



Rice Lake International Friendship Association Miharu, Japan ■ Zamberk, Czech Republic

Winter 2008-09



Delegates gather on the Zamberk Town Hall steps

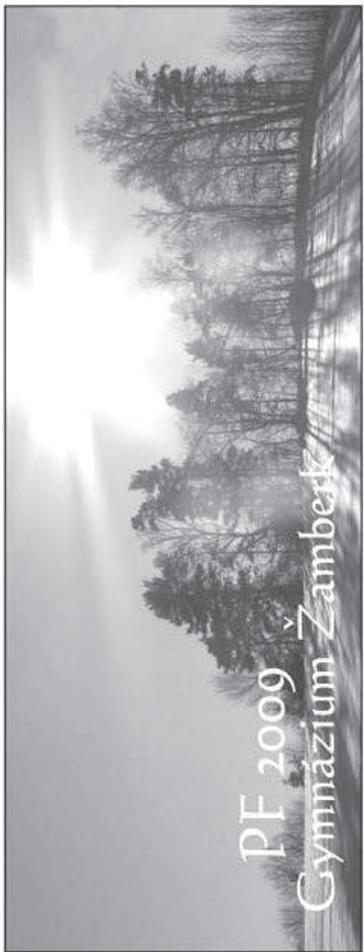
15th Anniversary Delegation Travels to CZ

A delegation from Rice Lake celebrated 15 years of friendship in our Czech sister city, participating in many tours of schools and city sites, meeting several of the former exchange students, hearing Corale perform, and meeting many new friends. There were also many visits to neighboring communities and tours of local firms and meetings with city officials. Also arranged were a trip to Moravian wine country, a side trip to Poland and a short tour of Prague.

Building on the 15 years of friendship, delegates met Milan Suchodol, the man who lived with Leonard and Phyllis Schieffer in 1993 while he was an agriculture intern shortly after the change of regime in Czech. Milan and Phyllis talked about developing a sister city relationship at her kitchen table. Within months—an unusually short period of time for such events—the sister city relationship was formed. Many moments from the years of friendship were shared.

The delegation included Mayor Dan Fitzgerald and his wife Bunny—the first Rice Lake mayor and mayor's wife to travel with a delegation to Zamberk and the second mayor to visit our sister city. Other delegates were Steve Fulton and his wife Becky, Sue Torgerson, The Fitzgeralds, John Sommerfield, Dan Genereau, Terri Mikyska, Diane Peterson, Karen Anderson, and Deb Neuheisel Smith

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Happy New Year from Headmaster Milan Lipensky, Jan Vych, and teachers and students at our Czech Sister School.

RLIFA NEWSLETTER
Mary Fredrickson: Designer Graphic Editor
Deb Neuheisel Smith: Editor

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Happy New Year!
Are you a current member?
If not, join today.

Hello, Ahoj and Konnichiwa . . . to RLIFA members on this wintry day. Welcome back to the folks who traveled to Zamberk earlier this fall. By all accounts it was an excellent trip, with a nice mix of official visits and interesting side trips. Thank you for representing Rice Lake so well, and thank you to Steve Fulton and Sue Torgerson for making the arrangements. In the future, we'd also like to invite people from Zamberk on a casual exchange, with plenty of time with their host family. That's been successful with Miharu in the past.

On the student exchange front, we've encouraged MIFA to select and send students from Miharu again next year. Due to MIFA's reorganization from a city-sponsored organization to an all-volunteer group, the student exchange didn't happen last year. (The previous year the late change of student-visa companies by the American Sister Cities organization prevented them from coming.) I believe that exchange students are important to the Sister Cities relationship by putting faces with the Zamberk or Miharu name as well as bringing new people into the organization.

Because of the active exchange student program, recruiting host families is critical. Please consider inviting a Czech or Japanese young person into your home; it will be a life-long memory for your family as well as the student. You don't need to have children at home to be a host family.

