



JANUSZ KORCZAK ASSOCIATION OF THE USA

NEWSLETTER July 2019

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 USA, Dr. Korczak's legacy was promoted by Prof. Millicent Magaliff and Dr. Kurt Bomze, through their Janusz Korczak Society of America, founded in 1991. In 2013, Mariola Strahlberg officially joined International Korczak Association and formed Janusz Korczak Association of the USA. Joyce Reilly, Professor Efrat Efron, Max Gilman, and Mariola Strahlberg are current board members. You can reach us and learn about our activities via our website (korczakusa.com).

Thank you to all who have already sent your donations. To help us continue our work, you can contribute [via the DONATE button on our website](#), or send us a check with the form at the end of this newsletter.

DONATE

TEN MATCHBOXES

In March, Mariola attended the play *Ten Matchboxes* at the JCC in **Teaneck**, New Jersey, performed by Amichai Pardo from Israel. The play was presented to students in Hebrew, and although Mariola doesn't speak Hebrew, she enjoyed the performance immensely.

Why did you decide to do the play *Ten Matchboxes*?

My first "meeting" with Korczak that pushed me to create a performance was an article in an "Open University" course about education.

I read there three pages on Korczak, and immediately I thought "Wow, I only heard how he went with the children to Treblinka!"

*I began to dig for material and the short story *Ten Matchboxes* called to me to make an adaptation because it was written for story telling and especially because it has the sentence that appears again and*



the artistic director, I gave the text to her 12-year-old girl and asked her opinion. When she said it is interesting, we brought it to the artistic director and general manager, Mrs. Hagit Rechavi Nikolaievsky, who gave her blessing to start working on it. So now it is already 20 years of my performing all over the world, meeting all kinds of people and in a way putting a mirror where they can see themselves and face the challenge of "You think about it."

Can you relate one best and one worst event at your performances?

There are so many best and worst performances.

I feel that one of the most emotional was performing in front of foster children and a 14-year-old girl when I asked her, "What would you like there to be in your empty matchbox?" replied, "A mother."

The worst I guess was in an ultra religious school in Israel, where children were never exposed to a theater and after two minutes they shouted, "How can you be Korczak? He was murdered!"

I had to take off my beard and explain to
[\(Continued on page 4\)](#)



again: "What happened later? You think about it." I found inspiring the idea to address the challenges to solve conflicts of children with children and the way Korczak presents it as a dialogue between the adult asking (consulting with a child) and the young boy or girl answering. So, since I am an actor, in 1998, I brought the text to the Orna Porat Theater for Children and Youth in Tel Aviv, Israel, but before asking



WORTH KNOWING

On December 27th, 2018, Ben Harris of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, interviewed Brian Hull, member of Korczak USA, and Professor Efrat Efron, board member of Korczak USA for his article, "A pioneering Polish Jewish children's rights advocate and author is honored 70 years after his murder." [Click here to read the full article.](#)



Professor Roza Valeeva from Kazan, Russia, visited New York in January with her husband and stayed at Marcia Talmage Schneider's apartment. Korczakians in the New York area did not want to miss an opportunity to meet with Roza. Thanks to Marcia's hospitality, we had a wonderful Shabbat dinner together.



L to R: Roza, Fred (Marcia's husband), Marcia, Agzam (Roza's husband)



L to R: Mariola, Roza, Agzam, Misha Epshtein, Sergei Mikhelson



In March, Orna Porat Theater from Israel for Children and Youth presented Korczak's *Ten Matchboxes*. The show was performed in Hebrew by Amichai Pardo at Kaplen JCC on the Palisades in Tenafly, New Jersey. [You can find Mariola's conversation with Amichai on page 1 of this newsletter.](#)

NEWS ABOUT KORCZAK'S ORPHANS



L to R: Avi, Itzhak, and his amazing wife, Shosh

On March 30th, 2019, Avi Tzur from Israel shared this picture with us and news about Itzhak Belfer's 96th Birthday.)

In 2018, Itzhak Belfer published two books in English: [King Matt the First, by Janusz Korczak](#), is a short version of Korczak's original book, translated from the Polish by Belfer and illustrated by him, and [Janusz Korczak: The Man who Knew how to Love Children](#).

Both books are worth your time and will make a beautiful addition to your children's or grandchildren's library.

