

(USPS 500-660)

SOKOL



TIMES

December 8, 2022

PUBLICATION FOSTERING FRATERNAL, CULTURAL
& PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES JULY 14, 1905

Entered as Second-Class Matter, February 7, 1980 at East Orange, New Jersey under the act of August 24, 1912, provided in Sec. 1103, Act of October 3, 1918 authorized July 3, 1918

**Vesele Vianoce
A Stastny Novy Rok!**

**Merry Christmas
And Happy New Year!**



**To All Our Members
From the Supreme Lodge
of Sokol USA**

From the President's View

The waning of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen the reopening of many events that had been closed or canceled for the past two years. In the Pittsburgh area, there have been large scale events such as the Slovak Festival at the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Polish Festival, various holiday festivals and the reopening of large size theaters. Our Sokol USA National Board held an in-person board meeting October 20-22 in the Chicago area. The board was also invited at that time to attend events at the ASO Sokol Spirit lodge in the Chicago area. Our sports,



Joseph Bielecki

fitness and wellness department had been involved with ASO in a
(Continued on Page 3)



Ellen Kovac poses on a beam during an old timers meet.

Ellen Kovac Named To NJ Gymnastics Hall Of Fame

On November 5th, the New Jersey Gymnastics Association honored Sister Ellen Kovac from Sokol Lodge 12 by inducting her into the New Jersey Gymnastics Hall of Fame. The induction took place at the NJ Gymnastics Association's Annual Gala, where Ellen enjoyed the evening surrounded by her children, grandchildren, gymnastics friends and judges.

USAGNJ established the Hall of Fame in 2016 to provide lasting recognition to the special people who have furthered and sustained gymnastics in New Jersey.

The Association highlighted her lifelong commitment to the sport of gymnastics, which included being a competitor, an

instructor, a coach and a judge.

Ellen's first instructor was her father, who, as she recalls, "wouldn't let me join the gymnastics classes at the Sokol Hall in Little Falls, N.Y., until I was 5 years old." As a dedicated and determined gymnast, Ellen progressed from recognition at SOKOL meets over the years, through progressively higher levels of the sport. She was recognized as the NJ State All-Around Champion for six years, 1964-1969, and was a four-year varsity All-Around gymnast for West Chester State University. Ellen also competed at the National Collegiate Championships in 1967 and 1968. She has competed in "Old Timers" meets and at many National

Collegiate Championships in 1967 and 1968. She has competed in "Old Timers" meets and at many National Sokol SLETS, including recently in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 2017 and Buffalo, N.Y., in 2019.

Her love of the sport also pulled her into teaching young gymnasts, including at Sokol Woodlands Gymnastics Camps from 1965 to the 1990s. "My children Lance and Brandi also embraced gymnastics and spent all of their childhood summers at the Sokol Woodlands Camp – it was our life!" After coaching a YMCA team and Lodge 12 gymnasts, Ellen ended up as the Westfield High School gymnastics coach for 11 years, where her teams
(Continued on Page 5)

SOKOL TIMES

official organ of the
**SLOVAK GYMNASTIC UNION SOKOL
OF THE USA**
Sokol USA - District 4000 a Division of GBU Financial Life

Published bi-monthly on the 2nd Thursday of the month

SOKOL OFFICE:
Telephone: (973) 676-0281
E-mail: info@SokolUSA.org

All communication for publication should be sent
to Editor at 408 Main Street, P.O. Box 677,
Boonton, NJ 07005-0677

Or SokolTimesSubmissions@gmail.com
by the 22nd of the previous month.

Second Class postage paid in East Orange, NJ
Annual Subscription for non-members is \$10.00

GBU Financial Life

**A Member Owned, Not-for-Profit
Insurance Provider**

**4254 Saw Mill Run Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15227-3394**

412-884-5100 * 800-765-4428

www.gbu.org ~ Email: info@gbu.org

SOKOL USA

A Division of **GBU** FINANCIAL LIFE



LODGE 32 BOONTON

The next meeting will be held as follows:

Monday January 9, 2023
7:30 PM

Sokol USA Headquarters
408 Main Street, 4th Floor
Boonton, NJ 07005

Officer elections will take place and we are always
looking for new leaders.

Please let us know if you'll be attending.

Nazdar!
Lodge 32 Officers
BoontonSokol32@gmail.com

**SOKOL USA
HEADQUARTERS HAS A
NEW MAILING ADDRESS:**

**SOKOL USA
408 Main Street
P.O. Box 677
Boonton, New Jersey 07005**

Natalie T. Gardner of Lodge 276

Natalie T. Gardner, 86, passed away on October 3, 2022, in Pittsburgh, Pa. She was born on January 6, 1936, to Matthew and Eva Blistan. Natalie was preceded in death by her loving husband of 24 years, Richard Gardner Sr., and later finding her longtime companion, Sam Venturella; siblings, Matthew Blistan II, Mildred Zornan-Sweeney, and Richard Blistan.

