

## Who We Are:

The Janusz Korczak Association of the USA founded by Mariola Strahlberg of Shining Mountain, is a member of the International Korczak Association (IKA), whose roots date back to the Polish Korczak Committee, founded in 1947. Dr. Korczak, a pediatrician, children's author, educator and humanitarian, was well-known in Poland and Europe for his innovative work at his Orphans' Home and Our Home in Warsaw. Dr. Korczak, his assistant Stefania Wilczynska, and approximately 196 children and nine staff members were taken to the Treblinka death camp on August 5-6, 1942, and disappeared into its bowels, never to be seen again. After WWII, Korczak's legacy as an educator and hero grew in Poland as well as abroad. In April 2013, here in the United States we officially formed Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. We currently have 48 members. Thank you all for your support last year and **please renew your membership dues** to help us continue our work. For more information about us please visit us at [www.facebook.com/korczakUSA](http://www.facebook.com/korczakUSA) or at [www.shiningmtnforkids.com](http://www.shiningmtnforkids.com)

## Upcoming Events:

**International Seminar devoted to Dr. Janusz Korczak entitled "Towards Inclusive Education** – Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 2" on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014 at the Mission of Poland in Geneva, Switzerland

**CATS Conference** – Children As Actors for Transforming Society, July 26<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 in Caux, Switzerland

**Korczakowo Camp** in Osno near Zielona Gora, Poland – June 29<sup>th</sup> – August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

**New Jersey Core Curriculum Holocaust Teachers Conference at the Ramapo College, New Jersey** - November 18, 2014 – This year, for the first time, this annual one-day conference will focus on Janusz Korczak.

## Janusz Korczak - Educational Moments reported by Mariola Strahlberg and Lauren Alleva.

During March and April of 2014, Finkelstein Library in Spring Valley, NY has hosted our exhibit entitled "Janusz Korczak – Educational Moments". Besides 14 posters displayed on three walls of a large conference room, we added few of the original Hebrew posters and one poster from 2013 Korczakowo.



In one corner of the room, we created Children's Corner with a list of some of the Children's Rights and some questions for children to answer. Here are some of the questions we asked them:

**A child is an intelligent young citizen, well aware of her/his needs, difficulties and obstacles of her/his own life.**

What do you like about your school?  
How do you learn best?  
What would you change in school to make your learning easier?  
If you were invited to write for your school newspaper, what would you write about?

**As a member of a family or a school class, you have certain responsibilities.**

What responsibilities do you have at home?  
What responsibilities do you have in school?

**Social reflections.**

What are you grateful for today?  
Who did something nice for you today and who would you like to thank?  
Who did you offend today and need to apologize to?  
Write one thank you and one sorry note.

**We ended the exhibit on April 27<sup>th</sup> with the celebration of the Holocaust Remembrance Day.**

The library staff was wonderful, adding to our exhibit by creating a cart of books related to Korczak and his orphaned children. We came up with an art project for the Remembrance Day based on a famous Holocaust poem, The Butterfly, by Pavel Friedman and the staff of the children's department helped bring it to fruition. They set up several tables with paints and beautiful flowers and leaves which children used to paint the butterflies for the celebration. They even used the project for one of their children's programs during the month of April and created many butterflies for us to have at the celebration. They loved the idea so much that they set up two of their own exhibits based on butterflies and children's holocaust poetry for the children's department which were really lovely.



The celebration was very special with about 50 attendees, including many children who listened attentively to the Korczak story, joyfully participated in the butterfly project and enjoyed healthy food. The adults were introduced to the exhibit and participated in the Remembrance Day activities. We ended with a reading of a Prayer for Children by Ina J. Hughs and listening to a Jewish Partisan's Anthem, Zog Nit Kayn'mol sung by Chava Alberstein while 7 candles were burning. A few adults commented that they remembered that song from their childhood.

***We are very grateful to the library for hosting this exhibit and for its beautiful ending.***

## Mariola's Interview with Joyce Reilly.

Joyce Reilly, one of Shining Mountain's Board Members, visited Warsaw in October 2013 on her way to a gathering in Auschwitz. I asked Agnieszka Witkowska-Krych (adjunct in the Korczakianum Center for Documentation and Research, a branch of The Historical Museum of Warsaw) to host Joyce's visit and to show her some of the Warsaw sights in connection with Korczak.

Agnieszka met Joyce in her hotel and they walked to Dom Dziecka (Orphan's Home) on Jaktorowska 6 Street (previously Krochmalna 92 Street). They first visited the Korczakianum, which is a library and administration area that houses thousands of files in connection with Korczak's life and legacy. There are over a thousand books by Korczak and about Korczak written in many languages, articles and PhD Theses from many countries on the subject of Korczak and a big exhibition room with photos of Korczak, Stefania Wilczynska and the children. There are also writings on history of Warsaw and Polish Jews.



