

### 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 over 50 members. Thank you all for your support last year and **please renew your membership dues** to help us continue our work.

For more information visit us at [www.facebook.com/korczakUSA](http://www.facebook.com/korczakUSA) or at [www.shiningmtnforkids.com](http://www.shiningmtnforkids.com)

### Upcoming Events:

**Reach One Teach One Program, Finkelstein Library, Spring Valley, NY** - September 2014-June 2015. The Five Star Program© will be used during the Homework Help mentoring program for grades 1-6. See page 2 for more information.

**Educational Philosophy and Legacy of Janusz Korczak in Teaching about the Holocaust - Gumpert Teacher's Workshop - Ramapo College, NJ** - Tuesday November 18, 2014, 9am-3pm. This year, for the first time, this annual one-day conference will introduce Janusz Korczak's pedagogical ideas. See page 2 for more information.

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## Tribute to Jerzy Zgodzinski

by Mariola Strahlberg

With a heavy heart I am writing this article which I never expected to have to write so soon. It was only a year ago that our US delegation spent 10 glorious days at Korczakowo and were all touched by it's Chief Jerzy. I remember how he was coming to us at the end and surprising us with yet one more goodbye. He did not want us to leave and we promised to be back.

Jerzy Zgodzinski died at 75 on June 22nd, 2 days after my last conversation with him, and just one week before the Korczakowo 2014 opening.

Apparently he was sick for many years and although we knew last year that he was not feeling great, he never mentioned it once and was ready to lend a hand in all the camp activities. Many of you had the opportunity to see a beautiful movie from our 2013 summer experience in Korczakowo and saw his sunny face and heard his beautiful deep, warm voice. For me and for many people in Korczakowo, both young and old, he was the "Chief" of that camp and the closest that we were to come to understand Korczak.

He was born in 1939, just before WWII. He studied Polish Philology and when he was finished in 1961, he received an offer to work in Zielona Gora in the vocational (automotive) high school. Instead of leading a theater - his silent wish, he was also offered to lead a boy scout troop. Since his students knew little about culture, Jerzy wanted to give them the experience of literature, theater, film, and music. From the beginning, Jerzy knew that whatever he would do, with whomever he would work, he would use all that he learned about Korczak. Early on, those whom he taught called themselves Korczakians. After a few years, they dreamed of a piece of land to call their own. They looked many places and found a beautiful lake near Swiniar next to Osno Lubuskie and knew this was the place.



"Chief Jerzy" at the campfire July, 2013, Korczakowo.

Here for the past 50 years, young people come to spend vacation in the camp whose patron is the author of King Matt the First. It is here that the first Korczak monument was erected. Young people come once and the next year bring their friends. Jerzy had unbelievable patience, the ability to listen and to understand. He listened to everybody's complaints, challenges and dreams. He understood young people and was eager to lend them his hand. He also had a smile, a real smile and you knew that he always told you the truth even if sometimes that truth hurt. Did he ever regret that he was not producing plays? Never. He told everyone that he preferred to be a producer at the blackboard in school or at Korczak camp., being able to change roles daily instead of having them dictated by the script of a play. On July 2010, Jerzy received a prestigious international award (Order of the Smile), awarded by youth from all over the world to people who contribute in a special way to improve lives of children. This honor has been awarded annually since 1979 by the General Secretary of the UN.

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**Upcoming Events:****(continued)****Viola Elementary School Five Star Program© Pilot, Suffern, NY -**

Beginning in September, several elementary classes have been learning and using the Five Star Program©.

**International Korczak Association, Kiev, Ukraine -**

October 17-19, 2014, Yearly Meeting of the International Korczak Association.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Among its recipients are educators, political leaders, and even popes. When asked if he would come to Warsaw to receive the award, he humbly asked for the ceremony to take place in ...Korczakowo. Jerzy had next to him a strong group of young people who participated for

many years in the summer camps and when they got older, became counselors. This group, despite their heavy hearts, led the two camps this summer and will continue the tradition. We remember Jerzy and hope that he is looking down at Korczakowo, smiling his big, warm smile. And we wish all the counselors all the strength they need to carry on.