Natalie always led an active lifestyle in her church and her community. She was a proud member of Sokol Lodge 276, Trustee of Sokol MCT, and a member of the Sokol Gymnastics Union. Natalie was also a passionate member and volunteer at Holy Emmanuel Lutheran Church and then Christ Lutheran Church. She loved playing cards, bowling, exercising at the gym and line dancing.

She enjoyed her AARP group and going to the casino. On weekends, Natalie

could often be found on one of her many bus trips. She was always up for a game of Chinese checkers with her grandchildren and was an active pen pal to her great-grandchildren. She was eternally grateful to her father, Otec (Mathew) for immigrating from Czechoslovakia to America in 1910 for dreams of a better life for their family.

Natalie will be greatly missed by her children, Linda (Byron) Swann, Richard (Lorena) Gardner, and Cyndi Chiodo; grandchildren, Fernando (Nichole) Medina, Richard Everett (Adriana Da Silva Bellini) Gardner, Bradley Swann, Brittany (Brendan) Litzinger, Cole Chiodo, and Mali Chiodo; great-grandchildren, Jonas and Penelope Medina, Rayleigh and Adriana Litzinger; and loving siblings Olga Paulovkin, Rose Hoover, Darlyne Moschak, and Gerald Blistan.



Natalia T. Gardner

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in Natalie Gardner's name payable to University of Pittsburgh, Lung Cancer Research, UPMC Cancer Pavilion, Suite 1B, 5150 Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232.

Fond memories and expressions of sympathy may be shared at www.brandtfuneralhome.com for the Gardner family.

Irene D. Rotella of Danbury, Conn.

Irene Dorothy (Balash) Rotella, age 86, passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 22nd at Hancock Hall Nursing Home surrounded by her loving family. She was the widow of Louis Rotella, who always referred to her as his bride. Both Louis and Irene were lifelong residents of Danbury, Conn.

Irene Balash Rotella was born May 4, 1936, and was the daughter of the late John and Marie Surovy Balash. She was raised Lutheran, however following her husband's passing Irene studied Catholicism and became a very devout confirmed Catholic.

Irene worked for many years at Union Savings Bank where she began as a teller and worked her way up to become an administrative assistant. Prior to her years at the bank, she worked as a media resource aide at New Fairfield High School. After her retirement, she spent her time volunteering in the gift shop at Danbury Hospital, dedicated many hours to St. Joseph's

Church, worked every election at the voting booths, and was very active in the Danbury Garden Club. She took it upon herself to provide transportation to seniors to medical appointments, grocery shopping and other non-emergent needs. She was only a phone call away for anyone who needed her.

It was her family who held her heart and soul. Mrs. Rotella is survived by her three children, Perry Rotella of New York City, Anna Marie Dufresne of Brookfield and Irene Roth and her husband Kevin of Danbury; seven grandchildren, Daniel Roth LCDR, Michael Rotella and his wife Katie, Madeline Rotella Eely and her husband Kyle, Stephanie Dufresne, Mark Dufresne, Jake Rotella and Evan Rotella, and one great-grandchild Adrienne Eely. She was predeceased by her siblings John "Sonny" Balash, Marie "Marika" Caliendo, Clarence "Bebe" Balash and Ann "Anca" Bagley.

Beyond her immediate family, Irene was everyone's

beloved mother or grandmother. Endless sports events, proms, celebrations, dinners, dance recitals, holidays, plays, graduations, appointments, pool parties, concerts, etc. She rarely missed an event. Her presence was pure joy, love, acceptance, grace and a true passion for life.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Hancock Hall Recreation Fund, 31 Staples Street, Danbury CT.

The family would like to acknowledge the exceptionally devoted and loving care that their mother received daily from all staff. We are deeply grateful for each staff member for the respect and care given to our dear mother.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Minutes from the National Board Meeting held in Chicago, Ill., will be published in the February 2023 edition.

Closing out 2022 and Entering 2023

As we wind down on what remains in 2022 and look forward to the start of 2023, let's take a moment to reflect on a busy year. After two years of enduring a world dominated by the COVID outbreak, we finally seem to have made it through to the other side of this pandemic. Our lodges and sports groups are back to in-person meetings and activities, and socialization among other people is becoming a part of everyday life again. We held a successful convention in August and elected a new board to steer our organization through the next four years. I believe we as a group should take this as a good sign to start looking at a future that seems much brighter than we expected just a short time ago.

Our National Board met during the time of October 20th to 22nd in the Chicago area which included both in-person and Zoom attendance. Lodge 306 hosted our trustees' meeting on October 20th and the full board meeting on October 22nd in addition to providing both a social on Friday evening and lunch on Saturday. Afterwards, we were able to attend our sister American Sokol's Spirit Unit's 75th anniversary celebration. We were warmly welcomed and enjoyed a lovely evening of food, music, celebration and sharing of Sokol comradery. An additional shoutout of thanks to Brother Todd Yatchsyn for facilitating this opportunity.