Next they visited the big hall. This is the old dining room, which also served as a playroom. It is a bit smaller than the original hall since after the war some of the walls in the Orphan's Home were moved in order to adapt them to the new institution. There is a wall at one end of the room that is covered floor to ceiling with a giant photograph of the room full of children, as it would have been in the early years of the 20th Century. The children are looking out at the visitors then and now, dangling their feet and smiling shyly. Joyce noticed that half of the children were not wearing shoes. Since the picture was taken in April 1940 during the war, it is possible that there was a shortage of shoes at that time. The room felt small to Joyce since she knew that at one time, it was supposed to accommodate 100 children, yet felt so real that she expected the children would come in at any minute to have lunch.

There was a group of school children visiting the Orphan's Home that particular day – how appropriate! The Orphan's Home is visited by many Warsaw school children and many foreign visitors, mostly from Israel.

Today there are 30 children living here. Most of them come from dysfunctional families where alcohol, physical and mental abuse, and unemployment do not provide the children with healthy home life. They are considered social orphans. There are plans to implement a new law in Poland that will move these children from living in a large institution such as the Orphan's Home to small group homes, each with a teacher and a caretaker to provide a family-like setting for these children.



After visiting the building, Joyce and Agnieszka stepped out to the large courtyard where there is a statue of Korczak by the Polish sculptor Xawery Dunikowsky. From there they had a most extraordinary tour of Warsaw: they followed the Warsaw Jewish Ghetto walls. Today there are no walls, just lines made out of bricks on the sidewalks to mark the area. Agnieszka pointed out that many movies were made about the life in the Warsaw Ghetto, for example *The Pianist* – one of the most authentic depictions of the war. *The Pianist* was filmed in another section of Warsaw, Prague, since the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto was leveled during the war and there are almost no old buildings left.

Agnieszka showed Joyce Chlodna 33, one of the places Korczak and Stefa stayed with the children during the war. There is no building left there. She also pointed out Chlodna 20, where Adam Czerniakow (President of the Jewish community in the Warsaw Ghetto) lived. He committed suicide upon finding out that Korczak and his children would not be spared from final deportation "to the East" – as the Nazis proclaimed. They stopped at the Palace of Culture and Science, the last place Korczak and his children lived, where today only a small plaque and Korczak monument remind us of them. At each building, Joyce walked around and had a feeling of emptiness - people were missing, there was nothing there.

After a few hours they stopped for coffee and Agnieszka shared with Joyce her story of how she connected with Korczak. When she was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, around 12 years old, she watched the black and white movie *Korczak* by Andrzej Wajda. She was traumatized by the last scene and cried for some time after seeing it. When she was older, she read some of Korczak's writings, got interested in the history of Polish Jews, finished two faculties at the University of Warsaw (anthropology of culture and Hebrew studies) and today she works at Korczakianum, doing research (see below the abstract of one of her articles) and providing information about Orphan's Home to many Polish and foreign visitors. For example, she is currently preparing a talk to be given at a Culinary Conference where she will be speaking about diet in Orphan's Home. She is also finishing her PhD in History. This was an opportunity for Joyce and Agnieszka to get to know one another, two women of different generations, language and country, brought together through this extraordinary story of Janusz Korczak.

After a break, they went to visit the Old Town. This is one of the major tourists attractions and the place where Mariola grew up. They saw Mariola's house and her favorite places to play and read. Joyce loved Warsaw and her special Korczak experience, and most especially meeting Agnieszka and her passion for the history of this unique time in history. Thank you, Agnieszka, for hosting Joyce, and for your continue work in Warsaw, helping to bring Korczak alive to so many!

### Agnieszka Witkowska's Article:

"The Last Road of The Inhabitants and Staff of the Orphan's Home"

Abstract

(continued from page 2)

Korczak's Orphanage to the Umschlagplatz. It is mainly based on testimonials of the witnesses and analysis of the then-realities of the Warsaw Ghetto. Its aim is to establish the most probable version of the events and to eliminate products of imagination existing in collective memory until today.

This article is in Polish and was published in a magazine "Extinction of the Jews. Studies and Materials", Volume 6, 2010.

*Many people all over the world heard or read about Janusz Korczak and their lives have been changed in a profound way. In each newsletter, we will introduce you to one of our members and their stories.*

## **"How I Met My Hero, Dr. Janusz Korczak."**

By Daniel L. Berek

My career as an educator has taken me to many special places; however, it was working with children with special needs that has enabled me to best put my love of children into practice. My supervisor at a school for children with emotional and cognitive needs recommended two excellent books by Larry Brento, president of Reclaiming Youth International. While reading these books, *No Disposable Kids* and *Reclaiming Youth At Risk: Our Hope for the Future*, I kept coming across an unfamiliar name: Janusz Korczak. Who? I did not even know how to pronounce the name! My curiosity led me to the story that most people associate with Korczak, how he refused to abandon the children he cared for in the Warsaw Ghetto and the eyewitness accounts of his final march, leading his charges in a procession of quiet dignity to the Umschlagplatz, to board a train to Treblinka. This act of spiritual resistance, a story of indescribable sadness, had me in tears. From that moment, I became determined to find out everything I could about this wonderful man.

