Czech ethnicity who can trace their ancestry to the Czechs who immigrated from the present day Czech Republic or former Austria-Hungary (including Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Silesia), to honor those immigrants, and to operate exclusively for charitable, scientific, literary and educational purposes.

The goals of the TEXAS CZECH HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER, INC. are:

To educate the public about the past and present contributions and status of persons of Czech descent

To encourage the study and preservation of the Czech language, fine arts, music and dance

To provide for the preservation and exhibition of artifacts that are historically significant to the Czech people of Texas

To provide a library and archives for the collection and preservation of books, newspapers, periodicals, family histories, research material, photographs and all printed data of historical significance to the Czech people of Texas

To provide adequate space for gatherings, meetings and educational activities for the benefit of the Czech people of Texas

To encourage and promote a cultural exchange program between the Czech people of Texas and the citizens of the Czech Republic

To provide the public with updated information regarding Czech-related activities and historical sites in Texas, the United States and abroad.

You are invited to continue receiving the newsletter Náš Český Život and an annual calendar by sending in your ANNUAL SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP. This journal will only be sent to members. Support your Center — JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY.

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We are currently taking 2024 memberships
and donations online on our website.

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President's Letter Fall 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

On behalf of the TCHCC Board of Directors and our Volunteers, best wishes for 2024. Thank you for your generosity this past year and for your donations and support in participating in our events.

This edition of *Náš Český Život* includes photos of dedicated events from September through December of 2023. Volunteers working behind the scenes to make TCHCC a beautiful place to display our Czech history are not always captured on photos.

We are so grateful to the volunteers who come regularly to greet our visitors, to help in the Melnar library with genealogy, and to assist in the Kopecky Gift Shop, to open the Czech Village for tours and to keep the grounds and buildings maintained. Thank you to those who prepare luncheons for our scheduled tours and prepare lessons for our school children. Our volunteers will tell you that sharing Czech heritage and history is a wonderful experience for them. If you are interested in joining our team, please call me.

We had a successful year and look forward to continuing with the projects that are ongoing.

We look forward to seeing all of you this coming year. The Blacksmith Shop is almost complete. Soon, we will begin construction on the Brethren Church.

Thank you to TOCA member organizations for being a part of TCHCC during Heritage Festival and Muziky. We are grateful for the work these organizations are doing in promoting Czech heritage and culture. We would like to remind you of the TOCA Award Dinner on Saturday, March 16, 2024, in the Pavilion Hall, when each organization will choose one of their members for a special award.

I sincerely thank you for your support.



*TCHCC President
Retta Slavik Chandler*

Elizabeth Patalik has chosen to recognize Fr. Marcus Valenta this year and honor him with the Flag Sponsorship. Perhaps someone else may like to do the same for someone they respect next year. See the last page of the newsletter for details.

FATHER MARCUS A. VALENTA was born of a Czech father (Leo William Valenta), who died before he was one year old, and a German mother (Margaret Hermes) at Sweet Home, Texas on June 26, 1905. Being brought up by his German relatives, he did not learn the Czech language. He attended St. Louis College (later called St. Mary's College), San Antonio from 1922 to 1923 and next studied at St. John's Seminary, San Antonio from 1923 to 1926, where he expressed a desire to join the class in Czech, but he was about to continue his studies in Rome, Italy, and Latin of course. He studied at the American College in Rome in 1926 to 1930 and was ordained a priest there on December 21, 1929.

He served as assistant at St. Ann's Church, San Antonio from August 14, 1930 to 1933; next as Chaplain of the "Tree Army" (Civilian Conservation Corps, the C.C.C.) from June 15, 1933 to 1934; next as administrator of Sacred Heart Church, Rockne, Texas July 15, 1934 to 1935; next as administrator of the (Italian) St. Francis di Paula Church, San Antonio from 1935 to 1940. On October 19, 1940 he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force as Chaplain.

Service carried him in the middle of 1941 to Honolulu on Oahu Island, Hawaii, and Canton Island. He lived through the horrors of December 7, 1941 at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and ministered to the casualties. He saw service at Leyte, Saipan, the Solomon Islands and Okinawa. He was present at the Japanese surrender on August 5, 1945 and served as Chaplain in the Army of Occupation in Japan. He had refused transfer and promotion, in order to stay with the assault troops across the immense combat zones of the Pacific. He served throughout World War II and holds the longest overseas combat-zone record of any Chaplain in the history of the U.S.A. He returned to the U.S.A. on January 3, 1946 and was in the Active Reserves in February 15, 1946.

