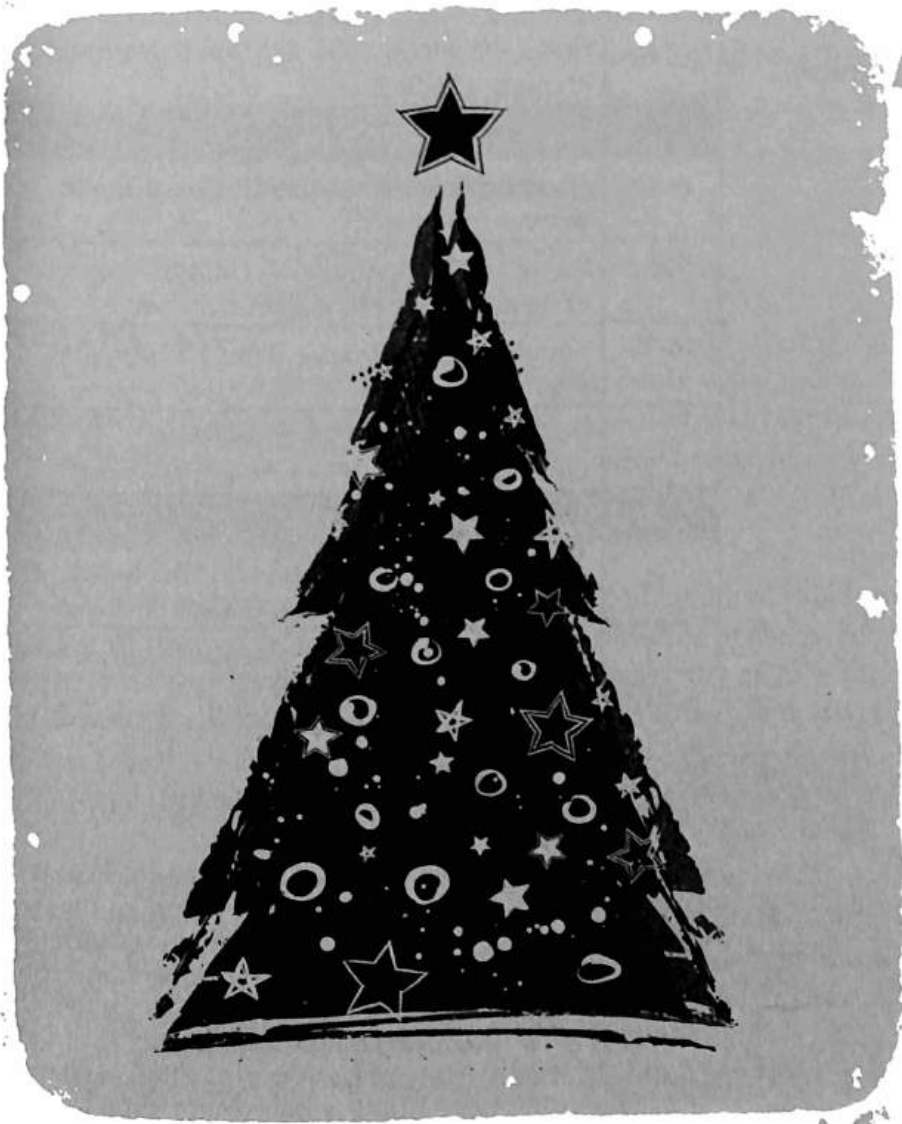


**Happy Holidays!**  
**Veselé Vánoce!**



The mission of the  
American Sokol is  
to provide fitness  
and community for  
individuals and families  
through physical,  
educational, cultural  
and social programs.

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**AMERICAN SOKOL**

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Meets every 4th Tuesday\* at 7:30 pm

ASO Board of Instructors

Meets every 2nd Wednesday\* at 7:30 pm

\*except in July and August

**To Submit Information for Publication:**

Email: Editor@American-Sokol.org  
 Mail to: American Sokol Editor, Angela Hartford,  
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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Don't forget to send in your 2010 events to editor@american-sokol.org

December	
7	Sokol Minnesota Sv. Mikulas Party for Children
27	Sokol Washington DC Ski Trip to Vermont (through Jan 3rd)
January	
8-10	Central District Skills Clinic, Sokol Tabor, Berwyn
13	Czech - Slovak American Club of Tucson Special Holiday Mikulas Fundraiser
15-17	American Sokol Winter Slet, Chicagoland area
23	Central District 3-on-3 Basketball Competition
February	
7	Central District Sokol hosts GIJO Meet, Sokol Chicagoland/Elite, Downers Grove
13	Central District Co-ed Volleyball Competition
13	Ennis Czech Music Festival


**Meet the New Editor**

Recently, the roll of Editor for the American Sokol has made the transition from Nancy Imbrone to me. I accept this duty with great pride and excitement as we continue to grow and evolve the American Sokol publication to new and greater heights.

