

Better Than WORDS

By Susan Denney

(Based on a true story)

"I help you, and you help me, and that's the way that it's supposed to be" (Children's Songbook, 263).

Martin was born in the United States. But then his family moved to a country in Europe called the Czech Republic. The people there spoke Czech. Martin knew some of the Czech words his Primary teacher used. He could say *ahoj*, which meant "hi." But he mostly spoke English.

Martin loved his school. He had an English teacher and a Czech teacher. There was a big playroom with fun wooden toys.

One day Martin was playing with puppets when a new boy came into the classroom. The English teacher said, "This is Josef. It's his first day of school. He doesn't know much English yet."

Josef had a worried look on his face. Martin thought he must be scared on his first day of school. Maybe Josef couldn't understand the English teacher.

The teacher led Josef to a table with wooden puzzles on it. Without meaning to, Josef knocked over the whole

How could Martin help Josef when they didn't speak the same language?



stack of puzzles. *Crash!* The puzzle pieces flew everywhere! Josef looked like he might cry.

Martin wanted to tell Josef not to feel bad. It was just an accident. But Martin didn't know how to tell him in Czech. He stopped playing with his puppets and walked over to the puzzle table. He smiled and started stacking one of the puzzles. He showed Josef how to put it back together. Soon he and Josef

finished all the puzzles. They put them back on the table.

For the first time that day, Josef smiled. Martin felt very happy. He had made a new friend without saying a word. ♦

The author lives in Pennsylvania, USA.

HOW TO SPEAK CZECH (pronounced *Check*)

hello—*ahoj* (a-hoy)
thank you—*děkuji* (die-koo-yih)
please—*prosim* (pro-seem)
goodbye—*Na shledanou*
(nahsh-leh-dah-noh)