He served as pastor of St. Philip's Church, El Campo, Texas with mission of St. John at Taiton from April 1, 1946 to 1955 and from then to 1980 as pastor of St. Mary's Church, Praha, Texas, where he sponsored a solemn Armistice Day observance with the cooperation of the Army.

He was a lifetime Chaplain of the Pearl Harbor Survivors' Association and annually promoted the solemn military observance of Veterans Day Service at Praha. The traditional solemn celebration of the parish Feast of the Assumption on August 15 on the actual date, Sunday or weekly, attracting thousands of former parishioners and their descendants and friends from far and near. Rev. Marcus Anthony Valenta died on September 9, 1984 in Houston and is buried in Queen of Peace Cemetery, Sweet Home, Texas. (*Short Biographies of Czech and other Priests in Texas*, Msgr. Alois Morkovsky, 1982.)



FLAG SPONSOR
Elizabeth Patalik
In Memory of
Lt. Col. Chaplain U.S. Army
Rev. Marcus Valenta
7-26-1905/9-9-1984

CZECH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF TEXAS ANNUAL AWARDS PRESENTED

CHS of Texas presented several awards at their Fall State Meeting held on November 11, 2023 at St. Anthony's Malinoski Center in Bryan, Texas. The meeting was hosted by Brazos Valley Chapter of the Czech Heritage Society of Texas.



Susan Chandler's mother, children and sibling were among the guests present to receive the award. Back row l-r: CHS State President E. J. Biskup, CHS Chairman of Trustees James Steffek. Front row: l-r: Sean Ryan, Sarah Ryan, Devin Lichfield, Retta Chandler, Kenneth Chandler, Marie Lichfield, Lisa Chandler, Travis/Williamson Counties CHS President Dottie Davis.

Susan Rene Chandler, daughter of Charles and Retta Slavik Chandler, was posthumously awarded the Blaha-Hejl Memorial Award. Susan was a journalist who worked at several newspapers while raising four daughters. She served as the Museum Director of the Czech Heritage Museum & Genealogy Center in Temple from December 2014 until her untimely death.

Susan was very active in the community and was also serving as the Chairman of the Main Street Organization, a component of Dan Kelleher's Temple Main Street Program - a collaboration between the City of Temple, downtown Temple merchants, property owners, and others working together on downtown improvement activities. The group had been meeting regularly at the Czech Heritage Museum.



Presenting the award to Irene is (left) CHS of Texas Chairman of Board of Trustees James Steffek, (right) CHS State President E. J. Biskup.

Irene Polansky Szwarc received the CHS Award that recognized her many years of dedicated service to CHS in various capacities. Irene has held numerous positions over the past 20+ years including Lavaca County Chapter President, Vice President, Board Member and Reporter/Historian. On the CHS State level she has served as Vice President, and has served on the CHS Board of Trustees. She has been a presenter at numerous genealogic conferences.

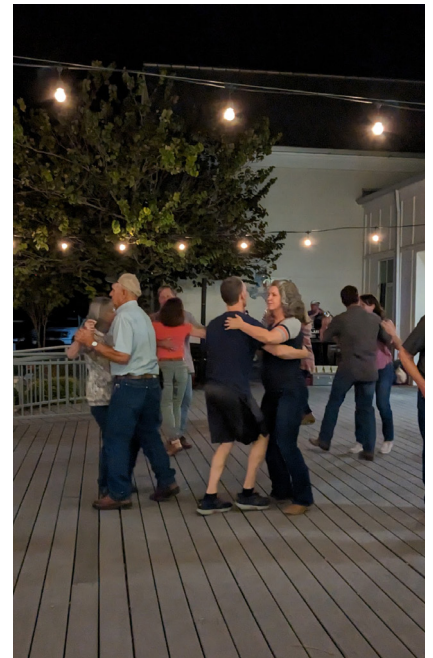
Irene wrote articles for the *Nasinec* for 16 years and dedicates her time with the American Legion Auxiliary, VFW Auxiliary and AVVA and various other organizations.