The Pittsburgh area was able to have its first in-person Sokol Heritage Festival on November 6th at the Cathedral of Learning since 2019. It was an especially nice honor to also have the Slovak Ambassador to the USA, the honorable Radovan Javorcik, attend and hold a discussion on the past 30 years of Slovakia's Independence since the beginning of January 1993.

Upcoming events in December include Farrell Lodge's annual Saint Nicholas Party on December 3rd as the first of many celebrations coming up in the other lodges for the holiday season. As many of us are aware, Folks of Italian heritage celebrate the Feast of the Seven Fishes on Christmas Eve, but our Slovak heritage also has a rich tradition concerning that day as well. In Slovakia, the big day of celebration is also Christmas Eve where families serve a special dinner with 12 items of food, followed by the opening of presents and then the attendance of mass or other similar services. On Christmas Day, they use the traditional greeting of Vesele Vianocce (Merry Christmas) and their celebrations extend to the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th.

So, as we prepare to bid farewell to this year and shift our focus to the start of 2023, I would like to send my fondest wishes for a joyous holiday season and a Happy New Year to all our members past, present and future.

NAZDAR

Sister Nancy Shurina
Chairwoman of Fraternal Activities



Baseball legend Ted Williams finally gets his chance to see Ellen perform a beam routine up close! This was at the New York World's Fair in 1965 on SOKOL Day.)

Sister Ellen Kovac Receives Tremendous Honor!

Lodge 12 gymnasts and Sokol Woodlands campers know Sister Ellen Kovac as the instructor whose mantra is "Safety First, Safety Second and, lastly, Safety." For the Sokol community, she's devoted countless hours outside of the gym as well running clinics, authoring calisthenics, updating the by-laws, and as the editor of the Sokol Times. But in the gymnastics community at-large, Ellen is known as even more still: a champion competitor, judge, coach and administrator. For these roles and her dedication to the furtherment of the sport of gymnastics, the New

Jersey branch of the USAG inducted Sister Kovac into their NJ Gymnastics Hall of Fame. The gala event held on Saturday, November 5, 2022, was a night for members of Lodge 12 to fete our life-long member, and to reflect on how lucky we are to be the recipients of Ellen's passion and knowledge of gymnastics.

While Ellen started her gymnastics career as a Sokol, she quickly branched out to Y's and clubs. She was the NJ All-Around Champion from 1964-1969, was an all-around gymnast for West Chester University (coached by fellow Sokol Brother Milan Trnka), and

competed at the National Collegiate Championships.

Ellen was the varsity coach of the Westfield High School Girls' Gymnastics Team and even stood in as boys' coach when needed! Ellen was a certified judge for over 40 years and, at various times, served as the NJ State Rules Interpreter, Education Chairperson and Test Administrator for both USGF and NJSIAA.

Sister Ellen is a model of health and fitness, and embodies the Sokol motto of "Ni Zisk, Ni Slavu:" for neither personal gain nor glory. Lodge 12 couldn't be more proud of her. Congratulations Ellen!

From the President's View

(Continued from Page 1)
variety of training sessions. This was a very nice opportunity to become acquainted with members of our sister Sokol organization, ASO.

At the Slovak Heritage Festival, held in Pittsburgh on November 6, some of our Sokol USA volunteers, including myself, made a

Sokol display table. This was the first Slovak Heritage Festival in Pittsburgh since November 2019. It was good to see people come for the various cultural events such as Slovak folk dancing, Slovak cultural displays, Slovak heritage lectures and other similar events. The Ambassador of Slovakia to the USA, the Honorable

Radovan Javorcik, attended the festival, held a discussion regarding the past 30 years of Slovak independence and toured the festival, viewing all of the cultural displays and greeting people from the fraternal societies who attended the festival. It was good to see people come out to celebrate their

heritage.

As the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's holidays approach, it is a very good time to remember those in our communities in need. Many of our lodges will meet for holiday parties, functions, and events. I encourage our lodge members to enjoy each other's company and the

fraternal events offered by the lodges. However, it is important to remember the other aspect of fraternalism, which is helping those in need. Many families will have empty chairs at their holiday tables because one of their loved ones passed from COVID-19. Others will not be able to afford holiday
(Continued on Page 6)



Sokol USA members who attended the 2022 American Sokol Board of Instructors Development Conference are (in back from left) Matthew Reynolds, Thalassa Millwood, Lily Glover, Rachel Bender, Natalie Smith, Charity Ruhl and Todd Yatchyshyn and (in front) Kathy Naccarato, Reyna Reynolds and Heidi Yatchyshyn.

