

Brazos Valley Chapter
By Marie Dulak

Brazos Valley Czech Heritage Society (BVCHS) held its annual Czech Heritage Month Celebration on Sunday, October 13, 2019. The day began with two Polka Masses at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Bryan with singing and music provided by the Taylor Czech Chorus. Mass scriptures were read in Czech by BVCHS member Tomáš Pansky. At 1:00 p.m., a meal consisting of roasted pork loin, grilled chicken breast, parsley potatoes, sauerkraut, green beans, gravy, rolls, peach cobbler, and tea was served to over 200 people at the St. Joseph Parish Activity Center (PAC). Following the meal, everyone enjoyed dancing and listening to music provided by The Moravians of Ennis, Texas. The Chicken Dance was especially enjoyed by young and old alike. The 2020 Czech Heritage Celebration will be held on October 11, 2020.



On November 3, 2019 the BVCHS membership meeting was held at the St. Joseph PAC. Prior to the meeting, a meal of baked chicken provided by BVCHS with side dishes and desserts provided by members, was enjoyed by 24 members and seven guests. Lydia Pustejovsky, 2019 Miss Texas Czech-Slovak Queen, and 2019 CHS Czech Little Sister Allison Pustejovsky attended the meeting. Lydia spoke to the chapter about her activities serving as the State Queen and her participation in the 33rd Annual Miss Czech-Slovak US Pageant held in Wilber, Nebraska in August. A display board and album of Lydia's activities were available for members to view.



Following Lydia's presentation, President E.J. Biskup called the meeting to order with the members reciting "Our Czech Heritage" in both Czech and English followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Officers and committee chair reports were given. Membership Chair, Jo Ann Zaeske reported our chapter currently has 114 members. Upcoming events discussed were Brazos Valley Worldfest and a request of members to help bake items or to work the booth the day of the event; Christmas party to be held December 7th at the St. Joseph Pac; and the Christmas Baking Class on December 14th. Following adjournment of the meeting a 50/50 drawing was held.

BVCHS participated on November 9, 2019 in the Brazos Valley Worldfest – a community-wide festival to promote and celebrate the international diversity and heritage of the Brazos Valley and Texas A&M University. It was held at the Brazos County Expo Center in Bryan, Texas. The evening before the festival Stan Vitha, John, Samuel & Grace Moravec, Georgia Simecek, Bruno Shimek, Tomáš Pansky, Mary Enger, Frank & Marie Dulak met at the St. Joseph PAC kitchen to prepare kolache, vánočka (Christmas bread) and apple strudels to be served at the booth along with cookies and rosettes prepared by BVCHS members. On Saturday, besides the food to be offered, a cultural display with information about the chapter and the Czech Republic was available for visitors to view. Thanks to the volunteers – Stan Vitha, John and Samuel Moravec, Carrie Martin, Lorraine Roesler, Richard and Toni Fayman, Bill Merka, Michael Jaska, Tomáš Pansky and Mary Enger – who worked the booth by selling food items, talking with visitors about our organization and upcoming events and selling Czech noisemakers. At the close of Worldfest the BVCHS booth had sold out of every item there was to offer.



The BVCHS Christmas party was held on Saturday, December 7, 2019 at the St. Joseph PAC with 25 members and 4 guests in attendance. Prior to the meal BVCHS member Fred Wenck gave a short Christmas message following with the meal blessing. The main entrée was ham provided by BVCHS with members bringing delicious side dishes and desserts for everyone to enjoy. Youth member, Erika Vitha, entertained everyone by playing Christmas songs and a variety of musical favorites on the piano. The traditional Czech ornament exchange was enjoyed by everyone participating. Tomáš Pansky and Lynette Urbanovsky led everyone in singing Czech and American Christmas carols. Door prize drawings concluded the celebration.



In preparation for the Christmas holidays a Czech Christmas Baking Class sponsored by BVCHS was held on December 14, 2019 at the St. Joseph PAC kitchen. Instructor, BVCHS member Stan Vitha, taught the 10 participants how to make vánočka (braided Czech Christmas bread), perníčky (gingerbread cookies) and coconut bars that are staples in many Czech households during the Christmas season. Everyone enjoyed learning how to braid the 9 rolls for the vánočka, using different cookie cutters for the Christmas gingerbread cookies and having baked goods to take home to share with their family.



Upcoming Events:

January 19, 2020 – BVCHS Membership Meeting, St. Joseph PAC, Bryan, Texas.

January 20, 2020 – Spring Czech Language Class, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. St. Joseph PAC, Bryan, Texas

March 7, 2020 – Kolache Baking Class, St. Joseph PAC kitchen, Bryan, Texas

April 19, 2020 – BVCHS Membership Meeting and Scholarship Presentations, C&J Bar-B-Que, Bryan, Texas.