

SOKOL TIMES

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From the President's View

It is a new year, and the new year brings new beginnings: new year's resolutions and the eager anticipation of spring. There are many new beginnings happening within our organization. Several of our lodges, like Whiting, Ind., and Braddock, Pa., have reorganized themselves under new leadership, and they are beginning new activities and new directions. Sister Shurina and her new program, providing seed money to lodges for new fraternal activities, has seen a great deal of success. It is my hope that in 2024 more lodges will avail themselves of this program and work with Nancy to realize new events and activities.

The Sokol spirit embodies strength, unity, and a commitment to physical and mental fitness. It also encourages fraternalism and community involvement. As we embrace the changing seasons, let us embrace the Sokol principles that bind us together!

Winter is a perfect time to work off all of the pounds put on during the festive holiday season. I encourage our members to engage in walking, stationary bike riding, or traditional Sokol aerobic exercises. These can be done at home or in lodge halls. For those wishing to do chair aerobics and/or traditional Sokol exercises, I recommend going to the Sokol USA website and watching the videos posted there by Sister Ellen Kovac. This is a great starting point for post-holiday weight loss and exercise!

These winter months are



Joseph Bielecki

As we navigate through winter towards the blossoming of spring, let us embody the Sokol spirit in all that we do.

also a good time for our members to meet at their lodges, foster a sense of camaraderie and belonging, and participate in activities benefiting the lodges and their local communities. I encourage each of you to consider participating in Sokol to whatever extent possible. It is a chance to celebrate our shared values, learn from one other, and strengthen the Sokol family. It can be through exercising along with the Sokol videos on our website, it could be via attending lodge meetings or participating in a lodge/community project, or even attending or supporting the Prague Slet.

The Prague Slet is a grand celebration of Sokol's

(Continued on Page 6)

Gymnastics competition



Congratulations to Lodge 30, Sokol Danbury's very own National Youth Sports member Liv Sommer! Liv competed in a Providence, R.I., gymnastics competition. We are so proud of you and all you have done!!!



SOKOL TIMES

official organ of the

**SLOVAK GYMNASTIC UNION SOKOL
OF THE USA**

Sokol USA - District 4000 a Division of GBU Financial Life



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From the National Fraternal Secretary

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I hope everyone had a great holiday season. A lot has transpired since our convention. We only had one nomination that was duly seconded for the Vice President position, Sister Debbie Golden. As per our National By Laws and Robert's Rules of Order, she is the newly elected Vice President to fill the term until the next convention.

I have visited several Lodges this past year and met with their leadership and members: Lodge 114 Sleepy Hollow, N.Y.; Lodge 12 Central Jersey, N.J.; Lodge 26 Guttenberg, N.J.; Lodge 214 Palmerton, Pa.; Lodge 93 Bethlehem, Pa.; Lodge 306 Chicago, Pa.; District MCT; Lodge 255 Leechburg, Pa.; Lodge 269 Whiting, Ind.; Lodge 32 Boonton, N.J., and Lodge 30 Danbury, Conn. In addition, I was able to retrieve various unclaimed funds from the states of Virginia, Wisconsin, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania belonging to our organization. We began the long task of digitizing our records, which provides easy access to everything.

In the New Year, my hopes are to reconnect with Lodges that are still active but have not had contact with Sokol USA in many years. The website for Sokol USA is continuously being updated, with hopes of expanding membership and getting younger members engaged. Members of Sokol USA will attend the Slet in Prague from June 30 to July 6, 2024, more information to follow as soon as it is available.

Nazdar!

John A. Kennedy
National Fraternal Secretary
Sokol USA

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 Sokol USA Milan Getting Scholarship :: :: :

SCHOLARSHIP Program 2024

*Looking for some help to achieve your goal of attending college?
Each year Sokol USA is proud to award the Milan Getting
Scholarship to a limited number of qualified Sokol USA members
who are furthering their education at an accredited college or
University.*

*If you or a family member will be entering college or a university
this coming fall, please visit the Sokol USA website using the QR
code below to access the application and further detail.*



sokolusa.org



Winter Warnings

The cold chill of winter has definitely arrived in America and its effects can be felt across our country. Freezing temperatures, high winds and snow are widespread as this arctic blast we find ourselves in continues to span blizzard-like conditions throughout the states. To all members of Sokol, please remember to exercise extra caution when driving and walking outside for the next few months. Safety experts remind us to pack these emergency items in our vehicles, including a blanket, a flashlight with working batteries, a first aid kit, a snow shovel and ice scrapper, and some snacks and water just in case you get trapped somewhere due to the weather. In addition, be sure to check your tires and their air pressure regularly since stopping times for all vehicles are extended during this season. Remember that winter weather is not the time for you to take it easy with low gas levels, so keep your gas tank and other fluid levels full as much as possible. Slow down on icy roads and wear good shoes or boots when walking around as we want everyone to stay safe as we ride out this storm.