Sokol USA participates in Instructors Development Conference

During the weekend of October 21st and 22nd, Sokol USA members representing the Sports, Wellness and Fitness Department, Lodge 32 (Boonton, N.J.), Lodge 47 (Monessen, Pa.), Lodge 103 (Ferrell, Pa.), Lodge 306 (Chicago, Ill.), and Lodge 410 (Penn Argyl, Pa.) attended the 2022 American Sokol Board of Instructors Development Conference hosted at Sokol Tabor in Berwyn, Ill. Saturday started with a welcome from Mary Cushing, American Sokol's new National Physical Director, where she provided an overview of the weekend's offerings and her plans for the American Sokol Board of Instructors. Saturday morning sessions included a yoga demonstration by Christina Curran, discussions on thinking outside the box for class ideas led by Jane and Howie Wise and Cassie Croft-Panel, updates to Excel rules (with tips and tricks on composing routines both from a coaching and judging perspective) presented by Karyn Domzalski and Karen Hartman, CPR certification taught by Todd Yatchyshyn, and a presentation by Christina Curran on American Sokol's Youth Initiative.

After a quick lunch break, sessions continued with newly elected American Sokol President Adam Wilt providing his vision for American Sokol during his term. Dan Bajek and Joe Bajek gave their first session of spotting and progressions for uneven bars (with demonstration support from Sister Charity Ruhl) and Sister Jo Peterson gave a demonstration of skills and activities for tots and preschoolers assisted by Reyna Reynolds of Lodge 410. The afternoon continued with demonstrations of step aerobics with Kathy Barbal and circuit workouts by Kenny Fron. Alix Fron and Dan Bajek presented plans for this year's Instructors School (mark your calendars for June 24 to July 2, 2023, hosted at Sokol Greater Cleveland) and Karen Hartman presented best practices for conducting a successful gymnastics meet. Finally, Svatka Hermanek presented an introduction to the sport of orienteering.

After dinner, the day wrapped up with presentations on the planning for the 2025 American Sokol Slet, Risk Management and Safe Sport, and American Sokol's social media plans. Saturday evening found the attendees at Sokol Spirit in Brookfield, Ill., where they were joined by members of the Sokol USA National Board, who were in Chicago for the



Above, Sister Kathy Barcal leads a demonstration class in step aerobics at the 2022 American Sokol Board of Instructors Development Conference. Below, Reyna Reynolds from Penn Argyl assists Sister Jo Peterson during the Tots and Preschool Activities Demonstration 3 at the 2022 American Sokol Board of Instructors Development Conference.



Sister Maryann Fiorelis leads a demonstration class on drumming for fitness at the 2022 American Sokol Board of Instructors Development Conference.

National Board meeting, for an evening of socializing, music, and home-cooked food.

Sunday morning brought one final session of presentations. Dan and Joe Bajek continued covering spotting and progressions for floor, beam, vault, and men's events. Maryann Fiorelis led a discussion on mentoring programs and Kenny Fron demonstrated class ideas utilizing balls, bands, and bells. Todd Yatchyshyn taught a second CPR certification class and Mary Cushing shared best practices for effectively teaching a class. The conference finished with a discussion led by Hawie Maskill and Cassie Croft on growing programs through community outreach, a drumming exercise led by Maryann Fiorelis, and a presentation on Sokol United's newest program, the Gym Bus, which will provide a mobile gym for events and outreach.



William Rehwinkel with the 50-year-old Austin Organ

BROTHER REHWINKEL PERFORMS AT CHURCH

On Sunday, October 16th, Central Jersey Lodge member William Rehwinkel performed an organ concert to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Austin Organ at the First Congregational Church in Westfield, N.J. The organ concert featured an interesting variety of organ music, most of which had not been heard by most of the audience. It was not traditional church music, but rather classical organ pieces by several composers.

William is a student at Oberlin College's Conservatory where he has been studying organ performance and composition for several years. The audience was able to see the hand and foot work it takes to play the many pipes and pedals used to create sound for an organ. Along with the concert, William prepared a program explaining the history of the four organs which have been used by the church in the past 140 years. This information was fascinating and really expanded my horizons, as I have never been to an organ concert. One of the things I treasure about my Sokol relationships is how it pushes me to branch out into experiences beyond gymnastics.

Respectfully submitted by Norah Valentin.

HEY SOKOL GOLFERS!

Save the date for the best GOSH DARN
Golf Scramble in Western Pennsylvania
Saturday June 10, 2023

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL
SOKOL FARRELL, PA
FOUR PERSON OPEN
GOLF SCRAMBLE

SHENANGO LAKE GOLF CLUB: 99 Birchwood Dr., Transfer, PA 16254



DISCOUNT FOR

SOKOL MEMBERS!

For more information, please visit our webpage at:
<http://www.sokolfarrell.org/home.html>

Brother Tim Brandt, chairman

Slovak Heritage Festival



Attending the Slovak Heritage Festival on November 6th in Pittsburgh, Pa., are (from left) Professor Renata Kamenarova, Sokol USA President Joseph Bielecki, Dr. Nancy Condee, Slovak Ambassador Radovan Javorcik, Dr. Bella Grigoryan, Mrs. Javorcak and Lesley Mann from GBU.

