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# SOKOL



# TIMES

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## From the President's View

As we begin the new year, it's a perfect time to reflect on our shared values and the vibrant community spirit that defines Sokol USA. Winter, with its crisp air and serene landscapes, offers us a unique opportunity to come together, engage in meaningful activities, and focus on our physical and mental well-being.

The Sokol spirit embodies strength, unity, and a commitment to fitness. This winter, I encourage all our members to participate in activities that promote health and



Joseph Bielecki

camaraderie. Whether it's walking, stationary bike

riding, or traditional Sokol aerobic exercises, there are plenty of ways to stay active. For those interested in chair aerobics or traditional Sokol exercises, I recommend visiting the Sokol USA website, where there are excellent instructional videos by Sister Ellen Kovac. These resources are a great starting point for post-holiday weight loss and maintaining fitness, especially indoors, throughout the winter months.

Winter is also an ideal time for our members to gather with their lodges, fostering a sense of belonging and community. Participating in lodge activities not only benefits our local communities but also strengthens the bonds within our Sokol family. Attending lodge meetings, engaging in community projects, or simply spending time with fellow members – every event counts in building a stronger, more connected Sokol USA community.

As we look ahead, let's also remember the importance of giving back to our communities. Volunteering and participating in charitable activities not only help those in need, but enriches our own lives. Whether it's organizing a food drive, helping out at a local shelter, or simply offering a helping hand to a neighbor, every act of kindness makes a

(Continued on Page 6)

## Happy Retirement!



Our very own Fraternal Secretary, John Kennedy, of Sokol Lodge 30 is officially retired! Please join us in Congratulating him on a 25-year career as a firefighter. He had a stellar career and should be very proud of himself for his dedication and hard work! Now he will have more time than ever to focus on Sokol!

## Head over heels



Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., held their annual Cartwheel-a-Thon. A special congratulations to Rebecca Wichner who completed 173 cartwheels in 5 minutes. She now holds the record for most cartwheels at the Slovak American Sokol Krivan Annual Cartwheel-a-Thon. More photos on Page x.



# SOKOL TIMES

official organ of the  
**SLOVAK GYMNASIAC UNION SOKOL  
OF THE USA**  
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# SOKOL USA

A Division of **GBU** FINANCIAL LIFE



## 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](mailto:kennedy1073@gmail.com).

## Winter 2025 Brrr!

As I write article, a large portion of us are trapped in the bullseye of winter's wrath in this post-Christmas season. Snowstorms and bitter cold temperatures are running rampant across America, even hitting the south from Texas to Florida. They're continuing up the coast through Georgia and the Carolinas, and everywhere from the Midwest to the East Coast are frigid with temperatures below zero. Many television PSA messages are focusing on safety issues due to the weather, so I want to pass several of them on as a reminder to our own members. With the persistent cold outside, many of us will use space heaters to keep warm inside, so just make sure they are never left unattended. Statistics show almost one-third of all winter fires are started by incorrect and/or unattended use of these heaters. They are not to be plugged into extension cords and never use them if the wires are even slightly frayed.

When traveling by vehicle in the winter, always keep an emergency kit in

the car in case of accidents or mechanical problems. The kit should include a small shovel, a blanket, extra clothing, protein or other non-perishable food, and a small bag of kitty litter or sand in case you need extra traction. Also, don't let your gas tank fall below half-full, just in case. Tires are what helps keep you moving and stopping in these storms, so make sure they are in good condition with plenty of tread. If you're in an area with frequent snowfall, it's best to invest in a set of snow tires.

Lastly on this list of precautions, be careful when out shoveling or walking in the snow, especially the elderly and those with health issues. The American Heart Association says that in addition to the strenuous physical effort of shoveling snow, the excessive cold narrows the blood vessels in our bodies, making this even more dangerous. If you must shovel snow, do it gradually and take breaks when needed. If you start to feel deeply fatigued or lightheaded, stop and finish

it at a later time. As far as walking in this weather is concerned, make sure to dress in layers that cover the nose, mouth, as well as any other exposed body parts. You may even want to walk like a penguin as it's proven to be the safest way to traverse through ice and snow, so it doesn't matter if you look a little silly. Better to be safe and sound than risk a fall that could land you in the hospital.

To our young folks, their parents and grandparents, it is time once again to begin gathering all the required information to apply for our Sokol and GBU Scholarships. Information on how to do so can be found on our websites. Don't pass up the opportunity to receive money towards furthering your education. In my mind, it is one of the best benefits of belonging to our fraternal organization.

Until we meet again, I wish all of you a safe and warm winter as we wait for the cold to end and spring to arrive.