Also of interest: *King Matthew the First*, by Janusz Korczak, illustrated by Jerzy Srokowski, translated by Adam Fisher and Ben Torrent. [See more of Itzhak Belfer's work on amazon.com.](#) Contact: itzchakbelfer@gmail.com. Website: itzchakbelfer.com.

Shmuel Nissenbaum died on April 1, 2019. He was 95 years old and lived in Holon, Israel, a suburb of Tel Aviv. He was an artist, sculptor and teacher in Israel. His granddaughter said: "He was my inspiration." She is also an artist. He was one of the ten persons Marcia Talmage Schneider interviewed for her book [Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls](#). Marcia's impressions of him was that he was so kind and loving...undoubtedly feelings conveyed by Korczak when young Nissenbaum was in the orphanage. You can find his story in Chapter 10 of her book.

From the ten persons Marcia interviewed for her book, there is only one person, Itzhak Belfer, still alive. She feels sad about it, but also glad that she had the opportunity to speak with them at the time they were all coherent and able to recall how life was like under Korczak's and Stefa's tutelage.



WORTH KNOWING

In April, Misha Epshtein, Associate Professor at the College of Staten Island, organized a special Korczak event for the students and faculty in the School of Education. [To learn more about it, turn to page 2.](#)



Our website, korczakusa.com, has been updated. We now have three buttons for Future, Recent and Past Events. Check them out from time to time to learn about our activities and let us know about your Korczak work by sending an email to info@korczakusa.com.

The Children's Rights
Discovery Trail
at
Harriman State Park
New York



If you like hiking and you live in the tristate area, take your family and friends to Harriman State Park for the Children's Rights Trail experience. Learn more about the trail, including how to arrange your visit, by [downloading our Children's Rights Trail pamphlet](#). The trail is open through October 14th. You will not regret the experience!

MASTERING THE PEDAGOGY OF JANUSZ KORCZAK

On April 16, 2019, a meeting was held at the College of Staten Island, School of Education, dedicated to presenting and discussing modern international projects that develop in practice the pedagogical ideas of Janusz Korczak today.

The meeting was attended by students and teachers of the college. The idea of the meeting is not so much to tell the story about Janusz Korczak as a person (this has already been done in previous meetings), as to try to discuss such issues together:

- What pedagogical ideas of Korczak can be implemented today?
- How to involve teachers (and also future teachers) in understanding and implementing the pedagogical ideas and practices of Janusz Korczak?

During the meeting, Mikhail Epshtein and Marcia Talmage Schneider (the author of the book *Janusz Korczak: Sculptor of Children's Souls*) briefly described Janusz Korczak, his fate and fates of some of his pupils.

Eva Haller, president of the European Janusz Korczak Academy (Munich, Germany) gave a detailed presentation on three projects implemented by the Academy today:

- The leadership project "YouthBridge" – openness and intercultural dialog (Janusz Korczak and his principles of RESPECT).
- The project "Respect – Dialogue – Participation" (Solving conflict situations with Korczak's educational principles).
- The project "Mishpacha" (Korczak and the intergenerational relationship, child and parents relation).



Mariola Strahlberg, president of the Janusz Korczak Association of the USA, told the audience about her own experience in implementing Korczak's ideas through the Wager System program based on Korczak's solution for bullying and defiant behavior. Attendees were also able to learn and have personal experience with the Five Star Program® developed by Mariola for a classroom environment. Five Star Program® is a tool for students to teach them self-assessment, self-control and responsibility for their own learning process.

Participants were especially appreciative to learn about modern experience of teachers who are putting Korczak's ideas into practice. Students noted that they would be interested in learning more about projects presented and how to bring these ideas to the future schools they will be working at. College teachers, continued their conversations after the meeting, discussed how these ideas and practices could become part of the curriculum of the School of Education.

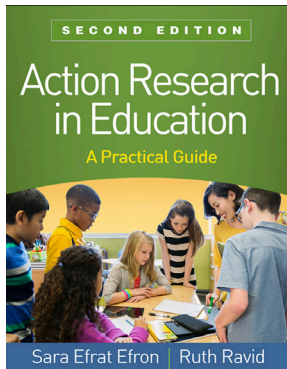
Right now, no concrete solutions have been found. But most of the participants expressed a desire to continue their acquaintance with the ideas of Korczak and the experience of his modern followers.

