

AMERICAN CAMP

ENGLISH CAMP WITH AMERICANS IN POLIČKA



2004–2024

MANY PEOPLE WILL WALK IN AND OUT OF YOUR LIFE, BUT ONLY

TRUE FRIENDS

WILL LEAVE FOOTPRINTS IN YOUR HEART.

ENGLISH CAMP — BEGINNINGS

A long time ago, in a church far, far away, Pastor Jan Dus arrived in Ponca City, in 2002 with his family, to explore how we organize Family Ministry in our church. While he was there, he experienced a summer camp we call Vacation Bible School. This camp is loved by children from preschool through grade 6. Jan and our pastor, Tom Schacher, began brain storming how this concept could be adapted to an English camp.

They set a date for July, 2004 and asked Jolene Ebbert and I to create the classes (which felt daunting). Jan and a marvelous Polička team then started working on logistics, finding volunteers, homes and dinner sponsors for the Americans. Plus, many other details and supplies that had to happen. Wow, having this camp take place has many aspects that takes time to come together.

I remember the morning we, the American team, went to the airport. I know I was excited and nervous at the same time. It turned out that a bird flew into the engine and even though they kept saying “It will be fixed any minute”, it wasn’t. Therefore, we arrived in Polička a day late. We only had Sunday afternoon to meet the volunteers, see our teaching rooms for the first time, set them up, and try to catch up with lost luggage. Loosing luggage has almost become a game of guessing who will not have luggage when we get there.

I must say, with all that could become stumbling blocks, it STILL catches my breath every Monday morning to walk into that Sanctuary and see all the beautiful, happy faces of children of all ages ready to get started.

As we planned for the first camp, we were told to do what we do in Ponca. That means, a theme to inspire, games, learning activities and of course energizers! They will really think we are crazy Americans! But we started with 500 Miles, and just hoped they would come back on Tuesday. They did and have for 20 years. I still cry every time I think about it.

This camp has changed my life in so many ways. Bill and I have seen it has changed the lives of our daughters. I am so proud and thankful that because of this camp, Kati spent 2 years working with the church and is now a pastor, and Jacque has taken over the roles of both team leader and camp director. It has been so thrilling to see over the years campers become volunteers and some come back as leaders. What a joy it is to have them keep in contact with us all year.

From my first fruit dumplings, trying to pronounce “Přemek” correctly, exploring Polička, giving Chip our fried liver, many other experiences and of course, getting to visit and know so many of you that I cherish as friends, my life has changed forever!

Ann Salmons





How It All Began

It all started a year earlier, in July 2003. A few days before our year in Ponca City was over, the idea of an English Camp in the following summer in Polička was conceived between Pastor Tom Schacher and ourselves. We quickly received support from Ann Salmons and Jolene Ebert. And a number of friends in the Polička and Ponca City congregations just a few weeks later.

The year, which followed, was full of email exchanges between Ponca City and Polička and meetings of task groups on both sides. We wanted to be ready. We wanted everything to be planned. We wanted to make sure that things would go smoothly. – But, little did we know how different the reality would be.

In order to properly welcome our friends from Ponca City, we decided to take our three children to the Prague airport. All of us were excitedly awaiting to see our Oklahoman friends after a year of separation. As we were waiting for their arrival, unforeseen challenges unfolded. A bird's unexpected collision with the plane's engine in Wichita triggered a cascade of delays, leaving the travelers stranded. And leaving our family waiting in Prague not knowing for how long.

The delays stretched on, and with each passing hour, nerves began to fray. It did not make any sense to be waiting at the airport for someone who had not even started their long journey. So we decided to explore the Prague ZOO, trying to make the best of an unexpected situation.

Two days later, the weary travelers finally arrived in Prague. We rushed to Polička arriving there on Sunday evening. Both the hosts and the guests were relieved and exhausted at the same time. But the two days of delay left us with no time for preparations. The first day of camp was only hours away and our guests needed to sleep.

Despite the fatigue and the unfamiliarity of their surroundings, American and Czech volunteers rallied together, fueled by the shared purpose of creating a memorable experience for the awaiting children. In the end, amidst the chaos and uncertainty, long-lasting bonds were formed, and the first chapter of First Camp unfolded, marking the beginning of an unforgettable journey.

Anna and Jan Dusovi

FOREWORD FROM THE ALMANACH EDITOR

Dear Czech volunteers,

In the next few pages you are going to read a number of short texts, mostly addressed to the Americans from Oklahoma and Michigan who have been coming to organize camps for children in Polička for twenty years. Without the Americans there would be no American Camp, makes sense. And I want to say a big thank you to all the Americans who invested their holiday time, energy, enthusiasm and money to come to Polička to spend almost two weeks playing around with Czech children and volunteers. However, without you, my dear volunteers, it would be equally impossible. There would be no camp without Honza inviting the Americans in the first place and Uri accepting the challenge of taking over and leading the American camp with quite limited English at the time. There would be no camp without team leaders tirelessly translating for their teams, answering hundreds of campers' questions, picking up their bags, caps and treasures that they had left at different stations, making sure each member of their group enjoyed the camp and helping the children to pick up as much English as possible. There would be no one to help Americans explain the rules of the games at

Recreation, no one to help the little ones with crafts, no one to quickly clean and reprepare the Crafts or Science stations for the next group. There would be no energizers in the morning without the "sound team" setting up the sound system before the camp starts. It would be impossible to feed the children snacks without the "snack ladies" and to feed all of us delicious pork at the garden party without the "grill men". There would be no trips without the planning team's endless discussions about the places to show the Americans that they haven't seen yet. There would be no one to translate and explain things for the Americans at various trips and events. The time spent in Polička would probably never be so memorable for the Americans without the families inviting them for dinners and sharing their time and life stories with them. But most importantly without all of you – Czech volunteers – there would be no one to befriend the Americans and make their stays here in Polička so enjoyable that they wanted to come back. Thank you all for being so helpful and faithful, coming year after year to work at the camp and spend another week of joy and togetherness with our friends from the USA. Good job!

Magda

CAMP PREPARATION TEAM (2004–2024)

Jan Dus / Jiří (Uri) Tengler (pastors)

Anna Dusová

Magdalena Jakubcová

Hana Bartošová

Jiří Švec

Zdena Šimonová

Ilona Teplá

Pavel Vojtíšek

Láďa Bartoš

Jarda Najbert

Dagmar Klusoňová

Jarmila Andrllová

Jiří Hladík





CZECH CAMP VOLUNTEERS (2004–2024)

Andrle Martin
 Andrlíková Anna
 Batla Daniel
 Bartoš Adam
 Bartoš Přemek
 Bellak Jan
 Biberlová Adéla
 Blandová Kristýna
 Blandová Martina
 Braňová Daniela
 Brigante Adam
 Bukáčková Marika
 Burešová Lenka
 Cenková Petra
 Dietz Lioba
 Dolejšová Magdalena
 Doležalová Veronika
 Dudek Jindřich
 Ducháčková Lada
 Dus Jaromír
 Dus Tomáš
 Dusová Magdalena
 Dusová Marta
 Dvořák Jan
 Dvořáková Karolína
 Edlman Jan
 Erbesová Nicole
 Faltýnková Andrea
 Fedorová Barbora
 Fejt Filip
 Feltl Lukáš
 Feltlová Klára
 Feltlová Lenka
 Filipová Zuzana
 Fingerland Vojta
 Fingerlandová Kristýna

Flidr Jan
 Freundova Barbora
 Freundová Linda
 Gapová Martina
 Gregorová Anežka
 Hájek Radek
 Hamr Adam
 Háp Matouš
 Haupt Martin
 Havran Lukáš
 Havran Honza
 Havran Martin
 Hladík Jiří
 Hladíková Ester
 Hořáková Pavlína
 Hromádka Petr
 Chadima Tomáš
 Chadimová Milena
 Chalupníková Markéta
 Charouzová Lucie
 Jakubcová Barbora
 Jakubcová Klára
 Janeček Ondřej
 Janečková Eva
 Janečková Tereza
 Jelínková Barbora
 Jelínková Julie
 Jílková Adéla
 Jirčáková Jana
 Jirků Alice
 Justová Aneta
 Kadidlo Lukáš
 Kadidlová Eva
 Klepárník David
 Klein Kristián
 Kleinová Charlota

Klimešová Alžběta
 Klimešová Barbora
 Klimešová Veronika
 Klímová Martina
 Klusoň Štěpán
 Klusoňová Vanda
 Kozáčková Karolína
 Kozáčková Radka
 Kozáková Anita
 Krabička Jan
 Král Jan
 Kučera Jan
 Kučerová Anežka
 Kučerová Karolína
 Kučerová Šárka
 Kunhartová Daniela
 Kyclová Jitka
 Lašticová Veronika
 Lavický Jan
 Lavický Jeroným
 Láznička Standa
 Lázničková Zuzana
 Macek Adam
 Macek Ondřej
 Macková Alena
 Marešová Marcela
 Matějková Anna
 Matějková Štěpánka
 Mencová Simona
 Mlejnková Kamila
 Mlejnková Pavla
 Mužíková Michaela
 Nagy Vojtěch
 Najbert Jara
 Nekvindová Aneta
 Nemeč Sára

Neřold Jan
 Nigut Svatava
 Novotná Eliška
 Novotná Tereza
 Nožková Sára
 Paclíková Petra
 Pallová Klára
 Pejchar Štěpán
 Pešout Lukáš
 Petrásková Marie
 Petrásová Soňa
 Petrásová Žaneta
 Petříčková Zuzka
 Plecháček Šimon
 Plecháček Ester
 Punčochářová Anna
 Punčochářová Pavlína
 Raaschová Johana
 Rozsival Vít
 Rozsivalová Šárka
 Rýdlová Lada
 Řebíček Petr
 Satrapová Iva
 Satrapová Pavla
 Simonová Hana
 Sláma Petr
 Slezáková Eliška
 Stodolová Magda
 Stoudek Pavel
 Stoučková Maruška
 Stoučková Věrka
 Straková Hana
 Svatoš Filip
 Svobodová Ludmila
 Šir Ondřej
 Škvařilová Marie

Šotolová Jana
 Štursová Karolína
 Štursová Kateřina
 Švec Jiří jr
 Švecová Eva
 Švecová Martina
 Švihlová Eliška
 Tengler Jáchym
 Tengler Joel
 Tenglerová Ida
 Tenglerová Rút
 Teplá Kateřina
 Teplá Lenka
 Tomanová Barbora
 Tomanová Kateřina
 Trusina Filip
 Tůmová Barbora
 Tůmová Šárka
 Tutková Tereza
 Uher Jiří
 Ulrichová Kristýna
 Uttendorfská Klára
 Váňová Kateřina
 Vápeníková Sára
 Vlček Štěpán
 Vojtová Zuzana
 Vondráková Pavla
 Vosmeková Jitka
 Vožarová Jana
 Vránová Johana
 Vraspírová Pavla
 Vykypělová Sára
 Willantová Petra
 Zámečníková Linda
 Žďárová Štěpánka

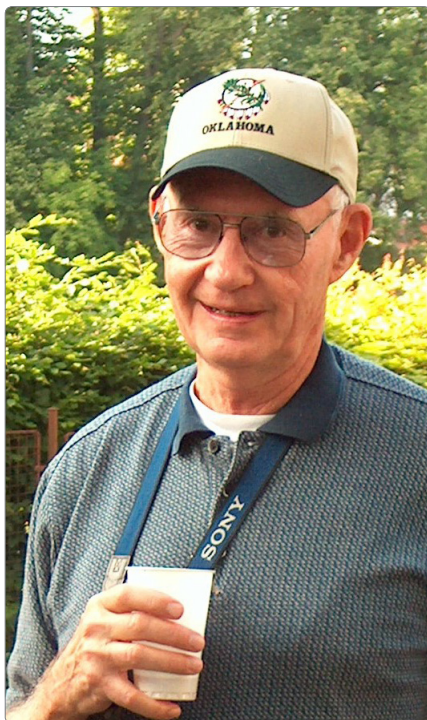
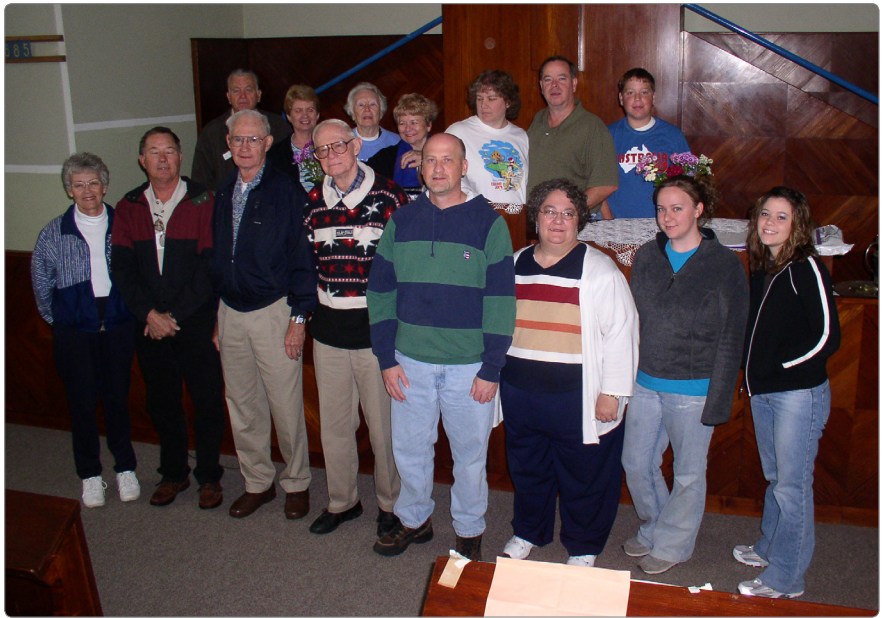
American Team

TOM SCHACHER
ANN SALMONS
JACQUE SALMONS
DENNIS POULSON
VICKI POULSON
DICK JONES
JOAN JONES
DANNY SMITH
MARGARET SMITH
JOLENE EBBERT
KERRY EBBERT
SARA EBBERT
DANIEL EBBERT
CHIP WHIPPLE
FRAN CLEGG

There are many types of choices and actions we all make in our lives. Each day we talked about a different idea that can make us better friends, family members and community members.

- Monday: Everyone is special
- Tuesday: Hospitality
- Wednesday: Making good choices/self control
- Thursday: Loyalty/Honor Family, Friends, and Country
- Friday: Flexibility and changes





Team Names	
Colors	
RED	PURPLE
BLUE	BLACK
GREEN	WHITE
YELLOW	BROWN
ORANGE	PINK



2005

PARABLES

American Team

TOM SCHACHER
McKENNA SCHACHER
KERRY EBBERT
JOLENE EBBERT
BILL SALMONS
ANN SALMONS
JACQUE SALMONS
DORENE TONSFELDT
LANA DAVIS
JOY GLASS
MYKA MAXWELL
MARY ANN HOLT
CHIP WHIPPLE
JODY WHIPPLE
CALAH LYNES
KIM (SHAFFER) SHANKS
CAILA (SCOTT) HUSTER
LINDSAY (GOAD) HANEY
MIKE JEFFERS
MICHAEL JEFFERS
VICKI POULSON

Discussing the stories of the parables can help us understand our own lives better. Each day we discussed a different parable and what we can learn from it.

- Monday: The Good Samaritan
- Tuesday: The Lost Sheep
- Wednesday: The Sower and the Seeds
- Thursday: The Prodigal Son
- Friday: Lamp of the Body / Let Your Light Shine





- Team Names**
Native Tribes
- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| PONCAN | TONKAWA |
| CHEROKEE | OSAGE |
| SEMINOLE | PAWNEE |
| CHOCTAW | CREEK |
| CHICKASAW | CHEYENNE |

2005

2006 BECAUSE I KNEW YOU. I HAVE BEEN CHANGED FOR GOOD.

American Team

KERRY EBBERT
ANN SALMONS
BILL SALMONS
JACQUE SALMONS
KATI (SALMONS) COLLINS
JOY GLASS
LARRY GLASS
CHIP WHIPPLE
LINDSAY (GOAD) HANEY
CAILA (SCOTT) HUSTER
KIM (SHAFER) SHANKS
VALERIE SMITH
ALEX SMITH

“People come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we can learn, and we are led to those who help us most to grow if we let them and we help them in return.” By learning about the stories of different characters each day we learned that we all can be an influence of good to others around us.

- Monday: Ruth (Service)
- Tuesday: David (Sacrifice)
- Wednesday: Joseph (Grace)
- Thursday: Esther (Advocate)
- Friday: Abraham (Trust)





Team Names	
States	
NEW YORK	VIRGINIA
OKLAHOMA	PENNSYLVANIA
FLORIDA	SOUTH DAKOTA
CALIFORNIA	ALASKA
TEXAS	ARIZONA

2006

To My BELOVED CZECH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

My beloved Czech family and friends,

I miss you terribly! You helped me learn about the world, and you gave me new perspectives on life. While looking for mushrooms or blueberries, I learned to observe and be attentive. While teaching, I learned to value the wisdom of my students. While celebrating together, I learned to appreciate old traditions. The world may have changed, but Polička Beer stays the same, and the Charles Bridge is still standing. The years between my visits have been too

many, but my love and gratitude are equally strong. These are some pictures I share to tell others about you, and I hope you enjoy them. Many of these are from 2011, but a few are from 2006! My little girls, Samantha and Abigail, and my husband, Robbie, are looking forward to meeting you in the future, and until then, may God bless you with laughter, gratitude, peace, and a bit of silliness.

Love, your American Girl with Czech Legs,

Kati Salmons Collins





2007

ACTS OF KINDNESS

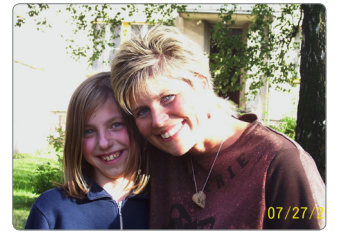
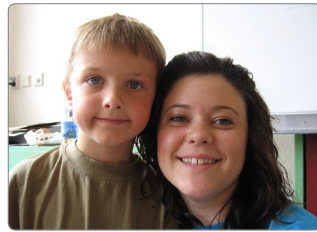
American Team

KERRY EBBERT
ANN SALMONS
SARA EBBERT
JACQUE SALMONS
KATI (SALMONS) COLLINS
CHIP WHIPPLE
ALEX SMITH
VALERIE SMITH
CAILA (SCOTT) HUSTER
GARY SCOTT
MALORY (SCOTT) HORINEK
JULIE BILLS
JOY GLASS
LARRY GLASS
KEN MCKINLEY
MARY MCKINLEY
LINDSAY (GOAD) HANEY
KELLY OFFUTT

With “Priceless Commercials” and a “News Flash” each day we talked about random acts of kindness and how we can do those in our everyday lives.