Like many of you, Sokol has been and continues to be a major part of my life. Starting as a young child in the Tot's program at Sokol Tabor and currently in the Senior Women's class and a member of Sokolice Tabor, I have learned firsthand the value of leadership, discipline and friendship. With these lessons I am confident that we can continue the great tradition of this fine publication.

As we close the door on 2009, let's take a moment and remember the great things we have done and the road ahead. I encourage all of you to provide articles, photos and other noteworthy submissions to me at **editor@american-sokol.org**. Let's make 2010 a great year!

NAZDAR!



Angela Hartford



# The Sokol Educator

*Sis. Ellen Jeanne Schnabl, Educational Director*

November: the muted month - the wind whispers - flowers fade - animals scurry for shelter. It's a time for quiet and withdrawal. The air is sharp, damp and penetrating and there's a certain pleasure in clearing the brittle remains of summer's growth and raking the last leaves.

## NOVEMBER

November it is - leaves yellowing  
and from trees drop.  
sad it will be, abandoned  
our lovely garden

## LISTOPAD

Listopad je - listi zlutne  
a se stromu opada  
smutna bude, opustena  
nase mila zahrada

## VETERANS' DAY:

Formerly known as Armistis Day - A German peace delegation called upon Marshall Foch to end the hostilities. In 1920, the body of an unknown soldier was buried under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris; another in Westminster Abbey in London. In 1921, the body of an unknown was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. In 1958, he was joined by 2 unidentified servicemen of World War II and the Korean War.

## THANKSGIVING:

Sarah Josepha Hale was instrumental in making this a national holiday. Born in Newport, NH in 1788, she was the editor of "Godey's Lady's Book" & also the author of the poem "Mary Had a Little Lamb". In her 1827 novel, "Northwood" she urged that Thanksgiving, like the 4th of July, should be considered a national festival and observed by all people. On Oct. 3, 1863, Pres. Lincoln proclaimed a common day for the nation. Each President after that issued a similar annual proclamation and during the middle 1930's there were TWO Thanksgivings. Finally in 1941, it was made an official National Holiday.

- 11, 1811: Karel J. Erben, Czech poet and historian was born.
- 08, 1620: Battle of White Mountain was fought. Czechs lost their independence for 300 years.
- 10, 1706: First school of engineering in central Europe was founded in Pilsen.
- 14, 1918: In Prague, the revolutionary National Assembly deposed the Hapsburgs & elected T. G. Masaryk President of the new Czechoslovak Republic.
- 15, 1671: Jan Amos Komensky, great national teacher, last bishop of the Bohemian Brothers' Union, creator of the modern system of education, died in Amsterdam.
- 20, 1850: Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk, American-born wife of T.G. Masaryk was born
- 23, 1919: First educational school was opened by the Czech Sokol Organization in Prague
- ?, 1904: The "National Hall" on 21st & "U" sts. which was co-owned by Sokol South Omaha and C.S.P.S. Lodge #145 was completed.

A Vermont farmer, W.A. Bently began a decades-long hobby in the 1880's of taking thousands of photographs of snowflakes on black velvet. He believed that no two snowflakes are alike. Today, scientists say that no two complex snowflakes are alike, but that more simple combinations may be so. He died in 1933 of pneumonia - contracted after he walked home in a blizzard.

**Snow comes in many colors:** Glacier snow can appear blue -- algae growing on fallen snow can create hues of green or red. Orange snow in Siberia was possibly the result of a heavy sandstorm in Kazakhstan.

