



The Czech Heritage Club Board is pictured with the author of “Minnesota’s ‘Big Woods’ Musicians” author at the Montgomery book signing. Pictured are (from left) Vi Chromy, author Sister Anita Smisek, George Mikiska, Fred Simon (back) Gary Pikal, Marit Lee Kucera Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for MN, IA, ND, SD, Jean Keogh, Doris Coghill, and James Simon.

## Locals pick up copies of ‘Minnesota’s ‘Big Woods’ Musicians’

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As the Mayor of the City of New Prague, Duane J. "Dewey" Jirik received a copy of “Minnesota’s ‘Big Woods’ Musicians” authored by Sr. Anita Smisek, OP, with narrative assistance from John Chromy.

That’s when he saw his family on the pages and wanted his sons to have their copies.

“I found that my great-great-grandfather Vojtech (Albert) Jirik was listed in the book as having a band with his brothers, and that he played clarinet in Emperor Franz Josef’s Military Band and Orchestra in Vienna before coming to the United States,” Jirik stated. “When I saw this, I wanted to get my two boys their own copies and have them autographed by the author Sister Anita.”

Jirik purchased his books and had Smisek sign the copies at a book signing in New Prague on January 17. Signings were also held in Montgomery and Lonsdale the following days.

Smisek’s book tells the amazing story of how the immigrants came from the farming villages and towns of southern Bohemia and brought with them their love

of music. She recounts how playing and singing music made bearable the hard work of clearing trees, building homes, and creating farms in the “Big Woods” of south-central Minnesota in the late 19th century.

It also shares how the “Founding Musical Families” taught their children by candlelight to love and play music; and records the development of many musical groups (bands, orchestras, choirs) in and around Veseli, Lonsdale, Montgomery, and New Prague.

According to Czech Heritage Club President Jean Keogh, more than 30 people attended the book signings each night.

The book is available at Downtown Sound, New Prague; Herrmann Thrifty White Pharmacy, Montgomery; Edel’s Meat Market, Montgomery; and Lonsdale Hardware Store.

It can also be ordered online starting February 1 at the Sisinawa Book and Gift Gallery, Czech Heritage Club or Bethlehem Academy.

For Jirik, owning copies of the book for him and his family was something he didn’t want to miss. He was also fascinated by the amount of history that went into its pages.

“I am impressed with the vast amount of research and time that Sister Anita put into this publication, and it really tells of a musical history of the area and our heritage,” he said.



New Prague Mayor, Duane Jirik, and his son, Josef, 13, have their copy of “Minnesota’s ‘Big Woods’ Musicians” signed by its author Sr. Anita Smisek, OP, a former choir director at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, with narrative assistance from John Chromy. (Inset) Marit Lee Kucera, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic for MN, IA, ND, SD at Honorary Consulate of the Czech Republic in Minneapolis, looks at the book with Czech Heritage Club member James Simon.

## Kilkenny seed grower receives award

Richard “Dick” Stangler, of Kilkenny, has spent his entire life working with seed. His first job was to clip the metal MCIA seal on seed bags with a pliers. His grandfather, Elmer, started the family in the certified seed business; his father, Jim, followed.

Stangler was recognized this month by the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA). Stangler received the Premier Seed Grower Award, that has been presented annually since 1928 and recognizes MCIA members for their dedication to the production and distribution of quality seed, as well as their involvement in MCIA and other organizations.

Stangler continues his family’s tradition of growing, conditioning, and selling seed. From 100-pound seed sacks, to forklifts, to tote boxes, and now bulk seed, he has seen many changes over the years.



Stangler

With a passion for mechanics, planning, and building, he has regularly made improvements to his family’s seed conditioning facility. It is still a family business as son, Nick and daughter, Becky are part of the operation. They produce 1,400 acres of soybeans, oats, wheat, and corn, in addition to 800 acres of contract seed production.

Much of the farming is done in partnership with Dick’s brother, Steve.

According to Roger Wippler of the MCIA, Stangler participates in the Seed Certification, Approved Conditioning Facility and the Noxious Weed Seed-free Forage & Mulch programs. He also served as secretary of the local county crop improvement organization for many years and has genuinely enjoyed being a part of MCIA and working with the MCIA staff.

In the 1990s, in an effort to increase crop diversity, Stangler helped organize the Southern Minnesota Wheat Growers group, Wippler stated. The group demonstrated practices that improved wheat quality and increased yields in the area.

“After working with the local soil and water conservation service to install eight miles of waterways and terraces, Stangler saw the benefits of conservation practices on their farm. Today, he offers cover crop mixes to reduce erosion and improve water quality,” Wippler said.

In addition to raising seed crops, Stangler feeds out 50 head of cattle and raises 600 to 700 broiler chickens every year.

A graduate of Waterville-Elysian High School, this one time 4-H and FFA member still enjoys exhibiting at the State Fair Crops and Seed Show, and has collected a number of ribbons and awards over the years, Wippler stated.

