



JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

NEWSLETTER Spring/Summer 2017

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, nine staff members, and approximately 196 children were taken to the Treblinka death camp on August 5-6, 1942. They 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.

Here in the United States, we officially formed Janusz Korczak Association of the USA in April 2013. Prof. Efrat Efron, Joyce Reilly, Erin Schrim, Prof. Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady and Mariola Strahlberg are current board members. If you are interested to join them, please send email to Joyce Reilly at joycereilly@aol.com. As of 2016, we have a logo for our association, and you can reach us and learn about our activities via our website (www.korczakusa.com) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/korczakUSA).

A big thank you to all of you who have already sent your membership dues and donations for 2017. If you haven't done so yet, please do it today to help us continue our work.

Upcoming Events

Korczakowo Camp 2017 will take place at Lake Grzybno, Poland. The session for teens, 14-19 years old, will be Jul 2-21, 2017. Younger children, 8-13, will enjoy the camp Jul 23 – Aug 4, 2017. To learn more about the camp, visit their website in English at www.korczakowo.org.

(Continued on Page 2)

In the Atmosphere of Respect and Trust: How I Participated at the Dutch Korczak Conference

By Prof. Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady

Occasionally, life presents us with incredibly pleasant surprises, the impact of which stays with us forever. It's especially true and important when surprises and gifts are not of the material nature, but rather emotionally positive and intellectually challenging and enlightening. Such a gift I received while participating at the International Janusz Korczak conference, *How to Trust a Child*, held in the Netherlands, October 12-16, 2016.

By that time my connection with Korczak's ideas and activities had been long and inspiring, so I expected the conference to be somewhat informative in terms of its presentations, and wonderful because of the chance to reunite with old friends, some of whom I have not seen for years, and to meet new ones. But in reality, the conference went way beyond my most positive expectations, as I never dreamed of becoming part of such a festival of love, respect, and positive emotions.

In this brief review, I would like to offer a few very personal remarks along with some general information. Let me start with praises and compliments to the team who organized and made this conference possible. Among them are some old and dear friends – Theo Cappon and Helma Brouwers, President of the Dutch Korczak Association Arie de Bruin, young team leaders Alsu Nikonorova and Alina Talmanova, and many others. Their amazing teamwork, commitment, and perseverance made this incredible event so successful.

The conference demonstrated a perfect combination of formal presentations that were at the same time important and informative, together with a number of creative hands-on projects that allowed all the participants not only to learn new ideas but also to receive some experience in actually doing them. Among the highlights were the talks by the Polish ambassador in the Netherlands, Dr. Jan Borkowski, President of the Dutch Korczak Association, Arie de Bruin, with the introduction and explanations of the conference theme, and Professor de Winter who gave a lecture, *Learning to Trust One Another in a Polarizing World*. All three were quite impressive and set the right tone for the conference.

But there was one speech, not only informative, but also extremely emotional and impactful, which I would call truly outstanding in terms of its contents and manner of the presentation. It came from a former Member of the Dutch Parliament, and a schoolteacher, Dr. Tanja Jadnanansing, who was describing the structure and design of her new program called *LEF* (Listening, Empathy, Feedback), which she has successfully used in practice for quite some time. Not only the program itself, but also the level of sincerity and passion made this talk unforgettable.



"Dare to dream... something will always come of it." ~ Janusz Korczak

Upcoming Events

(Continued from Page 1)

The 8th **International Korczak Conference**, commemorating 75 years of the last way of Korczak, Stefa, the Staff and Children, will take place in Warsaw, Poland, at the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, September 13-15, 2017.

Efrat Efron, Mariola Strahlberg, and Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady will be presenting at the conference. For more information, visit: www.korczak2017.com.

CATS 2017, Children as Actors for Transforming Society will take place in Caux, Switzerland, Jul 29 – Aug 4, 2017 (catsconference.com).

The theme for the conference is “Reaching for an Inclusive World”. The guiding principle of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child is that every child has the right to participation. The conference will provide the forum for children from all over the world, children experiencing wars, children with disabilities, street children, as well as experts in the field and academics.