1938: Contralto Kate Smith premieres "God Bless America" which was Irving Berlin's anthem to his adopted home. It is also the last song she performed before her death in 1986 at age 79. ©



# The Sokol Educator

*Sis. EllenJeanne Schnabl, Educational Director*

## PROSINEC

Zimicko, ty zimo bila  
o, jak jsi nam detem mila!  
Jiz se tesi srdce nase  
na svateho Mikulase

Kdyz je zima, zle je ptackum  
slitujte se, deticky  
sypejte jim ubozackum  
sypejte jim drobcky!

## DECEMBER

Little winter, you winter white  
Oh, how your our children liked!  
Already happy hearts of ours  
upon St. Nicholas day

When it is winter, hard on birds  
feel sorry for them, children  
scatter to those poor ones  
scatter them some crumbs

- 22, 1808: Ludwig van Beethoven conducts the premiere of his Symphome No. 5 in C minor in Vienna.
- 9, 1871: Josef Manes died - a painter, designed the official Sokol banner & uniform of the Sokols & painted the famous clock tower on the city hall in Prague.
- 10,1918: "Kde Domov Muj" & "Nad Tatrou Sa Blyska" was chosen as the national anthem for the newly-formed Czechoslovak nation.
- 31, 1834: The song was sung for the first time in a play "Fidlovacka" in Prague. Words were written by Josef Tyl, music composed by Frantisek Skroup.
- 1985: Space shuttle Discover was launched on the first secret, all-military shuttle mission.
- 27, 1988: Sokol Minneapolis merged with Sokol Minnesota.
- 23, 1947: Bell Labs physicists John Bardeen & Walter Brattain used wire plastic, a paper clip, gold foil & germanium to a power source to create the first transistor.

6th: St. Nicholas (Svaty Mikulas) climbs to Earth on a golden rope with an angel & a whip-carrying devil. SO: children of all ages: Hang up your stocking on the night of the 5th -- if you've been good, you'll get nice treats. If you've been bad, you'll get potatoes or coal.

21st Winter Solstice: Cheer up! The days are starting to get longer!

15th Bill of Rights Day -- Pres. F.D. Roosevelt ratified it in 1941.

From 1659 to 1681 Christmas was outlawed in Boston.

Hanukkah means dedication in Hebrew.

Kwanzaa was created by a college professor.

Alabama was the first state to declare Christmas a legal holiday.

Czech ornaments were usually made of straw, cleverly folded. Dough figurines were made of flour & water. A jezek (hegehog) would chase evil away. Frogs sybolized clear water, a fish discreetness, a swan love and a rooster good luck. Paper was used to cut snowflakes & make paper chains. Corn husks were used as craft material for dolls & nativity scenes. ©

Best wishes to all our Sokol Sisters and Brothers at this Season of Good Will!

NAZDAR!

EllenJeanne Schnabl, American Sokol Educational Director

## STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE DIRECTOR UPDATE

I'm so pleased that we are finally getting another magazine out to our members. It will be good to catch up on all the things that have been happening at Sokol lately. On that note, I'd like to give you updates on our Strategic Plan and the Teams – so here we go.

**Volunteer Management** – Their resource book is now completed and has been sent out to Unit Presidents. This book contains a wealth of information regarding volunteerism – how to recruit, train, recognize and retain – as well as some helpful ideas around fundraising and even websites to go to for more information.

**Finance Team** – They are continuing to work on their resource book with hopefully a final draft by year end. Sections of this guide will include areas of facility utilization, strategies for combining resources for quantity discounts as well as how to design a balanced fundraising program in such areas as creating a donor base, grants, direct appeals, selecting the right fundraising event, online fundraisers and so much more. So stay tuned.

**Implementation Team** – Have been on hiatus but plan to meet the week of November 29. We have a couple of new team members, Jerry Sijansky replaces Bob Podhrasky in representing the Southern District and new Northeastern District President, Roger Martanovic, will represent his district until he can recruit a new member. This team will be discussing their new role and which direction they need to go.

**Organizational Development Team** – Continues to work on their project charter deliverables. This team was a big part of the Presidents Conference held in October. They took this opportunity to review their Team Charter and Communication Plan to clear up some misnomers going around about their direction, have open dialogue to address questions and concerns. The team put together a survey as another way to obtain feedback. A great rate of return was achieved as well as valuable feedback. Results of the surveys have been distributed to all attendees. This team is also working with the Board of Governors to develop

an ongoing approval process for their products and is currently working on bylaw changes to meet the December 22 deadline.