NAZDAR  
Sister Nancy Shurina  
Chair of Fraternal Activities

**June 25-29  
2025**

**CHICAGO**

2 0 2 5

**XXV AMERICAN SOKOL SLET**

**We can't wait to see you at our first ASO Slet in 8 years!**

Stay tuned for more details.

# FIT FOR LIFE

By Ellen Kovac

Do you have a current fitness plan for yourself? If not, think about what it should include, write down your ideas, and take specific steps to implement them right away!

If you need inspiration and ideas, consult this wonderful website: [www.wellandgood.com](http://www.wellandgood.com). It includes a wealth of information on nutrition, health and fitness tips, healthy mind and relationship tips, and many exercises of all kinds.

Here is a summary of a wellandgood.com article I saved from October 2022 titled "Heart-Health Workouts for a Longer Life," by Charles Richardson, MD, a heart health expert:

Low-impact exercises are those that allow you to work hard without taking a toll on your joints, tendons, and muscles. Thus, low-impact exercises can be used well into your golden years. Here are some low-impact exercises that also provide a good cardio-vascular workout:

1. Swimming: According to one cardiac surgeon, this is the most beneficial type of exercise you can do not only for cardio health but also for strength and longevity. And, it has an almost no adverse impact on joints, and helps with breathing patterns. (If you are a non-swimmer, take this as a good reason to learn how to swim! Meanwhile, get into a pool, hold on to the edge, and kick your legs, trying not to bend your knees much.)

2. Walking: It's low-impact, easy on the joints, and will increase your heart rate significantly. And, you can vary your speed or incline, add weights, or in other ways add variety to your walk.

3. Dancing: It's so enjoyable that we don't think of it as exercise, yet it's a great aerobic activity. Even if you don't have a partner or music or know any dance steps—just dance! (Music with an upbeat tempo helps.)

4. Cycling/biking: This is



Getting a workout at a golf driving range

another low-impact cardio exercise that is easy on your body yet can get your heart rate right up, and is especially good at getting blood flowing to your lower extremities.

5. Rowing: This has benefits similar to cycling and provides a good arm workout.

6. Elliptical machine: This is a treadmill or similar device for walking in place while holding onto handles. An elliptical is less stressful to the joints than jogging, and can often be adjusted to add incline or resistance. It's perfect for walking in bad weather. Many fitness facilities such as YMCAs have ellipticals.

7. Hitting a bucket of golf balls at a driving range or walking 9 holes on a golf course. (And if you can walk 18 holes, great!)

8. Pickleball: In concluding his article, Dr. Richardson recommends "the fastest-growing sport in the U.S." Pickleball is played on a court 20x44 feet, like a badminton court. The rules are roughly similar to tennis. It's a great fitness sport because of the multi-directional movement it requires and the cardiac/aerobic workout it provides. And it is a sociable event as well!

PS: Remember, good nutrition is important. Your diet should include plenty of vegetables and fruit, preferably fresh, and only a moderate amount of meat, with chicken and fish preferable to red meat.

PPS: Using the ideas above, add you own favorite low-impact exercises!

# DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED

## To the Milan Getting Scholarship Fund

- From Sokol USA Lodge 63, Homestead, Pa. \$297.50  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 79, Mahoney City, Pa. \$1,168.75  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 2, Bridgeport, Conn. \$300.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 39/40W, Chicago, Ill. \$100.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 244, Westfield, Mass. \$50.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 114, Tarrytown, N.Y. \$100.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 276 Pittsburgh, Pa. \$100.00  
*In Memory of Gene Coleman*
- From Anthony Puglisi, Sokol Times Editor \$50.00  
*Happy Holidays*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 127, Star Junction, Pa. \$318.75  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*

- From Sokol USA Lodge 74, Plymouth, Pa. \$85.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 15, Yonkers, N.Y. \$212.50  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*

## To the Sport, Fitness and Wellness Fund

- From Sokol USA Lodge 63, Homestead, Pa. \$297.50  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 79, Mahoney City, Pa. \$1,168.75  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
- From Sokol USA Lodge 39/40W, Chicago, Ill. \$100.00  
*In Memory of Deceased Members*
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# SOKOLS AT THE WORLD'S FAIR

Do any fellow Sokols have pictures or memories from "Sokol Day" at the 1964-65 World's Fair in Queens, N.Y.? If so, the New York Hall of Science in Corona, N.Y., would love to have them! Sokol USA's own Sister Ellen Kovac was there and performed. The Hall of Science has a picture of her, would love to have more and, in general, learn more about our organization's participation.

