

## 2016 Annual Report of Region 1 Director

Dear Rev. Thomas Nasta, President Andrew Rajec, Executive Officers, and fellow members of the FCSU Board of Directors:

It is my honor to represent Region 1 on the Board of Directors. Firstly, I would like to thank the Executive Board and all of my fellow board members for their guidance, collaboration, and support. I am eager to continue to learn and collaboratively work together to grow our society.

I have performed all the duties required of me as stipulated in the bylaws of the First Catholic Slovak Union. As part of my duties and responsibilities as a Regional Director, I've attended all Board of Directors meetings personally or via teleconference and participated in meetings on invitation of the President.

I've attended all of Msgr. John E. Rura, District 4 meetings and Branch 746 meetings. In addition, I've attended Branch 45 meeting as well as the District 16 meeting.

In 2016, I represented the First Catholic Slovak Union at various events organized by local branches, Slovak and/or Czech non-profit organizations, and events hosted by representatives of the Slovak government in the United States. To highlight a few:

- **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Slovak Ball** – On Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016 many Jednota members attended the annual Slovak Ball organized by the Slovak-American Cultural Center which featured special guest performer Peter Lipa considered the “Godfather of Slovak Jazz”. The event drew together older and younger generations.
- **Mary Karch’s Retirement Celebration** - On Sunday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, I helped to organize Mrs. Karch Retirement party which was held in conjunction with Branch 746 and District 4 meetings. The luncheon celebrated Mrs. Karch’s more than 50 years of membership with FCSU and many years of dedicated service as a member of the branch board serving as Treasurer since 2001 where she organized many Slovak dances, picnics, day trips and other activities.
- **Mother’s Day Children’s performance** – On May 8<sup>th</sup> the Slovak children’s school, Slovenské centrum detí- LIPKA Academy, based at Holy Family Church in Linden put on a Mother’s Day program followed by a luncheon. The program included recitation of poetry, songs, and Slovak folk dances. The event was attended by sixteen Jednota members. Jednota’s youngest members were part of the program as they attend the Lipka Academy on Saturday mornings for Slovak language classes. At the end of the program Branch 746 surprised the children with a donation check to fund an interactive learning module. Branch 746 also distributed informational and promotional materials about FCSU to those attending and mini gift bags to the children performing. As Regional Director I am interested in continuing to collaborate with the Slovak school on future events.
- **Children’s Folk Program** – On Sunday, May 8<sup>th</sup> the Slovak-American Cultural Center hosted a Children’s Folklore program. All Slovak schools and dance groups in the NY and NJ areas participated. The event brought together 100+ children in the age category of 5-16 on the stage of St. John Nepomucene in New York City with an attentive audience of over three hundred people. The event was attended by Branch 45, 716, and 746 members.