### NEW TEAMS:

Have been trying to get the Communications Team and Marketing/Branding Team started. So far we have two applicants for Communications and none for Marketing. The Strategic Planning Task Force discussed the importance of moving forward with both of these areas and came up with the following solution – Combining the teams into a Communication/Marketing Team. I have sent email to the two applicants to see if they would still be interested in this combined team and both have said YES.

**Leadership Development** – Believe it or not, we have a member interested in being on this team (even before we asked!). The SPTF feels we need to strike while the iron is hot so we plan on also starting this team up early next year.

Elsewhere in this publication you will see Team Interest Forms for these two new teams. Please take the time to review them to see if you are interested in volunteering or if you know of someone who has the qualifications we need, please give them a nudge to apply. These forms will also be on the website soon. Please note the submission deadline.

Last March, I put together an article on team updates that did not get published. While some of the information is outdated, it did include all the team member names and which units they are from. I feel this is important information to share so you know who is on the various teams so you can 1) thank them for devoting their time and 2) if your unit/district is not represented or well represented, you can do something about it! ☺

Moving forward to build a stronger American Sokol,

Maryann Fiordelis  
Strategic Planning Task Force Director

## Message from the Executive Director

If you are an officer of the American Sokol, at any level, please send the National Office your most current email address. Regular, important communications will only be sent via email. As annual meetings are beginning/continuing, please also send your most current rosters to the National Office. It is important for us to have the most current contact information on file. Email addresses are very important as it saves a lot of money on communication. Thank you for your cooperation! Ⓢ

### American Sokol organization receives 2009 Dave Moskovitz Award

Reprinted from [www.usa-gymnastics.org](http://www.usa-gymnastics.org)

INDIANAPOLIS, August 18, 2009 – The American Sokol organization was honored as the recipient of the annual Dave Moskovitz Award for 2009.

The Dave Moskovitz Award is given annually to an individual, individuals, or organization that exemplifies the “Spirit of the Gymnaestrada” and Gymnastics for All.

American Sokol served as the host organization for the 2009 International Sport and Cultural Festival in Fort Worth, Texas, June 23-27, at the Fort Worth Convention Center. This world class event included the USA Gymnastics National GymFest, TeamGym Nationals, Gymnastics for All Challenge, Festival Rhythmic & Aesthetic Gymnastics competition, and the Festival Gala.

Steve Whitlock, USAG/GFA Director said, “American Sokol provided an outstanding venue in a wonderful host city for the location of our 2009 National events. The entire event truly characterized the “Spirit of the Gymnaestrada” and will certainly have an impact on the growth and development of our future Gymnastics for All programs. We were proud to partner with our good friends from American Sokol and believe furthering these kinds of cooperative and synergistic events is an important goal for the future.”

One of the attending USA Gymnastics groups, the Biron Gymnastics Show Team, commented, “American Sokol deserves the highest accolades for having conducted such a well organized festival characterized by camaraderie, excellence, enthusiasm and spirited



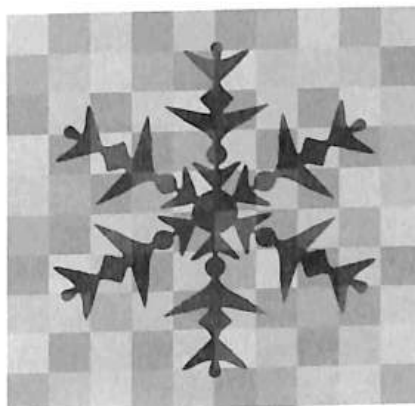
Lori Laznovsky, USAG/GFA committee member, presenting the Dave Moskovitz Award to Larry Laznovsky, President, American Sokol.

support of gymnastics and sport. American Sokol, a member organization of USA Gymnastics, American Sokol is an organization dedicated to the physical, mental, and cultural advancement of its members, the youth and adults that attend its programs and the local communities they serve. Sokol was founded on the philosophy that only physically fit, mentally alert, and culturally well developed citizens can make a nation strong and give life to the honorable spirit of patriotism. American Sokol conducts exhibitions, clinics, training courses, and classes for all ages and abilities, and also sponsors many cultural events. American Sokol has distinguished itself with impressive accomplishments throughout its rich history. There are currently 44 Sokol units, or clubs, open in North America. Ⓢ

AMERICAN SOKOL  
**GYMNAST**

By: Kandi Pajer  
 117 Oakland Grove, Elmhurst, Il 60126  
 kandi@pajer.us

*Happy Holidays*  
 from the  
 American Sokol  
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 Rome Milan, Lori Laznovsky and Allison Gerber

## Western District Skills Clinic Hosted By Sokol South Omaha Saturday , October 24



All units of the Western District got together on Saturday, October 24 and spent 7 hours working on Gymnastic Skills relating to the USAG competition levels. Many new skills were accomplished for the first time and grins and smiles were everywhere in the gym.