**Reach One Teach One Program**

by Mariola Strahlberg

After our beautiful Holocaust Remembrance Day at the Finkelstein Library, the head of the Children's section asked me to collaborate with the library's Homework Help after school program. We applied for a Target grant and received it in June. Although the grant will cover only a third of the expenses, we are excited to begin. The program will serve from 15 to 70 elementary school children every day from Monday to Thursday, 4pm – 6 pm. There will be library staff, high school volunteers and Shining Mountain's volunteers helping the children with the Five Star Program© and their homework. Ten children who are having reading difficulties, will be evaluated for light sensitivity and each will receive color overlays for reading. Reading skills for these ten children will be noted before the start of the program and again after 3 months. The reading program will be repeated with two more groups of ten children. If you live in the area and would like to participate as a volunteer, we will gladly offer you a position in the Reach One Teach One program. If you are moved to help us financially, we would like to be able to provide snack for the children besides water so any help will be greatly appreciated.

**Educational Philosophy and Legacy of Janusz Korczak in Teaching about the Holocaust - Gumpert Teacher's Workshop -at the Ramapo College, NJ**

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, we will be gathering at the Ramapo College of NJ for the first ever conference for teachers on the East Coast of the US that will include information on Janusz Korczak and his educational ideas. This conference is a cooperative endeavor of the NJ Commission on Holocaust Education, Ramapo College Holocaust/Genocide Resource Center and the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Dr. Kurt Bomze will present Dr. Korczak's biography and I will present how Dr. Korczak's ideas can be brought to children in various grades. We plan to show the "Janusz Korczak - Educational Moments" exhibit at this conference. Our hope is that many teachers will be able to bring this information to their students in their social studies, Holocaust studies, etc. For more information and registration, visit [education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=21221](http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=21221).

**Viola Elementary School Five Star Program© Pilot, Suffern, NY**

by Mariola Strahlberg

Last fall I was invited to make a presentation during the Rockland Health and Wellness Coalition Showcase for the Rockland County teachers and administrators. During that event, I spoke with the principal of the

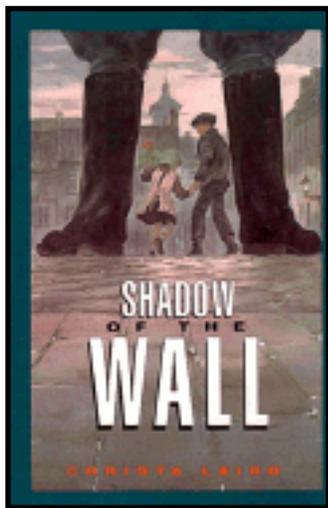
Viola Elementary School (Rockland Central School District) who was very interested in the Five-Star Program©. She invited me to present to her entire staff at the end of the school year last June. Three of the teachers were interested in participating in a pilot program. Starting in October, one kindergarten, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade class will have a Take a Break area and the children will be using the Five Star Program© at least once a day for 3 months. We will be using results of 3 standardized tests plus teachers evaluations to determine the positive effect the program has on children's behavior and performance. We also look forward to hearing how much easier the 3 months were for the teachers. Seven more teachers are waiting to participate in the program this coming January.

**"I exist not to be loved and admired, but to love and act. It is not the duty of those around me to love me. Rather, it is my duty to be concerned about the world, about man."**  
**— Janusz Korczak, - Ghetto Diary**

## A Book Review: Shadow of the Wall

By Christa Laird, [reviewed by  
Lauren Alleva]

This is a touching story of Misha, a 13-year old boy and his two younger sisters Rachel and Elena who have been taken by their ill mother to the Warsaw orphanage run by Dr. Janusz Korczak. Their father has recently died and Korczak had raised him earlier after he had become orphaned. The conditions in the Warsaw ghetto have become worse, and Misha is forced to smuggle food from outside the ghetto for his mother so she does not starve. As the story progresses, Korczak who feels like somewhat of a grandfather to the children, arranges for their baby sister Elena to go live with a family but needs Misha and Rachel to help him smuggle her over the wall and out of the ghetto. Misha eventually joins the resistance movement and manages to escape through the sewers to the Aryan side for training. At the end of the book Korczak, his staff and the orphans are



deported to Treblinka and pass the store window where Misha works with the underground.