- **Branch 746 Picnic** – On July 10<sup>th</sup> I attended and assisted in organizing the Branch 746 picnic which was hosted at the Veteran’s Memorial Park in Linden, New Jersey. Also in attendance were Branch 290 members. The picnic was a great opportunity for members to get together, catch up with friends, and celebrate the beautiful summer weather.
- **Pilgrimage to Marian Shrine, NY** – On August 14<sup>th</sup> I attended the pilgrimage to Marian Shrine in Haverstraw, NY hosted by Branch 716. The day commenced with Mass celebrated by Jednota members Fr. George Torok and Fr. Richard Baker followed by a luncheon and the recitation of the rosary.
- **Exhibit of Slovak paintings with opening by Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign & European Affairs of the Slovak Republic** – On July 13<sup>th</sup> I attended the opening of an exhibit at the United Nations with H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, the Slovak candidate for the Secretary General position.
- **Slovak Fashion Night in New York** – On Sept 8<sup>th</sup> I attended the Slovak Fashion night hosted by the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York and +421 Foundation. At the event, I was able to engage with non-FCSU members and encouraged them to check out our website and the products that we offer.
- **Pilgrims to the Basilica of the National Shrine** – On Sept 18<sup>th</sup> Branch 856 under the leadership of Katerine Nowatkoski organized the annual celebratory mass at the Shrine. Though I was not able to attend the event, Slovak communities from NJ and NY were in attendance as well as Region 1 local branch members. A bus was organized from St. John Nepomucene to transport members to the event. I commend Katerine for keeping the tradition of this pilgrimage alive for so many years, for her hard work with organizing the event and look forward to next year’s pilgrimage.
- **Meeting with President of the Slovak Republic** – On Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, H.E. Andrej Kiska visited New York on the occasion of the opening of the United Nations General Assembly. The Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations, Frantisek Ruzicka hosted a reception at his residence with young Slovak professionals and members and leaders of various Slovak organizations. I was honoured to be invited and represent FCSU at the reception.
- **Slovak Festival** – On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, I was attended the Slovak Festival in New Jersey where I assisted our Vice President Mr. Harcar and Andrew P. Rajec at the table in distributing promotional materials, meeting members and non-members, and spreading the word about our society. Also assisting throughout the day were all three generations of Minarovichs – Joe, Stephen, and Adam. In attendance were approximately 5,000 people from the NJ, NY, CT, and PA areas. Despite the rain, we were able to distribute promotional materials, newspapers, and engage with those interested to learn more about our society. The Slovak Festival is one of the largest festivals organized in the US and is a perfect outlet to promote our society, draw attention to what Jednota does, and solicit new members. The day concluded with a concert by famous Slovak superstar Katka Knechtova.
- **Woodrow Wilson Freedom Lecture** – On Nov 18<sup>th</sup>, I attended the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Czech and Slovak Freedom Lecture with a keynote address by Ambassador Rastislav Káčer Slovak Ambassador to Hungary who commented on U.S. relations with Central Europe. After the lecture Friends of Slovakia hosted a luncheon for Amb Kacer, Amb Kmec, and the Board of Directors of FOS. Also in attendance were Jednota members Chairman of Friends of Slovakia and Honorary Consul Joseph Senko and his wife Albina.
- **Slovak Dances** – On Dec 1<sup>st</sup> on the occasion of the conclusion of the EU presidency, I attended a wonderful concert at Carnegie Hall by the renowned Peter Breiner who

performed his compilation of classical and folk music called Slovak Dances. It was a full house and definitely a proud moment for all the Slovaks in the audience to have our own Slovak maestro perform on the world's most prestigious stage.

- **Slovak Young Professionals Networking event** – On Dec 11<sup>th</sup> I attended a networking event organized and hosted by the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, DC in cooperation with the Consulate of the Slovak Republic in New York. The topics of discussion were focused on: Education, Science & Research. Some interesting ideas came about from my interactions on potential programs/projects that FCSU could engage in terms of working with Honorary Consuls, educational opportunities for our young members, highlighting Slovakia's innovation projects in our newspaper, engaging with successful Slovak companies and entrepreneurs in the US, and so on. I am happy to brainstorm, develop and pursue some of ideas with the support of the Board if they see that they would be of interest and beneficial to the society.
- **Children's Mikulas Celebrations** – On Dec 18<sup>th</sup> I attended the Slovenské centrum detí- LIPKA Academy's Mikulas (Christmas) concert/program. Children from all of the grades participated in the program which was beautifully choreographed. The performances included singing of Slovak Christmas carols, recitation of poems, and various dances. Branch 746 continues to support the Slovak school and its activities as many of our youngest Jednota members attend the school. Congratulations to the teachers on their dedication and all that they do to teach our kids our beautiful Slovak language, history, and folk traditions.
- **Jednota Christmas Party** – On Dec 18<sup>th</sup>, Branch 746 had its annual Christmas party after the Branch meeting. Members had a lot of fun with the raffle of Christmas gifts! Catering was provided by our members, Mr. and Mrs. Rada and their son, Steven. At the meeting, discussion was held on upcoming activities to be planned for 2017.
- **Consul General Jana Trnovcova's Farewell Reception** – On Jan 8<sup>th</sup> of this year, a farewell gathering was organized at St. John Nepomucene for the Consul General who, after 4.5 years of fruitful service, was leaving her post in New York. This was one of many receptions organized in her honor which is a testament to the mark that she left on those she engaged with. Later in the month I also attended another reception hosted for members of the diplomatic community at the residence of H.E. Ambassador Frantisek Ruzicka. In her years as Consul General, Jana played an integral role in bringing together the Slovak communities, engaging with Slovak organizations, and coordinating an incredible number of activities, networking events, and informal gatherings. On behalf of FCSU, I thanked Ms. Trnovcova for her dedicated service and friendship. The Consul General had an opportunity to visit FCSU home office in November when she was part of the delegation which included the Director of USZZ.