If you like, you can send Brandi Kovac your written memories, anecdotes, or pictures at: [BKKovac@aol.com](mailto:BKKovac@aol.com) and she will forward them to the museum. Or, if you'd like to communicate with them directly, here's their request:

*Did you attend the 1964-65 World's Fair - or know someone who did? If so, we'd love to hear from you! We are eager to share photos, videos, and other memories from the fair so that we can look back and dream forward together! If you have something to share, send a note to [info@nysci.org](mailto:info@nysci.org) with the subject line "World's Fair Memories." Thank you in advance!*



ON A ROLL! – Above and below left, Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., held their annual Roll-a-Thon. Congratulations to the toddlers who participated. In total, the tots who participated completed 282 rolls!!!



Above and below, while some tots waited to complete their rolls, others participated in obstacle courses.



*On the slopes*



Members of lodge 30, skiing at Stowe, Vt.



**PARENTS NIGHT OUT** – Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., held a Parent Date Night Out event. Kids who participated got to enjoy all sorts of fun events while parents had an evening off. Some of the activities they got into included arts and crafts, building their very own castle fort out of mats, eating a pizza dinner (inside the dining room creating within the massive castle fort), and popcorn and a movie.



### Spreading the Christmas Spirit



Lodge 255, Leechburg, Pa., donated \$500.00 to help the Southern Armstrong Police Department buy Christmas gifts for children in need. Pictured is Treasurer Linda Ringle, Lt. John Arce and President Jeff Clever.



### SOKOL FARRELL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Sokol Farrell is accepting donations to the Scholarship Fund. Well over \$40,000 has been awarded to Sokol Farrell members.

Donations may be sent to: Sister Dorothy Slezak, Chairman, 6850 Seneca Road, Sharpsville, PA 16150. Checks may be made to "Sokol USA Farrell."

Please refer to the Sokol Farrell website for scholarship applications and instructions. We are located at <http://www.sokolfarrell.org/>.

### QUESTIONS?

Do you have any official Sokol business and/or questions? Please reach out to Brother John Kennedy at [info@sokolusa.org](mailto:info@sokolusa.org).

### Medal winner



Sokol Lodge 30 member Olivia Sommer placed third All Around at The New Year's Invitational in Springfield, Mass., on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW

(Continued from Page 1)

difference. Let's continue to embody the Sokol spirit of generosity and compassion, making a positive impact in our communities and beyond.

Our sister Sokol organization, American Sokol Organization (ASO), will hold a Slet in the metro Chicago area this year. I encourage all who are interested and able to consider attending the ASO Slet, as this will be the first North American Slet since Covid appeared in 2020.

The World Sokol Federation recently held an informal Zoom meeting for its board members. At that meeting, Sokol Poland announced that it will hold a Slet in June of this year, and they invited all of the World Sokol Federation member organizations to attend. Additionally, and in tandem with the Sokol Poland Slet, Sokol Poland will be publishing a Sokol history book, from the creation of the Sokol movement from 1862 to the present day.

Our Sokol USA is considering a Slet in 2026 and is in the planning stages. More information will be put out to our membership in the Sokol Times as planning becomes more concrete.

Additionally, I encourage any of our eligible members to apply for Sokol USA's Milan Getting Scholarships, as well as for GBU Scholarships. If an applicant is selected, these scholarships are very useful for defraying the costs of post-secondary education expenses.

As we navigate through the winter season, let's embody the Sokol principles that bind us together. Embrace the opportunity to stay active, connect with others, and contribute to our community. The winter months may be cold, but the warmth of our shared values and the strength of our unity will carry us through.

May this season bring you good health, happiness, and a renewed sense of purpose within our Sokol family.

NAZDAR!  
Joseph Bielecki  
President  
Sokol USA



Vacuuming is good exercise.

## Exercise – With Benefits

By Greg Bender

In the middle of winter, outdoor exercise is hard to get into. Running over snowdrifts or enduring single digit wind chills just doesn't cut it. So, how do you work off the holiday poundage?

If you regularly go to the gym to work out, include spending time on a treadmill or bike, or participate in various aerobic routines and stretches. You probably spend time thinking about two aspects of this fitness routine. Aside from the benefits from the exercise, here's the drawbacks that are in your mind:

**Boredom:** Even with TVs and headphones, it may feel like time drags. Looking out the window or staring at a wall doesn't help either.

**Time commitment:** Your muscles may feel better after you're done, but the time you have invested is lost for getting anything else done. And the other tasks in your life are still there when you get home.

What if you could achieve the same level of exercise while accomplishing some of the annoying tasks that are always waiting at home? Surely, a win-win situation?

Well you can, by combining house cleaning tasks into a structured series of exercises. Many online sites list the calories burned by various home tasks which can be paired with the specific exercise routines that you use for each task. For a typical three-bedroom house, here's what you can do:

**Vacuuming your house – Floors and carpets:** 500

calories for a two-hour job.

Rearranging furniture to facilitate the vacuuming. (You want to do the job right?) That's 400 calories.