Exhibit of 14 posters, depicting Life and Work of Dr. Janusz Korczak, is on view at the Finkelstein Library in Spring Valley, NY, from June 12 – August 24, 2017. Please bring your children (there is a children’s corner), your friends, and especially your children’s teachers. Dr. Korczak is considered one of the 100 best educators by UNICEF. His ideas are very needed in our times.

And the **News for 2018:**

Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady, PhD (Adjunct Professor, School of Education, Seattle Pacific University, and Editor-in-Chief, *Russian-American Education Forum: An online journal*, rus-ameeduforum.com/), proposed the **Seattle Pacific University** as the sight of the international education conference in **August 2018**. Both, the University and the International Korczak Association, accepted her proposal, and we are looking forward to **the first ever Korczak-inspired conference in the USA**. The working title for the conference is: Education for Excellence, Diversity, and Respect: Transformative 21st Century Innovations. Website for the conference will be available by August.

Along with the key presentations for the whole conference, attended by 135 people from 15 countries (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Poland, Russia, USA, etc.), there were also workshops, illuminating and educational. We received a lot of new information, and managed to develop some new practical skills in line with Korczak’s idea: “*You will go on blundering, for only he who does nothing avoids errors.*”

Some truly unique features set this conference apart and made it exceptional. First and most, its *atmosphere* of true sincerity, openness, and care. It’s so rare that the participants would not only talk about some important moral values, like *trust* and *respect*, but also reveal and experience them in everything that was happening during the conference.

How was it possible? I guess it’s a combination of several factors: the personalities of the organizers who don’t just know Korczak’s ideas, but also *live and manifest them* in everything they do. For example, Alsu Nikonorova, a director of the Dutch camp *Nash Dom*, was sitting in the lobby, offering tea with lemon and ginger to everybody who needed it; a few other team members were cooking for the whole conference, and I’m still craving those delicious meals; the music and singing by Arie de Bruin were extremely uplifting, and he seemed to be tireless playing his guitar, presenting, singing, and accompanying other singers. Still other members *worked* as taxi drivers, virtually day and night, giving a ride to everybody who needed it.

It feels that the Dutch Korczak Association is blessed with artistic talents, high intellect, and huge open hearts that embrace everybody. And again, Korczak comes to my mind: “*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 people.*”

Another factor that made this conference successful was the participants that represented a mixture of *ages* (from very senior, middle-aged, to very young), a combination of high academic *professionalism* (full professors and famous researchers together with young academics, teachers, social workers, and college students), and a rich variety of *talents* that graciously complemented each other. The whole conference was breathless listening to the Russian Professor Irina Demakova’s singing, was enthusiastically supporting and applauding beautiful ethnic dancing of the students from Tatarstan and Brazilian Korczak Association’s President Tania Novinsky-Haberkorn, etc.

I could go on and on, and on. As it usually happens with really exceptional events, even after seven months it feels like it was yesterday... So in conclusion I would wish us, in the Korczak Association of the USA, that our conference on August 22-25, 2018, be at least half as successful as the Dutch one. My heartfelt thanks to Korczak, to the Dutch Korczak Association, and to the entire International Korczak community, which I feel honored and humbled to be part of.



Congratulations to Marcia Talmage Schneider



Marcia is the 3rd from the right

On February 4, 2017, Marcia was honored at her synagogue, Anshe Hessed on Upper Westside of Manhattan, where she has been an active member for 24 years. She taught Hebrew reading to adults for several years, co-chaired education committee, was involved in the summer program of “Scribblers on the Roof” where authors gave book talks and read from their new works, and together with her husband volunteered at the Homeless Shelter housed at the synagogue.

BUT her claim to fame is that she is the “Sticker Lady”: she is handing out stickers, she buys in Israel, to children who attend the services. The children are delighted, and it almost seems that they grow a few inches with happiness from this. Marcia loves children, just as Korczak. In her speech, she said: “I wrote my book, *Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children’s Souls*, in the hope that we can all learn from Korczak’s magical humanism and fulfill his dream of making a BETTER WORLD with LOVE AND RESPECT by being true Anshe Chesed, pursuers of truth and justice”.

What else can we do to bring legacy of Korczak to as many people as possible?

