

Who We Are

The Janusz Korczak Association of USA was founded by Mariola Strahlberg and is a member of the International Korczak Association (IKA). 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 died in Treblinka death camp on August 5, 1942. 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. **Thank you all for your support last year . Please renew your membership dues to help us continue our work. For more information about us please call us at 845-425-7243 or visit us at**

www.facebook.com/korczakUSA.

Ongoing Events

Viola Elementary School Five Star Program© Pilot, Ramapo, NY -

Three elementary classes are continuing to use the Five Star Program© in the 2014/2015 school year.

Bergen County YJCC Training, Washington Township, NJ -

In June, Mariola held a training session for the staff of the summer camp program for autistic children. She has been doing this for the past 7 years.

Upcoming Events

CATS (Children as Actors for Transforming Society) Conference

For the 3rd year, the conference will be held July 27-August 2 in Caux, Switzerland. Mariola and Erin Schirm were asked to present at the conference. Their talk will focus on tools for young people to help them develop active leadership skills.

International Korczak Association

This year, the meeting will take place in Munich, Germany Nov 19-22nd.

Homework Help (Reach One to Teach One) Holds End of Year Celebration - Spring Valley, NY

by Joyce Reilly

On Thursday May 21st, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the celebration of the Homework Help program at the Finkelstein Library in Spring Valley, New York. This program, which has been going on for twelve years, received a new life through the participation of Shining Mountain Children's Center for Peaceful Childhood, under the direction of Mariola Strahlberg.

Our six volunteers faithfully attended this program four-afternoons a week from September until May together with high school student volunteers interested in young children and their challenges. As many as one hundred children attended this program, which is made all the more important by the fact that the East Ramapo public school system has been experiencing severe shortages of needed resources for the past 10 years. Many of the children attending come from families who have recently immigrated to the United States from Central America, and their families are eager to see their children do well in school, go on for higher education, and make a productive and independent life here.

Upon entering the Homework Help space, the sounds of children's laughter and eager participation is the greeting! You see the children performing the Five Star Program, eagerly and naturally, before and during their studies, as the mothers with babies waiting in an adjacent room, observe and chat quietly in Spanish and other languages. There are plans for English classes for these parents as they wait. What a perfect opportunity!

On this last day, the energy is even higher, as right after the first hour of work the children will come up to the



front of the room to perform something that they have prepared- a poem, song, in English and Spanish, and in one case a very moving essay about how this program helped a young man to gain control of his feelings and focus on his studies (with much nodding and encouragement by his teachers in the room!). Children were dressed for this special occasion in their finest suits and party dresses, the girls' hair braided and curled, the boys with shiny shoes, and each performer thanked their tutors. Many flowers and gifts were presented by children and by shy but beaming parents. The afternoon was a bilingual one, with all included, and the warmth of this acknowledgement added to the happiness of the afternoon.

Mariola, with the aid of Steve White, an activist in Rockland County, NY for children's rights and of an organization to save East Ramapo, called Power of Ten, presented the high school and Shining Mountain volunteers with certificates from the county government, commending their work and faithful attendance. The volunteers and library staff spoke lovingly of the children and thanked the parents for bringing them, despite weather and many challenges. After the formal celebrations, we had a party with pizza, cupcakes and fruit - a universal language for children!

One of the most touching aspects of this program is where it is held. Originally in the library building itself, the program has grown exponentially and now is housed in the former Holocaust Center of Rockland County which is a building, attached to the Finkelstein Library.
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Marcia Talmage Schneider's Book is out!

On June 9th, the publication of Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls was celebrated at Congregation of Anshe Chesed in New York City.

Mariola attended the event and was moved by the number of people who came to celebrate Marcia's book signing. Over 75 people attended and 40 copies of Marcia's book sold out before the event even began.

Mariola had an opportunity to display 3 of the Educational Moments Posters from our Korczak Association and copies of our past newsletters and membership forms. She also was asked to speak about our Association and its activities. The audience showed a lot of interest and we are looking forward to some new members and opportunities for presentations.

For her book, Marcia interviewed ten people in Israel who lived at the orphanage and whose lives Korczak influenced in profound ways. At the event Marcia spoke about Korczak life and the life of some of the orphans in her book. Out of the 10 orphans who left the orphanage before WWII for Palestine, only 3 are still alive today. If you would like to order Marcia's book, please contact her at mahryuma@verizon.net.

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Most of the Holocaust exhibitions have been moved to the Rockland County Community College, but one very poignant display of dark blue sky with falling, golden stars, states that when the 1,500,000 children of the Holocaust were annihilated, even the heavens wept. In the space that to this day commemorates unspeakable death and injustice, perhaps the stars can laugh now seeing the children participating in the beautiful Shining Mountain's program which encourages each child to be positive and eager to live and learn. It seems fitting that our devotion to the life and work of Janusz Korczak, who lost his life together with his children in Treblinka, would have led us to this place and to this work. This is the work of transformation, transformation of individual lives, of peoples, and of the legacy of prejudice and hatred. Our children's shining faces, bright laughter, and hard work are a testament to Korczak's spirit, which lives on.



One of the parents presents gifts to the staff to thank them for all of their help with the children.



Andrew Murphy, our youngest volunteer, receives his certificate from Steve White and Mariola.

Durga Tree International Walkathon

by Lauren Alleva

On May 16, Mariola, Andrew and I participated in the 2nd annual **Lacing Up for Freedom Walkathon** in Ridgewood, NJ. It was an opportunity for Mariola to meet people in the community and educate them about our work at the Shining Mountain Children's Center and Korczak's legacy.

The event was run by Durga Tree International, a New Jersey-based non-profit dedicated to raising funds and

empowering multiple grassroots charities that are devoted to ending modern-day slavery around the world. Durga collaborates with these organizations by supporting projects and sustaining them as well.