This is a story of the children's amazing courage in the Warsaw Ghetto. While reading this book I was trying to get some idea of who Korczak and Stefa, his faithful assistant of 30 years, were and how they related and interacted with the children.

They were both extremely dedicated to protecting the orphans from what was going on in the ghetto and what their fate might be. They found ways to keep

the children calm and to give them hope of a better world. In a scene when Korczak is confronted by a hysterical mother asking if the rumors are true that everyone is being taken away, he says to her "we must hope and go on hoping, and above all go on trying to survive, for the sake of these little ones." Korczak understood the importance of his orphans to have a proper childhood and was very compassionate about their situation. "Child, like so many, without a childhood" – he made sure they had studies and culture and chores to keep them busy during the day. He treated them all like his own children and never refused to take another child in. When conditions in the ghetto worsened, he spent every day visiting supporters outside the orphanage begging for food and supplies for the 200+ children in his care. "Pride belongs to the past." Korczak always stood on the side of the child. In a scene where he is telling Misha how dangerous it is for him to be smuggling food to his mother, Korczak realizes the tremendous risks they have all been forced to take just to survive and keep each other safe. He says of Misha's devotion to his mother "How to love a child (...) in such an age you love him by trying to stamp out his loyalty to his own mother." He is torn by the inhumane conditions they are forced to endure living in the ghetto.

Korczak's companion, Stefa, keeps everything in order and really runs the orphanage. She is very strict and organized and this is especially important during periods of Korczak's absence. She enforces the rules and keeps the children in line, and yet, she acts as the loving mother. One night, she shows affection towards Misha even after being woken up in order to let him in after hours because she realizes he has seen something horrible. She is also very thoughtful. When they are preparing Misha's baby sister for her escape over the wall, Stefa takes great care getting the baby ready and packed and even includes some of her own silver and an aquamarine brooch, a gift from Korczak from Palestine. Korczak knows this is one of the only things she has left of any value and understands that her giving it away "is a measure of hope she was investing in the child's future." She also makes an exception and lets Misha and Rachel have breakfast that morning with their sister in the toddler room.

Only a few scenes in the book are of Stefa and Korczak interacting with each other and these always have to do with the children. It is not easy to get a full understanding of their relationship however, it is clear that they had great respect for each other and were both totally dedicated to the children. At the end of the story, many of Korczak's friends and supporters offer him fake papers to get him out of the ghetto and avoid deportation but he chooses to stay with his staff and his children.

Although this book is fiction, many of the characters are based on historical people and I think it is a good story for students 11 and older to read to get an understanding of who Janusz Korczak was and to get a sense of what it was like to live in a ghetto during WWII. The author writes historical fictions for young people so the book is age appropriate.



Children at Korczakowo Camp 2014, proudly displaying their butterflies.

And what happened to the 89 butterflies that were sent to Korczakowo Camp from our Holocaust Remembrance Day last April? You will hear about them in our next newsletter.

## “How I Met the Good Doctor.” By Kurt Bomze

My background is important in order to understand my strong emotional bond to Janusz Korczak-The Patron Saint of Child Advocacy. I first became acquainted with the life story of The Good Doctor when I read an editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 1979. It was written by Professor Edwin Kulawiec on the occasion of the UN declaring 1979 The Year of the Child, and Janusz Korczak -The Man of the Year- though posthumously. It was noted that Janusz Korczak, real name Henryk Goldszmit, was a pediatrician.