I look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting in February, as well as the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Zamberk Sister City relationship in the spring.

Bobbi Freitag
RLIFA President

RLIFA 's Annual Meeting
February 8th, 2009

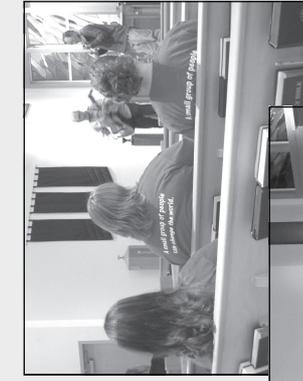
Blue Hills Masonic Lodge
(corner of Pioneer Ave and South St)

Refreshments and social hour: 6:30 pm
Business meeting: 7:00 pm. If you'd like a ride, please call Bobbi at 736-1499 and we'll arrange transportation. See you there!



September Concert

Rain changed the venue but didn't dampen the spirits of this year's September Concert. Relocated from the City Band Shell to United Presbyterian Church of Rice Lake, this year's event again featured John Pisa, Charlie Uehlin and David Butler. "A small group of people can change the world," reads shirts of several high school students who attended--and indeed that was the message of this annual event to spread peace and celebrate music at the same time in hundreds of sites throughout the world.



I was really surprised when I came here . . .

I was really surprised when I came here at how similar it is to my home. But I did not expect the countryside as big as it is. I was glad to see that my family has got woods right behind the house.

I am staying with the Lachman family. My host mother Sue works as hairdresser, and she is probably one of the best in whole Rice Lake. My host father Mike is retired, so he is always home when I need something. They have both children in Europe, so I am in the house like only child, which is of course good for me.

I also go to Rice Lake High School. Some of the classes we do not have at home, so I find that I can learn math at home and I choose some fun classes such as cooking, band and now I have also hobbies for(ot) life and mythology. I find learning easier than I expected, so I have good grades in classes like Five Kingdoms or American History.

It was also very good for me to experience deer hunting because I am interested in hunting.

Photo: Vojta Cukor and his host father Mike Lachman during a trip to Duluth

Unfortunately, although we were sitting for long time in tree stand in bad cold, we did not see any deer. Some things are different from hunting in Czech Republic including the deer itself, other animals, different hunting seasons, and customs. I am also looking forward to try ice fishing which I have never done and it seems like great fun to me.

My reasons to come in America were to improve my English, which I am trying to achieve, to meet new friends, and I have made some including my host family. One of my reasons was also to see different customs which I have already done because I experienced Halloween and Thanksgiving, that seems really interesting to me. And the best part is that I still have more than half a year to achieve my goals.

by Vojtech Cukor

15th Anniversary Delegation Travels to CZ

(continued from pg 1)
 "This was a trip of a lifetime," said Fitzgerald. "We were treated so well and the schedule was well planned. I have been to Europe three times before this but this trip was the best. was able to learn a number of things about the country and the city. The people of Zamberk were so great to be with. My wife and I enjoyed this trip so much and would go back again. I mostly enjoyed the young students learning the English language and all wanting to come to America."

Steve Fulton and Sue Torgerson coordinated with Valerie Fabr of Zamberk International Friendship Association to arrange the trip. Steve recalls, "We were greeted by several host families upon arrival and spent a wonderful time getting to know our hosts for several days before taking a side journey to Krakow and Auschwitz Poland. All in all, we came away from this experience feeling good about our sister city relationship with Zamberk and know now how vital this partnership is to our better understanding of the different ways of the world."

Delegate Diane Peterson, a semi-retired WITC instructor, also shared her thoughts. "The entire trip surpassed my expectations," she wrote. "I can give a summary as a first-time sister city traveler and also first time to Europe. The amount of things we were able to see and do was wonderful. Some of the highlights for me included the first day when my host family and friends and I went to Litomysl where we shopped, had lunch at a cozy cafe, and espresso and dessert at a sweet shop. We were even entertained by a Czech band playing traditional music. This gave me a great overview of the area surrounding Zamberk.



