

National Pageant

Meet the 2018 Miss Czech-Slovak US Contestants

Name: Annika Angelo
Wisconsin Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 18
Parents: Luanne Angelo
Hometown: Phillips, WI
Talent: Piano Solo
Sponsor: Phillips Czechoslovakian Community Festival

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I would like to become Miss Czech-Slovak US because of my pride for our heritage. As someone who has been a part of the Czech-Slovak festival in my home state for almost my entire life, I feel a deep connection to my Slovak roots and would like to represent both the Czech and Slovak communities in a larger role. As the Miss Czech-Slovak US, I would feel honored to help others discover our heritage and history, while instilling the deep passion for our past, present, and future. I feel that I am prepared to take on the responsibilities that come with being Miss Czech-Slovak US Queen.

Future Goals: To find a job as a marriage and family counselor in the future and start her own family.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has been involved in the Miss Czech Slovak Wisconsin festival for over thirteen years. Annika's family has performed with the Czech singers at the festival, singing traditional songs in Czech and in English.

Name: Victoria Bartos
Ohio Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 20
Parents: Edward and Susan Bartos
Hometown: Hudson, OH
Talent: Jazz Dance Routine
Sponsor: Edward and Susan Bartos, grandmother Margaret Dintino, and Branch 161 of the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association.

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be Miss Czech Slovak US because I would love to be able to use the platform to promote Czech and Slovak culture in the United States. Many people do not know much about the small countries of Central Europe, revealing itself in that I am the only student at my school in my Czech language class. I know that the Czech Republic is an important country not only for its rich history, but for its growing market and influence in the EU and world. I want to spread information and show the culture of these amazing country that have been of great significance in my life. Also, becoming Miss Czech-Slovak US would be a way to honor my grandparents and great-grandparents who uprooted their lives to better their families and themselves. It would be a way to pay tribute their hard work and challenges they had faced.

Future Goals: After pursuing a bachelor of science in international business with a minor in Slavic and Eastern European studies from The Ohio State University she hopes to continue her education and obtain a masters degree.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She is currently learning Czech from an instructor at Indiana University because she is in the highest level of Czech her university offers and wants to continue her language instruction.

Name: Kristina Blaha-Rodriguez
Florida Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 20
Parents: Jana Blaha and Roy Rodriguez
Hometown: Miami Beach, FL
Talent: Modern Dance Routine
Sponsor: Jana Blaha and the American Czech Slovak Cultural Club in Miami

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be the 2018 queen representing Miss Czech-Slovak US for a variety of reasons, mainly because I realize the value and importance in ensuring the Czech heritage and culture remains alive and strong from generations to come. If given the opportunity, I would promote the Czech and Slovak heritage and history and use the platform to demonstrate the importance and the contributions by both beautiful countries and the many attributions in society. I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US because of the difference I can evoke in representing such a culture-rich heritage; I want to spread awareness of the Czech culture, language and way of life. I want to be a role model for any Czech or Slovak girl who meets me, so she can have ambition and motivation to learn where she can from, because being connected to your backgrounds is an important quality to have.

Future Goals: She plans to attend law school to become an environmental lawyer and devote her life to public service promoting sustainability.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She visits the Czech Republic every summer participating in local folklore festivals while there.

Name: Danielle Blattman
Texas Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 17
Parents: Scott and Janet Blattman
Hometown: China Spring, TX
Talent: Flute Solo
Sponsor: The Czech Heritage Society of Texas

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US Queen because I have grown up admiring the previous Czech Heritage Society Queens, including my older sister, at various Czech events and envisioned myself fulfilling their duties



as I become older. Additionally, I feel that becoming Miss Czech-Slovak US Queen would allow me to continue to learn more about my heritage and develop for it a deeper love that I can share with others. I plan to attend many more Czech-Slovak events within my state and beyond.

Future Goals: To become a physical therapist and practice in the Central Texas region, get married and have a family.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: As a group with her siblings, she has performed in kroje dancing and singing at state and local festivals.

Name: Janae Buckley
Nebraska Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 20
Parents: William and Janet Buckley
Hometown: Omaha, NE
Talent: Ballet Dance Routine
Sponsor: Nebraska Czechs Incorporated

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US to truly honor my Czech ancestors and thank them for their sacrifices in passing their culture along to me. My heritage is a huge part of me and who I am. After all, I was told I tried to polka before I tried to walk. Earning this title will enable me to foster excitement about preserving Czech heritage and traditions within young people. Authentic kroje are what tie my family together—my ancestors were seamstresses and tailors. I would visit places in the Czech Republic where they make and restore kroje. This title will give me opportunities to wear kroj and use it to teach others about this connection to our pasts and keep it alive for future generations. This prestigious title will help me in my ongoing quest to promote excitement about cultural preservation, as it would allow me to reach people of all ages. Young people are drawn to the colorful outfits and fun activities of the Czech culture. This has inspired me to teach a polka class to homeschooled children. We also talk about family heritage and have each child share something about their own culture. Some of the children told me that they didn't know where their family came from, but thanks to me they want to learn more about their family's heritage. Those moments are why I am so passionate about heritage preservation and why I want to continue to educate youth in fun, inspiring ways. I also value talking to the older generations and hearing their stories and life experiences. It's so fulfilling when I see their eyes light up when they admire my kroj. I have made it my goal to keep those stories alive and share and honor the traditions of the Czech culture and inspire others to do the same.