Did you know that: UNICEF estimates that 300,000 children younger than 18 are currently trafficked to serve in armed conflicts worldwide?

Did you know that: According to World Vision website, More than 85 million children worldwide are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including trafficking for commercial sex exploitation and hazardous physical labor?

Since our mission is to help children everywhere, we were happy to participate in this wonderful event. The event was a success! Participants completed a lovely 5 mile trail walk at the Ridgewood Duck Pond followed by a picnic lunch and entertainment. There were 136 registered Walkers and over \$53,000 was raised. At the event, Mariola connected with Robert Jaroszuk from Rise Fit in Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ and they plan to collaborate on a summer camp project for kids at his fitness club.

To learn more about Durga, you can visit their website at durgatreeinternational.org.

“How I Met the Good Doctor”

by Joyce Reilly

Stories have been the guiding light in my life: stories about peoples, about creatures, about individuals. In my family, without knowing exactly how or why, storytelling is a great art- perhaps our Celtic heritage, combined with the immigrant experience to New York and Philadelphia from Ireland and Wales, marked this as a way of internal survival.

I grew up hearing my mother’s stories of being orphaned in the 1918 influenza epidemic- her mother was twenty years old and left three children in the blink of an eye. In her recounting of life experiences, we questioned and explored motivations for kindness and cruelty, especially to the most vulnerable, and specifically to motherless children.

In early adulthood I found the Camphill movement, intentional communities where families share their lives with children (in the schools) and adults (in the villages) who have “special needs” of all possible stripes. Here, recognition of our common humanity and the struggle to meet individual challenges while living in a world of mutual support is very *real!* These communities were founded in 1939 by a brave group of souls, together with the pioneering pediatrician Dr. Koenig, who was one of the handful in the world interested in children with mental and emotional challenges. They were fleeing Hitler’s persecution in Vienna, and shared with the Waldorf movement a background in anthroposophy, the name given to the work of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher from the late 19th and early 20th century. So they were three times enemies of the Third Reich: Jewish, working with handicapped people, and anthroposophists!

It was in one of these Camphill communities in New York State that I first heard about Janusz Korczak. It was August 6th, sometime in the late 1970’s, and I was visiting a family I had close connections to. It was “Hiroshima Day”, and we had gathered to remember the terrible events of that day in 1945, when surprisingly, we heard a story that commemorated

another tragedy of that wartime. My dear friend and mentor, Gerda Von Jeetze, herself a refugee at age 18, told the story of Korczak and the orphans, singing, with banners held high, marching with dignity to the cattle cars to Treblinka (we now learned that August 5th is the correct day for this event). Gerda told us of Korczak’s work, how he embraced children of all backgrounds and faiths who were in need of a home, and how he formed the most human of families with these young people, from tiny ones to young adults, in the face of the non-human policies of the National Socialist Party and the Polish government, and how his death, but more importantly his LIFE, were a statement more eloquent than anything written by mankind before. She went on to say that Korczak’s legacy is to all good work for children, upholding their humanity and strengthening their hearts and minds, and is a fellow movement to Camphill.

Indeed, many places throughout the Camphill Movement (and there are over 200 places on all continents of this world!) are named for Korczak and for the life he led in service of the highest nature of the human being.

So it is in this story, told on a hot summer night by a soul, brave herself, that I came to know Korczak. Years later, Betty Jean Lifton’s *The King of Children* became one of my favorite books, and then I was privileged to meet Mariola Strahlberg and the work of Shining Mountain Children’s Center for Peaceful Childhood.

I have visited Warsaw and have walked the streets of the ghetto and stood in the orphanage hall. The story of Janusz Korczak and his children lives on not only in memory but in the deeds performed today for the good of children and for all of humanity.

Joyce is the current President of the Shining Mountain CPC and is a trained Waldorf teacher and administrator as well as curative teacher and therapist. She established Gheel House in 1984, a therapeutic community for people dealing with long term psychiatric difficulties. Joyce serves as the co-president of the New York Branch of the Anthroposophical Society and sits on several boards of peace-building organizations. She can be reached at joycereilly@aol.com.

Letter from Korczakowo Camp 2015 from Michał Koziń to Mariola

“The camp is getting closer and closer! We already have 75 participants from Poland for the High School camp as well as a small group from Israel. For the Junior camp, we already have 45 campers and a big group from Ukraine (if they can get visas), so we are doing quite well but we regret you won't be here with us. We are going to do the "Butterfly Day" during Junior Camp (using your US butterflies from last year). We will connect the butterfly project with making kites and letting them fly. Thank you Mariola for sending us a box of empty greeting cards for different occasions. The campers will use these cards to write each other “Thank you” or “Sorry” notes at the end of the camp.”

Hamilton Elementary School donates supplies for Homework Help

by Lauren Alleva

In May, I reached out to my neighbor, Irene Pierides who is the Principle at an Elementary School in Glen Rock, NJ and told her about the great work we were doing at the Homework Help program and the situation in the East Ramapo School District. She was moved and organized a fundraiser at her school as one of their community projects. The children collected school supplies, educational games, books and many other wonderful items for us. In addition, the school generously donated boxes of books organized by reading level, math manipulatives, science materials and flashcards. We were elated by their generosity.

Ms. Pierides asked if Mariola and I would visit her school and do a presentation for the 4th grade classes. We were asked to talk about the needs of our children, mainly Latino and Creole, many of them new immigrants, who are less fortunate and why the donations were so important. We ended the assembly by introducing the Five Star Program and had all the children and teachers stand up and do the movements with us. We thanked Hamilton Elementary School by having our children create a “Thank You” poster with all of their signatures and presented it to Ms. Pierides.

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
- Korczak Institute in New York City

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

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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