The 15th anniversary delegation was received at town hall.

"As a teacher, I appreciated visiting the schools, seeing and meeting the students and teachers, and seeing some of their class projects. A few other highlights included the Castle, wine tasting in Moravia, Prague, and I will never forget Auschwitz. The relationships we built with our friends in Zamberk and with our fellow travelers will last a lifetime. Thank you to all who organized and executed this amazing trip. Can't wait until the next one."

By Deb Neuheisel Smith



Photos (from left to right): A gift from Zamberk, made by Standa Cukor, Vojta's father, is presented to Rice Lake's Mayor Dan Fitzgerald; More familiar faces from Rice Lake exchanges-Ondrej, Mike, Pavla and Cilka; Celebrating with former exchange students and Corale friends.



New country, family, school . . .

It was 24 August, when Vojta and I went to the airport in Prague, perhaps prepared to spend one year in Rice Lake. We said goodbye to our parents and left our country.

It is now over three months and I have a lot of new experiences and friends. The most important change is probably the family. It is a crazy feeling, when you are sitting at home and know that you are going to spend next year with a family you have never seen. My family is actually really great. I spent a fantastic time with them and their relatives. I learned a lot of new stuff about American culture and habits like Thanksgiving, which we do not have in Czech Republic. I hope I showed them something about my country as well and they enjoy their life with me like I do with them.

First term in school was little hard, because sometimes it was not too easy to understand everything. I had great time though, because teachers and students are very helpful. Every time when you need some help they are here for me. I would like to say thank you to everybody, because sometimes a little help makes your life easier and happier. We are now in the middle of second term and I enjoy every day here. Everything is going so fast and my classes are

exciting. I like how students can choose their classes, which we do not have in Czech.

I am doing some activities after school as well. First term I did tennis, which was a good experience and met a lot of new people. During September and October we practiced for Madrigal inner, which was in the beginning of November. We did a great job. I think people who came enjoyed it. I was a server and sometimes it was hard to deliver food at the right time to the right place, because there were a lot of people especially on Saturday. Five weeks ago I decided to do tryout for Warriorettes and I make it. Right now our coach is doing her best to prepare us for competition. We already had our first performance and we were in the Christmas parade. I have a lot of fun there and I hope we will do really well in competition.

At this time I am looking forward to a typical American Christmas, which will be pretty different than what I know from Czech. I am going to change my family during Christmas break which will be probably really exciting as well because they live in town and their children do not live with them any more. I hope I will spend great time with them like with my first family.

By Kristyna Langerova



Kristyna as a Warriorette



Anna and Zamberk student Magda visit Bratislava.

the huge bunker "Hankička" that has underground tunnels to 4 other bunkers in the same vicinity!

You have put a lot of effort into this relationship. I hope many more American students will have the chance to experience life in Zamberk like I have. Time has flown and although I do not think about it often, I am not looking forward to saying goodbye. But THANK YOU again for this opportunity to be here through your contacts!

Sincerely, Anna Ostenson
Return Date: February 3, 2009

Anna Ostenson writes RLIFA friends from CZ

Dear RLIFA,

Hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving! I would like to take this opportunity to thank RLIFA for the contacts they have made here in Zamberk, Czech Republic. I have met many Czech people these past few months that have had the chance to come to Rice Lake and they all share fond memories! I have met some parents of foreign exchange students that don't speak English that are happy to talk to someone about Rice Lake and their American friends in Czech :)

Along with teaching English and meeting new people, some exciting experiences have been learning to bake with the very traditional ingredient apricots, to prune rose bushes and prepare them for the winter.