- Monday: Ordinary Deeds of Good Will
- Tuesday: Acts of a Volunteer
- Wednesday: Acts of Friends
- Thursday: Acts of Trust
- Friday: Acts in a greater good that connects us all





Team Names
US Cities

OKLAHOMA CITY	SEATTLE
DENVER	CHICAGO
ORLANDO	DALLAS
SAN FRANCISCO	ST LOUIS
ATLANTA	PHILADELPHIA

2007

American Team

KERRY EBBERT
 DANIEL EBBERT
 ANN SALMONS
 BILL SALMONS
 KATI SALMONS
 JACQUE SALMONS
 JULIE BILLS
 JOY GLASS
 LARRY GLASS
 LEAH HRACHOVEC
 JEREMY AULT
 JAMIE AULT
 PAULA DENSON
 KELSEY GOEBEL
 SARAH CHANCELOR
 DERRICK ROWE
 KELLY OFFUT
 KATIE SNYDER
 BEN KLINE
 CHIP WHIPPLE

Doors in the world and in our lives come in many shapes and sizes. If we look for the good in the world and the kindness of others, we take that with us through each new door. By learning about the different doors in the life of Moses, we learned about our own lives.

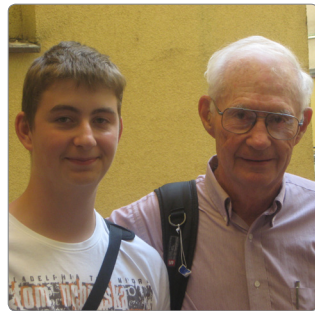
- Monday: The Open Door
- Tuesday: The Closed Door
- Wednesday: A Welcoming Door
- Thursday: Doors of Opportunities and Choices
- Friday: Exiting the Door

Observation by Paula:

“I have observed the following about Czech people:

1. How similar we (CZ and US) are in the things that we value most: family, home, friends and pride in our heritage, as well as similar beliefs and faith.
2. I love the happy nature of Czech people when we get to know them in the Church and in their homes. They make me drop my serious cover and enjoy life!
3. I believe that Czech people are very giving and generous in all ways and I appreciate their sincere interest in each of us as we build relationships in Polička.”





Team Names
National Parks

ACADIA, MAINE
 BIG BEND, TEXAS
 EVERGLADES, FLORIDA
 GREAT SMOKY MT, TENNESSEE
 REDWOOD, CALIFORNIA
 DENALI, ALASKA
 GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA
 YELLOWSTONE, WYOMING
 HAWAII VOLCANOES, HAWAII
 MESA VERDE, COLORADO



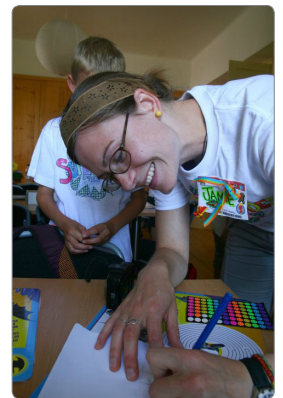
THIS IS OUR STORY ☺...

When Jamie and I initially arrived in Polička in the summer of 2008, we were whisked into the frenetic energy of planning for what was then the 5th annual English Camp. There were names to learn, people to meet, culture shocks to navigate, language mis-haps to smile at, and skits to write and perform. And we were recently married, having just exchanged our vows six months prior. There was a lot of uncertainty. Perhaps some naivety. And scarce assuredness that our lives in Polička would even work out. If I'm honest, I can say I don't remember much from that camp in 2008. My mind was inundated with tasks, demands, and anxieties. I'm pretty sure I disassociated and instead solely focused on the fear of not knowing what would happen when the lights and energy of the camp died down. When the departing plane filled with kind, gregarious Oklahomans took off from Prague, to pierce the sky on its way back to the United States. To home. To familiarity. While Jamie and I were left to figure out what to do next. In our apartment in Polička that Tuesday. Alone.

But a funny thing happened. Over the course of the next two years, we never did feel alone. What may have appeared at the time to be small acts of kindness from Czech friends and camp volunteers, was magnified into courageous acts of friendship for two young, impressionable Americans. We relied

on literally every one of the Czech volunteers from the camp to provide us with our most basic needs. The camp, with its blurred lines and hurried pace, provided the foundation for slower, deeper resonance and reflexion. And over time, the memories that stick with us were the moments where Jamie and I felt connected to a community that adopted us without question or hesitancy. They are flashes of memories. Probably forgotten by most of you, but extremely visceral for us:

It's the memory of the Dus children taking us to buy raincoats. It's Madla Dolejsova spending one complete afternoon taking pictures of a plush mouse on oversized chairs in Svitavy. It's Jarda and us, three adults, swinging at a playground. It's me receiving desperately-needed dental care from Dr. Kucerova, while her daughter Kaja translated. It's Jirka and Lenka Svecovi finding us a washing machine. It's Vlad'a and Lydia Hancil patiently teaching us Czech – a language that Jamie and I did our best to butcher. It's Karel and Vera Zahourovi graciously hosting us for our first two weeks, helping us navigate the supermarket. It's Bartošovi taking us on our first hike to Svojanov, introducing us to Tlacenka. It's Renata and Jirka Blandovi befriending us and inviting us to "fitness nights," where more beer was consumed than push ups attempted. It's Vlasta and Mila Plechackovi having us over for Sunday tea and conversations, where we



dug deep into family history and theology – moments we will cherish forever. It's Magda, Bara, and Klara showing us how to properly split the sausage to get a proper roast over a fire. It's Marie Stankova introducing us to the work of Charitas. It's Vosmekovi in Kamenec showing us the true meaning of Czech hospitality (with a lot of Slivovice on the side). It's Olga, it's David, it's Esther, it's Otakar and their kindness and joy, always making us feel loved and welcome. It's Vlada Gracias and our Tuesday morning runs around the lakes. It's Klusonovi inviting us for soup and a meal and an impromptu music session in their living room. It's making gingerbread cookies with Ondrej and Tereza. It's colossal collisions on ice skates with Vilhem and Jana Brahovi, and cross country skiing in Borova. It's walks with Honza, Lukas, and Madla back to Hegerova, tripping over the railroad ties as we crossed behind Penny market in the final light of the day. It's Petr Simon and Mlenjkovi rotating the roasting pig for the final camp celebration. It's Pavla, Jindrich, Pavel, Adam, Filip, Anicka, Klara, Marta, Radek, (among others) at Dankovice sliding slippers across a floor in an olympic farce. It's breaking several brooms on the frozen lake playing broomball. It's Cerne Ovce and our evening practices. It's the greetings and pleasantries shown by students in the shops. The dinner invites and the conversations around fires. It's dancing (and drinking!) at Maturitni Ples. It's the countless nights

at the pub. It's picking mushrooms. It's these small memories and so many more – multitudes more. These moments, forever remembered, have shaped me and Jamie to such a deep level that we can't be separated from you. Sorry. You're stuck with us.

So back to the camps. They are the beginning and the deepening of relationships and friendships. They are the archive of memories that now contain communities from across the US and Europe. The camp has produced romance and marriages. And connected families. What we appreciate about the camps isn't just the event itself. It's the act of forging ahead in its planning, believing that this relationship between people and cultures matters. In our digital lives, where friends and social networks can be swiped, deleted, or blocked, the English Camp is decidedly analogue. It's a hand-written letter with hundreds, maybe thousands, of postage stamps on its envelope. And these letters take time to write. There is intentionality behind our words and messages to each other, even beyond distance and time. So as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of this camp and what it has meant to all of us, let's celebrate the fact that we are face-to-face again. Not behind a screen, but together. In person. What an act of joy and love! What an opportunity we have to continue to write this story.

Jamie and Jeremy Ault

American Team

JEREMY AULT

JAMIE AULT

PAULA DENSON

KELLY DENSON

JEAN CROCKETT

AUSTIN ALLEN

BEN CROCKETT

SAM STEELE

TIM SCHLAIS

RACHEL SCHLAIS

JODY WHIPPLE

CHIP WHIPPLE

BARB HENDERSON

BOB HENDERSON

JULIE BILLS

LEAH HRACHOVEC

The theme of this years camp is “One Big Village” and the kids will be hearing stories from the travels of Paul and then learning about different regions of the world each day as they travel through the different stations.

Skit: Mr. Postman

Leaders: Jeremy and Jamie Ault

- Monday: Europe
- Tuesday: South America
- Wednesday: Asia
- Thursday: Africa
- Friday: North America





Team Names
Countries

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| PHILIPPINES | GUATEMALA |
| KENYA | ESTONIA |
| OMAN | CAMBODIA |
| BULGARIA | HUNGARY |
| PARAGUAY | PERU |

2009

American Team

JEREMY AULT
 JAMIE AULT
 KERRY EBERT
 TONYA SCOTT
 MALLORY SCOTT
 JORDAN SCOTT
 CHRIS HALL
 KELSEY GOEBEL
 PAULA DENSON
 KIM SHANKS
 JASON SHANKS
 JEAN CROCKETT
 BEN CROCKETT
 COLTON CROCKETT
 BARB HENDERSON
 BOB HENDERSON
 CHARLIE BRUCE
 TIM SCHLAIS
 RACHEL SCHLAIS
 LINDSEY (SCHWAGER)
 JULKOWSKI

The theme of this year's camp is Superheroes, and each day will have a mini theme that is a characteristic of superheroes (friendship, creativity, kindness, etc...), which the campers will be learning about. However, there is a catch. Everyday there is a skit, biblically based, were there are two superheroes that are trying to save the world, however they are always too late – a normal, everyday person does the job for them. Skit: Super J (Jeremy Ault) and Wondergirl (Petra Willantová) – not good at their job

Leaders: Jeremy and Jamie

- Monday: Friendship
- Tuesday: Creativity
- Wednesday: Kindness
- Thursday: Courage
- Friday: Empathy





Team Names
Superheroes

SUPERMAN
 INVISIBLE WOMAN
 INCREDIBLE
 ELASTIGIRL
 FALCON
 WONDER WOMAN
 FLASH
 STORM
 IRON MAN
 CAPTAIN AMERICA

REFLEXIONS & THOUGHTS

These are reflexions and thoughts by American volunteers collected by Jamie for the blog she was writing during the two camps prepared by J. and J. Aults while living in Polička.

Jean Crockett: “The Polička English camp, at the Brethern Church, has fun game, interesting crafts, and lots of fun! The teenage helpers and the adult teachers make a great team. There is lots of love here.”

Bob Henderson: “If the enthusiastic smiles of excited students and volunteers could be captured and shared around the world, we would be much closer to peace on earth.”

Leah Hrachovec: “I’m so impressed with the number of Czech volunteers and their dedication. We get to be a part of a team with them and it’s a joy to work together and get to know each other throughout the week.”

Julie Bills: “One of the things that impressed me the most is that Polička and the Czech countryside is so clean. I never see trash along the highways or in the parks. Also, I love the typical Czech breakfast: fresh, homemade bread, cheese, and salami with tomatoes and red peppers right out of the garden.”

Jody Whipple: “My first visit to the Czech Republic with the English Camp was in 2005. The kindness and generosity of the Czech people and their children has been an important part of my life since that time. I thank Polička for letting our team return to enjoy them, the scenery, architecture and hospitality of this beautiful village.

Sam Steele: “The people – adults, youth, and children – of the Czech Republic are children of God, just like us in America. The only walls are the ones we build!”

Barb Henderson: “There is much joy in my heart to be in ‘English Camp’. Polička has so many beautiful children. Thank you Polička. English Camp is awesome! Keep a smile on your face. Give love from your heart.”

Kelsey Goebel: “Today was amazing. The children were so excited. Seeing the smiles on all their faces was so inspiring. I can’t wait to continue working in the camp.”

Malory Scott: “As Monday came around the corner, from all the preparation, I realized that even though it is the first day I already feel the connection between the campers and us. The excitement they had was encouraging even though they were cautious with how they responded to us. I hope that everyone can step away from this week with the feeling that they had made a connection and a difference in the lives of the campers this week.”

Tonya Scott: “My first day of English Camp made me realise that kids are so very similar – regardless of geography. Today I had students of all ages and I watched them laugh, talk and wrestle. I had expected quieter, more withdrawn children, thinking American



kids were more rambunctious, but I quickly realised that they are the same – the smiles, the laughter, the curiosity. Even though it was a hot and tiring day it was full of excitement and reward.”

Paula Denson: “For me the mission trip has been full of unexpected kindnesses, which I have seen from people caring for others. It makes me think that our goal of finding ‘everyday superheroes’ in both groups – Czechs and Americans – has already been accomplished. I’m looking forward to finding more ‘superheros’ all week long.”

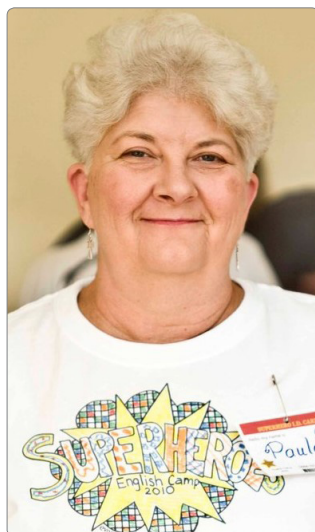
Colton Crockett: “English Camp has been a ton of fun so far. I think my favorite thing about camp is being able to meet new people.”

Tim Schlais: “During one dinner hosted by a Czech family in Polička, we began a conversation about the youth here and their search for something greater in life, some deeper sense of this life. A realization

hit me that sometimes the search may be important and will create a deeper faith for someone whose belief was come too easily. My greatest hope is that our week here will help someone begin their faith journey.”

Jordan Scott: “Yesterday was the best day of camp. I liked the family that we ate dinner with.”

Jamie: “WOW, what a week! I can’t believe the last day of camp has come and gone! I’m positive that everyone involved had a BLAST and it’s going to be hard to go back home and to our every day lives outside of English Camp. Jeremy and I would like to personally thank everyone who worked so hard to make this camp a success. Thanks to all the volunteers (Americans and Czechs) and all the families that hosted Americans or had them over for dinner. We know that each camp takes a lot of time and planning, but it would not have been able to happen without all your help. Thank you.”



And a few reflexions by Czech volunteers:

Pastor Jan: “The most exciting thing about the camp is how lively this place is. The campers, the Americans and the volunteers are just full of so much energy. After camp I like to walk around the church and feel all the loose floor boards that weren’t there before. I really like the openness of our doors – people coming and going, being relaxed and being themselves.”

Petra: “For me the camp is mainly about relationships. I’m happy my friends from America came so I can see them. And I’m happy I got to make more friends. Your company really means a lot. You always bring so much energy and it really inspires me.”

Jitka: “I’m a leader of the teenage girls and they are so hard to impress, but they really like it here. They are having fun and it is because of you.”

Hanka: “This is my first year and I didn’t think it would be this great. I can see you like this work and you like to work with children and the children really like you and so do I. This camp is a really special thing.”

Dan: “I’m not from Polička, so I don’t get to see local people throughout the year. English Camp for me means doing something good and making friends and seeing old friends – both Czechs and Americans.”

ONLY A FOOL WOULD SCUTTLE THIS

The first time I heard about the American camp was in the Fall of 2010. It was during the transition period when the congregation of the protestant church in Polička did not have a pastor. Jan Dus had finished his service in August and I was due to take over in February. However, it was necessary to start planning the next summer camp in the meantime. The planning team was facing a new question to tackle besides all the organizational issues: What position is the new pastor going to assume regarding the camp?

One day that Fall I was visited by a previously announced survey commando composed of Přemysl Bartoš, Petra Willantová and Jarda Najbert in the town of Zábřeh, where we lived at that time. They described with enthusiasm what the camp is about, how many volunteers are involved and what role the camp plays in the life of the congregation. Finally, they came to a crucial question: whether, as a new pastor, I was willing to support this camp or potentially become personally involved. I was taken aback by their question thinking to myself, “Why are they asking such a question? Isn’t that obvious? It’s clear that the camp is loved by both children and the volunteers, the organization is going well. Only a fool would scuttle such a well-running project.” My answer was that I couldn’t see any reason for not getting engaged in the camp and that I was more than ready to join in. The surveyors returned home reassured and soothed.

However, one obstacle was there yet to be overcome. I didn’t speak English. I had lived without the knowledge of English more or less happily for 36 years. I had a very good grasp of German and that was sufficient to talk to my German friends and read German books. How well could I learn English in half a year with all my other daily tasks? Would I be able to join in the camp happenings and communicate with the Americans? I wasn’t afraid of English. Magda Jakubcová taught me some basics before the camp. (Thank you.) Based on my previous experience of learning a language I knew that the only way to learn to speak it is by actually talking. So, when the Americans arrived, I wasn’t embarrassed to speak





bad English because it's the only way to get better. Every year I'm really happy to see the children at the camp pluck up their courage the same way I did back then, and try to talk with the Americans.

There's one more joyful duty I have regarding the camps. As a pastor, I prepare Czech-American Sunday services and, of course, singing is an inherent part of them. You won't find many songs in our Czech hymn books that would have English versions. Therefore it was difficult to find songs that we could all sing in both languages. So, I got down to work on my own translations to have a range of songs to sing together with our American friends. I am glad to see some of the song lyrics being adopted by congregations even outside of Polička. In other words, thanks to our American camp some classic English songs found their way into the Czech church. (Eg. Be Thou My Vision – Buď mojí nadějí.)

We should thank God for everyone who has ever been involved with the camp. All those who have provided the children, the youth and the adults with pleasant moments of togetherness in which everybody experienced human closeness and understanding.

Jiří Tengler, pastor

2011

SUPER STARS

American Team

KATI (SALMONS) COLLINS

JACQUE SALMONS

KAREN WILLIE

PAULA DENSON

CALEB FORBES

CONNER FORBES

BARB HENDERSON

BOB HENDERSON

GRETCHEN HRACHOVEC

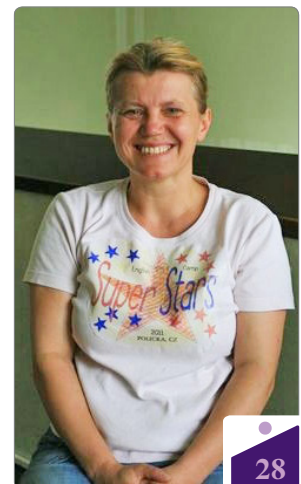
MARK HRACHOVEC

Skits followed the story of The Prodigal Son, told as a reality TV show with the younger son leaving home to go to Hollywood and become a movie star. Each day we discussed how a different character aspect relates to our own lives.

