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SHINING MOUNTAIN  
Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc.

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The Fall Newsletter

October/November 2013

## Who We Are:

The Janusz Korczak Association 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. Korczak, his assistant for 30 years, Stefania Wilczynska, and approximately 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. It began in 1947, when the Polish Korczak Committee introduced

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## How We Spent Our Summer Vacation: Korczakowo and Caux Welcome Us With Open Arms

by Mariola Strahlberg, Founder of the SMCP and JKAUSA

Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, the Janusz Korczak Association and many generous donors sponsored a wonderful summer tour for four young Americans to Korczakowo, the Janusz Korczak camp in Poland and the Children As Actors for Transforming Society



our stay a true retreat. I was especially impressed with campers' work in groups where it was obvious that they were eager to accept differences in each other—which enabled amazing creative collaboration.

Everyone was eager to help in any way as he or she could—some as translators, others with lending helpful hand, and others by including us in their activities and games.

Alex was part of the group of six young women who won second place at the Song Festival and were also honored for being the most popular and helpful group of the 2013 camp. As their reward, they were asked to plant a new tree in the middle of the camp.

Takoda learned enough Polish to be able to sing with his group at the music festival after only 2 days. He also impressed everybody with his basketball skills and kindness. Dan made many people laugh and enjoyed creating beautiful handwork pieces during one of the arts and crafts workshops. Erin brought his orienteering skills and love of nature to create interesting nature

gathering in Caux, Switzerland. The four young people were: Alex Chludzinska (17, from Chestnut Ridge, NY), Takoda Nordof (17, from Great Barrington, MA), Dan Habet (14, from Teaneck, NJ) and Erin Schirm (24, from California) were chaperoned by Mariola Strahlberg from Shining Mountain.

The group was welcomed at the Korczakowo gate with a sign that showed them they were entering another world. Jerzy Zgodziński, the camp director for more than 40 years has been bringing Korczak's ideas to life. He teaches children to respect each other, to be helpful and kind.

Because those values are part and parcel of the camp atmosphere, we were accepted without question, and that made

activities for the whole camp. We enjoyed spending our days and night outdoors in the peaceful forest and at the beautiful lake.

Our gift for the camp was a Native American plaque that now hangs on the Chief's board for everyone to see. It fits in very well with the spirit of Dr. Korczak and the camp. We learned a lot about Dr. Korczak and his methods, their application in everyday camp life and we brought those values back to our home communities.

On the last day, Alex, Takoda and Dan created a beautiful and thoughtful presentation for their first activity in Switzerland, which showed how they plan to become more active in their communities. Asked about the camp experiences, they loved it and if possible they are planning to come back next year.

Here is what Alex wrote on the last day at Korczakowo: "Now it came time for us to leave the camp. I wanted to participate in as much as I could before I left, and so I went to the morning assembly

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#### WHO WE ARE CONTINUED

pedagogical projects for young people, educators and parents based on his methodology and life's work. Fifty years later, the committee became the Polish Association of Janusz Korczak and in 2003 became a non-profit organization known as the International Korczak Association. There are now 24 countries in the IKA. Among them are England, France, Germany, Brazil, Ivory Coast, Japan, Austria, Holland, Israel and others.

In the US, Dr. Kurt Bomze singlehandedly promoted Korczak's methods for 17 years through his Janusz Korczak Society of the USA. In April 2012, Mariola Strahlberg officially joined IKA with Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc. (a not-for-profit organization) and since then, the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA is a full member of the IKA, and we work closely with them.

The IKA meets once a year and members participate in various meetings in their respective countries as well as at the international gathering. For three years running, there have been June gatherings in Geneva, Switzerland, organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations. Each year an article from the 1989 Declaration of the Children's Rights is chosen for discussion, and this year, Article 31, concerning leisure and artistic activities, was discussed.

Since Shining Mountain's work in the U.S. is closely connected with the work of our sister organizations, below is information about the IKA. Currently the Chairperson is Ms. Batya Gilad from Israel and the General Secretary is Malgorzata Kmita from Britain. Yearly IKA dues are 200 Euro.

## HOW WE SPENT OUR SUMMER VACATION

with the junior campers. Standing there, I recalled our last night. I led the entire camp in a [human] train through the campsite. I then stopped the (from page 1) train and said a couple of words about how our train was leaving in the morning, and the younger children's train was just arriving.

Then all the new campers received their bandannas to show they were part of the "Korczakowo family." The usual campfire followed. At the closing circle we were each presented with a gift: a piece of charcoal from the campfire, put on a plaque made out of wood, with the camp's logo and the date burnt into it. It was beautiful and I plan to hang it up in my room to always remember. I received the honor to lower the camp flag that night, and this morning I had the honor of raising it.