Irene has spent many years volunteering and working at TCHCC in the Melnar Library and in Genealogy. One of Irene's major tasks at TCHCC was her work in archiving and cataloging books and donated items into the computer system and setting up the library shelving system. Another one of her responsibilities was helping members with their genealogy.

HERITAGE FEST

October 20-21, 2023

Dujka Brothers performed on the Deck



Left: 2022-23 CHS Czech-Slovak Little Sister Natalie Hollingsworth and 2023-24 Miss US Czech-Slovak Queen Destiny Hollingsworth sang the Slovak National Anthem. Center: Mayor Jan Dockery welcomed all visitors. Right: Miss Texas' Teen 2023 Natalie Poveda was introduced by TCHCC President Retta Slavik Chandler.



Round Top Brass Band played under the Fraternal Mutual Pavilion



2023 KJT Tarock Tournament Winners
*l-r: 1st Place, Wilbert Cernosek; 2nd Place, Travis Mixon;
 3rd Place Andy Stavinoha; 4th Place Jim Coufal.*



SPJST Kolače Eating Contest - Girls' Division
Winner: Zoe Janda, La Grange (Center)



SPJST Kolače Eating Contest - Boys' Division
Winner: Hudson Riha, El Campo (Center)



SPJST Kolače Eating Contest - Womens' Division
Winner: Kris Beane, Katy, Texas (6th from left)



SPJST Kolače Eating Contest - Mens' Division
Winner: John Booker, La Grange, Texas (far left)





Czech Heritage Society of Texas' Royal Court

Top L-R: 2023 CHS Miss Czech-Slovak Jr. Queen Grace Moravec/Brazos Valley CHS; 2023 CHS Miss Texas Czech-Slovak Jr. Queen Runner-Up Marley Gibson/Wharton Co. CHS; 2023 CHS Texas Czech-Slovak Little Princess Runner-Up Pearl Gibson/Wharton Co. CHS; 2023 CHS Texas Czech-Slovak Little Prince Lincoln Holecek/McLennan-Hill CHS; 2022-23 CHS Miss Texas Czech-Slovak Little Sister Natalie Hollingsworth/Bexar Co. CHS. Bottom L-R: Miss Texas Czech-Slovak 2023 Katie Kostelnik/Lavaca Co. CHS; Miss Czech-Slovak US 2023-2024 Destiny Hollingsworth/Bexar Co. CHS, Miss McLennan-Hill Czech-Slovak 2023 Emerson Uptmor.



CHS Texas' Royalty hosted games and provided demonstrations in the CHS of Texas Booth.

Some of the other events during the two-day event were: Antique Farm Show, Car Show, Zapalac Sawmill Operation, Corn Grinding/Shelling, Hay Baling, Mule Drawn Wagon Rides, Children's Train Rides with help from Leo's Club drivers, Sausage Making, Washboard Clothes Washing, Butter Making, Candle Making, Noodle Making, Apple Cider Press. See our Facebook Page for more photos.



Fraternal Organizations gathered to support and promote Czech heritage.

Top l-r: SPJST District 5 Director Bradley Stavinocha, CHS of Texas President E. J. Biskup, KJT State Director Michael Reznicek, KJT President Chris Urban, RVOS Rep. Jalene Moore, Kelly Urban. First Step l-r: KJT Director Melba Reznicek, National Czech Slovak Museum, Cedar Rapids, Iowa Rep. Richard Martin, KJZT State Director Betty Vacek, National Czech Slovak Museum, Cedar Rapids, Iowa Rep. Sharon Schweitzer, Bottom Step l-r: KJZT Sales Agent Donna Janda, KJZT State Director Joy Kovar, KJZT State Director Helen Metzger, SPJST President Brian Vanicek, KJZT Sales Agent John McDermitt. Bottom Far Right: SPJST District 7 Director Regina House, SPJST District 6 Director Annie Vahalik, KJZT Sales Agent Joe Wolf.



Heritage Fest Performers: Left: Jodie Mikula Orchestra Right: Country Sounds: Al Sulak and sister Marie Sulak Pavlok (Photos courtesy of Gary McKee)



MUZYKY, MUZYKY Legend Series featured the Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys 55th Anniversary Tour Show.