I've learned about wild mistletoe and how it spreads from tree to tree, about heating with coal, making homemade wine, the book binding industry, and even the furniture making business! I have visited the Sea Salt Cave, castles, nice tennis courts and

Former CZ Exchange Students Organize RLHS Alumni

Former exchange students Aneta Langerova (Kristyna's older sister) and Barbora Vsetickova Sevcikova (a student from 1996-97, the first year of the student exchange) are partners in organizing their idea: an alumni group in CZ for former exchange students. Below are some of their communications.

From Barbora, a few weeks ago:

RLHS Alumni had a first meeting Saturday 8.11.2008. The reason for this was that a few of us started to talk during the week of the 15th anniversary of Rice Lake and Zamberk friendship. Even though we didn't know each other, we found out we have a lot in common and would like continue sharing our experience as well as support this great exchange programme in upcoming years. At this point we have contact with every RLHS Alumni and more than half of us were at the meeting. During our meeting we talked about different ideas we have on how we could help the programme based on our own experience (such as promoting the exchange, help selected students and their families, preparation for cultural shock....etc.)

Following this discussion we would like to meet with Jana Fialova as the representative of ZIFA, Mr Lipensky and Mrs Odvarkova as the representatives of Gymnazium Zamberk to talk about the possible support that we can offer to ZIFA and Gymnazium Zamberk and agree on concrete action steps that we can take to make this programme a great experience for next generations of students.

A more recent letter from Aneta:

Our alumni organization is going quite well. We prepared a short info leaflet which will be distributed next week to all Gymnazium students (first trigger for people to start thinking about going to Rice Lake). On January 29th we have a two hours long presentation for all Gymnazium about the exchange and its impact on the participants. I hope that some alumni will attend. I'm putting together the programme and very much looking forward to it! :) We have a googlegroup running and are in touch over email quite often after our first meeting.

Meeting with Milan and Ivana was very nice; they are supportive. Bara (Barbora) met Jana lately and hopefully we will manage soon to have a discussion about the selection process which is our priority for now. We are probably going to ZIFA's meeting in January.

Amy George continues to build international ties

In summer 2006, RLIFA sent five youth to the Sister Cities International Youth Summit on Global Citizenship in Washington D.C. This was the start of the current sister school program with Zamberk. At the conference, three youth from Rice Lake and two from Zamberk met dozens of other international students from sister cities throughout the world. Together they studied leadership, conflict resolution, and global citizenship-ambassadorship. Amy George of Rice Lake was one of those students. A junior this year at UWEC majoring in Communication Sciences and Disorders, she emailed recently with a few updates on her life.

"Last January - June I studied in Aberdeen, Scotland through UWEC's study abroad program," Amy wrote. "I wanted to visit another country, travel around, and see what their education system was like. Next semester I will be a peer advisor for students studying abroad in Scotland since last spring I was in Scotland studying abroad. I am very excited about that!" And in the last few days Amy was selected as an international peer guide, "someone who helps international students who come to the campus feel comfortable on campus and be a smiling face for them. I am very excited about both!"

Personal Notes from Barbara and Aneta:

Aneta says she is "doing fine, enjoying my work, still trying to learn more about myself and the world around me. Currently I'm reading and thinking about the concept of living right here and now, not being a slave of your mind and thinking all the time about the past or future rather enjoying the beauty of the present moment. (Eckhart Tolle: The power of now—in case you haven't read it yet, I recommend :) Please say hi to my great sister and others in RL who know me."

Barb is married to Dan Sevcik, also of the Zamberk Gymnazium and, together with their families, they are good friends to many RLIFA members. They have two children and live in a new housing area in Zamberk.

Be sure to renew your membership for 2009!