So it was that my background made it that I was more than ready to embrace this Saint of Child Advocacy. I was born in Vienna, Austria, smuggled into Belgium in 1939, and arrived in the US in 1940. I grew up in what I call the ghetto of South Philadelphia, home of Sicilian laborers and Jewish merchants of small stores. Since I was 14 I knew that I was going to become a dentist. In my senior year of high school I was hired as a counselor at a summer camp for underprivileged children. That experience made me realize that I wanted to work only with children. After graduating from Temple University School of Dentistry, I was accepted into the Pediatric Residency Program at the Eastman Dental Center/University of Rochester. However, since there was a military draft in those days, I ended up being the post pediatric dentist at Fort Campbell, Ky-home of the 101st Airborne Division. There in addition to caring for the children of the military on post, I also got experience working with special needs children, being the dental consultant to the department of pediatrics, and doing preventive dentistry programs throughout the school system.

My deep relationship with Janusz Korczak progressed from that JAMA editorial. I was so intrigued that I wrote to Professor Kulawiec, who was the Dean of Graduate Education at George Washington University. He was of Polish background, became acquainted with Korczak on a trip to Eastern Europe. He subsequently began to translate Korczak's writings from Polish to English, further writing

his own articles on Korczak and education for professional journals such as the Harvard Educational Review. Professor Kulawiec became my mentor and shared all of his writings with me. I subsequently went on a search for all writings about Korczak in English that I could find, articles, books, and on line.

The next part of the journey came when Professor Kulawiec invited my wife and I to attend the Janusz Korczak Literary Awards, sponsored by the AntiDefamation League at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. The speaker that year was Jan Karski. Future award ceremonies were at the Bnai Brith building in New York City. Subsequent years' speakers were Governor Thomas Kean and Dr Everett Koop.

In 1991 I was contacted by Professor Millicent Megaliff, Professor of Education at Columbia University, seeking to convene a meeting of people interested in Korczak, and of forming the Janusz Korczak Society of America. At the inaugural meeting Professor Megaliff was elected President, and I Vice-President. We were to meet biannually at the occasion of the Literary awards. Unfortunately in 1996 the ADL abruptly discontinued the awards. This decision also deprived our group a reason and a place to continue the Society's meetings. In 1995 Professor Megaliff decided to retire from the Presidency and I was subsequently elected president. With no further opportunity for a central meeting place, and the membership spread over a wide geographic area, I saw my role as president to be the central source for communication among members, and to answer inquiries from people that wanted more information about Janusz Korczak, and to represent the Society at as many venues as possible.

My spiritual attraction to Korczak was instantaneous, and it was how he so well articulated, and was able to write about how I felt when I was working with children. He was my guide through out my professional career. He is still my guide with my children, grandchildren, and all children I get a chance to interact with. For all these many years I have been driven by the desire and the opportunities to acquaint as many people as possible,

through programs and lectures, with the rich life and teachings of Janusz Korczak. I speak about him to all people I meet, health professionals, educators in religious and public schools, adults and children, Jewish and non-Jewish.

I end with one of Korczak's famous philosophical utterances-one of my favorites. It is his goodbye speech to the leaving graduates of the Orphanage.

“We say goodbye to you and wish you well on your long travel into a faraway country. Thus your trip has but one name, and one destination; your life. We have thought long and hard how we should say good-bye to you, what advice to give you on your way. Unfortunately words are poor and weak vehicles to express ourselves. So we give you nothing but these few poor words.

We cannot give you God, for you must find Him in quiet contemplation, In your own soul. We cannot give you a Homeland, for you must find it in your own heart. We cannot give you love of Man, for there is no love without forgiveness, and forgiving is something everyone must learn to do on his own. We can give you but one thing only - A longing for a better life; a life of truth and justice; even though it may not exist now, it may come tomorrow. Perhaps this longing will lead you to God, Homeland and Love. Goodbye. Do not forget.”

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
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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
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- \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000+ Founder Circle

Chestnut Ridge, NY  
845-425-7243  
[shiningmtnny@aol.com](mailto:shiningmtnny@aol.com)

Stockbridge, MA  
413-358-1155  
[shiningmtnma@aol.com](mailto:shiningmtnma@aol.com)