- Monday: Creativity
- Tuesday: Persistence
- Wednesday: Integrity
- Thursday: Thankfulness
- Friday: Courage

Link to the camp movies on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFD9254CA0660F681>





Team Names
Movie References

- MICKEY MOUSE
- SLEEPING BEAUTY
- TOY STORY
- PETER PAN
- SHREK
- INDIANA JONES
- MAGNIFICENT SEVEN
- ZORRO
- THE LORD OF THE RINGS
- STAR WARS

2011

Camp without Americans

JEREMY AULT

JAMIE AULT

TYLER MANNON

(their friend from Pittsburgh, PA, who came to the CZ with them)

This year's Camp was prepared and lead by Uri and the Czech team but we were very happy to learn that Jeremy and Jamie were going to come for a visit to Polička at the time of the Camp and join us. Jamie had wonderful creative ideas and the kids loved making the "Native American headbands" and decorating their clothes. Then we had a potlach and played the drums! There were only 30 campers but loads of fun.

- Monday: People on the journey
- Tuesday: Journey to freedom
- Wednesday: Journey for knowledge
- Thursday: Journey to a new land
- Friday: Journey home





Team Names

THE YOUNGEST
 THE MIDDLE
 THE OLDEST

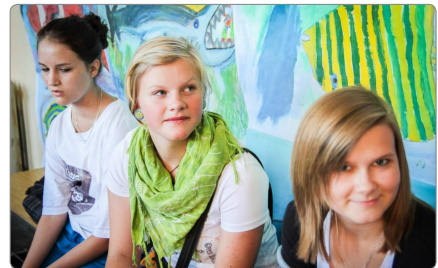
2012

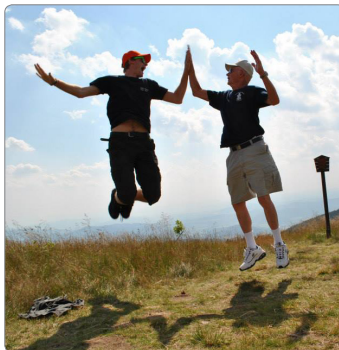
American Team

KERRY EBBERT
JOLENE EBBERT
DANIEL EBBERT
MEGAN EBBERT
SARA BRADLEY
KEVIN BRADLEY
KATI SALMONS
ANN SALMONS
JACQUE SALMONS
MALORY (SCOTT) HORINEK
CHIP WHIPPLE
PAULA DENSON
KELSEY (GOEBEL) HENRY
TONY GOEBEL
KELLY GOEBEL
LAUREN GOEBEL
EMMA GOEBEL

Skits followed the story of Albert Schweitzer and his humanitarian efforts. We learned about how he moved through the world with open eyes, ears, hands, and heart.

- Monday: Open Door
- Tuesday: Open Eyes
- Wednesday: Open Hands
- Thursday: Open Ears
- Friday: Open Heart





Team Names
African Animals

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| HEDGEHOGS | GIRAFFE |
| HYENAS | ZEBRA |
| GORILLAS | HIPPOPOTAMUS |
| ELEPHANT | CHEETAH |
| LION | REDBILLED
OXPECKER |

2014 PRECIOUS PEOPLE

PEOPLE PICTURED ON CZECH BANKNOTES

Camp without Americans but with plenty of Czech volunteers

The theme of the camp was whirling around the Czech historical personalities that made it to be pictured on Czech banknotes, so there was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, František Palacký, Jan Ámos Komenský, Ema Destinová, and Karel IV.

The best thing about the Camp was how many Czech volunteers decided to come and help with the Camp despite the fact that Americans did not arrive. The spirit of the Camp is so strong that it brings and holds together people who would otherwise not meet and makes them play crazy games with the children, run around throwing water balloons, draw funny pictures of historical celebrities, dance and sing in front of their peers which they would never even dream of doing in school. And they like it so much they are willing to come even when the Americans don't. So, a substantial part of their motivation – the chance to practice the language – is gone. Why did they come this year? I guess they just like hanging out together. And perhaps they like the church and the atmosphere here too. Thanks God!

- Monday: Karel IV. – a king and a visionary
- Tuesday: J. A. Komenský – a teacher – the school should be a playground, not a boring drill
- Wednesday: F. Palacký – a historian – the way we talk about history
- Thursday: E. Destinová – a singer – the power of songs in hard times
- Friday: T. G. Masaryk – a philosopher – the courage to think for oneself and defy nonsense





Team Names
Colours
of the Czech flag

WHITE TEAM
 BLUE TEAM
 RED TEAM

2014

2015 SEASONS

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES / SEASONS OF OUR STORIES

American Team

JACQUE SALMONS

ANN SALMONS

BILL SALMONS

MALORY (SCOTT) HORINEK

LISA LESSERT

JOE LESSERT

KARI EINSET

ELIZABETH NEITHAMER

WENDY LEWIS

Like seasons in the cycle of life, every story is a part of a bigger story and journey. When we tell our stories and listen to the stories of others, we gain a new perspective and join our stories together.

Skits each day were visits from the kooky librarian and her Czech assistant.

- Monday: Autumn
- Tuesday: Winter
- Wednesday: Spring
- Thursday: Follow the ancient scrolls day
- Friday: Summer





Team Names	
Vehicles	
RACE CARS	JET PLANES
TRAINS	MOTORCYCLES
SAILBOATS	PICKUP TRUCKS
SCHOOL BUSES	SUBMARINES
KAYAKS	HELICOPTERS

2015

2016

SUPER CAMP!

American Team

JACQUE SALMONS
ANN SALMONS
LISA LESSERT
JOE LESSERT
MARY ANN HOLT
BROOK (BARDEN) DEWITT
MALORY (SCOTT) HORINEK
VIRGINIA BALES
STEVE BALES
LINDA FOWLER
ALLAN FOWLER
ELIZABETH NEITHAMER
SCOTT NEITHAMER
KELSEY NEITHAMER
ANDREW LEWIS

On Monday of camp, we learned that Polička is actually a top secret hiding place for many SuperHeroes! And there is a Super Hero Camp sharing the school with us during English camp, so each morning we had a visit from The Professor (The SuperHero camp leader) and each day different superheroes stopped by and told us how their week at camp was going.

- Monday: "Accepting yourself" with Teleporter Girl
- Tuesday: "We all have gifts" with Gadget Guy
- Wednesday: "Everyone makes mistakes, even superheroes" with Hearing Boy
- Thursday: "Accepting Others" with Human Conductor Girl
- Friday: "Acceptance, Forgiveness, and Teamwork"





Team Names
Super Heroes

SUPERMAN
 INVISIBLE WOMAN
 INCREDIBLE
 ELASTIGIRL
 FALCON
 WONDER WOMAN
 FLASH
 STORM
 IRON MAN
 CAPTAIN AMERICA

2016

No American team

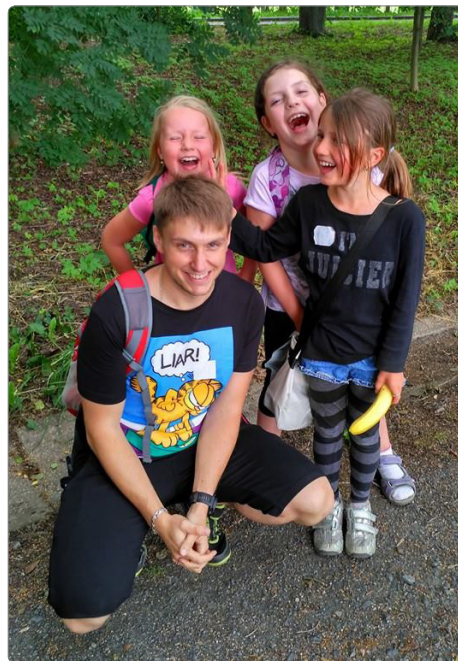
BUT WITH NEITHAMERS
FAMILY – ELIZABETH,
DAVE, KELSEY AND SCOTT

Below is a list of Czech
volunteers who made it
possible to carry out the
camp program and bring
joy and togetherness to both
children and themselves.
The team leaders, program
planners, station leaders,
snack ladies. Thank you!

JIRÍ TENGLER
MAGDA JAKUBCOVÁ
JARMILA ANDRLOVÁ
ROMANA JELÍNKOVÁ
ANNA DUSOVÁ
TOMÁŠ DUS
MAGDALENA DUSOVÁ
BARBORA FREUNDOVÁ
KAROLÍNA KOZÁČKOVÁ
KLÁRA JAKUBCOVÁ
RADEK HÁJEK
JINDRA DUDEK
DAVID KLEPÁRNÍK
MARIKA BUKÁČKOVÁ
PETR HRADECKÝ
FILIP FEJT
SVATAVA NIGUTOVÁ
MARTINA ŠVEC OVÁ
IDA TENGLEROVÁ
HANA GROULÍKOVÁ
ZDENA KLEINOVÁ
CHARLOTA KLEINOVÁ
PETR KLEIN
VERONIKA JURÁNKOVÁ

Inventors and their inventions or Where the Middle Ages ended,
a camp with 54 children.

- Monday: Copernicus – the desire to comprehend the World
- Tuesday: Columbus – the courage to start a journey
- Wednesday: Guttenberg – the freedom of the thoughts
- Thursday: Inventors – the craving for new ideas
- Friday: Luther – the joy, not the fear



A STORY FROM ELIZABETH NEITHAMER

Where do I begin to talk about a place, and people, who have changed my life, and my family's lives, so completely? I still remember Tom Schacher inviting our congregation to step into partnership with the Ponca City church, and how it seemed so natural to take that leap of faith and get on a plane to a country I'd never seen, to join with people I'd never met in a mission that still wasn't clear to me. How strange it seemed to feel like I was coming home to a place I'd never been before. Instead of being surrounded by strangers, I felt welcomed home by family. Little did I know how true that would become! They say that strangers are just friends you haven't met yet, but it seems sometimes they are also destined to become family. During our first meeting with the Czech team, while playing an ice-breaker game with dice, I met a beautiful young woman named Martina, and our lives have never been the same. The next year, I convinced Scott and Kelsey to join the American team for the 2016 camp, and I introduced Scott to my friend, Martina. The rest is history, and now my friend is my daughter and the mother of my grandson. Her family is our family, and we think of Polička as our second home. I have many beautiful memories from the camp itself, like being the Librarian with my awesome and kooky Assistant, time spent with Magda (my česká sestra) walking with her dog out in the country, pub time at Herešova Krčma, and singing with the Polička Men's Chorus. The Energizers during Opening and Closing never get old (I love the beach balls!), and the smiles on the kid's faces light up the world! So many wonderful things have come from this Camp and the partnership between the Polička, Ponca City, and Midland churches... forever friendships, lives touched in countless ways, connections to our Czech brothers and sisters, and relationships built between our towns and our churches. And then there's a little boy named Kai, who is here because two people from different countries came to the camp to volunteer, became friends, and fell in love. God really does work in mysterious ways, and He uses this camp to change lives. It has certainly changed ours!



Team Names

THE YOUNGEST
THE MIDDLE
THE OLDEST

2017

American Team

JACQUE SALMONS
BILL SALMONS
KERRY EBBERT
LISA LESSERT
JOE LESSERT
LIZ NEITHAMER
DAVE NEITHAMER
SCOTT NEITHAMER
STEVE BALES
VIRGINIA BALES
MARY MERSEREAU-KEMPF
DIANA BROOKENS
SHARON LEENHOUTS
KATRINA BUCKNELL
ELLEANA BUCKNELL
JENNIFER WARREN
ANTHONY WILK

This year’s camp, brought to you by the letter “H”. Each day we heard a part of the story of Joseph, his dreams, and his coat of many colors. We talked about various aspects and concepts of “Home”, relating this back to both the story of Joseph and the themes of hospitality that are present throughout many stories.

- Monday: Home
- Tuesday: Hope
- Wednesday: Hunger
- Thursday: Hearth
- Friday: Home Again





Team Names
Colors + Animals

KHAKI KOALAS
 TURQUOISE TOUCANS
 LAVENDER LLAMAS
 ORANGE OTTERS
 YELLOW YAKS
 PURPLE PARROTS
 KIWI KIWIS
 WHITE WHALES
 BLUE BARRACUDAS
 SILVER SNAKES

American Team

JACQUE SALMONS
WADE EMPTING
ANN SALMONS
BILL SALMONS
LISA LESSERT
JOE LESSERT
PAULA DENSON
KELLY GOEBEL
LAREN GOEBEL
EMMA GOEBEL
LIZ NEITHAMER
DAVE NEITHAMER
KATIE BUCKNELL
ELLEANA BUCKNELL
VERONICA (FUXA) PINION

We learned about openness to other cultures as well as to each other. Each morning, we were visited by a different character. These characters were travelers passing through town, sharing their stories.

- Monday: Open Eyes – The story of Zacchaeus
- Tuesday: Open Hands – The Good Samaritan
- Wednesday: Open Ears – David, the shepherd
- Thursday: Open Doors – The Prodigal Son, part 1
- Friday: Open Hearts – The Prodigal Son, part 2





Team Names
US States

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| NEBRASKA | TEXAS |
| MONTANA | COLORADO |
| FLORIDA | WEST VIRGINIA |
| CALIFORNIA | MICHIGAN |
| TENNESSEE | OKLAHOMA |

2019

2022 SEASONS

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES / SEASONS OF OUR STORIES

American Team

LISA LESSERT

JOE LESSERT

TIM SCHLAIS

RACHEL SCHLAIS

JACQUE SALMONS

LIZ NEITHAMER

DAVE NEITHAMER

KATIE BUCKNELL

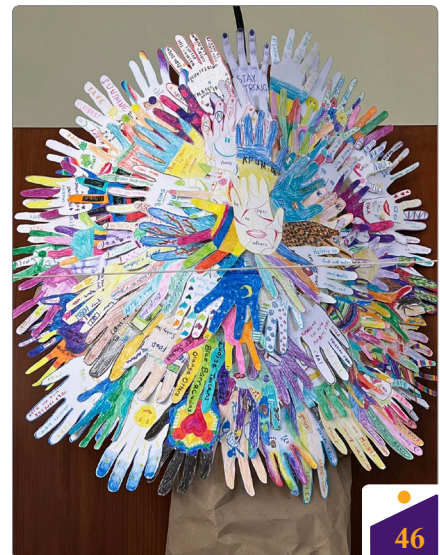
ELLEANA BUCKNELL

Like seasons in the cycle of life, every story is a part of a bigger story and journey. When we tell our stories and listen to the stories of others, we gain a new perspective and join our stories together.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Skits were visits from a pair of kooky librarians.

- Monday: Autumn
- Tuesday: Winter
- Wednesday: Spring
- Thursday: Follow the ancient scrolls day
- Friday: Summer





Team Names
Colors/Animals

ORANGE OTTERS
 PURPLE PARROTS
 TURQUOISE TOUCANS
 BLUE BARRACUDAS
 SILVER SNAKES

2022

2023

DOORS AND THRESHOLDS

American Team

JACQUE SALMONS

WADE EMPTING

TIM SCHLAIS

TAMMY WASSON

MARY EMMET

ELLEN INGRAM

LIZ NEITHAMER

DAVE NEITHAMER

KATIE BUCKNELL

ELLEANA BUCKNELL

KELLY BUELL

Doors in the world and in our lives come in many shapes and sizes. If we look for the good in the world and the kindness of others, we take that with us through each new door. By learning about the different doors in the life of Moses, we learned about our own lives. During the skits each morning, we were visited by the Dilly Dally Door Delegate who helped us with door deliveries, door repairs, and more!

- Monday: The Open Door
- Tuesday: The Closed Door
- Wednesday: A Welcoming Door
- Thursday: Doors of Opportunities and Choices
- Friday: Exiting the Door





Team Names
Musical Instruments

GREEN GUITARS
 SILVER CYMBALS
 PURPLE PIANOS
 TEAL TAMBOURINES
 CHARCOAL CELLOS
 ORANGE OBOES
 WHITE WHISTLES
 MAROON MARACAS
 BLUE BASS DRUMS
 BLACK BANJOS

2023

2024

THE 5 SENSES AND THE PRODIGAL SON

American Team

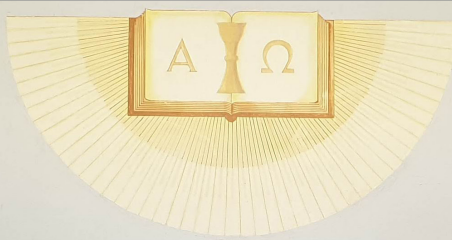
JACQUE SALMONS
WADE EMPTING
LISA LESSERT
JOE LESSERT
CARLI LEWIS
KERRY EBBERT
TIM SCHLAIS
MARY EMMET
TAMMY WASSON
LIZ NEITHAMER
DAVE NEITHAMER
KATIE BUCKNELL
KELLY BUELL
TOM SCHACHER
JAMIE AULT
JEREMY AULT
ADA AULT
MADELINE AULT

Using the different paths of two brothers in The Prodigal Son story to explore the 5 senses. We will discuss how these senses help us experience the world and help us make choices about how we react to the people and situations in our lives. Each day during the skit we will be visited by The Inventor, who will be working on an exciting invention relating to each day's sense.

- Monday: Sight
- Tuesday: Hearing
- Wednesday: Smell
- Thursday: Taste
- Friday: Touch



We all miss ANN and BILL SALMONS and McKENNA SCHACHER who are with us in spirit but unfortunately couldn't come.





Team Names
Universe

SUN	MARS
MOON	JUPITER
NEPTUNE	SATURN
PLUTO	ORION
MERCURY	TITAN

2024

JIRÍ (URI) TENGLER

⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3,9–14

A CAMP AS A CONSTRUCTION

How do I build my life? What material do I use to construct my family, my friendships, my professional career? Do I do good things or bad things? Such questions are a part of a human life.

Apostle Paul writes about the building as he looks back on his work in the city of Corinth. Paul was a very tenacious, persistent apostle and had traveled a great part of the world. By the way – it was a form of globalization back then in ancient times that allowed him to travel throughout the Roman Empire without restriction. Paul's missionary activity, after his conversion, began in Damascus and ended in Rome more than three thousand miles away. The Christian congregations Paul founded and cared for were hundreds of miles apart. However, the great distance did not lower his interest in the former places of work. On the contrary, the distance intensified the interest. Paul was a persistent, tenacious apostle.

Apostle Paul writes about the building as he looks back on his work in the city of Corinth. He began, others continued. Paul laid the foundation, but others built the Corinthian Christian community. Who built with what materials? Was it a good building? Solid? Stable? Looking back raises questions. It's a part of our Christian faith: we want to see how our work stands up in God's eyes. Or to put it in other words, we want to see how we will stand up in God's judgment. ***Their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light.*** (13n) Actually, it is a good hope that my deeds will be judged rightfully in the end.

Twenty years ago the first camp with Americans was organized in Polička. I don't know what expectations the first American volunteers arrived with. The Czech Republic, one of the most atheistic countries on our planet, and Christians from the USA offered a program to Czech children. Moreover, it was in a church! Crazy. But this is where we need to question with Apostle

Paul: Who built with what materials? What was the construction like? Good or bad? Will it stand up in God's judgment?