KOVAC JOINS NJGA HALL

(Continued on Page 1)
won four straight titles in New Jersey. Sokol Lodge 12 members continue to benefit from her instructions and encouragement during weekly gym sessions, and it's not unusual to see her spending some time on the beam.

Ellen's knowledge and love of gymnastics continued to pull her deeper into the sport where she worked as a USGF and NFHS certified judge for over 40 years, and became the NJ State Gymnastics Rules Interpreter.

Although Ellen is retired from gymnastics competitions and judging, her love of the gymnastics lifestyle has not diminished.

You can read her column, "Fit for Life," in the Sokol Times, and view her exercise video on YouTube. She remains committed to the Physical Education, Fraternal and Cultural activities of Sokol USA.

Submitted by Greg Bender



Ellen working out during a Lodge 12 gym session.

ABOUT SOKOL LODGE 306

Earlier in the Fall, Sokol USA Headquarters received communications regarding allegations of inappropriate behavior by an individual at the Chicago lodge. The National Board met promptly following the receipt of these allegations and suspended the individual. It also complied with AAU guidelines which required reporting the complaints received to the authorities and to the AAU for investigation. The Chicago lodge was directed to keep the suspended individual off its premises.

Initially a letter was received by the National Board sent indicating reticence to comply with the last directive. As a result, the National Board voted to suspend Lodge 306 for its failure to comply with the National Board's directive. Ultimately new lodge leadership was put in place and the suspension was later lifted.

REMEMBER SOKOL MEMBERS WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES

(Reprinted from the Sokol Farrell Newsletter)

The Memorial Day of the Czech Sokol Organization is a tribute to all Sokol members who sacrificed their lives in the fight for freedom, democracy and independence during the almost 160 years of Sokol's existence. Since 2019, it has been included in the calendar of significant days of the Czech Republic.

Nazi "Operation Sokol"

The date of October 8th was chosen as a reminder of the tragic events of 1941. On the night of October 7 to 8, 1941, the Gestapo arrested over 1,500 Sokol officials from headquarters, districts and individual Sokol units as part of "Operation Sokol." They were tortured, imprisoned, and sent to concentration camps. Fully 93 percent of them perished by the end of the war. Even during that night, Reinhard Heydrich signed an official decree on the dissolution of the Czech organization of Sokolská, which the Nazis considered the most dangerous domestic organization, whose organizational apparatus served the resistance movement on a mass scale.

The most significant act of the resistance then was the cooperation of Sokol in the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich (the Germans had made Czechoslovakia a "protectorate" of Germany), which could never have taken place without the literally suicidal help of the Sokols.

František Pecháček, athlete, Czechoslovak Olympian, Sokol official and author of the legendary men's rally song from the 1938 slet called "Oath to the Republic," was chosen as the symbol of the Sokol Memorial Day. As one of the leading representatives of the domestic resistance, he was martyred by the Nazis in 1944. František Pecháček's last words to his fellow prisoners were: *"Farewell, brothers. I know I'm going to die, but I'm not afraid of it. A brave man dies once, only cowards die a hundred times. I will die in peace knowing that our sacrifices were not in vain."*

On May 27, 1942, in Prague, Reinhard Heydrich, the commander of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), acting governor of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and a principal architect of the Holocaust, was attacked and wounded in an assassination attempt by Czechoslovak resistance operatives Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš. Heydrich died of his wounds on June 4, 1942.

The assassination, codenamed Operation Anthropoid, was carried out after preparation and training by the British Special Operations Executive and with the approval of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. The Czechoslovaks undertook the operation to exact retribution for Heydrich's brutal rule. Heydrich's death led to a wave of reprisals by SS troops, including the destruction of villages (Lidice is the most well known) and mass killings of civilians.

Commemorative acts: Evening of Falcon Lights

Throughout the day of October 8th, various devotional acts and social gatherings are held in the towns and cities where Sokol units operate. The whole day ends with the *Evening of Sokol Lights*. The traditional Sokol commemoration event is to commemorate the fate of a specific Sokol hero who sacrificed his life for his homeland with candles released on the water surface of the river Vltava, which flows through the city of Prague.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW

(Continued from Page 3)

festivities due to the present economic downturn. I encourage our lodges and members to make donations to food banks and holiday toy drives, homeless shelters and other organizations that assist those in need.

Additionally, after the holidays, it is a good time to work off the excess holiday pounds by doing walking, stationary biking, or Sokol exercises. These can be done in lodges or at home. Sister Ellen Kovac has created some very nice chair aerobic exercises which are now on the Sokol USA website. These are a good starting point for a post-holiday exercise program.

Our Sokol USA Vice President, Scott Pracko, recently resigned after many years in the position of Vice President. We wish Scott all the best in his future endeavors. The Sokol USA executive committee has appointed Sister Debbie Golden as interim Vice President. The Sokol USA by-laws require that an election be held to replace an officer who has left the board prior to the end of the officer's term. In the new year, the Sokol Times will issue a call for candidates for the office. Those delegates who attended the August 2022 Sokol USA National

Celebrating Service



Sokol Lodge 30 members at the VFW Military Ball

Convention are those who are eligible to vote to fill the vacancy. More information will be forthcoming in the new year in the Sokol Times.