A big thank you goes out to the instructors for providing the necessary enthusiasm and expertise to allow the gymnasts to excel at each event.

**Vaulting:** Bo Benak, 1st place winner (level 10) at 2009 Ft.Worth Slet, 5 time graduate of Sokol instructor schools. University of Nebraska Gymnastics Team member.

**Uneven Bars:** Buddy Benak, 1st place winner (level 5) at 2009 Ft. Worth Slet. Instructor at many AS instructor schools.

**Balance Beam:** Jessica Burns, Instructor at many AS instructor schools.

**Floor Exercise:** Carly Vincentini , Skye Wakefield , 4 time graduates of Sokol instructor schools.

**Uneven Bars:** Skye Weihe , Instructor school graduate, instructor at Sokol South Omaha for 4 years.

**All Boys Events:** Steven Kowalski, 4 time graduate of Sokol instructor school. Instructor at Sokol South Omaha for 4 years. (S)

## The End of an Era

*When a child abandons a Sport*

By Laura Amann

My days of gymnastics are over. So are my long hours at the gym. My nervousness and anxiety. It's all in the past. No more ponytails woven with ribbons, no more glitter spray, no more bleacher analysis. My daughter has left the sport.

For years, Caroline competed on a gymnastics team and she adored everything about it. Four days a week, we drove the half hour back and forth to the gym so she could practice 15 hours a week, year-round. I volunteered, I chatted with the parents, I watched and learned and bit my nails. The parents became my friends, the meets became a social time.

But after four years of this schedule, her complaints began: the coaches were too hard, she had a headache, she was tired, she had too much homework. Her message read loud and clear: she was burnt out at the age of 11.

With all the attention given recently to the downside of focusing on just one sport at such a young age, it's easy to overlook the benefits. Yes, kids miss out on the opportunity to dabble in other sports or activities. Homework is often done in the car or in the bleachers. Dinner is split into two meals: before practice and after. She frequently misses out on seeing her three siblings compete in their own activities.

Yet as we leave the world of competitive gymnastics, I'm forced to reflect on all that it has given us. We've heard many comments lamenting our "lost investment" or pointing out all that wasted time and money we've expended (and it's been a tremendous amount, don't get me wrong), but it's certainly not wasted.

By focusing so singularly on a sport, she's learned tremendous life skills, not the least of which is valuable time management skills-homework and friends must be balanced with the team schedule. Competing individually in front of judges has taught her to handle intense competition and scrutiny in a way that class presentations never could. She's mastered stress management and developed a self-confidence that will serve her well in any type of public arena.

Her teammates have taught her about the deep bonds you develop with others who share your passion. She's met some close friends and seen the good and the ugly side of competition. She's learned about nutrition, hydration, caring for injuries, pacing yourself and pushing yourself.

All before the age of 12.

It's humbling to realize how much of my version of her is wrapped up in her being a gymnast and how much of her identity involves her being a gymnast. It's part of what defines her. This is the fine line that we must walk as parents: when to encourage them to keep going over a bump in the road, and when to guide them to another path. There are never clear street signs.

We've watched in amazement. And now we will watch as she walks away from what defines her most. She's young; there will be other time-intensive activities I'm sure. The gymnastics world will slowly fade away from our family's routine. Live goes on. But I will be forever grateful to the sport, to any activity, that can inspire and push children to dream and grow. ©