After reading his works, *When I Am Little Again*, *The Child's Right to Respect*, *The Ghetto Diary*, and *King Matt*, along with several biographies, most notably Betty Jean Lifton's *The King of Children*, I discovered a remarkable man. More than anyone else, he embodied the love of children and the disenfranchised. Here

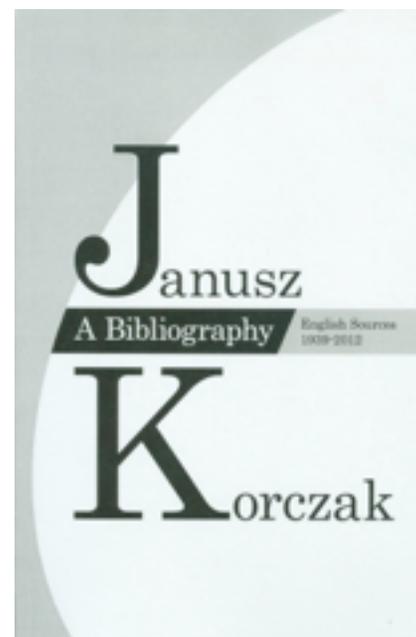
was a man who not only wrote about social justice, he lived it, giving a voice to those who had none – or at best were not listened to. I learned how his teachings became the inspiration for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and that the 1979 UN Year of the Child was created in honor of the centenary of his birth.

On a more personal level, I could readily identify with Korczak's ability to relate to children on their terms, a trait that seemed to elude many people I met in the field of education and an aspect of my personality that too often became the butt of jokes among people who saw education as just another career and others who considered a grown man working with children an aberration, either unmanly or just plain weird. In that context, Janusz Korczak became a source of comfort and inspiration, a kindred voice out there, someone with whom I desperately wanted to connect. This intense feeling led me on a quest to research and collect whatever I could find related to Korczak. Thanks to the ability of the Internet to search the globe, I have been able to locate and acquire every book by and about Pan Doctor, including some that are extremely rare. Likewise, I have accumulated a collection of medals, coins, pins, and stamps that honor Korczak or are related to his life and work. My appeals on the Internet have enabled me to meet many wonderful people from all over the world who shared my admiration for Korczak. And so, Korczak remains my guiding star, an important source of my personal and ethical values, the very reason I continue to advocate for children, especially those with disabilities, who need Korczak's understanding and kindness the most. I have left teaching since we last met, but continue to use my talents with children and adults with disabilities.

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In 2013, *Janusz Korczak Bibliography* was published in Canada. It was created by Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo and Galina Sanaeva (members of the Korczak Association of Canada). The material for the bibliography came from Poland from Edyta Januszewska and Daniel Berek, member of the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Thank you Daniel for your patience and perseverance over many, many years of collecting everything from stamps to medals, articles and books related to Janusz Korczak.

**To reach Daniel, you can email him at [dlberek@yahoo.com](mailto:dlberek@yahoo.com).**



*Daniel is sharing with us a favorite Dr. Korczak's quote:*

**"We compel children to shoulder mankind's responsibilities tomorrow, but give them none of**

"I found this quote in the wonderful CEC report on how the European Union needs to act "in the best interests of the child," taking both quotes from *A Child's Right to Respect*. It disturbs me that the United States refuses to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the of the Child and still has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I, therefore, choose this quote, not because it is the most eloquent, but one that is very timely and applicable to the social problems of today".

Daniel L. Berek

# BECOME A MEMBER OF THE JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

The mission of the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA is to disseminate information about his life and work, his humanism and his sacrifice. Through our practical work with children at the Shining Mountain, we strive to follow the Fundamental Rights of the Child. For example:

**1. The Right to One's Own Life** – we help educators and parents to create a safe environment for children to discover things on their own while allowing them sufficient space and time.

**2. The Right to Live in the Present** – We want to prepare children for the future but children yearn to live in the here and now – therefore we support their need for play and relaxation.

**3. The Right to Be Himself or Herself** – We ask to accept children the way they are, with their talents and shortcomings. With your help, we plan to translate Korczak's most important pedagogical writings, promote advanced courses for teachers on his educational philosophy, establish Korczak's camp in the US and strive for the US ratification of the 1989 United Nations "Convention on the Rights of the Child". Please let us know if you would like to receive information on how you can help with the following activities:

- \_\_\_ Children's Project based on Korczak's books and his legacy
- \_\_\_ Korczak's Exhibit and lecture
- \_\_\_ Korczak's Summer Camp
- \_\_\_ Workshops and lectures for parents and educators on Korczak's pedagogy
- \_\_\_ Five Star Program© training for your school or organization

## MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT

Membership includes a semi-annual newsletter that focuses on putting Korczak's philosophy into action along with suggestions and strategies for creating a harmonious childhood for children in our lives. You will be kept abreast of latest US and international Korczak activities with a possibility to join in those activities with various groups and organizations.

**Please send your check to: Janusz Korczak Association of the USA, 11 Beckett Ct, Monsey, NY 10952**

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Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

I am:      a student      an educator      a parent

other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Enclosed is my contribution:

### Basic Membership (annual):

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$15 (student/senior)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 (individual)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$40 (Family)
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 (organization/corporation)

### Benefactor Membership:

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 - \$249 Friend
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 - \$499 Associate
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 - \$999 Patron
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000+ Founder Circle

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