As the year ends and the holiday festivities begin, let's remember to be thankful for all of the blessings which we have received, to appreciate our family and our loved ones and to make the best we can in these difficult economic times.

I will close this article with one of the traditional Slovak holiday wishes that people say to each other: "health, wealth and happiness!" I wish all of you happy holidays and all the best for the new year! Health, wealth, and happiness!

NAZDAR!

Joseph Bielecki
President, SOKOL USA

FIT FOR LIFE

Brother Lenny Gianitsos, a member of Sokol New York, shares his own fitness and hopes everyone can benefit from it. Notice how he integrates exercise into daily routines and necessary chores. He's thereby developed a fitness habit that he'll continue to benefit from for years.

This is his regimen: Concentrate on Routine-Stretching-Walking-Stairs.

#1 ROUTINE:

I always loved sports but disliked exercise. People like me should try this. Develop a morning routine and stick with it.

I do the following: Drink a glass of cold water, make my bed, wash any leftover glasses or dishes.

While doing this, I do arm windmills-toe touches-deep knee-bends. I also give the kitchen a quick sweep.

Exercise (UGH). I concentrate on stretching, neck twists, arm twirls and deep knee bends. (Most I learned at Sokol.)

I end things with a series of push-ups (knees on the floor) and some vertigo exercises. I cannot do planks!

Breakfast is a glass of hot water or coffee. Something sweet but small and, occasionally, a slather of peanut butter on a slice of whole wheat bread.

Brush my teeth.

If I don't do this in the morning, it won't get done at all.

#2 STRETCHING

This cannot be overstated. Stretching can be done almost anytime or anywhere, but don't strain yourself.

#3 WALKING:

You don't have to speed walk, but walk with a purpose. Any place that is two miles or less away, I walk.

#4 STAIRS:

When possible, use stairs. When going downstairs, be extra careful. Go slow and always use the handrail.

Sports Fitness and Wellness Department Conference Call Minutes Sunday, October 2 – 8:00 PM EST

Attendance: Todd Yatchyshyn, Chris Yatchyshyn, Charity Ruhl, Heidi Yatchyshyn, Steve Banjak, Norah Valentin, Kristin Greenberg, Mark Omasta

Todd opened the meeting at 8:05 PM. He welcomed the participants and stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the recommendations for the 2022-2023 program year. He noted that Scott had responsibilities with their parents and were unable to be on the call.

Chris took a moment to thank the SFW Dept. assistants - Charity, Amy, Kathy and Heidi - for the past five years which they served. She mentioned how important they were in organizing and accomplishing Sokolfest 2019 and added how great an asset Norah has been on site at our national slets. She also thanked all the others who have helped through the years, like Steve and Kristin who have written calls, and were willing to help with whatever was necessary. She emphasized that we need everyone to keep the Sokol USA program moving forward and stated how she appreciated their dedication to making things happen on the national level and more importantly on the local level – especially during the pandemic.

Todd informed all about the upcoming American Sokol BOI Development Conference that will be held October 22-23 at Sokol Tabor in Berwyn IL. He reminded the participants that we have approval from our last set of recommendations to attend. Registration fees and travel for two delegates per lodge will be covered and we will have a short in-person meeting of all Sokol USA attendees. Let Todd know ASAP if you will be participating. An American Sokol Directors Conference will also be held on Friday, October 21. Matthew Reynolds will represent Sokol USA at that meeting; Todd will be teaching CPR on both days of the Development Conference.

On the same weekend, Sokol USA will be holding their board meeting at Chicago Lodge 306. We are hoping the board members will be available to participate in a session or two at the Development Conference, especially the session that will be presented by Adam Wilt, the new American Sokol President. It is a great opportunity for our board members to meet him and other newly-elected American Sokol officers.

Todd also mentioned that the Polish Falcons are holding three Leadership Development Conferences and an invitation has been extended to our members ages 14-20. Todd has participated in the past as well as a Dan Bajak of American Sokol and a few young members. He said it is well run and the skills used could help all young people. There is one in Erie, PA on October 15, another in Middletown, CT on October 21-22 and a third in La Porte, IN on November 11-12. In the past they held one a year in Pittsburgh, PA. They are now holding them regionally at their local lodges to reach more youth.

Chris reminded all that officers, directors and instructors need to have background checks so we are requiring AAU membership. USAG also provides background checks so a USAG membership is also acceptable. In addition everyone needs to take a SafeSport course. In the new year lodges will be required to supply their AAU (or USAG) membership numbers and copies of their SafeSport course completion certificates. For information go to: AAU membership; <https://aausports.org/>; SafeSport or <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/training-and-education/safesport-courses-for-all/>.