Name _____
 Address City, State, Zip _____
 Phone(s) _____
 E-mail _____
 For family membership please include: Spouse's name _____
 Children _____

Type of membership (Annual)

Family (\$25) ___ Individual (\$15) ___ Student (\$5) ___ Corporate (\$30) ___
 Exchange Student Host Family 2008 - 2009 school year (Complementary) ___
 Guest Membership: ___ Family (\$25) ___ Individual (\$15) ___ Student (\$5) ___

(Tax deductible #363-16-0066)

Additional donation enclosed for:

Friendship Orchard ___ Friendship Garden ___ Newsletter ___
 Exchange Student Events ___ General Program ___
 I am especially interested in assisting with activities for our exchange with
 Miharuru-machi, Japan ___ Zamberk, Czech Republic ___

I would also like to: ___ Host visitors ___ Short term/Special events ___ Exchange students ___ Board member ___ Raise funds ___
 Events ___ Visit a Sister City: ___ Zamberk ___ Miharuru

Make checks payable to RLIFA and mail with completed membership information to:
 RLIFA Membership, P.O. Box 1, Rice Lake WI 54868

Young citizen diplomat relates experiences in Miharuru

Since I have been in Japan, I have had so many amazing experiences, met so many amazing people and changed in many ways. I started school at Tamura High School in August, and I love it. My current host family is amazing and I am so happy that I'm living with them, they treat me as if I'm really a part of their family.

I have met the members of MIFA and volunteered at different types of events in the area. I helped make Vietnamese noodle soup and dessert with the rest of MIFA at Miharuru's Autumn festival. I got dressed up in my summer kimono for the Obon festival, and learned the traditional dance. I've been on TV and in the newspaper, and I'm enjoying the celeb status at school, because it means I get to meet everyone! I've made friends that will last forever, and I love it.

I've taken many trips around the area, some for only a day, but they have all been memorable. I've spent a total of 6 days in Tokyo, and I love it more every time I visit. It's amazing to be in the biggest city in the world; everywhere you look there are people, cars, subways and it's so easy to get caught up in the fast paced world. But there are also many places in the city where you can experience the "old days" and traditional culture.

I've spent 3 days in Kyoto, and I can not wait to go back. It is the most beautiful place I have ever seen; it is so rich in history, culture and traditions and the trees, in all their autumn beauty, are like no place on earth. I was truly amazed at everything around me. I took a 4 day trip to Okinawa, with the beautiful there, it's unlike any other area in Japan! I'm currently planning another, short trip to Kyoto to watch Tamura High School's track team-our team-compete at the end of December. And I'm also planning a trip to Seoul, Korea with my

Since I have come to Japan, I have definitely changed as a person. I've become more independent, but I have also learned just how much everyone in my life means to me. I have matured and grown so much as a person, more than I could ever explain. This experience has opened my eyes so much, and I view myself and the world in a different light. I will never take anyone or anything for granted, as I have before. Being away from my family and friends, and everything that I have known before, has forced me to look at myself and my life with a more critical eye. There has been nothing about this experience that I haven't enjoyed. I would definitely do it again, and I know that I will be sad to leave. This experience has prepared me for the life ahead of me, and it will always have a special place in my past, and my future. I can't wait to come back and teach English as a Second Language after I finish my time at college!

I've tried to keep this short, but I could easily write a novel about my experiences. So, I will mention one more thing before I finish; I would like to say "Thank You" to everyone involved in RLIFA. I could not have done this without all of your help and support. You have all been so amazingly supportive and encouraging through the entire process, and I am so incredibly grateful! I could never say it enough. Thank you all very much!!

by Chelsey Dubois

More pictures from Chelsey:

<http://viewmorepics.myspace.com/index.cfm?Fuseaction=user.viewAlbums&friendID=47546386>



Photos (from left to right) Chelsey in kimono, delighting in the culture of Japan; Chelsey's friends in Miharuru



Zamberk planted a tree to represent our friendship during the 15th anniversary celebration. Ondrej's mother (kneeling) was in charge of the project.

Friendship Trees



A Sister City Grove has been designated as part of the Friendship Orchard on the UW-Barron County campus. It is located adjacent to the Friendship Garden along the Library building toward the Red Cedar River. RLIFA President Bobbi Freitag, Rice Lake Mayor Dan Fitzgerald and UW-BC Foundation President Jim Stoll visited the site.