Stangler received the award, along with fellow Premier Seed Grower awardees, Duane and John Pazdernik, Larry Rivard, and Harmen Tande, during the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association’s 119th Annual Meeting on January 12, 2022.

Since 1903, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) has provided programs and services to meet the needs of an ever-changing agricultural world. These services include seed certification, organic certification, foundation seed production, and a variety of customized third-party verification programs for seed and identity-preserved grains. MCIA operates from facilities on the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus with field staff located throughout Minnesota.

## Lake Francis FISHING CONTEST

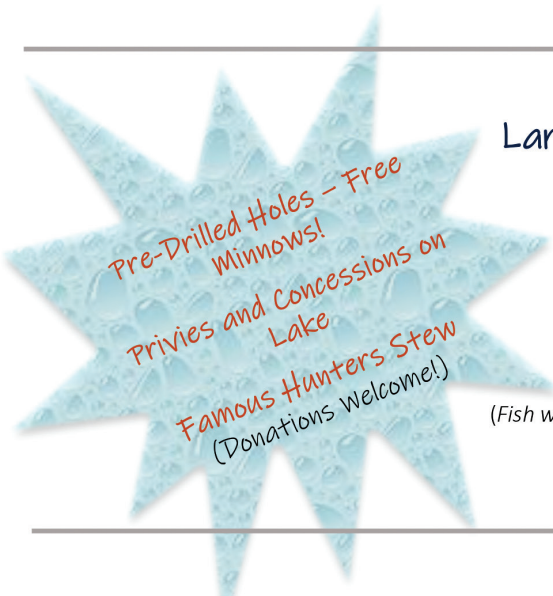
Location: On Lake Francis, Just North of Hwy #60 from Rest Stop, 4 Blocks to Public Access onto Lake (to walk on) OR...North of Hwy #60 on County Road #11 to North side of lake to Public Access.

**Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**1:30pm-3:30pm**

**WIN PRIZES**

\*Register for Merchandise Door Prizes - 1 Ticket Per Person\*

- ☞ Bucket Raffle - \$1,400 Hunting Trip (limit of 500 tickets, \$5 each, need not be present to win)
- ☞ 2 Cooler Raffles (Meat/Beverage)
- ☞ Multiple Bucket Drawings on the lake



### Largest Game Fish Prizes!

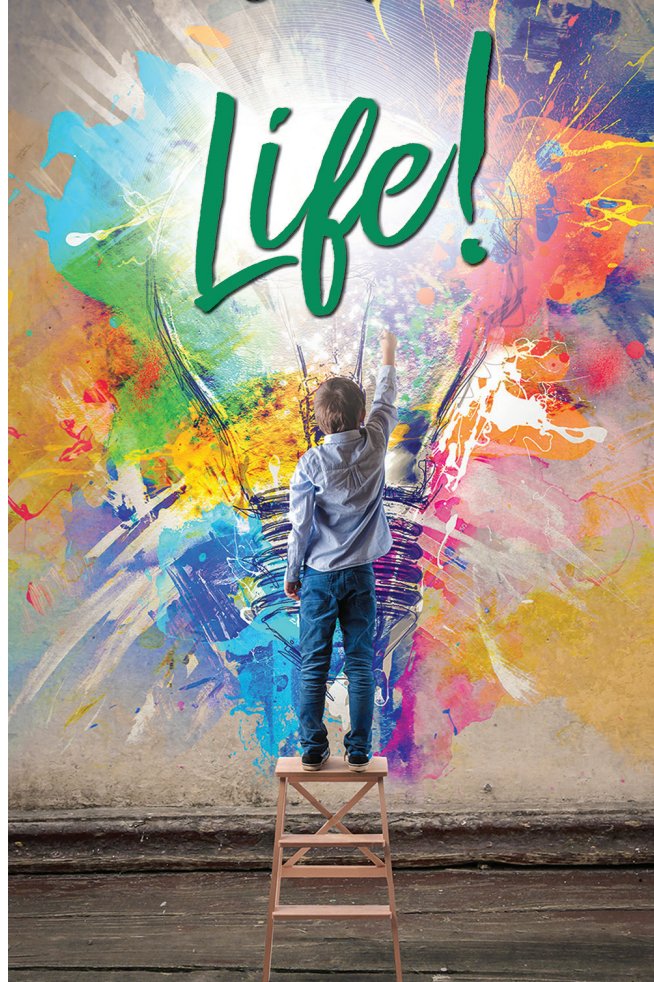
- 1<sup>st</sup> Place - \$100
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place - \$50
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place - \$25
- 4<sup>th</sup> Place - \$10

(Fish will be examined and Judges Decision on Freshest Catch)

Hosted by Legion Post 311 SAL members,  
Legion and Auxiliary  
Elysian, MN 56028



We can give your ideas



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