2022-2023 SFW Dept. Recommendations

National Organization, Directors, and Assistants

That Sokol USA continues an affiliation with AAU with a Level 2 Club Membership for both Youth and Adult Gymnastics at a cost of \$80 per year.

That Sokol USA reimburses the AAU membership fee and Safesport Certification for the National Directors and Assistants.

That Sokol USA pays for travel, room, per diem & registration fee for the National Directors, (or National Assistant as proxy) to attend the American Sokol Directors' Development Conference, District Directors Meeting, and American Sokol School Board Meeting in 2023.

That Sokol USA pays for the full travel expense for all authorized Sokol USA delegates to attend the 2023 SFW Department Meeting/Training Session; additionally, the National Directors receive room, per diem and paid registration fee, the National Assistants receive room, food allowance and paid registration

fee, and District and Lodge representatives receive paid registration fees. This event may be scheduled in conjunction with an American Sokol BOI Development Conference.

Athletes

That Sokol USA pays the full tuition of any Sokol USA member to attend a National Sokol Instructors School, Weekend Instructor School, American Sokol National Camp or other Fraternal Society Leadership Development Program in 2022-23 season, with the recommendation of their Lodge Director/Board and approval of the National Directors.

National Programs

That Sokol USA subsidizes up to \$4,000 for the 2022-2023 season for hosting or participating in a Weekend Instructor School, mini-Kurz, training sessions, or invitational competitions, for Sokol USA members or lodges. A proposal must be made in advance and approved by the National Directors and National Board. Proper documentation must be submitted within thirty (30) days of the event for reimbursement of the expenses.

That Sokol USA provides \$1,500 toward a National Bowling Tournament with the subsidy to be used to benefit Sokol USA members. Subsidy is paid to the host lodge and a basic expense report should be presented to the SFW Dept following the event.

That Sokol USA provides \$1,500 toward a National Golf Tournament with the subsidy to be used to benefit Sokol USA members. Subsidy is paid to the host lodge and a basic expense report should be presented to the SFW Dept following the event. If Sokol USA does not host a national tournament, lodges may apply for subsidy to help support participation in a tournament sponsored by any Sokol USA lodge, or one of the fraternal organizations with whom Sokol USA collaborates, or to help fund costs associated with a lodge team that participates in an ongoing seasonal golf league.

That Sokol USA subsidizes a National Sporting Activity, up to \$1,500, plus the cost of the awards.

That Sokol USA funds up to \$10,000 for a major Program Development Initiative that is designed to attract membership and help sustain Sokol USA into the future. Program must be presented in detail with a clear vision, goals and objectives, a strategic plan of implementation, a budget, action steps for reaching goals, and metrics for measuring program performance on a regular basis.

Lodge Subsidies

That each Sokol USA Lodge will be eligible to receive a program subsidy of \$5000 if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

The requesting lodge must complete and submit an initial subsidy request through Google Forms.

Throughout the course of the year the requesting lodge must complete a Fall Program Description & enrollment report, proposed budget describing how the \$5,000 will be utilized, a Mid-Year Check-in & enrollment report with budget status, and an End of Season Re-Cap, enrollment report, and final budget report.

In addition to the three reports which going forward will be required to be submitted in September, January and May; lodges must adhere to National Youth Protection Guidelines. All board members, instructors, program directors, and lodge members who are involved in any capacity with youth-serving programs must complete SafeSport certification and have a current AAU membership. AAU member numbers and Safesport Certificates of completion must be submitted with the initial application for subsidy. For lodges without youth programs only proof of AAU memberships are required.

Each lodge receiving a program subsidy must also plan, conduct/attend, and complete a professional development opportunity. This initiative is board ranging and could be relating to any activity the lodge currently facilitates or is looking to add to their current programs. The professional development opportunity may also focus on other pertinent areas such as, but not limited to, risk management, youth protection, financial planning, marketing, technology, or emergency response training. The American Sokol Development Conference or USAG Congress are examples of opportunities for professional development.

Finally, each recipient must submit 3 articles to the Sokol Times with images during the program year.

(Continued on Page 8)



HOLIDAY GREETINGS & DONATIONS

TO THE SPORTS, FITNESS AND WELLNESS FUND

From Lodge 500, Boonton, N.J.	\$750.00
<i>May Everyone Have a Healthy & Happy New Year</i>	
From Milan Kovac & Brigid Ruvolo, Lodge 12	\$100.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 12, Central Jersey	\$100.00
<i>Wishing All a Very Blessed Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 15, Yonkers, N.Y.	\$225.00
<i>Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 36, Binghamton, N.Y.	\$50.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 63, Homestead, Pa.	\$140.00
<i>Merry Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 74, Plymouth, Pa.	\$250.00
<i>May Everyone Have a Healthy & Happy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 79, Mahanoy City, Pa.	\$570.00
<i>Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 122, Kenosha, Wis.	\$100.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 127, Star Junction, Pa.	\$150.00
<i>Best Wishes for a Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 164, Detroit, Mich.	\$100.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 248, Rossford, Ohio	\$500.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 258, Campbell, Ohio	\$30.00
<i>Wishing All a Very Blessed Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 6W, Perth Amboy, N.J.	\$90.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From John Kennedy, Danbury, Conn.	\$75.00
<i>In Memory of the Wojnilko Family</i>	