While in Florida during the winter months, **Marcia Talmage Schneider** and **Dr. Kurt Bomze** did not waste their time. In Delray Beach, Marcia gave two talks about her book: one to a Hadassah group and another to a synagogue’s Sisterhood group. One woman said that Marcia made Korczak come alive for her. She also spoke about Korczak at a home of her friends in Boynton Beach. Altogether 27 books were sold, thus, spreading the knowledge of Korczak’s name and actions to “snowbirds”.

Dr. Bomze presented Korczak’s life and teachings to principals of the Education Council of Jewish Schools in the Greater Palm Beaches. According to the Senior Director, Lynn Lieberman, the talks inspired the educators to develop programs for their schools. He also showed Wajda’s film “Korczak” in its entirety to an audience attending the Academy for Continuing Education at the JCC in Boynton Beach. This program included pre- and post-film discussions. At the Baldwin Prep, a charter school in North Palm Beach, Dr. Bomze and his wife, Nadine, did a program with reading to the children a story about Janusz Korczak, discussing children’s rights, and then making kites, that were decorated with each child’s favorite rights. Under the direction of Eileen Shapiro, the former director of Holocaust education of the Palm Beach School System, the pupils were able to fly the kites in the courtyard.



After her return to New York, Marcia spoke to the eighth grade classes at Heschel School. At first, she was apprehensive as eighth graders are known to be very filled with hormones and ‘shpilkedik’ (antsy). She had someone make a power point presentation to accompany her talk. All went VERY smoothly. The children were very engaged, asked super questions all throughout, and a dozen of them came up to shake Marcia’s hand and thanked her for coming to talk to them.



How I Met My Hero, Janusz Korczak

By Pam Hudson

I have been a pediatric physical therapist for over 30 years, working in an outpatient setting of a pediatric hospital in the inner city. I work with children with special needs, and with parents in poverty. My specialty is in the developmental needs of children.

I first became aware of Dr. Korczak about 15 years ago, and immediately felt a personal bond with him as an educator and as a physician. I have read *The King of Children*, *How to Love a Child*, and am currently rereading *The Ghetto Diary*.

Working with children in a medical facility, I was especially moved by the story in which Korczak took his medical students into a classroom where a child stood behind an X-ray machine. Korczak told his students: "When you have had a bad day in the clinic, when the children you are treating are getting on your nerves, remember what you are seeing today: the beating heart of a frightened child." I try to keep these words in mind as I go through my busy day; they help me keep my focus where it should be: on the child and family I am serving. A hospital can be a very frightening place for a child. I am fortunate that my job involves helping them experience the joy of play and movement. They can enjoy being children again!

The children I serve face many of the same dangers that Korczak's kids faced: poverty, disease, disability and violence. Sometimes I feel like I am struggling to do all I can to keep the children off those trains. Like Korczak, I have a strong community of support; unlike Korczak, I have many more resources available to help these children. Reading Korczak's diary helps me appreciate and use all that I have to help them. His diary also shows me that children can teach me very valuable lessons!

I think kids today have the same need for care and respect as they had in Korczak's day. I also think that adults have the same needs as they did as children. When we can connect to each other honestly, as children do, we can be happier and build a more peaceful world, and we can help our children grow into peaceful, healthy adults.

I am so glad to have found this community of people who have a passion for learning, sharing and promoting Korczak's legacy for future generations!

To reach Pam, you can email her at yisroela@hotmail.com.

Emmy Award-Winner, Master Puppeteer Brian Hull Brings Korczak's Story to Life

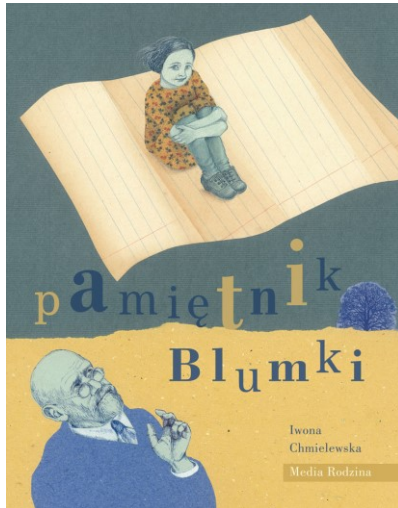
"I discovered the book *Kaytek the Wizard* by Janusz Korczak while at work at a library, and instantly was intrigued. I fell in love with this English adaptation by Antonia-Lloyd Jones, and was forever moved when I learned more about the author. It was apparent to me that Korczak was writing in a remarkable way that brought lessons with marvelous storytelling. As my profession is creating children's shows with puppetry, I contacted the publisher to get permissions to use this translation and began work - one year later, the puppet show premiered at the Nashville International Puppet Festival and has gone on to perform at theaters and performing arts centers with more and more children being introduced to this beautiful story written by a remarkable man."