I do not know what expectations the first American volunteers arrived with. Maybe they dreamed of the awakening they would bring to the sleeping Czech Republic. Maybe they dreamed of opening the way for many young people to discover the faith in Christ. Maybe they dreamed of helping to build a strong congregation in Polička. Hm... What is certain is that no great awakening took place. But let's not forget Apostle Paul and his question about how we build. And with what materials? I performed a wedding last weekend. After the ceremony, I talked to various guests at the table. One young man recalled attending our camps years ago, "The camps with the Americans were perfect with an interesting program." ***Their work will be shown for what it is.*** (13) ***We are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.*** (9) Christ teaches us that great things rise from small beginnings. From a small seed grows an ear, we don't even know how. Christ teaches us patience, perseverance, tenacity. Dear Czech and American volunteers, we don't work miracles at the camp. We build the best we can. Hundreds of children have passed through our camps in 20 years. What's our building like? I know that the building material is friendship and joy, selflessness, creativity, gratitude for life and desire to share. To share the trust and the love we have experienced in our lives. We don't need to talk directly about God, we want to pass on the gifts we have received from God. I look forward to the next week because we will share with the children the material for building their lives. The material that has proved useful to us: friendship and joy, love and trust, gratitude for life. That is what we want to pass on. Amen.





HYMN AFTER SERMON

PASS IT ON

1. It only takes a spark to get a fire going
and soon all those around can warm up in the
glowing.
That's how it is with God's love: Once you've
experienced it you'll spread his love to everyone.
You'll want to pass it on.
2. What a wondrous time is spring when all the
trees are budding. The birds begin to sing, the
flowers start their blooming.
That's how it is with God's love: Once you've
experienced it you'll want to sing. It's fresh like
spring. You'll want to pass it on.
3. I wish for you my friend this happiness that
I've found. You can depend on Him, it matters
not where you're bound.
:| I'll shout it from the mountain top, I want the
world to know the Lord of Love has come to me.
I want to pass it on. :|

KURT KAISER



HYMN TO COMMUNION

I COME WITH JOY

1. I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me.
2. I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.
3. As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.
4. The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here.
5. Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one.

BRIAN WREN



THE STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH CAMP

The idea of an English Camp was conceived between Pastor Jan Dus and Pastor Tom Schacher a year before the first camp. Jan and his family had experienced a camp we were doing in the Ponca City Presbyterian Church that we called Vacation Bible School. They experienced the energy and openness, and they saw how much the children loved their time at the camp. Adapting the concept of that camp into what we now know as English Camp was a natural transition. We incorporated a theme to inspire, games, learning activities, and of course Energizers! We realized early on that the structure of camp is just its foundation.

It allows us to lean into the reason we bring an American Team all the way across the ocean. We are all building relationships... not just between Americans and Czechs but between the Americans, the campers, the volunteers, the host families, the dinner hosts, and of course the church members in Polička. We all work together to bring that energy and openness which Jan and his family experienced at the camp in Ponca City. It is what takes the structure of camp, opens the doors to the church building, and makes a one week summer camp for kids into the wonderful experience of the English Camp in Polička!

Openings – The opening is the first exciting part of the day! It allows us to gather as one big group in the sanctuary, introduce the theme of the day, and set the tone for the fun and excitement that the kids can expect throughout camp.

Theme – Each year, the English Camp has a different theme. Having a theme brings cohesion throughout the stations and gives meaning to many of the activities. It is also an opportunity to inspire both creativity and conversation as we discuss the theme throughout the week.

Skits – The skits are a great way to introduce the theme during the opening each morning. Throughout the years there have been many fun variations on what a “skit” looks like... there have been commercials, news flashes, narrators, actors and just about everything in between!

Energizers – The energizers do just what the name says! They energize us, get us moving, and they encourage campers, volunteers, and Americans alike that it’s ok to have fun and act a little goofy.

Teams – Campers are divided into teams that rotate through the stations. The team names over the years have been a fun way to give each team an identity and also helps us organize opening/closing activities. Having the campers split up into teams by age helps us plan activities to engage both younger and older campers.

The stations:

Drama – Drama is an opportunity to really explore the theme for the day. This usually involves activities and games with more discussion involved.

Surprise – Surprise is a fun station because it is totally different every year. There have been game shows and board games, interviews, energizers, learning to play the chimes, puzzle rooms with inventions and many more.

Recreation – Recreation is a great place for campers and volunteers to use some energy and have time to just play together.

Crafts – Crafts were enjoyed throughout over the first half of the life of English Camp. It was fun a time to engage the kids in hands-on and creative projects.

Science – In 2015, when Jacque took over as team leader, she transitioned Crafts into Science and English Camp experienced its very first rockets. It remains a great place for the campers to enjoy hands-on and creative projects.

Snacks – Snacks is for snacking! It also gives us an opportunity to enjoy some shorter activities alongside the “koláče”. This is all made possible by the kitchen volunteers who facilitate the drinks and snacks available.

Closings – The closing is a time to gather again in the sanctuary as one big group. We talk about all the fun we had during the day, review the theme, and of course we enjoy some more energizers! There are also many interactive games as the kids are sent to lunch two teams at a time.

Lunch! – We would be mistaken if we left our lunches together out of the discussion of English Camp structure. It is a great time to enjoy conversations between Americans and campers and volunteers one-on-one and it helps to bond us all together in the overall experience of the camp!



OPENINGS & ENERGIZERS

OPENINGS & ENERGIZERS

SKITS

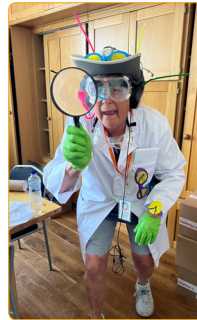
There have been so many epic moments throughout the years of camp... especially during the morning skits!!

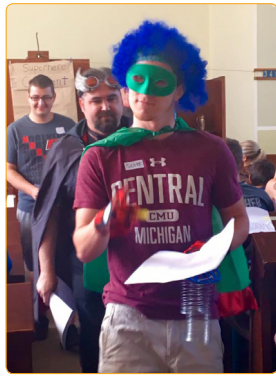
I remember so many times Czech volunteers and American team members stepped up and said, "Yes! I will put on that totally ridiculous costume and carry those silly props!"

Some of my most favorite memories include the year where animal noses were made out of colored paper, the year there was a massive handmade cardboard movie camera held by Martin, who climbed and crawled all over the front of the sanctuary, the time Katie dressed up as the Pharaoh and put on the mustache I handed to her – then

right before the skit began, she turned to me and said, "Wait... does this make me look like a man?" ...and who could forget – The Great Burning Bush of 2023!!

These skits have become a special part of English Camp. We stand at the front of the sanctuary. We act goofy, and laugh, and sometimes go off script (*I'm looking at you, Ann!*), and we all have fun while introducing the theme for the day. But it's more than storytelling. It's showing the kids that they are welcome to come to camp and act goofy. Laugh. And sometimes make mistakes. It shows them that we are all welcome at English Camp – just as we are.





DRAMA



DRAMA



SURPRISE



SURPRISE



RECREATION

Katie Bucknell speaking: I work the Recreation station which is obviously the most fun place and the most fun game is Dodgeball, of course. We've had so many laughs over dodgeball and a few tears but everyone loves it. I can still see Wade leaping in the air over balls only to be immediately knocked out by one in the shoulder. He looked like a large ballerina for a moment and the kids were falling over themselves laughing. It's the volunteers that get most into the game, it's like they have been waiting for a year to play and they come to win. The best matchup is the oldest kids against the volunteers. It should really have a trophy for it as it can be a long and dramatic game. And typically the kids win.



Katie Bucknell speaking: Another recreation favorite is water balloons. We start each class with a nice game of toss but before you know it, it has become a full blown water balloon fight. I will do what I can to get the volunteers grouped together so the kids can bombard them with balloons. I bet the laughter and shrieks of delight can be heard all the way in the town square on water balloon day.

RECREATION

RECREATION



RECREATION



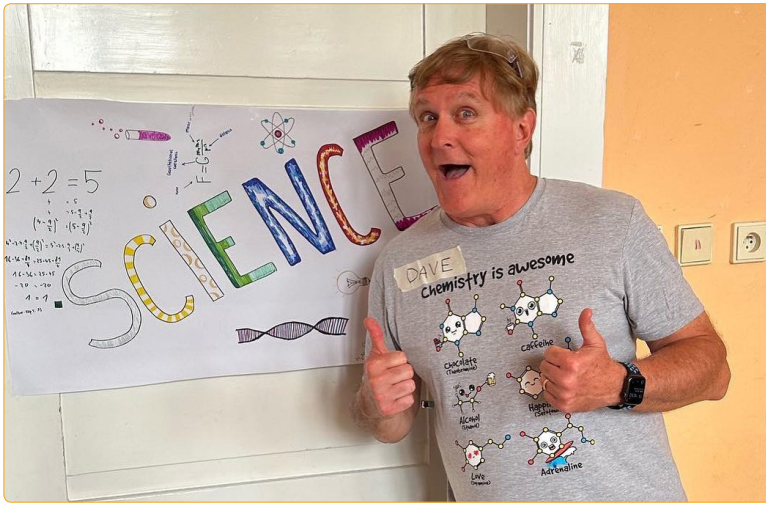
CRAFTS



CRAFTS



SCIENCE



SCIENCE



SNACK



SNACK



SNACK



SNACK



...& THE SNACK LADIES (2004–2024)

Jarmila Andrlová
 Marcela Feltlová
 Hana Groulíková
 Marta Hasník
 Romana Jelínková

Veronika Juránková
 Zdena Kleinová
 Martina Klímová
 Dáša Klusoňová
 Olga Kotvová

Radka Kozáčková
 Anna Lavická
 Lydie Nagyová
 Barbora Pejcharová
 Blanka Smejkalová

Zdena Šimonová
 Jarmila Štátná
 Lenka Švecová
 Petra Vinařová
 Květa Wloczková

(For many campers Snack Station with the cakes and pies was the most delightful part of the morning.)



THANKS TO THE CAMP...

Dear American friends,

As I reflect on the past 20 years of the camp, I find myself filled with gratitude for the role it has played in shaping my life. It's hard to believe that two decades have passed since I first joined the camp as a volunteer, not yet knowing the impact it would have on me. Back in the early days, I was a non-believer, simply there to help with the activities and maybe improve my English along the way. But through your kindness, openness, and the wonderful way you brought both faith and fun into the camp, something deeper began to grow within me. I saw not only how much the camp meant to the children, but also how your mission was quietly working for me as well.

It has been inspiring to see how your unique approach – combining English lessons with Biblical stories – has consistently engaged so many young people, both campers and volunteers. Year after year, you showed that it is possible to make a meaningful impact, teaching not only your language, but also morals, tolerance and faith. The way you weaved these things together has been a beautiful demonstration of how education and spiritual growth can go hand in hand. You have touched many hearts and affected many lives and I am grateful to have witnessed this impact on the children, volunteers and the wider community.

Over the time, I became more involved, not just with the camp, but with the church and its community. It was in this place of faith and friendship where I met my wife Ester and together we have built a life rooted in the understanding and love we have experienced in the church. This year, Ester and I had the incredible opportunity to visit the United States and reconnect



with many of you after so many years. It was a joyful and heart-warming reunion that reminded us just how far-reaching the bonds between us are. I am constantly amazed by the friendships we've built with all of you. These relationships have become such a valuable part of my life, and I treasure the moments we've shared. Looking back, I am profoundly thankful for the influence the camp has had on me. The mission you brought with you – to teach English and share the love of Jesus – changed the course of my life. Today, as a member of the church, baptized and serving as a presbyter, I see how those early seeds planted in my heart have blossomed into something beautiful. Thank you for your dedication, for the relationships you've built with all of us here, and for the love and faith you've brought into our lives. Your presence, year after year, has made a lasting impact on so many, myself included. I look forward to many more years of shared memories, whether here in Polička or across the ocean.

With deep gratitude and warmest regards,

Jiří Hladík





MESSAGES & MEMORIES



Dear Chip,

I remember the excitement we felt every beginning of the summer holiday because we knew there would be another American Camp and Chip was coming. You were such an important part of my childhood. I remember how patient you were, when me and my sister didn't speak English well and regardless of our age gap and the language barrier you played games with us and seemed to enjoy it. You also gave us a chance to laugh at your pronunciation of the Czech words that we taught you. Later when we understood more, I remember listening to your stories. When I saw Mom engaged in the discussions with you, I understood how important it is to learn languages. You must have liked your first stay with us too, because the next year you brought Jody and Calah with you. And then Jody came with you many more times. You are great people and we are really happy to have met you.

Klara

Dear Kati,

Firstly, I want to say you are deeply imprinted in my heart and in my memories. I admired your brave move to Polička and the grit you showed when living here and learning our difficult language. Secondly, I have you connected with your magazine "Freecoolin" because the name is so perfectly you. In my mind you are so free and open-minded, so cool and so IN. Thank you for that. Thirdly, I also have a very lively memory of you singing your favorite Czech song Kometa by Jaromír Nohavica at the church. I was so nervous for you, because I knew that it's not an easy song but you did a great, great job!

Pája

Dear Emma,

You probably can't remember your first camp in Polička very well as you were a little girl back then. But I remember this one moment so clearly. It was the morning your team were leaving from the Prague airport. It was a morning of hugs and a few tears (most tears were shed the night before). When your group was going through the security check, you turned and hugged me and then you were standing with a suitcase bigger than yourself, waving. I still see you: waving as if stuck in time, waving at a few people from a foreign country who you didn't quite understand but felt a connection to. You probably didn't understand those feelings at your age but you noticed your parents and other Americans were sad that it was all ending. You understood that special bond that had formed between the Czech and the American.

Jarda

Dear Kati and Jacque,

One cherished memory from my first English Camps is of energizers. This type of dancing in unison with many other people isn't usual in the Czech Republic, but it has been a wonderful part of my summer holidays since I was about 5 years old. I am very thankful for it; it brought me so much joy! I am grateful I got to enjoy the songs and energizers even throughout the years as Kati and Jacque gave them to me on a CD.

Majda





The Night We Stayed Up Editing Videos

The Movie Star Camp of 2011 was epic. Some events just happen once in a lifetime. The final edits of the films are still on YouTube thanks to our volunteers. Getting to that finished project was not easy. Every volunteer and camper contributed to fun, educational and entertaining films. I give most of the credit to the editors who brought their laptops and huddled together to make movies out of random clips with very limited software compared to the technology we have in 2024. On Thursday night, Jacque and I stayed up late with the editors to give our support. At one point, someone said we could go down to the brewery and bring back a whole box full of beer. So, a few of us walked from the church to the brewery around midnight and brought back the case. (America doesn't allow alcohol in churches, so this felt very strange for us!) The pictures tell the laughter and terror of the night. Watching the films in the morning brought me so much joy with pride for the accomplishments of our students and volunteers. Watching the films to this day makes me laugh and cry.

Kati

Dear Elizabeth and Dave,

I have so many heartwarming memories of you staying with us in Polička. Having one bathroom for five people was at times stressful, especially in the mornings. We were supposed to be in the church in time and everybody knew we lived the closest to the church of all the team members so there was little excuse we could use. However, we usually got into some interesting conversation at breakfast and then had to run to be there in time. We spent so much time talking about our families and life journeys. The best time, however, was the journey we took together to south Bohemia and Moravia in search of your family roots and then to Slovakia to our cottage in the mountains. I was so happy you didn't mind the outhouse and the very simple style of the cottage. It was pleasure to travel with you. Thank you for being good friends through all these years.

Magda

Dear Paula,

Every member of the American team is considered our extended family and you couldn't be anything else but my American grandma. We've spent together so many amazing moments that I am grateful for. Remember the afternoon with my Czech grandma "softly" offering you a cold bath for your legs? It didn't matter you didn't understand a single word the other was saying, you easily communicated even without words. You understood she meant to help. And I hope your legs felt better after that chilling water.

Lenka

Dear Chip,

I am very thankful that you were our house guest during the camps. You are an unforgettable part of them. Me and Klára had a lot of fun teaching you Czech. (Perhaps we thought it is as easy for the Americans as it is for us to learn English. We were wrong :D.) I remember preparing the breakfasts from the fresh berries we picked together from our garden. We missed you at the camps you couldn't come to.

Bára





Dear Kerry,

For most of my life I have been involved with the American camp and therefore connected to you and your wonderful family. When you first arrived 20 years ago and you and Daniel lived in our home, no one in my family spoke English, except for me. I was 13 years old, shy, and my English was maybe good enough to ask what you wanted to eat and drink, where you wanted to go, or where you worked, but certainly not good enough for any extended conversation. Nevertheless, we made do, and every time you came back to us it got better and better, and eventually we could talk about anything. And you were no longer just a valued guest and a camp leader, but a member of our family who could go and get groceries, show others around Polička, and even make us eggs for breakfast. So, sometimes it seemed like we weren't hosting you, you were hosting us. I will always remember that with great joy!

Přemek (Bartoš)

Dear Kati and Jacque,

I have so many great memories of each of you bringing joy, fun and inspiration into our camp days. However, one memory sticks out when I think of you. When you sang together, it was a breathtaking spiritually-loaded experience I can never forget. Do you remember when we visited Telecí and the 700 year old Singing Linden tree which was at that time not fenced yet. You two, inspired by the legend of the scripter who sang inside the tree while copying the biblical texts, climbed into the hollow tree trunk and sang so beautifully all the people standing there had tears in their eyes. The song still resonates in my ears: Because I knew you ... I have been changed for good.

Magda (Jakubcová)

Dear Czech friends,

My first trip to the Czech Republic in 2005. Jan Dus meets our group at the airport in Prague and we have our first adventure - we go to the Bone Church in Sedlec. Now that is something to see! After our tour of the church, we ventured on to Polička. Wow, the land, the hills, the flowers... all so beautiful! I was very fortunate to visit the Singing Tree in Telecí. No, I can't sing but I did get my picture taken while inside the tree... a great picture (of the tree)!

Mary Ann Holt

Dear Švecovi,

My host family, Jiri and Lenka Svec, welcomed me as if I was their own daughter. With my return trips to the Czech Republic, they greeted me "American daughter," embracing me as I came through their front door. Their son, Jiří, so shy, yet extremely smart, worked hard to help me communicate with his family. Lenka always had amazingly yummy breakfasts with an occasional koblížky special. I spent evenings with their daughter Martina and her friends, Eva and Pavla. With every trip, I brought American candies for them to try. It was so fun sitting in front of the Švec house sharing candy and learning Czech words such as Milky Way and they thought mosquito was such a funny word.