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A HUGE THANK YOU goes out to all of our volunteers including our kitchen helpers: L: Shayley & Hartley Wehring, Vera Wehring, Robert Svrcek. Center: Marilyn Kothmann, Carolyn Surface. R: Joyce Hermes, Shirley Macik, Kathleen Kramr, Georgia Vyvial.



A Summer in Spillville in 1893: A Historical Novel

was presented by author Barbara Ortwein October 6, 2023 at TCHCC with a book signing

Czech composer Antonin Dvořák spent a year in New York at the National Conservatory of Music of America and then ventured out to rural Iowa in 1893. He encountered a countryside similar to his Bohemian homeland and met immigrants who enriched his journey. Author Barbara Ortwein wrote this story through the eyes of Antonin's daughter and retells the experiences of Dvořák and his family in the small rural town of Spillville, Iowa.

A great book for music teachers. Books are available for sale in the Gift Shop.



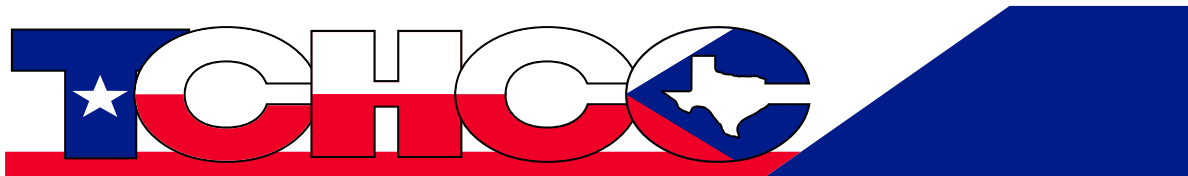
L-R: George Koudelka, Barbara Ortwein, Retta Chandler



Barbara Ortwein told her story through music.



Progress continues on the Blacksmith Shop. Left: Bill Schovajsa and Michael Ahart strip down cedar posts. Right: Mark Hermes and Eugene Klekar add rafters.



Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Event Center Presents

Slavnost

"May Fest"

SUNDAY MAY 19TH 2024

**Tribute to the Czech Immigrants
Ceremony at 10:30 a.m.**

Meal Served starting at 11:30 a.m.

Chicken Fried Chicken Dinner - \$12 per plate

Music by

Donnie Wavra & Friends Orchestra

11:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fun for the Whole Family!

Czech Village & Museum Tours • Classic Car Show • Gift Shop

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TCHCC was visited this Fall by four schools in the surrounding area. They spent the day touring the village houses, taking part in demonstrations, and enjoying lunch.

St. Rose Catholic School>>
Schulenburg, Texas
Fayette County



<< Sacred Heart Catholic School
Hallettsville, Texas
Lavaca County



St Anthony's Catholic School>>
Columbus, Texas
Colorado County



<<Dime Box ISD
Dime Box, Texas
Lee County



CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY EVENTS AT TCHCC

Bruno Shimek and his team from Caldwell demonstrated the art of making kolače on December 2, 2023 in the Hanslik Hall at TCHCC. Assisting him was Stan Vitha who demonstrated the making of a large koláče (or Chodko Koláče). Bruno's other two helpers were his sister Jo Ann Shimek and friend Brian Estlund. The team prepared the food and provided helpful hints to those in attendance. Bruno has won the State Bake Off Contest held at the Caldwell Koláč Festival three times and is now a retired champion. He is one of the members of the Caldwell Koláč Festival Committee who demonstrates and organizes the competition every year.

Chefs: Stan Vitha, Bruno Shimek, Jo Ann Shimek, Brian Estlund



Hands-on demonstrations were a part of the class.



A Rosette Making Class was held on December 9, 2024 by Kathleen Svatek and her assistant (daughter) Kim who shared hints and family traditions with the audience.



TCHCC closed out the year with a Christmas Party for weekly volunteers and staff. George Koudelka led everyone in a sing-a-long of Czech Christmas Carols.



A TREMENDOUS THANK YOU goes out to Second Chance Emporium, La Grange, Texas for their generous donation to TCHCC.

l-r: Janis Hrnecir, TCHCC archivist, Retta Chandler, TCHCC President, Gayle Schielack, Second Chance Emporium Store Director, Darlene Strahan, Second Chance Emporium Assistant Store Director.