We are planning to see *Kaytek the Wizard* next year in Seattle at the Korczak USA Conference. In the meantime, you can watch some excerpts from this special puppet show at www.briananimations.com. Brian Hull can be reached at brianimate@aol.com.





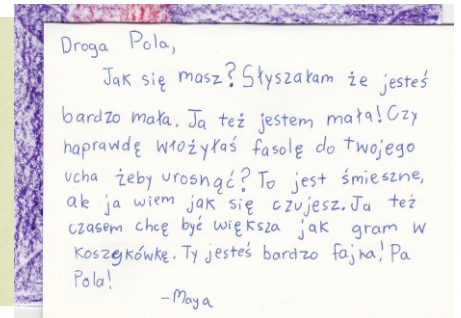
Ending of the Two Year Program at Polish Saturday School in Mahwah, NJ



In April, **Mariola Strahlberg** met with the 4-5 grade class. During the previous session, children chose one orphan from *Blumka's Diary* (*Pamiętnik Blumki*) and were going to write letters to them after Mariola read to them about life in the orphanage. The letters are beautifully illustrated and very touching.



From *Blumka's Diary* (*Pamiętnik Blumki*)



During the last session, Mariola introduced Korczak postcards with a twist. Each child was to write something they value in another child on a postcard in Polish – at the end of the session, each child ended with a list of 11 attributes about themselves.

Here is what their teacher Danusia Swiatek wrote to Mariola after the program:

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your wonderful presentation in my classroom today! Your contribution to my students’ emotional development is precious!”

Yom Hashoah 2017

During our afterschool Enrichment Program at the East Ramapo School District in Spring Valley, NY, we dedicated a whole week to reading about Korczak, discussing the need for reflection and quiet, and preparing individual “Sacred Spaces for Home”. Each child learned how to whip stitch and sew a little felt bag, how to finger knit and knitted the tie for the bag, used block crayons to create 3 color cards: Red to Wake-Up, Blue to Calm Down, and Green for Balance. During the ending celebration, each child picked “treasures” for their Sacred Space: battery operated candle, a stone, a heart, a shell, and a Children’s Verse.



Siegelbaum Competition Award Ceremony at the Rockland County's Holocaust Center

On May 9th, **Mariola Strahlberg** was invited to give a keynote address at the celebratory reception honoring the outstanding art and literary submission by this year’s 15 competition winners. The theme of this year’s competition was “The Power of the Immigrant Story”. Over 170 students from 30 NY/NJ middle schools and high schools participated in this year’s event. Mariola was surprised to learn that many of the young people and their teachers heard about Korczak and few teachers extended their invitation for her to come to their schools to present.

We wish you all a wonderful summer.

Please keep in touch.

Let us know what you are doing to teach children about their rights, and how you are promoting peaceful and successful childhoods for them.



JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

welcomes you as a Member of our Association

Janusz Korczak (1878/9-1942), a Polish-Jewish pediatrician, children's writer, educator, father of progressive orphanages and children's rights, is well known all over the world and yet most Americans have never heard of him. The purpose 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 Exhibit and lectures for parents and children
- ___ Korczak inspired conference at the Seattle Pacific University in August 2018
- ___ Workshops and lectures for parents and educators on Korczak's pedagogy
- ___ Five Star Program® training for your school or organization

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

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.

.....
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 donation or membership 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

Please make your check payable to Janusz Korczak Association of the USA and mail it to:

Shining Mountain Center for Peaceful Childhood, Inc

11 Beckett Court, Monsey, NY 10952

Thank you for your commitment. There is power in numbers and your participation gives us strength to continue creating a more peaceful and happy childhood for all children.

You can contact us by calling 845-425-7243 or on the web: www.korczakusa.com and www.facebook.com/korczakusa.