Dusting the high fixtures and curtains using a stepladder and hand duster or vacuum attachment: 350 calories

You would burn more calories if you have stairs and take several trips up and down during the cleaning, with each trip up acting as a series of step up – step down reps. As an added way to burn more calories and to raise your heart rate, consider alternating cleaning activities on each of the floors to add to the number of trips up and down the

stairs.

Vacuuming will allow you to focus on lunges and reaching, on both wood and carpeted floors. It also stretches the back and lower legs.

Add squats when you go under the beds and couch. Moving the tables and chairs targets the biceps and back muscles.

Dusting and vacuuming high fixtures stretches and tones the upper arms and shoulders and back. Also, going up and down a step ladder to reach the fixtures really works out your calves and quads.

The best part of this two-hour workout is that you end up with both toned arms and legs and a clean house!!

 **Sokol USA Milan Getting Scholarship** :::::

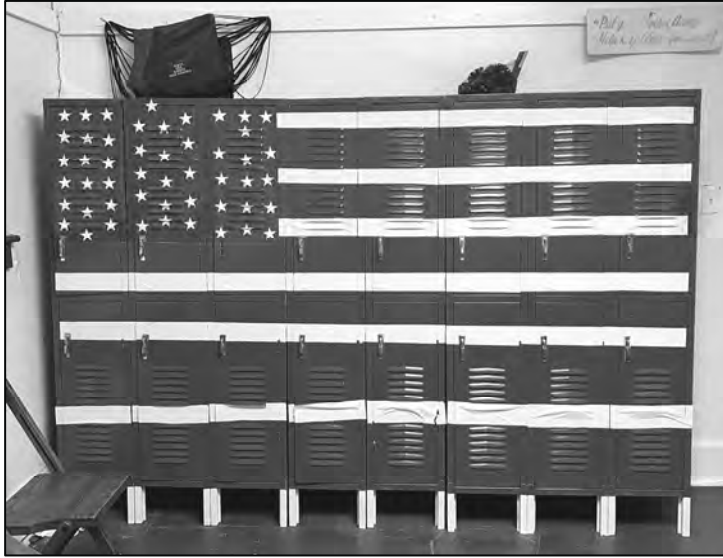
# SCHOLARSHIP Program 2025

*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](http://sokolusa.org)



Lodge 103 spruced up their locker rooms and painted the lockers like an American flag.

## Lodge 103 Update

Sokol Lodge 103 has been making some updates to its gym. A new vaulting mat system recently was purchased and was used for the first time by our girls on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Next, the girls' locker room was cleaned up and the lockers were painted to look like an American flag. The next big project is to paint the stage area that was damaged during Covid when the roof leaked. The roof was replaced and now members are going to scrape off the old paint that was damaged and then treat the wall with a water sealer and then paint it, which one of our parents is going to be doing for us. We just purchasing the supplies that he needs to complete the work and we thank him in advance for doing this for our gym.

Our girls having been working hard on learning their routines for the competition in Cleveland in February and then the Slet in Chicago. Coaches Christina Pegg and Rachael Bender have been working with them to make their routines better and letting them add something of their own. They both say that the girls have come a long way since the beginning of the season and they could not be prouder of all their hard work they have been doing.

We had a successful St. Nick Party in December. There was live polka music and the food was prepared by our members. The food was organized by Deb Goda, who did a fantastic job. Everyone said that the food was wonderful. We did a Chinese Auction this year for the first time and it was a great success. There were so many wonderful baskets. We are planning to do it again next year.



Lodge 103 is refreshing its facilities.



**CLEARING THE WAY** – Thank you to the parents and kids of Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., for your help with snow removal during this cold season. We couldn't do it without them!!!



## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE TO LODGES

At the latest National Board Meeting in October, it was decided to establish a fund dedicated to providing collateral loans for lodges in need. If your lodge requires financial assistance for special projects, renovations, or similar needs, please submit a formal request via email to [info@sokolusa.org](mailto:info@sokolusa.org). This request will be presented to the National Board for review.



CARTWHEEL-A-THON – Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., held their annual Cartwheel-a-Thon. Congratulations to all who participated. A total of 3,873 cartwheels were completed at the event!



## And the winner is...



Pictured are members of Sokol Lodge 30 who were winners of the ski race at Bromley.



COOKIE MONSTERS – Slovak American Sokol Krivan (Lodge 306) located in Chicago, Ill., held their annual Cookie Walk this holiday season. Thank you to all who donated or purchased cookies. The fundraiser brought in just over \$300 to give back to the gymnastics program!



## SPONSOR A GYMNAST

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](mailto:kgreenberg.sokolusa@gmail.com) to find out how you can become a part of this new sponsorship program.