Ongoing activities:

- It is always with sadness that we say goodbye to our loved ones; this year we have lost several branch members and we continue to remember them in our prayers. When possible, I have attended wakes, funerals, and visited those that are ill.
- **TV LUX Television Broadcast** – In June 2015 TV LUX, an independent Slovak catholic television station (the Slovak version of EWTN), launched a monthly live broadcast of Slovak mass from the US. I was privileged to be a part of the very first broadcast and continue to support the mission and ministry. Long time Jednota member, Rev. George Torok, Rector of Oratory of St. Filip of Neri as well as Branch 746 members Fr. Vladimir

Chripko and Fr. Jozef Krajnak, PhD serve as celebrants at these masses. The masses are available to view on the website of TV LUX through the archives portal (<http://www.tvlux.sk/videoarchiv/>). I encourage our members who are interested in documentary films, listening to Slovak masses, etc to visit their website. Throughout 2016, I was honoured to be a part of several of these live broadcasts. In December Branch 746 members donated to LUX New York which is a Slovak Catholic Media Production company based at the historic church of St. John Nepomucene with the goal of supporting the Catholic faith among Slovaks living in the U.S. and Canada mainly through our production of TV shows, news reports and documentaries. As Region 1 Director, I have been meeting with the Director of the program in New York to see how I can assist as I feel that the work that they are doing is important to support and contribute to.

- **Solicitation of new members** – This year, I met personally with families and individuals that showed interested in Jednota to introduce them to our society and encourage them to become members. Many times people don't realize that in addition to life insurance we have many other products that we offer as well as fraternal activities/benefits for members. I am happy to report that I've been successful in attracting new members who have become active in their respective branches.
- **What Is Jednota? Campaign** – I've updated the 2-page Fact Sheet on FCSU in English and Slovak flyers which I created last year to better inform the Slovak-American community about the work of the organization. I continue to use these where applicable. I also helped to promote the home offices' JEP campaign which offered a free JEP policy for \$10,000 for one year. I've shared information about this campaign and tried to inform parents about the product.
- **The Slovak Community in New York** – With the arrival of Fr. Richard Baker to St. John Nepomucene and the work that he has done with the united parishes of St. John Nepomucene, St. John the Martyr, and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the Slovak community is thriving under his enthusiastic leadership and stewardship and is becoming the center of Slovak faith and culture. I have met Fr. Baker, a new member of Jednota, on several occasions to discuss the opportunities to work together. Engaging with the united parishes, in addition to the Slovak community, is a wonderful way to spread the good work of FCSU to others. I am very much looking forward to working with him and the New York branches in the coming year.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the home office staff for their support, encouragement, and administrative assistance throughout the year.

I want to thank all the members of Region 1 for their enthusiasm, collaboration, and participation. I am excited about the work we've done thus far as a team in coming up with ideas for a Regional picnic and other events in 2017! I look forward to continuing to work together with the Executive Board and Board of Directors in building and strengthening our society through growing membership and increased member participation.

Respectfully submitted,

Sabina Sabados

Region 1 Regional Director