I was debating whether to put this article in, but after reading it many times, it made me proud of my sport-gymnastics! It also holds true for any sport or activity at pretty much any level. Sports and/or activities are very beneficial for children and in my opinion outweigh all negative aspects two fold. They teach psychomotor skills-such as balance and agility as well as skills of the sport itself. Sports also teach affective skills-such as how to wait in line, how to listen to the instructor and how to interact with classmates. Extracurricular sports or activities also teach cognitive skills-such as the names of skills and memorizing routines or sequencing patterns or strategies. Yes, there is potential for burn out, but the benefits are immense. Please encourage your children to stick with it, but also keep dialog open and if they are truly unhappy-of course allow them to stop. Good luck, have fun with your activities and stay happy and healthy — KP ;)

## Winter Safety Tips from the New York State-State Emergency Management Office Safety First for Kids

Hey, kids! Winter can be a fun-filled time when enjoying outdoor activities such as skiing, skating and sledding. However, before going out, follow these safety tips:

1. The best way to stay safe in a snowstorm is to stay inside. Long periods of exposure to severe cold increase the risk of frostbite or hypothermia.
2. If you go out to play after the storm, dress in many layers of clothing and wear a hat and mittens. Many layers of thin clothing are warmer than a single layer of thick clothing. One of the best ways to stay warm is to wear a hat; most body heat is lost through the top of the head.
3. Come inside often for warm-up breaks.
4. If you start to shiver a lot or get very tired, or if your nose, fingers, toes or earlobes start to feel numb or turn very pale, come inside right away and tell an adult. These are signs of hypothermia and frostbite. If you experience these symptoms, you will need immediate attention to prevent further risk.

Remember these tips when you go out to play. Ⓢ

### American-Sokol.org Update

By: Angela Hartford

All Designs and Marketing, Sokol Tabor Member  
angela@alldesignsandmarketing.com

The American Sokol national office is in the process of giving its web site a face lift. This new site will be user friendly and direct visitors to their nearest Sokol organization. It will focus on the four main areas of the ASO: Physical, Educational, Social and Cultural programs as well as Sokol's involvement in the community. The goal is to complete the site early 2010 – Look out for the grand unveiling soon! Ⓢ

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You can advertise here, too! Contact Jean Hruby at 708-255-5397

## Prague Marathon – My Experience

By: Mike George

Sokol Greater Cleveland

Men's Class & Czech Folk Dance Group member

The morning of May 10th, 2009, found me sitting on a curb near the Jan Hus Memorial in Old Town Square, Prague, under rare, precious shade. Without any clouds in sight, it was a hot day already, even for 8:45 am. This would be a perfect day for just about anything, except for running 42.2 kilometers. Old Town Square was packed with over 6,000 athletes waiting for the start of the 15th Annual Prague International Marathon and I was one of them!

The race was set on a fairly level course. The route crossed the Vltava River six times throughout the race with side trips through Old Town Square, past the Municipal House, across the lower part of Wenceslas Square, the low area around Vysehrad and right through the center of the Staropramen Pivovar complex in Smichov. Unfortunately, due to construction, we did not run across Karluv most. The route also avoided most cobblestone streets except in Old Town Square where there were hundreds of yards of mats covering those cobblestones to make for a smoother running surface. Compared to other marathons I have run, this course would have been considered easy but with the extreme heat it was one of my most difficult marathons.

The night before the race, I worked through converting mile pace times to kilometer pace times. My projected 7:40 minutes per mile converted to 4:45 per kilometer. I wanted to try that pace as long as I could. I was successful until just past the ½ way mark, near 22 kilometers. The effects of the sun and dehydration hit me hard. My pace slowed down by almost 1 minute per kilometer. I walked through all water stations from that point making sure to drink several cups of water and sports beverages. My final time was 3 hours and 52 minutes.

The words of a man that I greatly admire seem appropriate to my experience of running through Prague: "If you want to run, run a mile. If you want to experience a different life, run a marathon." - Quote from Emil Zatopek; 1952 Olympic Marathon Champion.



I have mixed feelings about this experience. On one hand, this was among the worst marathon races I have ever run. On the other hand, I was running through one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Adding to that enjoyment were the many "Sokol" comments I heard at every water station and periodically from other athletes running along with me. I was wearing a tailored American Sokol Uniform shirt and I saw the Sokol emblem on several athletes during the race.

My first visit to Prague was at the Sokol Slet in July 2000. The beauty of the city enamored me. Shortly after returning home from that trip I set a personal goal to run the Prague International Marathon. Nine years later, I am happy to have achieved that goal. ☺

P.S. – Upon returning to Cleveland from his marathon run in Prague, Mike then ran in the Rite-Aid Cleveland Marathon just one week later, and in much cooler weather and a much faster time. Congratulations, Mike!

## STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM INTEREST FORM COMMUNICATION/MARKETING

Looking for highly motivated team players with experience, knowledge and expertise in creative writing using various communication vehicles as well as creation of an effective marketing plan. This team will be responsible for developing standards and effective methods for communicating within our organization as well as designing an effective marketing plan and materials. A Marketing background is definitely a huge plus. Some computer research work will be required. It is expected that this team will begin the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2010 with completion by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Weekly time commitments for independent work and teleconferences will be required to stay on track.

If interested in being considered for the Communication/Marketing Team, please fill out this form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide some information regarding your experience and knowledge around effective writing methods, various formats to ensure message gets to appropriate level in a timely manner, and process flow for effective communications.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are You Interested in Leading this Team? \_\_\_\_\_. If yes, please provide us with your experience with being a leader as well as indicating what your leadership style is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If submitting more than one team interest form, please rank your interest in this team. \_\_\_\_\_  
(1=Lowest, 10= Highest)

(indicate other teams your are interested in: \_\_\_\_\_)

I understand that submission of a Team Interest form does not automatically mean placement on the Team. I am willing and able to make the necessary time commitment to ensure that the responsibilities of the team are handled in a timely manner.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Submission of the form can be completed through email to [mfiordelis@yahoo.com](mailto:mfiordelis@yahoo.com) or mailing to Maryann Fiordelis, 6785 Lake McGregor Circle, Ft. Myers, FL 33919. Deadline for submission is January 20, 2010. Candidates will be informed of status within 30 days.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM INTEREST FORM LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Looking for highly motivated team players with experience, knowledge and expertise in designing and utilizing leadership training programs. This team will be responsible for creating and/or obtaining appropriate leadership development training programs and materials for the various leadership levels as well as generating effective recruitment ideas for the various boards and key volunteer positions. Some computer research work will be required. It is expected that this team will begin the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2010 with completion by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. Weekly time commitments for independent work and teleconferences will be required to stay on track.

If interested in being considered for the Leadership Development Team, please fill out this form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide some information regarding your experience and knowledge around the development and/or facilitating leadership training programs.

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Are You Interested in Leading this Team? \_\_\_\_\_. If yes, please provide us with your experience with being a leader as well as indicating what your leadership style is: \_\_\_\_\_

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If submitting more than one team interest form, please rank your interest in this team. \_\_\_\_\_  
(1=Lowest, 10= Highest)

(indicate other teams your are interested in: \_\_\_\_\_)

I understand that submission of a Team Interest form does not automatically mean placement on the Team. I am willing and able to make the necessary time commitment to ensure that the responsibilities of the team are handled in a timely manner.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Submission of the form can be completed through email to [mfiordelis@yahoo.com](mailto:mfiordelis@yahoo.com) or mailing to Maryann Fiordelis, 6785 Lake McGregor Circle, Ft. Myers, FL 33919. Deadline for submission is January 20, 2010. Candidates will be informed of status within 30 days.

## Congratulations 2009-2010 American Sokol Merit Award Recipients!

These recipients have been selected by the American Sokol Merit Award Committee and approved by the Executive Board to receive a \$500.00 award for the upcoming school year. Every year students are encouraged to attend instructor courses, participate in National, District and Unit events and competitions, assist with Unit classes and when eligible apply for the American Sokol Merit Award.

In 1975, the American Sokol Convention instituted Merit Awards to be paid from the American Sokol Future Leaders Fund. Applicants are American Sokol Youth or adult Sokol members who are planning a full time (at least two semesters of 12 hours per semester) course or program in an accredited two or four-year college. The application must be made in advance of the year of study. Applicants may be entering any year (not just 1st year).

Completed application forms must be received the American Sokol Merit Award Committee, 9126 Ogden Ave., Brookfield, Illinois 60513 by June 1st of the application year.

### HOW SOKOL HAS PREPARED ME FOR THE FUTURE



#### Alexandra Zahrobsky

Sokol Spirit  
Central District

My involvement in the Sokol community is the typical experience most of my peers have. While most are put in Sokol from a young age and are following a family tradition, I joined Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky when I was 10 as a second-class girl. I absolutely loved it when I had gone to visit and I made the choice for myself to become a part of Sokol. Not too long after I joined Sokol Berwyn-Slavsky, we merged with Sokol Brookfield and became Sokol Spirit. As a part of this newly formed gym I was a member of the junior class and was even elected to the junior board.