Future Goals: To become a recognized expert in preserving and restoring heirloom kroje.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has served as the Omaha Czech Culture Club's junior royalty program organizer and a mentor for the past six years.

Name: Madelyn Novosad
Oklahoma Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 19
Parents: Sharon Major and Billy Novosad
Hometown: Yukon, OK
Talent: Vocal Performance
Sponsor: Oklahoma Czechs Incorporated

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US because I love learning about and sharing our heritage. I will strive to inspire younger generations to become involved in the preservation of our customs and traditions. I want the opportunity to excite people about their ancestry because I believe that it's very important to know where we come from. That is why I ran for the title of the Oklahoma Czech-Slovak Queen and why I want to continue to represent American Czechs and Slovaks as Miss Czech-Slovak US. I would also love to visit the festivals in other Czech and Slovak communities, particularly Texas. My great-grandmother speaks so fondly of attending the enormous festivals there. I want to see Tabor, South Dakota's performance of the Besada with its thirty circles filled with dancers of all ages. The National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, Iowa also interests me greatly. I've seen pictures of the exhibits and would very much like to photograph them myself. I am very excited to be assigned my little sister at the Wilber festival! I can't wait to form a lasting relationship with my little sister and help give her a wonderful experience.

Future Goals: To further her college education while serving in the Air National Guard.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has been a member of the Oklahoma Folk Dancers for six years performing at various festivals.

Name: Alisha Ptacek
Kansas Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 23
Parents: Timothy Ptacek and Mikki Carney
Hometown: Salina, KS
Talent: Vocal Performance
Sponsor: Cherry Ptacek and Wilson, KS Chamber of Commerce

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I would really like to be Miss Czech-Slovak US because my heritage is very important to me. It is something I recognize has a large impact on a person and as a teacher I think it is important for students, as well as adults, to understand their culture as well as to accept it and grow from it.

Future Goals: To continue being a teacher and someday get married and raise a family.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She attended the European Union Open House where she spent the day at the



Czech Embassy interacting with others sharing her Czech culture.

Name: Jacqueline Stasa
Missouri Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 18
Parents: Diane and Matt Stasa
Hometown: Fenton, MO
Talent: Alto Saxophone Solo
Sponsor: Czech-Slovak Missouri Pageant

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US so that I can share all that I have learned and experienced regarding my Czech/Moravian culture and heritage. I want to be an "ambassador" to young girls and boys and inspire them to learn, appreciate, and embrace the unique and rich heritage that developed and flourished in this relatively tiny, yet culturally mighty enclave in the heart of Central Europe.

Future Goals: To pursue a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and hopefully study abroad during her college career.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has been involved with Sokol St. Louis and the American-Czech Educational Center with her family in various capacities since she was a little girl.

Name: Heather Vikla
Minnesota Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 23
Parents: Kelly and David Vikla
Hometown: Lonsdale, MN
Talent: Flute Solo
Sponsor: Miss Czech-Slovak Minnesota Organization

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? I would love to be Miss Czech-Slovak US because I am deeply passionate about our heritage. I love hearing the stories of older generations as they grew up and being able to tell those stories to younger generations such as the Czech Heritage Jr. Royalty of which I am a director. This year is an important year in Czech history: 100 years since Czechoslovakia formed, 50 years since Prague Spring, and 25 years since the Czech and Slovak Republics split peacefully. Being Miss Czech-Slovak US would give me an even better opportunity to travel and spread the importance of this year as well as meet more people whose stories I can tell to keep our heritage alive. I would use this title to build relationships with people in states that don't have Czech celebrations to encourage more young women to represent their state at the Miss Czech-Slovak US pageant and to spread their love for the heritage.

Future Goals: To attain a Master's degree in teaching German to further her education in increasing student interest and understanding of other cultures.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has been working with Marit Lee Kucera, the Czech Honorary Consul of Minnesota/Upper Midwest, to spread the word about the current historical year of the 100/50/25 as well as to learn more about the history and current culture.

Name: Elyssa Walloch
South Dakota Czech-Slovak Queen
Age: 19
Parents: Mark and Emily Walloch
Hometown: Scotland, SD
Talent: Vocal Performance
Sponsor: Tabor Chamber of Commerce

Why do you want to be Miss Czech-Slovak US? It would be a great honor to be crowned Miss Czech-Slovak US. I would continue to represent my heritage and community by attending not only Czech Slovak Festivals, but other ethnic festivals to promote our Czech Slovak heritage. I would continue to be a role model to the younger generations by helping teach the Besada dance, by proudly wearing my Kroj and will continue to learn about our Czech Slovak culture to pass down to the next generation. I would like to be Miss Czech-Slovak US, as it would make all my relatives and community proud that someone from South Dakota could hold such an honor and represent our ancestors.

Future Goals: To further her education and pursue a career in the medical field, someday returning to her small community to practice medicine.

Spotlight Czech-Slovak Activities: She has danced the Besada dance for the past 13 years and has helped teach it to beginners in recent years.





Czech Slavnosti

AMERICANS CELEBRATING THEIR CZECH HERITAGE

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