Moving on, many lodges held annual year end meetings this past December. Elections were also held and we wish to offer our congratulations to all new and returning officers; good luck in the upcoming year. I would like to encourage all members to increase their involvement with the local community and know that I'm always available to help with any local projects. Lastly to our Sokol student body, the deadline for scholarships and grants are published in detail on pages 28 and 29 of the recently arrived winter edition of the GBU Reporter. Our own Milan Getting Scholarship applications and renewals are currently online at sokolusa.org/scholarship and are due April 1, 2024.

Stay safe and stay warm.
NAZDAR
Sister Nancy Shurina

Lodge 30 toy drive



Sokol USA Lodge 30 members gathered in early December for their annual meeting and filled the Toys for Tots box.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Have any official Sokol business and/or questions?
Reach out to Brother John Kennedy at
info@sokolusa.org.

DONATIONS GRATEFULLY APPRECIATED

To the Milan Getting Scholarship Fund

Correction:
The \$1,200 donation from District MCT listed as Chicago, Ill., should be from District MCT Pittsburgh, Pa. We apologize for this error.

From Lodge 2, Bridgeport, Conn. \$300.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 114, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. \$100.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 255, Leechburg, Pa. \$200.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Anthony Puglisi, Sokol Times Editor \$50.00
Best Wishes in the New Year

From Lodge 79, Mahanoy City, Pa. \$63.75
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 74, Plymouth, Pa. \$85.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 15, Yonkers, N.Y. \$212.50
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 127, Star Junction, Pa. \$318.75
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 244, Westfield, Mass. \$50.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 130, New Kensington, Pa. \$50.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

To the Sport, Fitness and Wellness Fund

From Lodge 114, Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. \$100.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 255, Leechburg, Pa. \$200.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Anthony Puglisi, Sokol Times Editor \$50.00
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From Lodge 244, Westfield, Mass. \$50.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

From Lodge 130, New Kensington, Pa. \$50.00
In Memory of Deceased Members

Lodge 130 Holiday Party



Sokol Lodge 130 hosted their Christmas Party on December 17, 2023, at Villa Ballancha Restaurant in Lower Burrell, Pa. Attending the event are (sitting from left) Jo Ann Paulenda and Dee Choltko; (middle row) Helen R. Slaninka, Maria McAfoose, Kristen Depanicis, Mary Jo Shultz, Edward Shultz, Lynn Culleiton, Mary Imhoff and Austin Ealy; and (back row) Tom McAfoose, Jon McAfoose, Rick Choltko, Jean Choltko, Mary Ann Slaninka, Brian Culleiton, Keith Imhoff and Jersey Bell.

HEY SOKOL GOLFERS!
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Bro. Tim Brandt, Chairman



Jackie Pracko

Jackie Pracko

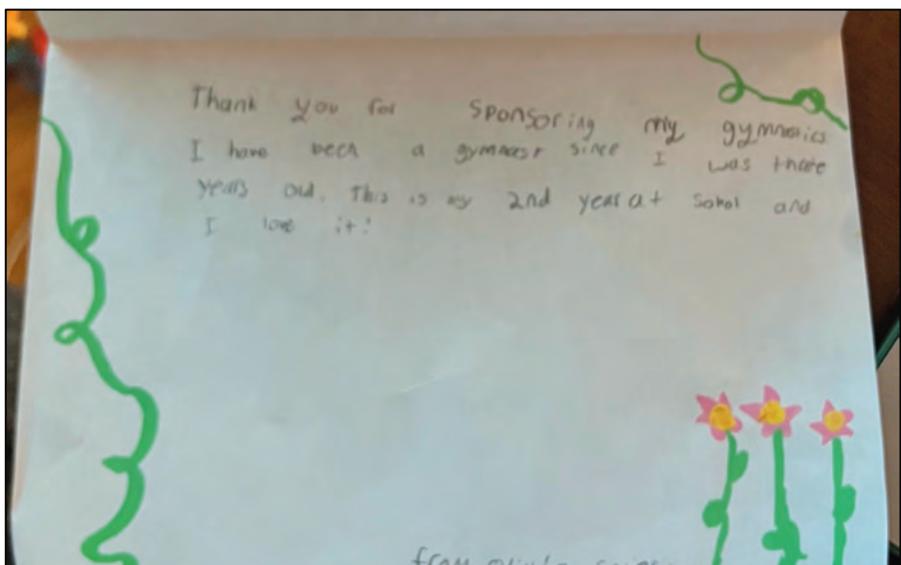
Lifetime Sokol member of Sokol USA Lodge 306 Sister Jackie Pracko passed away on December 20, 2023, at the young age of 91. Jackie was first a member of the Sokol Kenosha Lodge in Wisconsin and moved to Chicago in 1960 when she married John Pracko.