Since I joined, Sokol has meant more to me that just another place to do gymnastics or stay fit. It's a place for family and it's my home. I always look forward to attending any Sokol event. Whether it is competitions, exhibitions, slets, Sokol days, the excitement never fades for me when it comes to Sokol. It means more because you're with family and people who care.

Sokol has taught me a great deal of responsibility. I have been on the Sokol Spirit Junior Board for four years now. I spent two years as secretary, and two years as Girls' Director. Being a part of the Junior Board has helped me to learn to balance my time and to be a responsible young adult and a leader.

As well as being an active participant on the Junior Board, I have also participated in the National Camp for the past three years. I have had so much fun there and made memories that will last my entire lifetime. I have made wonderful friendships with people from all the over the world while participating in the activities at camp.

When I look back at my life since Sokol, I feel more mature and well rounded as a person because I had Sokol in my life. Aside from the leadership skills I have gained through my time on the leadership board, Sokol has enabled me to say no to peer pressure and yes to being a responsible young citizen. I had the experience of working with the Sokol members who have come before me and inspired me to be the person I have become.

So, to sum it up, how has Sokol prepared me for the future. Sokol has helped mold me into a person with morals, values, and a strong pride in my heritage. Being a part of Sokol has nourished me and created a path for my life that I would not trade for anything.



**Ryan Breidenbach**  
**Sokol St. Louis, Central District**

Throughout my years of being involved in Sokol, many things have greatly prepared me for my future life experiences. My parents involved me in Sokol at a very young age. We were constantly attending different Sokol events and activities and I was being introduced to new people. Therefore, early on in my Sokol life I was taught not to be shy. Being in Sokol and being shy is not really an option. Sokol teaches you to be sociable, friendly, and outgoing.

Sokol has also showed me the meaning of commitment. I devote a lot of time to Sokol and am committed to teaching, attending meetings, and putting in volunteer hours. Sokol has prepared me for my future commitments because I have learned that anything worth doing is worth doing well, and I try to commit 110% in

everything I do.

By attending many different Sokol camps and courses, I have learned that teamwork is tremendously important in Sokol as well as in everyday life. Teamwork in Sokol has prepared me for my future profession. Being a fire fighter, you must know how to work as a team and listen to each other. If you do not work as a team, you or someone else could be hurt or killed. It is so much easier to accomplish things when everyone works together.

Sokol has also given me leadership skills. I am an instructor for the boys' juniors' and men's classes and the leadership skills I have acquired are a great asset for any Sokol job or future endeavor. I am grateful to be a part of Sokol and will continue to be for many years. I would not be the same person that I am today without the Sokol experience.



**Anne Marie Suchanek**  
**Sokol New York, Eastern District**

There are numerous ways that Sokol has prepared me for the future. Ever since I was a toddler, I have been involved with the Sokol program. As I've grown older, I have been given more and more responsibilities as a part of Sokol. Not only have I helped run certain Sokol events such as Roller Night, but I have helped out at birthday parties and other classes. I went to National Sokol Instructor's School for three summers in order to better fulfill my role as a small girls team leader. I have also attended a national conference last year in order to help prepare my unit for the upcoming Slet in Fort Worth, Texas.

Throughout all of these activities, Sokol has taught me to importance of leadership and cooperation. Being known within the Sokol community has taught me how to be a role model. Not only do my small girls look to me when they need help for routines, but my fellow brothers and sisters look to me whenever they could use an extra hand. It is a great compliment to know that I have a great role within my unit. Working with my fellow Sokols has also taught me that being cooperative goes a long way. There are many things that my unit has done together that could not be done single handedly. Whether it was teaching a calisthenic, forming pyramids, or even setting out the gym floor, I have witnessed the products of great cooperation.

Even though the things I learned have been acquired through Sokol, I have been able to attribute these characteristics to life outside of the gym floor. I am an active member of the senior class at my school, and continue to help others in any way I can.

Sokol has taught me how to be a valuable member of the community and how to benefit others in a positive manner. These traits will greatly help me not only in college, but throughout the rest of my life. ©



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