TO THE MILAN GETTING SCHOLARSHIP FUND

From Lodge 500, Boonton, N.J.	\$750.00
<i>Wishing All a Very Blessed Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 2, Bridgeport, Conn.	\$300.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Emil Trgala, Lodge 12, Central Jersey	\$100.00
<i>May this Holiday Season be Joyful for All</i>	
From Milan Kovac & Brigid Ruvolo, Lodge 12	\$100.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 15, Yonkers, N.Y.	\$225.00
<i>Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 36, Binghamton, N.Y.	\$50.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 63, Homestead, Pa.	\$140.00
<i>Merry Christmas</i>	
From Lodge 74, Plymouth, Pa.	\$250.00
<i>May Everyone Have a Healthy & Happy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 79, Mahanoy City, Pa.	\$570.00
<i>May Everyone Have a Healthy & Happy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 122, Kenosha, Wis.	\$100.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 127, Star Junction, Pa.	\$150.00
<i>Best Wishes for a Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 164, Detroit, Mich.	\$100.00
<i>Happy Holidays</i>	
From Lodge 248, Rossford, Ohio	\$500.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 258, Campbell, Ohio	\$30.00
<i>Wishing All a Very Blessed Christmas</i>	
From Lodge #W, Perth Amboy, N.J.	\$90.00
<i>Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year</i>	
From Lodge 39/40W, Chicago, Ill.	\$200.00
<i>In Memory of Gerald von Schwedler</i>	
From Deborah Golden, Woodstock, Ill.	\$100.00
<i>Merry Christmas & Happy New Year</i>	
From John Kennedy, Danbury, Conn.	\$75.00
<i>In Memory of the Wojnilko Family</i>	



Sports Fitness and Wellness Department Conference Call Minutes
(Continued from Page 7)

Subsidies will be paid in 2 installments \$2,500 in the fall and \$2,500 after the fulfillment of all criteria. Report reminders with links to the electronic reports will be emailed automatically to the initial applicant's email address provided in the subsidy request form. Failure to meet the eligibility requirement will result in withholding the second installment of the subsidy and prevent an applicant from applying for funds in the following program year unless proof of improvement is presented to the directors.

Notes: This new initiative combines the former SFW recommendations referred to as the program subsidy, reactivation project, professional development, project safety, liability insurance, Safesport reimbursement, and AAU membership reimbursement. In the past the national organization did not have a list of individuals who work in youth serving roles and accompanying Safesport and AAU membership numbers. This newly established financial subsidy is a two-way street providing the lodges with a means to additional financial support and providing Sokol USA a way to enforce instructor certifications and collect vital information in a timely manner.

All other financial requests will be made on a case-by-case basis, approved by the Directors, and forwarded to the Trustees for review.

The recommendations were discussed, and all question were answered. After everyone felt they were comfortable with the new format a vote was taken. Steve made a motion to accept, seconded by Mark. The recommendations passed with a unanimous vote.

Todd then asked Charity to explain a possible fundraising effort for the SFW Dept. She explained that organizations are hosting "Destination Meets." The organization sets up the competition in a vacation area – preferably a warm location where families can take advantage of the ocean or pools in addition to have their gymnast(s) participate in a meet.

She said that some of her gymnasts have participated in two such events. It would probably take us a few years to get something like this underway, but the directors are looking into it.

Steve asked when the next slet would be. Todd explained that American Sokol is looking at 2025, but he does not think they have a formal committee established at this time. American Sokol held their convention and elections earlier this year. Mary Cushing is the new Director and he said they are in the early planning stages. He added that we are considering a Sokolfest in 2026, which will be new for us since our Sokolfests usually preceded the American Sokol Slets. This might give us an idea of what works well post pandemic and prior to our next Sokolfest.

Chris reminded all about the membership options available to young members. They include a GBU Life Policy or Annuity, or a Sokol USA National Sports membership for kids up to age 16. There was some discussion about how much the GBU policies help with funding Sokol USA programs. Todd stated it was not very much financially; Charity suggested we should be looking into a different business model for the organization. Chris pointed out that a new board was voted in at the convention and this would be a good topic to discuss in 2023. She also noted that John Kennedy is in contact with GBU and trying to obtain a minimal amount life insurance policy, which would make it more reasonable to sign up young members and their parents. Mark reminded all that the present membership rules are what we've been dealt, but he agreed that these ideas should be brought forward once the new board is in place.

Kristin asked that Thalassa Millwood be added to the email list. She was elected as a director of Lodge 306. Todd thanked everyone for their participation and ended the meeting with a "Nazdar!"

Respectfully submitted by
Chris Yatchyshyn