Kim





Dear Kim,

I know it may be a little bit silly but do you know what makes me still laugh and melts my heart at the same time? The memory of you teaching me the rhyme using our names. Pavla, Pavla bou Bavla, banana-nana fou Favla, fi fá fou Mavla, Pavla. I don't know the right spelling because it's such a long time ago and I was so young but I still remember it and I even use it to entertain my kids.

Pája (Omastová)

Dear Ann,

Do you still remember me? It's been nearly two decades since our paths crossed in the quaint charm of Polička's summer camp. Back then, I was just a teenager, pedalling my way from the nearby village of Svatá Kateřina to join in the camp. I wasn't much more than a helping hand, pitching in wherever I could. But oh, the joy I found in the company of the friendly faces and the adventures we shared on the bus trips in the surroundings of the town! One day, a funny incident occurred during the trip. The bus came to a halt because someone had pushed the stop button. It was amusing to watch our trip leader delve into English and Czech to unravel the mystery. In the end, it turned out to be a harmless mishap, and we continued our journey with laughter in our hearts and smiles on our faces. It warmed my heart to be invited to the camp.

Adam Hamr

Dear Jeremy,

He Flew Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease. One does not meet superheroes every day, but I clearly remember the week I first met Jeremy and Jamie Ault. The young American couple had just married and shared their first days with us at English Camp. Jeremy was a live wire, while Jamie was quieter. We had lots of great experiences together. I loved their eagerness for life and how Jeremy took charge of our camp lessons in the sanctuary. He was not a bit modest, and there was nothing he would not do if it entertained the children. He was witty and boisterous during the energizers, and his skits were especially funny. My happiest memory of him was when strong young men raised him into the air and "flew" Superman up the center aisle with his cape flying and arms outstretched in a pose that would have made the real Superman actor jealous. He was also quite good at acting as a mailman who delivered lessons to the group.

Paula

Dear Malory,

I still remember the year when you were staying at mine during one of the camps and all the fun we had trying to teach you Czech, tasting all different Czech food and just chatting about life. Do you still remember the day we decided to bike ride from my flat to the church? My bike was pretty high for you and even though we laughed on the way, I was pretty worried the whole time whether you will make it to church in one piece or not :-). We have always had a great fun together and I will keep these wonderful memories forever.

Zuzka





Dear Majda,

I remember the first time we met. You were standing alone in a hallway of the Ponca City Presbyterian church. I walked up to you and asked where your parents were. You immediately started crying. Loudly. I hope that your memories of me since then have gotten better. I'm glad I don't make you cry in public anymore. **Jacque**

Dear Kati,

I love to recall our long talks about the cultural differences, about the better and worse sides to Czech lifestyle, about life and what we expect from it. Your first summer here my girls fell in love with you immediately. They were so excited when you agreed to join us for a trip to our cottage in the mountains in Slovakia. You had no idea how big the hill up to the cottage is. However, reaching the cottage was just the first one of many challenges you won that week. As the weather forecast kept promising some rain, every morning looking at the blue sky we said: Let's go for a hike today as tomorrow it may start raining. So, every day there was a new chance for you to try your limits. I believe conquering Rozsutec was the biggest challenge but standing on the top was worth it, wasn't it? We had so much fun and you made my girls realize how much more fun they can have in the world if they learn your language properly. Thank you for being a good friend!
Magda



Dear Czech volunteers,

I was honored to be able to assist Jan with our customary Communion service. While providing this sacrament, I usually try to connect with each recipient, maybe by speaking their name, or making eye contact while speaking the appropriate words. We are frequently surprised by the camp volunteers who are and who are not associated with the church. While I turned to the next congregant, I realized the next person to be served was an important camp volunteer who is not a part of the congregation. The rush of emotions rendered me speechless and filled with joy and every other adjective you can think of! Being a part of the Church has never had more meaning for me personally.
Kerry



Dear Lenka,

One day, during English Camp, Lenka asked me, in her broken English, if I liked "Dacks." I did not understand her; I thought it was an odd question, but I responded that I had always liked DUCKS, although I had never thought much about them. As I answered her, Lenka looked puzzled as she explained that Kelsey and I were to be her family's guests for the evening meal and that she would meet us later. That evening, we arrived for the meal, which was served in the garden. Many hollyhocks grew along the fence, and a huge, silver GERMAN SHEPARD dog busily snapped at the visiting honey bees without exhibiting any signs of pain from stings. I quickly realized that Lenka asked if I liked dogs, not ducks! That was something to giggle over!
Paula





Dear Jacque,

One evening we were hosting you for dinner and on our way to my parents' house we passed the football stadium where some soccer players were training. My Mom turned to me and said in Czech, "Handsome guys! If Jacque chooses one of them she could stay here in Polička." I just laughed and didn't translate. About a minute later you looked at the boys and said something like, "I could choose one of these guys and stay here in Polička." I stopped and looked at both of you in disbelief. You can't speak each other's language but you can read minds.

Lenka

Dear Magda,

I know we probably should have written our messages to our American friends but I am gonna go off the book and write something to you. First of all, it's a big thank you for giving me the chance to volunteer at the Camp nineteen years ago. Because of that I found many friends for life not only among Americans but also among Czech volunteers. So thank you for that, you made my life much better! And second: you were right (everybody likes to hear that). I am talking about our Saturday's trip to Brno many years ago. We didn't have time to visit the city itself and I said that there's nothing to see anyway. You disagreed. And you were right, Brno is awesome.

Martin Haupt

Dear Kerry and all other Oklahomans,

It has been a long time since I attended the camp but I can clearly remember how welcomed I felt every time I was among you, guys. The Camp always had such a nice, positive atmosphere thanks to everyone who joined it, Czechs and Americans, thanks to the organizers. I enjoyed singing and dancing to the energizers every single day. I have very fond memories of a lot of people, for example of Kerry, with whom I stayed in touch via Facebook for a while. We talked about families, music. I bet if we saw each other now it would be like no time had passed. It was always such a fun way of practicing and improving English but not just that, the conversations about life or religion were meaningful and they meant a lot to me. I think back on it with a smile on my face and for that I will be forever grateful. Thank you very much and congratulations to the 20th Anniversary :)

Kateřina Tomanová / Simonová

Dear Czech friends,

There is an overwhelming joy children have given me as a teacher over the years. Yet, traveling to the Czech Republic to teach English to Czech children has been extremely special and more than just that. So many fun English lessons and activities were completed but so much more happened... lifelong relationships were built. Time spent preparing for camp with all the volunteers. Lunch with the campers and volunteers in the cafeteria brought more opportunities to get to know so many and be challenged to eat as many potato dumplings as our Czech friends. Garden parties, dinner with Czech families, outings to see amazing things became important time to spend with our new friends.

Kim





Dear Chip,

I remember sitting with you in Magda’s garden and talking about the life during socialism, about the brave people who resisted the pressure of the Communist party secret police and the effects of totalitarian regime on religion generally and our church in particular. You were so interested in everything and your questions were so relevant and prompted me to go further into the topic. We immersed into this conversation again a few years later during one of the afternoon trips. Later we walked through Polička park and I showed you the Monument to the Victims of Communism which made a big impression on you. I am happy to have met you.

Jaromír Dus



Dear Kerry,

I have a lovely memory of you from one of the first camps. On Saturday there was a trip to Olomouc. You, Americans, had been away from your homes and customary meals for more than a week. You had been forced to eat typical Czech meals and trying to enjoy them but, frankly, you must have been craving something “American”. All of us who have ever travelled know that craving for something familiar. Well, it was lunch time when we arrived at Olomouc main square and were encouraged to walk around the restaurants and shops to pick one and have some lunch. Then I caught a glimpse of you coming out of McDonald’s with that happy smile saying clearly, “It feels almost like home” or “Finally, some meal I can relate to.” ☺

Štěpánka Žďárová

Dear Ann,

Our family members used to be at one time a substantial part of the Camp as there were three of us volunteering and four children attending. We have wonderful memories of the Camp, the week full of joy, fun, learning, music, trips and numerous encounters – a beautiful week. I have recalled one funny story from the Camp of 2007. It was the Monday opening of the Camp and Jan Dus and you were standing in the front greeting everybody and launching the Camp. After you had finished your welcome speech Jan took the microphone and said in Czech in a friendly good-hearted tone, “We want to welcome our beloved Oklahománky” (which is a familiar Czech word for Oklahomans). You looked at him with astonishment and whispered, “Really? Oklahoma monkeys?” As Alča, Štěpánka and me were sitting in the front row with the youngest campers, we heard the question and burst out laughing. We couldn’t stop it but tried to hide it from the children as Jan’s speech was rather serious and moving and we didn’t want to ruin it. Thank you for making the Camp such a wonderful experience.

Šárka Rozsivalová

Dear Ann and Bill,

I have so many great memories of you. All the hugs from Ann. Her being like the mother of every kid and volunteer of the Camp. The geyser of energy during the openings and closings. And Bill, with your eternal smile. I cherish in my mind the picture of you at Friday garden parties with beer in hand, waiting for one of the first slices of the amazing meat. Love you guys!

Martin Haupt





Dear Paula,

I always enjoyed your British taste of humor which kept me on my toes around you! I also felt that I can count on you, which made me feel very safe in your hands. You took such a great care of us when we came to the US! I can only imagine how much work and energy you had to put in organizing our stay. I'm sure it must have been draining at times, but you never made us feel that we would be bothering you. I'm very thankful, and always will be, for all the care and effort that you and many others put in making our stay truly unforgettable. Thank you so much! I'm really glad that I could, at least, introduce you to my parents and welcome you in our home for a dinner. I believe we had a duck with dumplings back then. We had such an enjoyable dinner party with you and Karen!

Petra Willantová

Dear "Kofola" lovers!

Our first year I kept hearing Marta D, Přemek B (who we called Harry Potter because none of us could pronounce his name!), Tomas D, Majda D, Martina S and Jiří S talk about Kofola. "Kofola is better than Coke", "You need to order Kofola", "Drink it, you'll love it." Well, the last Sunday at lunch I ordered it. Whoa! It was not exactly as good as I thought, but you know what? Over the years I have come to like. Who would have guess that crazy group was mostly right?!

Ann

Dear Vicki and Dennis,

The memories of the inaugural summer camp hold a place in my heart. I recall the time when you stayed at our house. Dennis's deep interest in history and military sparked conversations about the pre-WWII defense systems of the Czech Republic throughout the week. Despite my limited knowledge of English, I found myself surprisingly able to answer most of your questions. On the final day of the camp, as everyone gathered for a barbecue, my dad took us on a spontaneous tour in his old white van to visit one of the largest bunkers. I was happy I could show you a part of our history.

Štěpán Vlček

Dear Kati,

Remember when you came back to Polička a couple years after you had left the congregation and gone back to US to finish your studies? You came a week before the camp to have a little time to catch up on everybody's life story, hang out with old buddies and prepare the camp program. When you were with us in the pub and you ordered the yeast beer, we felt like you had never left. And your Czech was still pretty decent. We were incredibly excited about the camp. Not only for the people and the fun, but I was also full of anticipation about how our program would turn out. We were working together with plenty others to make this camp SUPERSTAR good. Everything depended on the project films for the children. My enthusiasm grew with the number of messages I received from both American and Czech volunteers, all cheering us on and expressing excitement for this year's camp. And it turned out perfect, thanks to the team I am so glad to be part of.

Jarda





Dear Vicki,

Do you remember the Camp in Polička? I am sure you do even though it has been 20 years since we met. I was helping at your station in the church where you were showing pictures of American holidays and telling stories. You talked about April Fool's Day and told a story of a farmer who was tricked by his neighbours who moved his outhouse away from the hole in the ground which led to a very nasty surprise for the farmer. Then you talked about all the other "more important" holidays but all the kids remembered from your station was this "farmer's misfortune" story. They even came back to you to ask how the farmer got out. ☺

Magda

Dear American and Czech Camp volunteers,

It's been twenty years since I attended the camp with Americans. In the camp's history, I played an insignificant role, but the role of the camp in my life was very significant. I got to understand how important studying languages is. Perhaps it's the most important thing if our goal is to keep the world a good place for all of us to live. Thanks for the camp, thanks to all the volunteers.

Jirka Uher

Dear Kim,

I can't believe it's been 14 years since we first met at the Camp. You may not remember me, but you were my favorite (sorry to my other American friends). When we first met I really liked your curly hair and your beautiful smile and I wanted to be your friend. So, your Power station at the Camp was my favorite. I liked your ideas - we made Superhero T-shirts there (which I still have). I remember we did a short sketch where I was fishing (I had a funny photo of that). But the most exciting was the Courage Day, when I fell from a chair into my friends' arms for the first time, my eyes covered. It was very scary for me, but after the catch (uff) it felt so great. So, thank you for your ideas and for your kindness. I have a picture with you from the day you were leaving and we both have tears in our eyes. Thank you so much!

Aneta Nekvindová

Dear Czech friends,

Every trip to Czechia, I've learned something new. Nearing the end of our first visit, my sister and I were buying things from the grocery store to bring back and share with our American family and friends (like Studentska!). While shopping, I noticed a bottle with what clearly was a cow and bar of chocolate on the label. I like chocolate milk and will often buy it when I'm traveling. I looked forward to drinking it and quickly added it to our purchases. When Lisa and I left the store, I pulled out the chocolate milk and happily took a large mouthful... and then... I tasted it. I stopped in my tracks. It must have expired, I thought. With much sadness and a sour taste in my mouth, I spit the milk back into the bottle, put the lid back on it, and looked for the nearest trash can. Later that day I learned that among the many things sold in Czechia and not in America is... chocolate buttermilk.

Joe Lessert



Arrow Scavenger Hunt

Anyone remember the first camp Arrow Scavenger Hunt? For me this brought together memories with Czech friends from camps and through the year. During my first camp, I went with a group to Toulovcovy Maštale. Our guides laughed when I showed up in a skirt. They told me we were going for a hike, and I wore good shoes, but I did not imagine there would be climbing! My skirt did not hold me back! Our new friends showed us the poles and trees with colored stripes to mark the trails. In the US, trails like these are made by the government. I was fascinated to learn that local people had marked the trails on their own to form a national trail map. Later when I was at a church youth event, we played the Arrows game, and it reminded me of that experience. Again, I was in a skirt, but I was not lucky enough to have good shoes! In American culture, we have “scavenger hunts” where we look for clues or “obstacle courses” where we have to overcome big challenges. I loved how the Arrow Hunt combined these ideas! Since we had a theme for the next camp based on a spirit of openness and adventure, I really wanted to try a full day with an Arrow Hunt all over town. As I was teaching at local high school that year, my High School class helped with the preparation and marking the way! It was a lot of work being the mapmaker, but there was a lot of joy and laughter on the journey!

Kati Salmons

Dear Tomáš and Jindra,

Remember that time a bunch of us went to see the dinosaurs and had an epic photoshoot they chased us out of the water?! As usual, you went above and beyond. Thanks for always humoring me whether it’s during openings/closings, at a station, or just out on a random Sunday afternoon!

Jacque

Dear Elizabeth and Dave,

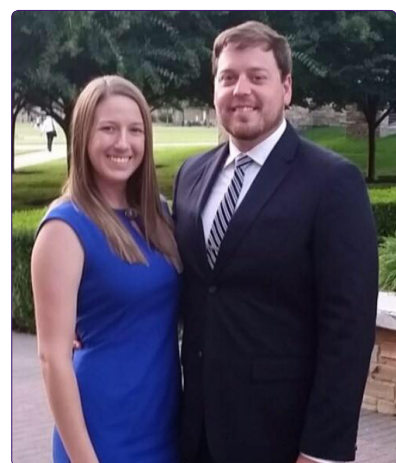
Thank you for coming to the camp in the first place and becoming a part of our lives. It was always so much fun having you living with us, exploring new places together, tasting new wines and beers. I love your passion for life. I believe that you liked it, too – you kept coming back to the camp and since you became a big family with Svecovi, I hope you will be coming back to Czech forever. With you started a new chapter of English camp - Michigan branch. And it was a great move, all the people have been a good addition to the camp team! See you soon (everytime you read this).

Klára

Dear Daniel Ebbert,

I remember when you came with your parents and you were really young. Then you came with your amazing wife Megan and we had the privilege of hosting you and it was so great. But what sticks out of my memories is when we were outside my parents’ house hanging out with other campers who lived in our street and you borrowed a Diabolo from Jirka Hladik (it was 2 sticks and a spinning thing) and you kept rolling it, so determined to learn to play it. You were obviously really talented as you learnt very quickly and even took one home with you.

Pája





Dear Americans,

I would like to thank all of you who ever came to the camp. Every year it was special, the first meeting, camp preparation, where we all got to know each other better than just by names... the camp week always passed by so quickly, like everything that you enjoy every minute of. One of my most and least favorite parts when I was a child was the Friday garden party. Since the first camp, for each of the next eight years I always had to leave for another camp the Saturday after the American camp - the day you went for the all-day trip. So, coming to the Garden Party was such a heartbreaking thing. I knew I would come to the parking lot on Saturday just to wave goodbye... so instead of enjoying the garden party, I spent half of it crying. I consider the American camp the highlight of all my childhood summer holidays and I loved every bit of it, every year.

Klára Jakubcová



Dear Jeremy,

My fellow superhero friend! It was a pleasure to run around with you throwing poses and failing to fight the bad guys during the morning openings. Likewise, thank you for being such a valuable member of the Incredible Five Project! I have this really warm feeling when I think about you and Jamie. You both always radiated such a good and calm energy. It was very easy to feel safe and chilled around you. I'm sure you're rocking it as parents!

Petra Willantová



Dear Czech planning team,

Can you guess who it is that accumulates more steps during camp than the rest of us? (I know, Czechs don't need to count steps.) Yes, recreation does a lot of steps, but you may not know that Anna Dusová and Magda Jakubcová not only work hours, preparing, shopping, organizing before camp, but they tag team working in the rooms and running errands not only on the grounds, but throughout the city all during camp. They are amazing! I admire them tremendously! Lesson learned – if you want more steps, volunteer to run the camp. Ha, ha, ha! I also admire Jiří Švec, Hanna Bartošová and anyone who has been on the planning team working hard to make it possible for us to come back every year. You have given us so many wonderful memories.

Ann



Dear Wade,

We haven't had much time to spend together and have talked just a couple times but I love your sense of humor and the way you support Jacque. Being a good sport was truly needed when you fell into our swimming pool last summer. We all had spent a couple hours swimming and having fun in the water while you were sitting on the edge dipping your feet. When we were about to head back to Polička and were packing the stuff, you tried to reach an inflatable ring floating on the water and fell right in in your shorts and shirt. We couldn't help laughing but I so appreciated you laughed with us. Dear Jacque and Wade, I wish you all the happiness and joy in your marriage. I am positive the sense of humor you both possess will guide you through.