"I cherished every bite of my soggy cereal with warm milk at breakfast. Things were

moving fast, and we were packed, sandwiches in hand by 10:00. We all took the Chief aside and each told him a heartfelt goodbye. (I translated for the boys). There is a great possibility that there were tears in his eyes when he told us he would miss us, and that we are required to come next year. Waiting by our minivan ready to go, the entire camp again gathered and gave us three salutes to say goodbye. A pang of sadness rose in my chest as I hugged all the counselors goodbye. They had all become more than just guardians and guides to me, and I have to admit I was crying when we said our goodbyes. We piled into the van, ready to begin our next adventure."



... We spent the next day and a half driving through Germany and France to Switzerland. The ascent to Caux Palace ... took 30 minutes and we found ourselves in a different world, a beautiful castle with comfortable rooms (showers and toilets) and balconies overlooking Lake Geneva and the Alps. CATS conference (Children As Actors for Transforming Society) attracted 50 young



people and 150 adults (parents, guardians and educators) from 40 countries. Our schedule allowed for interactions with young people in small groups where we worked on issues ranging from education, discipline, health and conflict resolution. There were many presentations from young people on their activities in their countries and plenary sessions by educators, doctors and children's rights activists. This was the first year of the five-year-plan to create a place for young people to express their opinion

on the issues they feel passionate about—and for young people and adults to take steps to bring positive change to our world.

The Korczakowo and Caux experiences were life changing for the four young Americans on the tour, and I trust that what they have seen and what they have learned will give them strength to transform their environments in big and small ways.

We are now planning to bring 10 people from the U.S. and three other countries to Korczakowo next year, and train them to be leaders of Korczak camps in their home countries. We also look forward to our future participation at the CATS conference.

We will keep you informed on our progress in bringing what we have learned to our communities. For more information, visit [www.korczakow.org](http://www.korczakow.org) and <http://www.caux.iofc.org/en/children-actors-transforming-society>.



# JOIN US IN HONORING AND SUPPORTING THE LEGACY OF DR. JANUSZ KORCZAK

(PLEASE SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS)

## Excerpts of the Statute of the International Janusz Korczak Association

The IKA is a voluntary federation of Janusz Korczak organizations existing and emerging in particular countries, federated on the basis of equality, independence and democracy, as well as of individuals supporting the activities of the Association.

The Association operates in the Republic of Poland and abroad. The seat of the Association is in Warsaw, the capital of the Republic of Poland. The Association uses a seal with its name in the Polish and English languages.

### Purpose and means of operation

The purpose for which the Association has been established is:

- To disseminate knowledge on Janusz Korczak's life, activity and creative output;
- To circulate theoretical and practical projects as well as experiences based on Janusz Korczak's legacy, developed in various countries;
- To initiate and support actions for the implementation of the "Declaration of Human Rights" and the "Convention on the Rights of the Child".

### Members, their rights and obligations

There are the following classes of Association members:

1. full members
2. supporting members
3. honorary members

Any national Janusz Korczak organization which is formally registered in the country of its operation may become a full member of the Association. A full member organization acts in the Association through its representatives.

Full members:

- are obliged to pursue the statutory purposes of the Association and to participate in the work of the Association;
- are entitled to assistance from the Association
- appoint their representatives who may elect and be elected members of the Association's authorities;
- are obliged to pay membership fees and to make other performances determined by the General Meeting.

Each national organization decides autonomously on all its internal matters.

### The following are the authorities of the Association:

1. the General Meeting
2. the Management Board
3. the Auditing Committee.

The term of offices for all the authorities of the Association is four (4) years.

### *Janusz Korczak International Association*

Jaktorska St. 6th, 01-202 Warsaw

To find out more about Janusz Korczak's Polish Association, please visit:  
<http://www.pskorczak.org.pl/> - in Polish. There is no current English website for IKA. For the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA, please join us at [www.facebook.com/korczakUSA](http://www.facebook.com/korczakUSA) or at [www.shiningmtnforkids.com](http://www.shiningmtnforkids.com) or write:  
11 Beckett Court, Monsey, NY 10952

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 sufficient space, literally and spiritually.
- 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 checks to

Janus Korczak Association of the USA  
11 Beckett Court  
Monsey, NY 10952

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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:

- | <b>Basic Membership (annual):</b>   | <b>Benefactor Membership:</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ___ \$15 (student/senior)           | ___ \$100 - \$249 Friend      |
| ___ \$20 (individual)               | ___ \$250 - \$499 Associate   |
| ___ \$40 (Family)                   | ___ \$500 - \$999 Patron      |
| ___ \$75 (organization/corporation) | ___ \$1000+ Founder Circle    |