She was the beloved wife of John L. Pracko, loving mother of Bryan and Scott (Amy) Pracko, proud grandmother of Samantha and Matthew Pracko, dear sister of Elizabeth (Curt) Carlson and the late Sandra (the late John) Danielson, fond cousin, aunt and friend of many. In lieu of flowers, the family asks to make memorial donations to Alzheimer's Foundation.

Sponsor a gymnast



Olivia Sciortino is just one of several gymnasts at Lodge 306 in Chicago that is benefitting from a new sponsor an inner-city program being offered through Sokol. A huge shout out to Lodge 39 for making the first sponsorship. You have made this child's year. Most recently, Olivia has moved to our young juniors' class (pre-teens) and will be working out two days per week, one of which will be participating in a conditioning class being offered to better support the full gymnast.



The thank you note was written by Olivia Sciortino and says, "Thank you for sponsoring my gymnastics. I have been a gymnast since I was 3 years old. This is my 2nd year at Sokol and I love it!" Are you interested in sponsoring a gymnast and getting updates on how the sponsored gymnast is progressing? Reach out to Kristin Greenberg at kgreenberg.sokolusa@gmail.com to find out how you can become a part of this new sponsorship program.

LODGE 32 BOONTON, NJ

Let's Stay in Touch

Would you like to receive **IMPORTANT** announcements from the lodge (minutes, news, events, etc)? Then please send an email with your name to: BoontonSokol32@gmail.com. We will gladly add you to our email list. Please spread the word to the rest of your family and Sokol friends.

Nazdar!
The Officers of Lodge 32
Boonton, N.J.

Sokol Website Update

Sokol USA is working with Lab Media, redesigning our website! The new website design will be a user-friendly comprehensive site to better fit the needs of our lodges and Sokol USA together. We are looking for high resolution images of your lodge members and functions. Please include the lodge name and names of individuals in the photos. New images can be emailed to SOKOL USA National Fraternal Secretary John Kennedy at kennedy1073@gmail.com.

AMERICAN SOKOL
NATIONAL CAMP

June 23-29 2024

AT SOKOL CAMP IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

more details and
registration info
coming soon



sign up to
receive
updates

If you or someone you know might be interested in
being a Camper or you want more information about
being a Counselor or volunteering as a Cook or Night

Watch, use the QR code above or visit: rb.gy/c5rfy

From the President's View

(Continued from Page 1)

rich history and its extensive global community. The Slet, scheduled for June 30 to July 5, 2024, promises to be a spectacular event that brings Sokol members from around the world together. The gigantic scale of many of the events and the prospect of smaller, more intimate opportunities for members to meet and share experiences at other events in Prague during this time offer a unique opportunity. It is an opportunity that showcases the Sokol movement's vibrancy and unity. For more information about the Prague Slet, follow the COS website at www.sokol.eu. Every few weeks, starting in January 2024, more and more information will be posted on the website by the organizing committee in Prague.

As we navigate through winter towards the blossoming of spring, let us embody the Sokol spirit in all that we do. May this season bring you warmth, good health, and a renewed sense of purpose within our Sokol family.

NAZDAR!
Joe Bielecki
President, Sokol USA

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Life Line Screening. Members receive discounted pricing on preventative health screenings that use ultrasound technology.

Make a Difference One Member at a Time. New GBU member applicants are given the opportunity to select a charitable organization to which GBU will donate funds.

Make a Difference One Hour at a Time. In support of a GBU member's individual volunteer work, GBU will provide a donation to the member's qualifying charitable organization.