Magda





Dear Bill,

Now I have to be careful here not to play favorites. That said, some years ago, I can vividly remember you telling me I didn't have an accent while speaking English. Of course, looking back at this now, I realize that this couldn't be farther from the truth (even now) — but right then and there it gave me a lot of much-needed confidence and motivation to continue learning English. I could be rambling on and on about how I enjoyed the conversations with the Americans during the Polička camps, so I'll cut this short: To each and every one of you: Thank you for everything.

Jan (the weird one from Austria)

Dear Jolene,

You taught us so much. You had a lot of patience with us, listening to what we tried to say and figuring out. However, what I have stored in my fondest memories is dancing energizers with you in the street at my parents' house. We had so much fun!

Pája

Dear Sam (Steele),

Every time I come across some mention of Texas I've got a flashback of you teaching us the proper "Teeeeeeeeeeexas" pronunciation with "e" as wide as Texas plains. Also you told us stories about Cowboy Pastor – the hero of your childhood. He rode a horse, wore a hat and chewed tobacco and I thought "Wow! Maybe one day I'll be a cowboy pastor too!" Now, I am not sure about the "cowboy" part of me but I have certainly become a pastor. Cheers!

Jeník Lavický

Dear Paula,

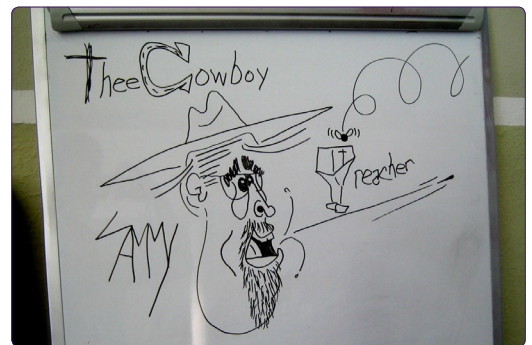
I will never forget the night Kelsey and I wanted to go for a pub night but I didn't want to leave you alone with my parents who spoke German and Russian but only about 3 English words. You encouraged us to go pointing out that you need to get some rest anyway. About 2 hours later, when Kelsey and I arrived back home, my mom greeted us with her mouth all blue saying, "Join us, we are just discussing your trip to the USA." How is that possible I thought. The look at the three of you having dictionaries on your laps, a map on the table, blue mouths from eating blueberries soaked in slivovice and being in such joyful mood was priceless. You proved that language is no barrier if you want to understand each other. Thank you for all the wonderful memories.

Jitka Vosmeková

Dear Jirka and Miloš,

I enjoyed hanging out with you guys grilling the meat. Supplement from Jacque, who thinks Wade's story is not detailed enough: During Wade's first year at camp it rained during the garden party, so we all went inside the church to hang out. A little while later I looked outside and saw Wade hanging out with Jirka and Miloš and the meat. The language barrier was no problem for any of them. They all just stood there in the rain keeping the fire going and rotating the meat. It was so fun for me to see Wade connect to those special guys through the universal language of grilling!

Jacque





Dear Vojta (Fingerland),

Even though you are no longer with us, for me you were an essential part of our camp group of Czech volunteers. I will never forget your irreplaceable sense of humour that sometimes made me laugh so hard that I could not catch my breath (especially when you started your stand-up comedy session together with Adam Bartoš). And trust me, this is something that only a very few chosen ones can do. I will never forget our long “deep” talks on the night streets after the pub nights when we were young teenagers with our teenage problems. You were a great guy and I will always remember you like that. Thank you for all the beautiful memories.

Jindra (Dudek)

To Klepárníkovi,

For the best picnic I’ve ever had in the woods. It was a sunny beautiful day with snacks and Bohemia Sekt and dear friends whom I will always call family. You taught me this: V lese jsou listy a stromy a houby a pařez! Remember that bottle? I brought it and I still keep it on a shelf in my kitchen! All my love to your family,

Jacque

Dear Ann,

The first American I ever met was Mrs. Ann Benton Salmons. It’s been twenty years since I met this treasure from Oklahoma. Unbelievable as it is the only thing I knew about Oklahoma was that many native Americans lived there and also that there were frequent tornadoes because it lies in Tornado Alley. Well, I thought it was a decent basis for a fruitful conversation. It didn’t go very well. I wanted to ask if she had ever met a native American and also if she had ever seen a tornado. Instead, something like, “Have you ever seen a Native American carried away by a tornado?” came out of me. Her look and laughter disarmed me. Thanks to you, Ann!

Jirka Uher

Dear Jirka and Lenka,

When I first arrived in Polička I’d never been to this part of the world before. I didn’t know the people, didn’t know the language, didn’t know what to expect. What I have found over the years is friends that have become family and blessings beyond my expectations. You have welcomed us so graciously into your home and into your family, and I thank you for that. We’ve already had wonderful adventures and times together... exploring our family’s Czech genealogy with you in Veřovice, Christmas in England with Scott and Martina, beautiful afternoons at your parents’ summer house (I love the accordion!), hiking, watching fireworks and playing games at New Year / Nový rok, and exploring the beautiful castles and Czech countryside with you. But some of the best memories I have are relaxing with you at your home and enjoying your beautiful garden. You have made us feel so at home, and that is a very precious gift. The saying is that “friends are the family that we choose for ourselves”. Martina and Scott have truly made us family, but you were already family the day we became friends.

Love, Elizabeth





Dear Tammy and Mary,

We are very thankful that we boldly invited ourselves over for dinner at Jiří and Ester’s house last camp. Thanks to this evening spent together, we got to know you – how funny, kind and energetic you both are. It was such a great evening with the two of you! So much laughter!! We look forward to many more camps filled with a lot of fun, learning country square dancing (we hope to learn more this year!) and sharing stories over beer in Prague!

Marta and Přemek

Dear Movie Star production team,

It’s crazy how incredibly fast that camp of 2011 went by. Honestly, it was the fastest of all the camps I’ve been to! It felt like a roller coaster ride. There wasn’t time to sleep. Like the night from Thursday to Friday I slept for 15 minutes. At 6 in the morning we had finished the editing and we started burning DVDs. The Oscars ceremony in the Church was full of laughter and excitement. The films turned out wonderful thanks to all the kids, volunteers and the production team. Then the garden party started, we played the guitars and sang, and had a great time as always. Then when the party was over, we went for a soft drink at the Club. On my way home, around half past eleven, I was so tired that I fell into a microsleep while walking and bumped into a parked car. And a few minutes later, again, this time into a traffic sign. Worse than if I were drunk.

Jarda

Dear Chip,

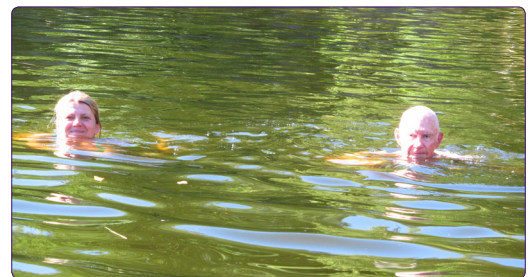
I have so many great memories of the summer days spent with you in our old house in Kamenec during the Camp week. I still recall your voice repeating the Czech words Klárka and Barča taught you and the long contemplative talks we had sitting on the porch. You were so curious about Czech history and politics, so open-minded and understanding when we came across differences and hard-to-grasp symptoms of post-communist lifestyle. What we loved was your enthusiasm for whatever adventure we suggested, like swimming in the cold and green-covered Borová pond. Your personality enlightened our home and our hearts

Magda

Dear Lenka Teplá,

One day I was invited over to Lenka’s house. Lenka’s grandmother was also visiting with them, and we had an enjoyable experience trying to visit each other in languages we did not understand. It was sweltering, and my feet were swollen. When I complained, she quickly ripped a cloth from the clothesline, filled a metal bucket with ice-cold water from the outside faucet, dragged it over to me, and plopped my feet into the water. Kelsy looked on her in surprise as my feet were dunked. Then, grandmother wrung the wet rag and put it around my neck. My tee shirt was dripping wet! After getting over the surprise, it felt good and was just what my aching feet and tired body needed. I fondly remember that day and have admired her and her actions for my comfort over the years!

Paula





Dear Jeremy & Jamie,

I first met you during your first Camp in Polička. From day one, Jeremy totally won us all over with his hilarious impersonation of Mr. Postman during the traditional skit every morning. And Jamie was so cool at the Camp “arts station”. And then you stayed! We had a church band just simply called “the Band” that Kati started with us and when she left, we were naturally curious to see if Jeremy and Jamie would like to join us in our musical efforts. When plotting during one of our rehearsals, Marta Dusová thought she had seen Jeremy play some drums the previous summer at the US summer camp. Awesome, he’s a drummer! Welcome to our band! But it turned out Jeremy had definitely never played the drums before, nor any other musical instrument for that matter. Well, we wanted him in the Band. Luckily, he was not to give up easily and he stuck it out with us teenagers and became a great drummer in the process! And the best part is that after returning back to the USA, he started playing as a drummer in what was to become a pretty famous indie band called the Delphines. So, now he’s probably the most experienced musician of us all, the irony... Jamie, in the meantime, joined us in our church choir and it was equally as great!

Madla



Dear Kai,

My lovely baby boy, you probably don’t remember your first English camp because you were only 10 months old, but trust me when I say that you made everyone around you smile. I’ve been part of the camp since I was 10 years old and it’s been a blast. I remember dancing energizers late at night on the street in front of our house, tasting American sweets for the first time, making new friends. However the best thing of all was meeting your dad Scott. I was assigned to his group and since day one we were inseparable. It was love at first sight and a truly life-changing encounter. I hope you will be part of this amazing camp for many more years to come and you will make your own memories. Love, Mommy.

Martina Neithamer (Švecová)



Dear Tonya,

When I think about you, the discussion we once had on a bus really stands out in my mind. It was during one of our afternoon trips to some sights. I don’t remember the place we went to see but I remember our talk so well. You talked about your work, and I could sense that you really cared about your students. I remember feeling this is the attitude every teacher should have. I still keep the souvenir you gave me at the end of the camp – the blue Superman T-shirt! Thank you!

Petra Willantová



Dear Martin and Jarda,

When I invited you to join our camp 19 years ago I knew your English was good, you were sporty and fun but I would have never guessed how remarkably persistent you would prove to be. Coming to the Camp year after year regardless of your life circumstances and the number of children has been one constant I could rely on. Thank you for being good and reliable friends through all those years!

Magda



Dear Chip,

At the second or third Camp you gave me a gift I still carry with me almost everywhere I go. My amazing pocket knife. Every time I use it I think of you and Jody and it just puts a smile on my face. Thank you for being a part of the Camp for so long and bringing so much kindness and fun into our lives!

Martin Haupt



Dear Joy,

Since I met you in the American camp in Polička, you and Larry have become members of my family. I remember it as if it was yesterday the first day I met you - such a beautiful lady, nice, calming and with a lot of patience for my English and above all with such a big heart. You are such an inspirational woman. We have known each other for almost 20 years and we have spent so many great moments together. Later it was not only the American camp in Polička, what brought us together. I visited your wonderful home in Alva, Oklahoma and you were the best hosts ever. You and Larry then came to my wedding, which I really appreciated and the fruit-bowl I got there from you reminds me of you and your family every single day. I wish we could see each other more. I am truly grateful for meeting you and having this special bond with you.

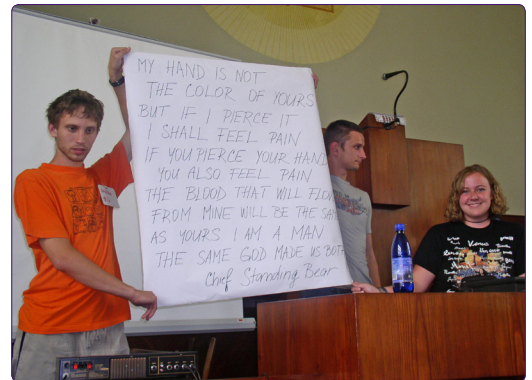
Lada



Dear American and Czech volunteers,

I was at the camp only once in 2005 but I have warm memories of that time and all the people who worked around the camp. I remember the outing somewhere at the Milovy pond, meaningful talks with **Chip** and his brave swim in the pond. I still have the knitted cap from his wife **Jody**. I like to remember **Jan Dus's** preaching and the singing and dancing at the opening of the Camp every morning. The last memory is of playing bowling with pastor **Mike Jeffers** who claimed he personally knew Tom Hanks. My friends doubted it but I thought: Why not? The world is such a small place after all.

Ondra Šír



Czech history and Jarda ☺

I remember in our first year, we got to tour Pernštejn Castle, and it was the first time I had gotten to see an authentically old castle. I've always loved films and movies set in the past, especially medieval times, and I loved walking through the history there. Going up a spiral set of stairs, it was pointed out that the design was so that the defenders of the castle would be able to swing their swords down at the attackers with their right hands, while the attackers would either have to swing with their left hands, or be hitting their swords on the wall going up. The stairs were at regular heights until the last step, which was quite a bit taller than the others. The doorway at the top was intentionally short, so that you had to stoop as you stepped into the room head first. Jarda had already gotten to the top of the stairs to demonstrate how the defenders would be able to swing at anyone coming through that doorway, and with a light miming of a sword swing at the neck, he would say with a grin, "aand you're dead..., aannnd you're dead," to each person as they stepped in.

Certainly brings history to life!

Lisa Lessert





Dear Jan,

One of my many special memories through out the years has been getting to play the organ and piano in different venues. We all know how pushy Jan Dus can be! (But I appreciate you, Jan!) When we would visit different churches and theaters, he would get me to play the organ or the piano. Several churches which we had to climb steep steps or even a ladder, pianos in a castle and the Polička Theater and even a Hammer Dulcimer at the “Garden Party”. They all are special memories, but especially the times on Sunday mornings in the church that opened it’s doors to us Americans and all the children and changed our lives.

Ann



Dear Kati,

We can never forget the few years you spent with us in Polička. It was such a brave decision to stay in a completely foreign country! And it meant so much for us. I remember how you taught us to play chimes (I loved it!) and then we played in the Black Sheep band together. I was a stupid teenager back then but I really enjoyed it. It was so much fun! However, my best memory is of that time when we took you to our cottage in Slovakia and you climbed Rozsutec (a steep rocky mountain) and you were so proud of yourself. And then we went to the open-air concert of Jaromir Nohavica in Terchova and after the concert we had to climb up the hill to the cottage in complete darkness because my Mom had forgotten to bring the torches! You took it so easy (well, you had no other choice), we kept laughing all the way up lighting our way with the last mobile phone we had (all the other had died). Loads of fond memories! Thank you for all of them.

Klára Jakubcová



Dear Mr and Mrs Vosmek,

One evening, Jitka and Kelly O. went to the local pub, and while I thought I would go to bed early, I stayed home with her parents. Visiting with her parents in their living room, I was presented with a glass of clear drink with about an inch of tiny blueberries covering the bottom, and he explained to me, mainly through sign language, that he had picked each one. It must have taken him hours, so I obliged by drinking the alcohol and eating all the berries. We sipped our drinks all evening, sang songs, and told stories. Jitka and Kelly came home late that evening, and they were so surprised to see that I was still awake and laughing so much. The girls giggled a lot, and it was not until later that they told me our tongues were all BLUE from the berries. We had quite a laugh!

Paula

Dear Joe and Lisa,

It’s been a pleasure to meet people with such kind hearts. I remember having a conversation with Lisa in Czech(!) and being so impressed with her language skills. She tried hard to learn our difficult language but also showed so much patience and love when talking to younger campers who struggled to make themselves understood. Another memory I have is of having fun while walking around Polička with Joe and Hana Bartošová. Your lovely warm smiles made every camp day even better.

Bára





Dear Jeremy and Jamie,

The most thrilling experiences I had with you were: Capture the cake game and Camping. I used to watch films showing all the American customs and traditions but with you two I truly experienced them. It was my first time enjoying S'mores with you at the campfire and we had so much fun playing the game Capture the Cake! It was so exciting! Thanks for these two memories as well as the hundreds more.

Pája



Dear Elizabeth,

One memory I have recalled from being at the American camp in Polička is our group of campers sitting in one of the classrooms, listening to you telling us about Thanksgiving. Until that moment, I had been clueless as to what Thanksgiving was. I thought it was an “americanized” version of Halloween, but it turned out to be something different. I like learning about different traditions and cultural practices in other countries, so this was a pleasant moment of gaining new knowledge. We read about the holiday and why it was so important to most Americans, and as an English learning exercise we were supposed to write simple sentences in our tiny notebooks. Somehow, we got to a point where Liz was explaining that “a person” in plural is “people” and not “many persons”, and she made us all repeat “one person, many people” several times. Some time later when I was back in my school in Sweden, we were going through the exact same thing in our English class and I thought to myself “I already know this, Liz explained it to me!” Hugs!

Agnes from Sweden



Dear Martina and Eva,

There are so many times throughout the week of camp that we have the opportunity to get to know each other and become friends. Sometimes it's asking about each other's lives during lunch with the campers. Sometimes it's sitting next to a new person on the bus trips. Sometimes it's commiserating with each other about dodgeball injuries. One of my first memories of this is walking around during the afternoon trips with Martina and Eva. They taught me and Sara our colors and numbers in Czech. We thought we were coming over that first year to teach the camp, but really those girls taught me. Not just Czech words, but they taught me what it looks like to be open and share about my culture and my life. Love you both!

Jacque



Dear Tim and Liz,

Last year on Wednesday afternoon when there was the Crafts workshop in the church, a few of us invited you to play a game of knowledge called Europe. We found a place on the floor in the church and prepared the game board. The game contained questions from areas like Culture, Sport, Geography, History of Europe ... It was all in Czech so we were trying to translate the questions for you. We probably did a good job translating because you two had better knowledge of Europe than all four of us Europeans together! Great job, you are awesome!

Žaneta Petrásová





Dear Ann and Bill,

There are so many memories I have of you collected over the unbelievable 20 years since we met. All the talks in the pub, on the bus during the trips, at the camp stations, the times when we were sharing our worries and joys and discussing the prospects of yet another camp next year. The last precious memory I have is of us sitting together at the Biker's lounge in Jedlová before we went to play bowling. That was a rare event when Ivan joined me for as he did not speak much English. Yet we had so much fun telling jokes and laughing together that people from other tables came to ask what was so funny. There was one specific joke about a baseball cap that I still remember because it brings back the memory of Ivan and Bill laughing so hard together although they had no common language. Love you.

Magda



Dear Liz & Dave,

Start packing your bags, the next adventure is just waiting! This is one thing that stands out when it comes to you two – both of you have left a lasting impression on me and my kids with your journeys and storytelling... I wonder if you recall the long afternoons and evenings in Magda and Ivan's backyard the way I do – barbecue, chips, bread, veggies, dips... describing your travels but also sharing the stories of our ancestors. I suppose it was when we discovered we shared the same values, beliefs in what's important – being there for our children, opening our house to guests, enjoying a good pizza! with our loved ones... it was there when I felt at home. Best wishes!