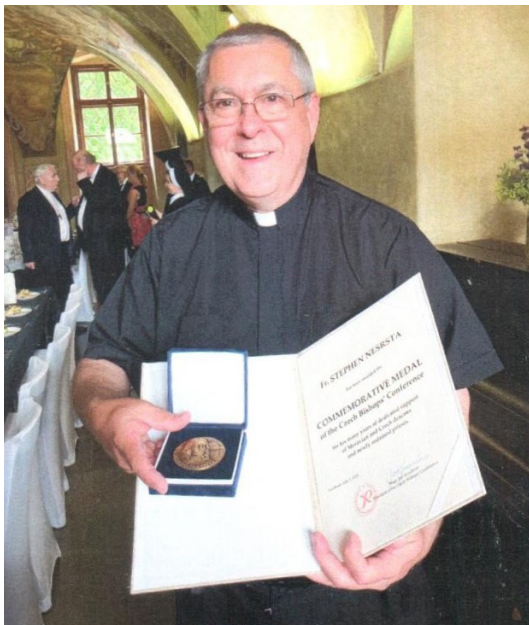
REV. STEPHEN NESRSTA HONORED

Fr. Stephen Nesrsta, currently pastor of Holy Trinity Parish in Corn Hill, received the Memorial Medal from the Czech Bishops' Conference in recognition of his many years of hosting Czech and Moravian deacons and priests to Texas. Fr. Stephen Nesrsta began welcoming clergy in 1998 and has welcomed 68 Czech and Moravian clergy since then. The visitors arrive every summer and stay for a few weeks.

“The program helps the deacons improve their English-speaking skills, get an experience of the Catholic Church in the United States, to visit Czech/Moravian settlements in Texas and to learn their history, and to get a better view of the U.S.” Father Nesrsta said.

Another task he undertakes is helping them with research materials as well as proofreading their correspondence.

He is very appreciative of his Moravian heritage and sees this program as a way of giving back to the land and people from where his family came.




Fr. Stephen Nesrsta received the Memorial Medal awarded to him by the Czech Bishops' Conference.



As an example of his dedication, Fr. Nesrsta recently brought two additional clergymen to visit TCHCC. Pictured l-r: Fr. Tomas Zamecnik, Fr. Stephen Nesrsta, Deacon Josef Kvapilik.

**NOW
on exhibit in the
TCHCC
Museum**

**Prepared and presented by
The East Bohemian
Museum in
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CZECH HERITAGE TOURS

The June 2024 itinerary is ready and available for booking!

We are so excited, and we invite you to tour with us.

Italy, Switzerland, Austria & Czech Republic

June 10-23, 2024

Italy - Milan & Lake Como

Switzerland - Lucerne, Tirano, St. Moritz & Schaffhausen

Austria - Soelden, Salzburg, Hallstatt & Linz

Czech Republic - South Moravian wine country, Lednice, Velke Bilovice & Prague

**For more information, including itinerary and price, or to reserve your space,
please email czheritage@hotmail.com or contact Renee at 469-867-1785.**

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 Edwin C. Marik
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 Johnell Moudry
 Mary Powell
2025 FAMILY MEMBERSHIP
 Louis & Janie Zbranek
MUSEUM & LIBRARY DONATIONS
Donna Birdwell – History of Kolinec, Bohemia
Ben Bohuslav - Male kroje
Agnes Darilek – 1910 Lavaca County Census Czech Extracts
Marie Englehart – 3 glass decanters with stoppers (red, blue, yellow)
John Heinrich – 1 small and 1 large pitchfork
Carolyn Heinsohn – Complete Authentic Orsag kraj, kraj, books and items for country store
Hattie Hlavinka Estate – bible, St. Mary School, Praha reunion pictures
Laura Poole – professional radio
Larry Kajs – 90 years-old La Mondiale accordion owned by Martha Simek Kajs
Benedict Kallus – 1930s picture of Hostyn Sokol Event in Ennis
Angelina Kretzschmar – Genealogy information on Frantisek Kossa & Phillip Mazoch
Judy Matejowsky – Book on Folk Dances
Linda Mihatsch – 1920 Wedding certificate of Alois Hluchanek & Albina Faldyn
Dwayne Pingnot – Migl Family History
Glenn Prochaska – book: *They Came To This Place*, 20 volumes of Slovo & Most magazines
John Schattel – Frank Schattel family history

VICTORIA ADVOCATE
September 27, 2023
Do you have Czech heritage
in your family line?