Fraternal Library of helpful family information. This library of family-oriented books provides members with a selection of "family-oriented" material at a minimal cost.

Get Fit Clubs. GBU keeps track of your walking, running and biking mileage. Awards are provided at specified mileage levels.

Language Learning. GBU reimburses members up to \$250 annually for taking an approved language course.

American Hearing Benefits™. Provides access to free hearing consultations and significant discounts on hearing aids.

Membership Contests. Members of all ages have the opportunity to win CASH awards through contests held throughout the year. Contests include photography, puzzles and coloring.

Social and community activities. Opportunities to participate in district-sponsored activities, such as bus trips, dinners, dances, picnics, fundraising events and local charitable volunteer efforts.

Our dear mother, Nancy Poliak-Viparina, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on November 30, 2023, at the age of 88. She was predeceased by her parents John and Mary (nee Yurczak) Poliak, her husband Paul Viparina, and son Steven Viparina. She leaves behind her daughter Karen and her husband Henry Stroczyński of Wilmington, N.C.; daughter Lori and her husband Robert Ryan of Leland, N.C.; seven grandchildren Alison, Ian, Brandi, Chelsea, Steven, Bobby and Kaeli and three great-grandchildren Lily, Leo and Sutton.

Nancy grew up in The Bronx, N.Y. After graduating from Julia Richmond High School, she began working as a teller in a New York City bank. Shortly after, she met Paul, got married and moved to Little Falls, N.Y., to help run the family gas station. They were then offered jobs managing the Boonton Sokol Gymnastics Camp in Boonton, N.J. After several years, they decided to open their own business, Boonton Liquors. She loved living in New Jersey.

She has been laid to rest next to her son at Rockaway Valley Cemetery in Boonton, N.J. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to hospice in Nancy's memory.

Nancy Poliak-Viparina



Nancy Poliak-Viparina

SHARE YOUR FAMILY EVENTS WITH YOUR "SOKOL FAMILY"

The Sokol Times Social Page is a great way to keep up with your old and new friends! Share your families' events with your Sokol family. We want to hear from you. Only news regarding members of our lodges will be printed.

Complete one of the attached forms and mail the information and a photograph of clear quality to Sokol USA, 408 Main Street, P.O. Box 677, Boonton, NJ 07005-0677 or info@SokolUSA.org.

ENGAGEMENTS, WEDDINGS & ANNIVERSARIES



NAMES: _____

PHONE #: _____

HOMETOWN: _____

SOKOL LODGE: _____

YEARS MARRIED (IF APPLICABLE): _____

BIRTHDAYS



NAME: _____

BIRTH DATE: _____

AGE: _____

PHONE #: _____

HOMETOWN: _____

SOKOL LODGE: _____

PROMOTIONS, HONOR ROLLS & OTHER EVENTS



NAME: _____

PHONE #: _____

HOMETOWN: _____

SOKOL LODGE: _____

EVENT: _____

*Photographs are not required, but they do add to the presentation.
Please include a self addressed, stamped envelope if you would like your photograph returned.*

Fraternal gathering



Members of Lodges 12 and 26 met with National Fraternal Secretary John Kennedy in December. At the gathering were (above from left) Emil Trgala, Arthur Burkhardt and Greg Bender and (below from left) James Malik and Buddy Burkhardt.



LODGE 39 CHRISTMAS PARTY – Lodge 39 held their last meeting of the year and Christmas Party on December 10, 2023, at McCook's Bohemian Restaurant. Following the meeting, members socialized, exchanged Christmas cards and enjoyed a delicious Bohemian meal of their choice. Everyone received a gift of chocolate truffles, and each family got a lovely poinsettia plant to take home.

History lesson



On January 8, 2024, Sokol USA President Joe Bielecki gave a lecture about the History of the Sokol Movement and Prague Slets to an eager audience of 50 attendees. The event was organized by the Western Pennsylvania Slovak Cultural Association and took place at the Mount Lebanon Public Library.



GBU Financial Life Member Benefits

Member Magazine. *The Reporter* magazine provides members with bimonthly news about GBU's programs, national and local activities, product information and GBU's financial statistics.

College Scholarships and Grants. Academic achievement scholarship and grant awards are provided to qualifying college/post-secondary students. Four college scholarship programs are offered: freshman, undergraduate, graduate and two-year.

The **GBU High School Freshman Grant program** is designed to assist eighth-grade GBU members with associated costs in their transition into the high school curriculum.