Svatava from Sweden



Dear Kelly Buell,

I'd heard about geocaching several times before I met you but with you I really experienced it. You showed me how to find the caches and told me all the necessary info about the game. Me and my family really enjoyed the time looking for the caches and our time together. Thank you.

Pája

Dear Jacque,

I'm really sorry that we never managed to play Fever together as we had planned! I'm sure that your ukulele version would be splendid. On the bright side, I had the pleasure to sing with you and the others at the garden parties. Like the last time I took part in the camp. Friday night, everything was already tidied up and everyone was supposed to leave the Church garden but we still stood in a small clump of people singing and trying to catch into our memories the very last moments we had together. Also, it was a truly transcendental experience anytime you and Kati sang one of your favorite songs. I will never forget how you threw a little performance in the church at Zelená Hora. The two voices complementing each other, resonating through such a beautiful and sublime space.... very uplifting indeed. Thank you for all the laughter and good time we had together!

Petra Willantová





Dear Dave and Steve,

I will never forget the morning session we had with you – it was a science lesson! We were sitting in a classroom and you told us that we were supposed to take the pens and draw something on the plates. I think I drew a house. Then, you told us to pour water on our drawings on the plates. Suddenly, the drawings started floating! Cool! I thought, that was really something! ☺ Of course, I remember fun at the Recreation and the dance we always did in the morning in the church – “When I wake up,... “ – that was fun! But your station was always the best. Lots of love!

Stephan from Sweden



Dear Czech volunteers and campers!

Ah, so many lovely memories of camp! So much hospitality and care, snacks and dinners and travel, laughter and new experiences! I can't help but smile and feel my heart glow when I remember each person I have gotten to know over the years, and all the amazing places we have gotten to visit. I remember on my very first long flight overseas, Jacque gave us a list of basic Czech words, and I saw that the Czech word for “Yes” is often spoken “No”... and I knew right then that the language was going to be a challenge, but I love trying anyway! That first year, we played a game where the campers were supposed to hold a card over their forehead with an English word on it. The youngest groups of kids were unaware that we wanted them to hold the card at their forehead, so while the game was going on, I asked our translators how to say “hold this” in Czech and I was delighted when the kids grabbed the card without hesitation, and didn't even notice that I was saying the command in Czech... we learned language together!

Lisa Lessert



Dear Jarda and Martin,

You came into the life of our camp the second year. I remember sitting on the bus and you sat in the seat in front of me. We were all in the back section where it is easy to talk with many people at the same time. You asked me and the others several questions and you looked surprised to find us casually and freely speaking with you. You are among those crucial volunteers who have continued to support this camp with your time and energy, even as you now have jobs and families. We greatly depend on you. Over the years it has been a joy to have you as friends and still be in contact with you. BUT I must say, Jarda and Martin, “Die Hard” is NOT a Christmas movie!!!

Ann



Dear Jiří Švec,

On return from a day outing, a group of us were returning to our host homes. Jiří was leading us down the road toward the theater. Road signs in Polička are not as high as the ones in America. As I passed the next street sign, I slapped it as hard as I could with my hand, then quickly covered my eye and face with my hand and fell to the ground. All came running to my side. Jiří, visibly concerned for me, quickly rattled off multiple sentences in Czech; however, slowly I uncovered my eye and pointed at him and said, “gotcha!” He quickly started laughing. A time I will never forget, nor will he!

Kim

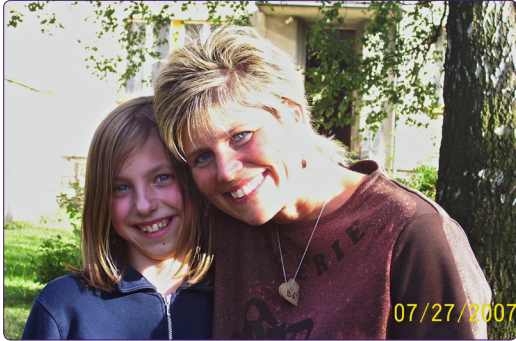




Dear Elizabeth,

I have fond memories of the first year we met and you stayed in our apartment. It was so nice to hear you singing Good Morning Starshine in the kitchen every morning before the camp. I was amazed by your voice. When we met in the Polička square last year, it seemed like no time had passed and I was so happy to see you back in your “second home”. I hope you and Dave had as much fun as me exploring the ruins of the Starkov castle. Thank you both for being so kind and generous.

Bára Jakubcová



Dearest Valerie,

It is really hard to pick one memory as I have so many with you but that one night when you got to taste and drink “Slivovice” is one I will remember forever :-). When I first met you at the camp I straight away noticed you had such a positive vibe, were always in a good mood, laughing or doing silly things and I am glad you are still as loving and funny 20 years later. You always make me laugh and I will always cherish all the wonderful memories we have together. I am forever grateful I found such a dear friend thanks to the English Camp and when I got to spend 8 months with you in Oklahoma you became a family to me. It has been a long time since we last met but I can’t wait to see you again.

Zuzka



Dear Kati,

My memories of the Camp with Americans are so many years old, but they don’t fade. I met there a lot of great people, whether our paths crossed briefly or we still keep in touch today. I would like to send my warmest greetings to you, Kati, as you were a wonderful leader of the Camp as well as a good friend during your stay in Polička. Although we haven’t seen each other for many years, thanks to social media you continue to inspire me with your enthusiasm, both for your work as a pastor and for family life. Thank you for all the love and kindness you spread.

Tereza Pondikasová / Novotná



Dear Jeremy and Jamie Ault,

One does not meet superheroes every day, but I clearly remember the week I first met Jeremy and Jamie Ault. The young American couple had just married and shared their first days with us at English Camp. Jeremy was a live wire, while Jamie was quieter. We had lots of great experiences together. I loved their eagerness for life and how Jeremy took charge of our camp lessons in the sanctuary. He was not a bit modest, and there was nothing he would not do if it entertained the children. He was witty and boisterous during the energizers, and his skits were especially funny. My happiest memory of him was when strong young men raised him into the air and “flew” Superman up the center aisle with his cape flying and arms outstretched in a pose that would have made the real Superman actor jealous. He Flew Through the Air with the Greatest of Ease. He was also quite good at acting as a mailman who delivered lessons to the group.

Paula





Dear Martin and Jarda,

It is impossible to pick a favorite memory or story when it comes to you two, so I'll just say I am so thankful for you both. Jarda, thank you for all you've taught me - including stories from Czech history and why you shouldn't name your rabbits. Martin, thank you for all the fun and laughter – including all the times we laughed at Jarda's teaching moments. I have tracked my life by the photos of the three of us together. Friends forever.

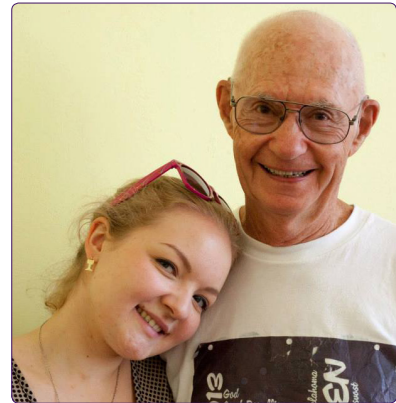
Jacque



Dear Chip,

As I am getting older and I am losing my hearing I often think of you. I know now how annoying wearing the hearing aid is. Do you remember the time when we went to the gallery in Prague where there was an exhibition of Alfons Mucha's huge paintings. There was a big hall where each painting had its own panel and everyone was walking around in absolute silence reading the texts in the gallery booklet and contemplating the paintings. Not us. Since they had run out of the gallery guides in English we were walking around me translating the texts about the historical scenes loud enough for you to hear. You also had lots of questions about the historical context. Other visitors were looking at us disapprovingly and I was feeling a bit uncomfortable, so I said, "Chip, don't you want to use your hearing aid?" And you gave me your big smile and said, "No, why? I can hear you pretty well." With much love

Magda



Dear children and volunteers,

Tammy and I have so many fond memories of the 2023 English Camp. The children will always have a place in our hearts. While we were learning each others language, we quickly realized that smiles and hugs were universal and broke down any language barrier. My very favorite part was eating lunch with them (they were so inquisitive and interested in our culture) and also dancing with them. I taught them a line dance from Texas and at the Garden party, there were over 100 people dancing to Boot Scootin Boogie. It was so hard saying goodbye to all the children and also to the volunteers. Each one of them have impacted our lives in such a good way. We are thankful to have been given this opportunity and look forward to many more. With much love and gratitude,

Mary Emmet and Tammy Wasson



Dear Blanka (Smejkalova),

We were so tired from a long journey but also so excited as we were approaching Polička on my first visit. Then we were there at the parking lot where we met our host families. They were lovely! I was fortunate to stay with Jan and Blanka Smejkal and their family. Blanka, her brother, Lindsay (from the USA) and I spent an afternoon going mushroom hunting. It was a great adventure although we only found two (2) mushrooms, but what a day! On my second visit, Blanka even made a special trip to say hello and to bring me a beautiful little tree. That little tree is now displayed in my home.

Mary Ann Holt





Dear Kelly,

I am really grateful I got to meet you and your family thanks to the English camps and so glad our friendship still continues to grow stronger and stronger many years later. You, your mom and your girls are the only Americans from the camp I got to spend some time with in 3 different countries. We had great fun in Polička, I loved every minute of my visit in Oklahoma and it felt really special when you came to visit me for a few days in my current home in England after the camp one year. There is so many memories we have together but my favourite one from Polička is definitely the night we met with others in one of the pubs and us walking home well past midnight singing our favourite P!nk's songs so loud the whole town must have heard us :)

Zuzka



Dear Ester and Jiří Hladíkovi,

You made such an impression on me from the beginning of camp. That first year when learning Czech names was (and still can be) very confusing, there was this crazy High School guy that was everywhere being quite crazy and goofy and like Garfield. I could not get his name right much less the correct tense. So, I called him my version of the word "ornery", a word that I grew up with that means doing crazy funny things. When I came home and looked it up, the dictionary says it is "a mean, cantankerous old man". That is completely the opposite of Jiří!!! I always smile when I think of him. On contrast to that, there was this sweet little girl in the younger classes that always smiled and was kind to everyone. It was Ester. The end of that year she gave me a white friendship bracelet with a pearl bead. That touched my heart so deeply. I still have that bracelet. Through the years they have always been at camp, they feel like family. And then I heard the strangest news, they were getting married. What a dynamic, dedicated couple they are, in everything they do. I will always think of them as "sweet girl and crazy guy", but honestly, I could call them "crazy girl and yes, sweet guy" (But don't tell Jiří I called him sweet! ☺) I will always remember being invited to see their new house. It was a wonderful trip until they showed me their rabbits. You know this city girl became way too attached to the rabbits! This crazy couple has been two of our super volunteers who have made a difference!

Ann



Dear Jacque and Wade,

Remember the last year's trip to Litomyšl? As the bus spit us out and people spread around the square and the Chateau hill, me and my sister Žaneta were left to each other, so we bought some ice cream and were walking down the square when **Honza Krabička** called me, "I am with Jacque and Wade in a very nice café on the square. Do you want to join us?" I happily agreed. On our way to the café we met Tim and invited him to go with us. When we arrived at the café, there you were sitting contentedly on the sofa and drinking beer. You were happy you finally have time to relax. We were talking about Czech music and Honza translated the song by Ewa Farna for you called Boky jako skříň (Hips like a wardrobe). We had so much fun and a really good time!

Soňa (Petrásová)





Dear campers,

At our camp I got to work (on both of my trips) in the Snack Station...I loved it! The campers were so wide-eyed and eager to learn, to share, to be friends. We had several “American” snacks and ideas that we shared. Their laughter, their friendship will always be a part of my life. Ahoj,

Mary Ann Holt

Dear Kati,

All my “American adventures” first started when Anička Lavická, the pastor from my village close to Polička, had the idea to invite Kati to my confirmation celebration. They already knew each other and Anička thought we might get along well since Kati was a musician and I was also very interested in music. The idea was for us to play some music together during the celebration. And maybe something else too? So I was supposed to meet Kati at the church in Polička to rehearse. I was really nervous because I couldn’t really speak much English yet. Which was luckily quickly about to change. And so started a beautiful time in my life, filled with lots of fun and great friendships, Czech and American. My friendship with Kati really influenced and inspired me for the rest of my life and I will never forget all those great moments we spent singing, playing music or board games, or just being silly... For all of it, I thank you deeply, Kati, my dear godmother!

Madla

A beautiful country

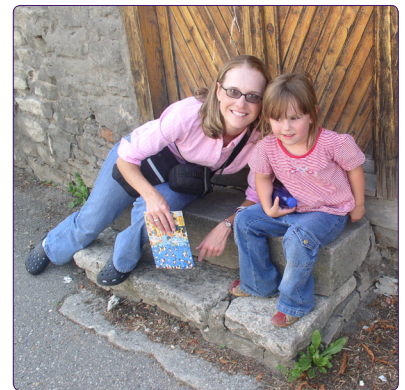
The country itself, has unmatched beauty. So much to take in from beautiful gardens to rich fields of grain, breathtaking poppy fields to historic castles. Vivid in my memory are the vast variety of geographical features from plains to rolling hills, sandstone area to forests with tall trees and captivating flowers.

Kim

Dear Jirka,

I claim you are my best student of all those years I have been teaching. In January 2004 Honza Dus gathered us to start planning the first camp and there came up the problem of where to accommodate the Americans. There were some people in the congregation who were willing to open their houses to complete strangers but did not speak any English. I offered to teach them the basics. So, we started meeting once a week to do some essential vocabulary about the daily needs, times of meetings, food and places. We had literally ten sessions and we were all aware the range of vocabulary wasn’t wide enough to allow much conversation. Then the Americans arrived and on Monday afternoon you took the group for a guided tour of Polička entertaining them along the way, explaining such difficult concepts as medieval fortification system and telling them stories of famous Polička natives. I am sure your smile and pantomime added to your success but you definitely did a great job. I was so proud of you. And I always use you as an example of how important it is to open up and use whatever language you have to communicate. Because being open, kind and helpful, not perfect, makes the communication possible and meaningful.

Magda





Dear Brooke,

I love the memories of my first summer camp (2016) where I met you. Me and my cousin were always so happy to see you during different activities. I think you used to be in the science room and I would always stick close to you because you actually talked to me for which I will always be thankful. To this day, I have the small Oklahoma pendant you gave me. Thank you for all the good memories.

Linda Freundová

Dear Kelsey,

During one of the trips we visited some deep and cool wine cellars located on the side of a hill in a little village near Brno. Kelsey was fifteen years old when we arrived on that first visit. She was not accustomed to drinking alcohol, and her eyes got huge as she stood across the wine cellar from me with her new friends. I did not stop her from trying the wine, and she thought she was very grown-up, as she sniffed and tasted it as instructed. I didn't have to worry because she quickly learned that she didn't like the wine as much as she liked the idea! The motto for the trip was "What happens in the Czech Republic stays in the Czech Republic."

Paula



Dear Ida and Jiří,

In 2016, I was fortunate to go again to Polička. This time I got to stay with Jiri and Ida Tengler and their lovely family. They were great and so gracious to me. Ida and I even went to a thrift store in the village square... it was great fun and I did find a "treasure" to take home. On the Saturday after camp, we all went out to the country to a scout camp ... again fun, entertaining and interesting.

Mary Ann Holt



Dear Malory,

You are so special to me! You're like my sister! I enjoyed every moment with you but what I love the most about you is your transformation. One year, you were such a crazy teenager, a lot of fun but sometimes cheeky and fussy. And then a few years later you came back to Polička completely changed and I was amazed by the change. Such an empathetic and mindful person you had become. And now when you are mum I feel the vibes even more. I wish you would come to Polička one day with your little boy and our sons could play together.

Pája

Dear volunteers,

In year one, on a cool summer's evening, a small group entered the outside hall of knowledge locally known as Šenk! Like a beacon of hope and merriment, numerous other revelers joined in the consumption of drink, snack, story telling and lies! The group continued to grow as we all came together by chance. Somewhere around 10 pm, our lovely server mentioned something about closing. Amidst the lies flying around the tables the server was asked when they regularly closed for the evening. Her response was 9 pm!!! This is the beginning of "pub night" as we know it!!

Kerry





Dear Campers,

In all the fun and play, my absolute favorite thing about the camp is sitting down with the kids at lunch. Something really special happens during Czech camp that encourages the kids to feel so comfortable they will talk to you about anything. These kids are so smart and wonderful and they aren't afraid to be curious. We've had some really serious and thought provoking conversations on topics the Czech kids are experiencing through social media. It's a great time to hear their impressions. Not every child wants to attempt their English at first but almost everyone gives it a try by the final Friday. And even if they don't want to engage in a conversation, they sit close to you and listen enough to have their brother, sister or friend ask you questions on their behalf. These conversations are the best reason to have this camp. Every moment at the camp is overwhelmingly beautiful, even when things go unexpectedly. And it's all because of the children. We are all so lucky to have this experience. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Katie Bucknell

Dear unknown American girl,

When I was 8 or so and I attended the American Camp for the first time, we went to Nové Hradý chateau, and I can distinctly remember walking and talking there with a young American girl (unfortunately, I can't recall her name). And although at the time our communication was very limited, of course, I have fond memories of her playing with me and making me have a great time.

Jan (Bellak)

Dear Czech hosts,

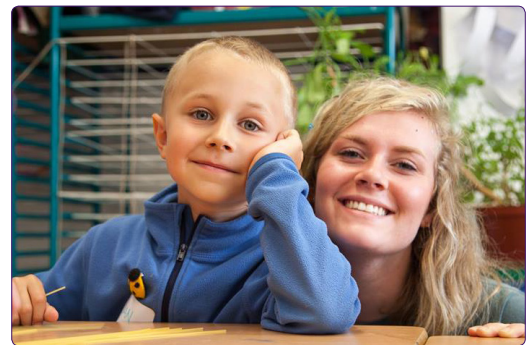
Another highlight of our trip was staying at the manse with the Tenglers. We loved getting to know Jiri, Ida, Jachym, Joel, and Rut. We especially loved playing board games with the boys. We loved getting to know all the volunteers and our dinner hosts. The first dinner host was Barbora Pejcharova. We shared a magnificent feast in her home with Magda Jakubcova and her daughter Bara. It was a lovely evening with great conversation and much laughter. Another dinner host was Ester and Jiri Hladik at their amazing farm home. We shared the dinner with Marta and Premysl Bartos. I don't think I have laughed that much in a while. We also had dinner in the country with Martina Biberlova, her husband and daughter Adela. Pavel Stoudek and his wife took us to a lovely restaurant and then on a drive through the beautiful countryside. Our final dinner hosts were the Horaceks. Such a delightful couple. And, of course, we had many meals with our incredible host family, the Tenglers. We also enjoyed spending time with the Dus family. Thank you, all our friends!