YES..... 43.6%
NO..... 56.4%

TCHCC Memorials can be made to your deceased loved ones or to honor a family member that is still active in promoting Czech culture and tradition.

IMMIGRANTS' WALL

A stone wall with engravings on plaques that include the name(s) of the immigrant(s), village of origin and date that he/she/they arrived in the United States. Plaques are available for \$2500. Contact us for details.

ENTRY PAVING STONES

A 12"x12" pink granite stone will be engraved with your choice of wording up to 40 letters for \$1000. These stones are in the entryway of the Czech Center. Contact us for details.

25TH ANNIVERSARY STONES

A 12"x12" pink granite stone will be engraved with your choice of wording up to 40 letters for \$1000. These stones are in a special section of the Czech Center. Contact us for details.

ROSE GARDEN MEMORIAL

For \$250 an 8" x 8" brick will be placed along the Rose Garden path that lines the entry sidewalk to the Czech Center. The brick will be inscribed with your choice of wording. Contact us for details.

MEMORIAL BRICK PAVERS

An 8" x 4" brick paver will be engraved with your choice of wording for \$100. The bricks will be placed in the sidewalk leading from the flagpoles to the steps that enter the Czech Center. Contact us for details.

BELL & BELFRY

For donations of \$50 or more, inscriptions are painted on the memorial sign. For donations under \$50, a record of the donation is made on a parchment list.

AMPHITHEATER SUPPORTERS

A designated amphitheater seat will be reserved with your name plate. Participant can reserve this seat whenever there is an event at the Amphitheater by calling ahead. Seats range: \$1,000, \$750 and \$500.

FLAG SPONSORS

Sponsorship can be made in Memory of or in Honor of an individual or group. \$250.00/newsletter, \$500/3 newsletters.

**BECOME A FRIEND OF THE
CENTER.**

Donation amounts are recognized by levels:

____ Permanent Endowment Fund
____ Maintenance and Operations
____ Other: _____

200,000	____ Five Star
100,000	____ Platinum Benefactor
50,000	____ Gold Benefactor
25,000	____ Silver Benefactor
10,000	____ Bronze Benefactor
5,000	____ Benefactor
2,500	____ President's Circle
2,000	____ Pioneer
1,500	____ Heritage Friend
1,000	____ Founder
750	____ Steward
500	____ Patron
250	____ Donor
150	____ Special Friend
100	____ Friend

Membership from

January 1—December 31

\$2000 ____ Lifetime Membership
\$500 ____ Corporate
\$200 ____ Non-Profit Organization
\$ 75 ____ Family
\$ 50 ____ Individual

ANNUAL SUSTAINED MEMBERSHIP (yearly)

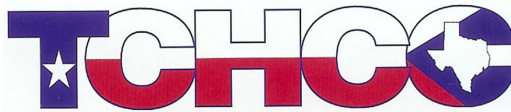
Benefits: Preserving YOUR Heritage, Annual Calendar
and *Nas Cesky Zivot* newsletters

MEMORIALS can be made to honor someone living, on their
birthday or anniversary etc., or the memory of a deceased friend
or family member.

FOR _____
Send Acknowledgement to: _____
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2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

2024

- Jan 15-May “From the Czech Silver Thaler to the U.S. Dollar” Exhibit on the occasion of the 500 years’ Anniversary of the Silver Thaler in Bohemia (1520-2020). University of Pardubice, East Bohemian Museum.
- Feb 10 Valentine’s Dinner & Concert 4 PM Social, 6 PM Dinner, 7 PM Concert
Performance by Pianist Professor John Dujka. Appetizers featuring local Texas wines. Advanced Tickets Only!
- March 16 TOCA Annual Banquet and Awards. Contact the Czech organizations of Texas for tickets
- May 19 Slavnost “May Fest” & Tribute to the Czech Immigrants to Texas
Tribute Ceremony at 10:30 AM -Fried Chicken dinner at 11:30 AM Music by Donnie Wavra & Friends Orchestra 11:30 AM - 4 PM
- June-Nov Museum Exhibit: Czech Handmade Crafts including wooden carvings, fabric, lace, ceramic items
- October 18-19 Heritage Fest & Muziky