—Presented by Misha Epshtein



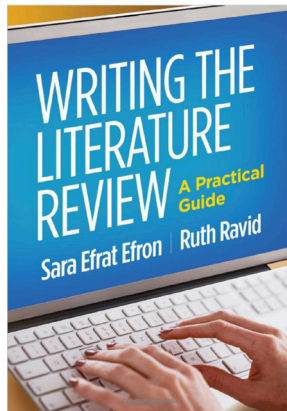
NEWS FROM PROFESSOR EFRAT EFRON, OUR BOARD MEMBER

Besides teaching at the [missing info here], Efrat has published two books this year.



Action Research in Education: A Practical Guide, Second Edition,

Published by Guilford Press and available from Guilford Press at <https://www.guilford.com/books/Action-Research-in-Education/Efron-Ravid/9781462509614>



Writing the Literature Review: A Practical Guide

A roadmap for producing high-quality thesis, dissertation, term papers and grant proposals. Also published by Guilford Press, the book is available from Barnes and Noble at <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/writing-the-literature-review-sara-efrat-efron-edd/1127972389>.

Regarding *Writing the Literature Review: A Practical Guide*, Efron commented, “Our publisher let us know that a publishing house in Korea is translating the book to Korean! Funny isn’t it? An Israeli writer’s book that was published in New York is going to be translated and studied in a country I have never visited...”

Both books were written with Professor Efron’s colleague, Professor Ruth Ravid. Congratulations Efrat!

Ten Matchboxes - cont’d from page 1

them that I am an actor and not really Korczak and bring to them basic ideas about theaters and plays and only then everything went smoothly.

What do the children like the most?

I think children like the most to participate and see their best friends participate; they love the humor and the children’s court.

What messages do you want to communicate to children?

The message to the children is not arriving from the text but from the way they see me looking at everyone as individual - the eye contact, the patience I have for

every child, my listening carefully to every gesture, the respect they feel from me, the confidence I project to their ability to express themselves and to bring solutions without being judged.

What messages do you want to communicate to adults?

The message to the adult is to notice the “non important” issues that have great importance in a child’s life.

Do you hear from the children? What impresses them the most?

One of the things I like the most is not children that “understand the message”,

but children that fell close to me and come to tell me about their life after the performance or ask questions that bother them.

This past March, on my last tour in the US, I performed in a youth jail in Pittsburgh. After the performance, attendees wanted to see pictures from the real orphanage and wanted to talk to me. I felt they needed “Korczak” in their life to believe in their ability to get better.

—Amichai Pardo can be reached at korczak.korczak@gmail.com.



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, we strive to follow the Fundamental Rights of the Child, including:

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.

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.

The Right to Be Himself or Herself – We ask to accept children the way they are, with their talents and shortcomings.

Yes! I want to support the important work of the Janusz Korczak Association!

Please send me your semi-annual newsletter so that I can learn more about:

- Putting Korczak's philosophy into action
- Suggestions and strategies for creating a harmonious childhood for children
- The latest US and international Korczak activities and ways to join in these 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: _____

I would like to further support the work of the Association with a donation in the amount of:

☐ Friend (\$15 - \$49)

☐ Patron (\$100 - \$999)

☐ Other: \$ _____

☐ Associate (\$50 - \$99)

☐ Founder's Circle (\$1000+)

You may include my name as a donor in your informational materials ☐ Yes ☐ No

I prefer to remain anonymous ☐

Please send me information on how I can help with the following activities:

☐ Children's project based on Korczak's books and his legacy

☐ Korczak exhibits and lectures for parents and children

☐ Workshops on the Convention on the Rights of the Child for educators and children

☐ Workshops and lectures for parents and educators on Korczak's pedagogy

☐ Five Star Program® training for educational institutions

Thank you for your commitment. Your financial support is greatly appreciated. Many schools, teachers and parents are not able to afford our services. With your help, we are able to bring our work to them for free or at greatly reduced rates.

There is power in numbers, and with your help, every day we are creating a more peaceful and happy childhood for all children.

You can contact us by calling 845-425-7243. Learn more at www.korczakusa.com. and facebook.com/korczakusa.