Mary and Tammy

Dear Katie,

When I first met you and Elleana you reminded me so much of myself and my girls when they were Elleana's age. Your energy and enthusiasm were always so contagious, all the children and volunteers loved being around you. It has been fun and inspiring to have you in our camp team and in our lives.

Magda

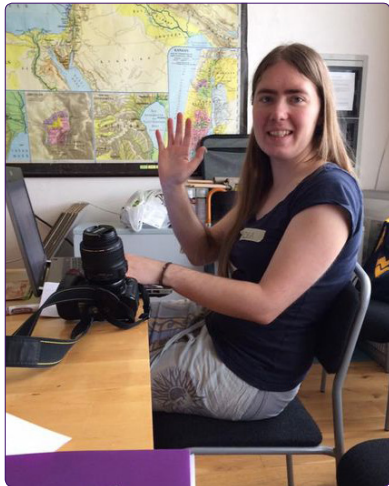




That one dinner we will always remember

The Americans have enjoyed so many wonderful meals in and around Polička, and this dinner from 2004 is still being talked about. It has become almost legend. Here is the story as remembered by Ann and Jacque. At dinner together were Ann, Jacque, Tom, and Chip. The family hosting us for dinner that night did not speak English nor were they church members, but one of their children married someone in the US and moved to the US. They wanted to host a dinner and were told Americans loved liver. So that is what they served us. Ann, Tom, and Jacque (who had never actually seen liver on a plate in real life) just kind of stared at our plates while Chip jumped in eating and saying how delicious it was! They had another son there translating. Their house was small and had no room at the table for them. Any time the family looked away or went into the kitchen, one of us just slid our liver onto Chip's plate. Chip was so excited about how much liver he got to eat that night. Seriously, he ate so much liver. Then, because we kept finishing the liver, they kept bringing us more!! Surely they wondered why our liver was gone and Chip was still eating – we'll never know what they thought. Ha!!

Jacque



Dear Everyone!

I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who ever contributed to the American Camps over the years! Thank you for the immense effort thanks to which we can meet again this year! Thank you so much my American friends for your endlessly positive and joyful energy. You have taught me so much and I will be forever grateful for it!

Madla



Dear Jacque,

My second American sister. You have become my closest American friend. We've known each other for almost twenty years but when I count the short periods we got to spent together it probably adds up to a maximum of four months ☺. We are not that young and crazy as we were at the first camp in 2005. It's terrible how we've grown old with the camp. I still wonder how such a strong bond can develop among people who have known each other for only a few weeks of their lives. It's an example of boundless friendship. We can rely on each other, experience joys and sorrows, cry when saying goodbye and cry again of joy when we meet after a year of disconnection. The Americans would say that the Holy Spirit unites us. For me, it's an incredibly strong collective emotion of joy and sharing that even Czech atheists can't resist ☺.

Jarda



Blue-print factory

I love to sew and collect fabric, so one of my fondest memories is traveling to a nearby village where the craftsmen hand-dye and print lovely blue and white fabrics. My home is full of those colors, and I love to exhibit the fabrics I purchased there. Each time I look at them, I remember all the treasured "day trips" our wonderful Czech hosts would treat us to during the many years that I visited. We saw castles, cemeteries, churches, museums, villages, and so much more!

Paula





Dear Tammy and Mary,

We spent a wonderful evening last year together with you two, Marta and Přemek. Jiří had come home from France early that day and joined the camp immediately. He brought a lot of different yummy treats from France and prepared a French menu. We laughed so hard and wanted this evening to never end. We were speaking about the importance of good friends around, and remembered how our friend group was founded on English camp many many years ago. Tammy and Mary said, they call their friend group “the tribe” and I think it just says it all. We hope there will be many more tribes thank to our great Camps!

Ester and Jiří Hladík

Dear Katie and Elleana,

Me and my family always love reminiscing about the evenings we spent together by the fire – eating, having fun, and even singing a few songs. I’m really looking forward to this year’s anniversary of the English camp and reuniting with all of our American friends. I hope you both have been doing well and can’t wait to catch up on everything we’ve missed. See you soon!

Martin Andrie

Dear Czech Friends,

So, I bought a souvenir. It is a castle. I bought it when we visited a castle. The box was so big that everyone laughed and said that I would never be able to bring it home with me. I insisted that it would fit in my luggage (minus the box). I was right. My souvenir castle will always be in my room reminding me of the wonderful trip, the wonderful friends, and how right I was.

Joe Lessert

Dear Sara,

I remember a funny situation from the very first year of the English camp in 2004. It was a time when everything was new for the Americans. Me and you went to the school cafeteria at the Masaryk school to have lunch. There was “svíčková” on the menu and you obviously did not know anything about Czech cuisine. You looked surprised when you saw what you got on the plate and did not know how to deal with it. You asked me to get you some ketchup so that you could eat it with the bread (meaning “knedlík”). So, I went to the lady serving the food and asked for ketchup. You can imagine her face when watching you putting ketchup on “knedlík” and eating it with “svíčková” sauce. Well, we did anything to make our US friends happy. And I bet the lady from the cafeteria had a story to tell her kids and family as well.

Lukáš Kadidlo

Dear Ann,

Do you remember warming your tea water in the microwave a few years ago? It’s only one of many memories I have of you here in the Czech Republic, yet whenever I think of it, I can’t help laughing. I mean, who would have thought of using the electric kettle for such a task, right? We laughed so hard and so often together.

Majda (Dusová)





Dear Jeremy and Jamie,

I really enjoyed time spent with you when you lived in Polička. It was fun not only at the camps but also in Jamie's art lessons and on our trips. I remember when you came to our cottage in Slovakia and we were putting new roof on. I think Jeremy was helping with the men's work and Jamie and I were painting and decorating the facade. Then we went for a walk to the forest and I joked about a sound that I had just heard and said it was a bear. It really scared you and we had to rush back to the cottage. I'm sorry, I didn't know how serious it could have been. (I don't joke about it anymore.) I probably didn't realize it back then but it's amazing how fast you learned to understand our culture and to speak Czech. Even more amazing is that you still speak it. I hope you'll keep coming back because I think a lot of us consider you part of the "family".

Bára Jakubcová



Special Camp Memory

One Science experiment involved dissolving an eggshell using vinegar. I did a demonstration where I cracked an egg on the head of one child from each group, but I had previously drilled the egg and blown out the insides. I asked Elleana Bucknell to say some "magic words" over the egg beforehand to make it a special egg. Also, just before each demonstration, I pretended an egg slipped out of my hand and smashed on the floor making a big mess. Everyone thought the blown-out egg was real until they realized it was empty. One child asked if they could crack an egg on my head, so I asked Jacque if I could have 5 minutes during closing time, and asked Vanda if she would help with the demonstration. Only Elleana and I knew the egg was real, but the kids expected it to be empty. I asked Vanda if she were ready, and I said, "Let's do it." She cracked the egg, and it made a huge mess! I acted extremely shocked that Vanda would do that! The kids and volunteers erupted into a chorus of cheers, laughter, and clapping. They were still talking about it the next year.

Dave



Dear American friends,

It is hard to choose a specific most memorable moment. Every person we meet through our lives leaves a trace, affects our views or pushes us on our journey in a new direction. I recall very clearly this memory of the first American Camp in 2004. I was studying microbiology at the time with the view of spending my working life in a laboratory. However, I took part in children's camps every year as the children charged me with delightful energy. At this 2004 Camp there was a couple whose names I have forgotten, unfortunately, but I can still recall the lady telling me I would make a good teacher. I may have contemplated it for a while but then forgot about it. Then, many years later, after I had moved to a different city and had my own children, I found myself looking for a new job. When unexpectedly offered a job teaching lab methodology at a secondary chemical school, I remembered this lady from the American Camp and said yes to this challenge. I have been teaching for 9 years now and don't regret at all.

Štěpánka Žďárová



Dear Elizabeth,

I know this statement can sound a bit weird but your presence at the camp is like a white wine on an Italian dinner table. Let me explain. An Italian dinner, just like our English camp, is a thing you always remember and the more you eat it the more you want, and you wish the plate will never be empty again. But what would be a dinner without a glass of white wine? And that is you. (I am sure you will love this simile.) Even though you were not present at the start of this camp series you found your way to come here and share your big heart with many of us. And since you became a part of your daughter-in-law's family in Polička you became a partial Czech as well! God's paths are sometimes unpredictable, and I am glad your path was guided by him to cross mine. I will never forget time spent together, walking through the fountain in Olomouc or drinking beers in our favorite brewery. Cannot wait to meet you once again!

Dan Batla

Dear Jody,

Thank you for coming with Chip to brighten our days (and to see why he kept coming back), thank you for trusting us to take good care of him in those years when you couldn't come. We often remember the times you both stayed with us in Kamenec and became a part of our lives forever. Your kindness and openness is unforgettable. We love you.

Magda, Klára and Bára

Dear Ann and Bill,

It is safe to say that you are basically like second over-seas parents to me. I have known you for the majority of my life and will always be grateful for everything you have done for all of our family. From welcoming us with open arms over 20 years ago to your home and community, through being the brains of the very first English Camps, later putting up with my 15-year-old self, when I decided to move in with you for 3 months to being there for us on one of the most important days – our wedding. And I think I speak for a lot of people in this camp when I say you have certainly touched many souls! Though we may not hear from each other for extended periods of time, the strings always stay attached. You are truly second family. Love and miss you so much!

Marta

Dear Anna and Magda,

I present to you a scenario. You are at your station during camp and suddenly you run out of one of your most important supplies. What will you do? How will you continue with the day's planned activities?! And then... unexpectedly the supplies magically appear! Where did they come from?! How did some guardian angel find out you needed 30 extra bottle corks and 9 sheets of colored paper in the first place?! Chances are that guardian angel was either Anna Dusova or Magda Jakubcova. Anna and Magda, you are so often behind the scenes, but you are the duct tape that binds us together. Your thoroughness, your practicality, and your dedication has inspired me to be a better leader and a better person. Love you both,

Jacque



CRAFTS AFTERNOON



CRAFTS AFTERNOON



CRAFTS AFTERNOON

CRAFTS AFTERNOON

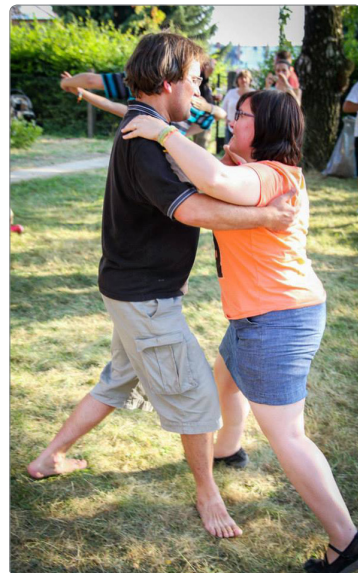
GARDEN PARTY

Jacque's first garden party

I'll never forget the very first Friday Garden Party – the afternoon barbecue that would become tradition! There was dancing, laughing, live music, and delicious foods. And best of all, it was a chance to spend the evening with friends we made throughout the week. Each year's garden party since then has been different and special and wonderful in its own way. I can't imagine a week of English Camp without it!

A special shout out to the grill masters and their pork leg on a rotisserie turning under the power of a washing machine motor. Jirka and Miloš, your efforts in sunshine or rain are unwavering. We couldn't put on a camp without you!

Jacque





Garden party

I fondly remember the Friday afternoon cookouts on the lawn next to the church in Polička. It was always a special treat to enjoy the delicious dishes that the church women brought to share with our mission team, and the smell of the pork rotating on the grill was exceptional! The men of the church were excellent hosts! Drinking pivo and visiting with so many friends was a happy pastime as we waited for a slab of that pork!

Paula



Friday Party

No matter whether the weather was very warm or pleasant, Jitka's parents and their friends would come in full Czech dress and dance on the uneven lawn. Jitka's father often sang and entertained with his lively polka songs played on the accordion. There was never enough time to talk to everyone, but we tried hard, and the conversations continued late into the evening. These happy gatherings will never be forgotten!

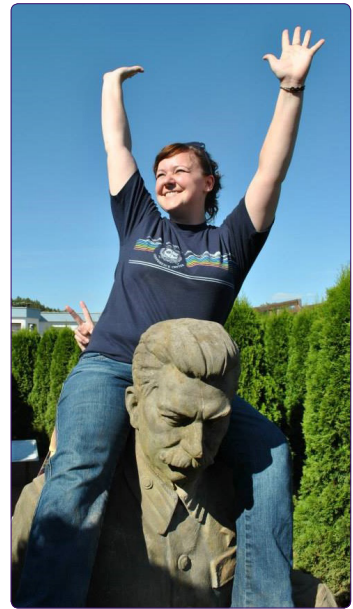
Paula

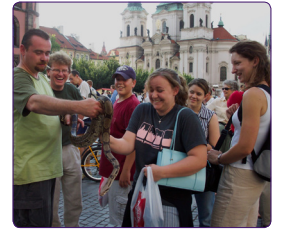


All those trips

I have a heartwarming memory of visiting the giant “singing” tree that was hollow inside and how close it grew to the farmhouse near it. What a treat! I loved seeing the fields of poppies, sunflowers, verdant grasslands, and fire sports competitions in Jitka’s village. I loved Prague, all the local villages we would pass through, the yellow color of the church buildings, the castles, and so much more! I also enjoyed the longer trips to Brno, the mountains, and the northern part of the country. To the east, in Olomouc, I saw one of the most beautiful cathedrals I had ever seen.

Paula









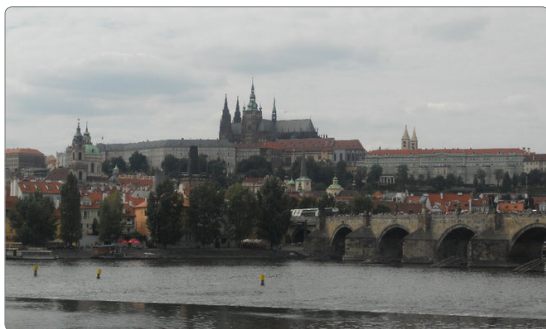
POLIČKA



POLIČKA



PRAGUE



PRAGUE



THE CLOSING

In closing, a haiku for English Camp...

*The spirit of Camp
How can we put into words?
Fun. Friends. Open hearts.*

The spirit of English Camp in Polička – how can it really be described? Why do so many of us keep coming back? Can you believe it's been 20 years? How do we keep encouraging new American team members and inspiring new generations of campers to join us?

Seriously... what is it about this camp?!

For some... maybe it's the energizers. Starting each day by dancing together and having fun. Maybe it's the chance to launch rockets at Science Station and wear sweet looking safety glasses. Maybe it's dodgeball. Everybody loves dodgeball. Maybe it's lunchtime conversations with campers where they are not afraid to ask the tough questions... like our views on politics. Or what kind of pizza we like. Maybe it's the stunning talents that the volunteers bring to the table – artists, musicians, teachers, dancers, and more than a few comedians. Maybe it's the amazing acts of radical hospitality. The meals provided. The snacks carried to the stations. The host families who do our laundry. The young man who carried a heavy bag up the hill when someone was struggling with a hike. The volunteer who shared their umbrella on the walk to lunch when someone was caught in the rain. Maybe we keep coming back for the garden party... Or maybe it's the pork leg at the garden party. ;) Maybe it's "Na jedno". Personally, I believe that camp lives on because of the people, and because of the relationships built over the years by working together and learning about each other. Everyone chooses to come as their best self and because of that the spirit of camp strives to be a community of openness and love. It can be felt from the classrooms to the lunchroom to the ice cream shop in the square. It touches all our hearts and that is not due to one single activity or person or group. It takes all of us.

I am sometimes asked about the future of English Camp. Of course, the answer is the same as always... "we can't know for sure what the future holds but I hope to see you next time." And every time we say



goodbye in the theatre parking lot, the same song always comes to mind, "It well may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime, so let me say before we part, so much of me is made of what I learned from you, you'll be with me like a handprint on my heart. Because I knew you, I have been changed for Good."

And so, thank you.

To the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Polička who keep inviting us back no matter how many ways we are weird or wacky. You are our brothers and sisters. Thank you!

To the Czech planning team who work diligently to organize a week of activities, hosts families, dinners, supplies, volunteers, and a million other things you do to keep camp running smoothly. Thank you!

To the Czech volunteers who show up ready to participate even though you have no idea what crazy activities the Americans will have come up with. Thank you!

To everyone who has ever translated for an American during Openings, Closings, or Skits... we have not made it easy on you and you are amazing. Thank you!

To everyone who has ever translated on an afternoon trip, during a dinner, or even just walking around Polička... we have not made it easy on you and you are amazing. Thank you!



To the campers who join us with open eyes, open ears, and open hearts. You will always be welcome to come through those open doors. Thank you!

To the parents who trust us enough to send their kids to camp. Thank you!

To the parents who visit during openings and closings so you can do the energizers in the balcony... we love you. Thank you!

To the helpers in the kitchen at Snack Station, who often go unseen by many volunteers and Americans. We see you. Thank you!

To the American team members (past, present, and future) for your commitment to overseas travel and building relationships. Thank you!

To Měšťanský Pivovar v Poličce for giving us each day our daily bread. Thank you!

To all the waiters and waitresses, bakery workers, and all the other shopkeepers who have had their workday

interrupted by the tornado that is the American Team and the English Camp. We are sorry. And also thank you!

To all of the people who have hosted dinners, provided snacks and desserts, and made the tea and coffee. Thank you! It was all delicious!

To all of the host families who feed us, give us a place to sleep, give us an umbrella if it's going to rain, and make us feel truly at home. Thank you!

To the friends who started as strangers and are now even more than friends... you are family. Thank you!

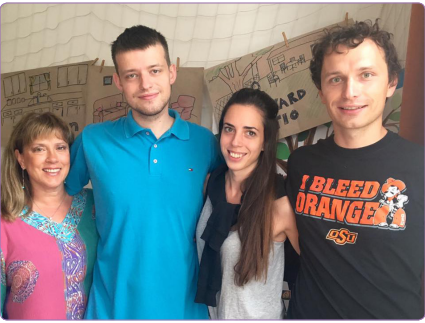
I am so excited for this summer and for another amazing camp in 2024! We can never truly know what the future holds, but I can say without a doubt that there is still an energy and a living spirit about this camp. It lives in our hearts. I look forward to seeing what comes next for English Camp!

Until then... Pojdme tancovat!!!

Jacque Salmons



FRIENDSHIPS



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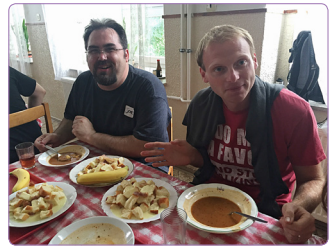


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AMERICAN CAMP 2004–2024
 English Camp with Americans in Polička

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