



AMERICAN  
**SOKOL**  
WASHINGTON, DC



**JANUARY 2022**

## Letter from Starosta

Dear members and friends of Sokol Washington,

I would like to wish you a healthy and prosperous 2022. We are one year older and perhaps a little bit wiser. Another year is behind us, and once again, it was a challenging one.

The year 2021 began as 2020 ended: with a pandemic restricting our activities. Because of COVID-19, we were often unable to rent at our usual locations and had to seek out alternatives. Our Friday activities are one such example. Usually located at a Montgomery County public space, our weekly Friday classes were moved to the Czech Embassy, which graciously agreed to host us. Between January and June of 2021, the Friday activities continued as follows. From 6:45 pm to 8 pm, we had our Czech-Slovak pre-school and Czech school classes, and from 8 pm to 9 pm, we had either art classes or sports activities for our children at the Czech Embassy. Many of our annual events were canceled or altered as well. Since we couldn't host Mikulasska or Sibrinky, which usually occur in the Winter, we organized as many outdoor events as possible. In February of 2021, we organized a one-day cross country ski trip and "Ski Valentine's Day." When it got a little bit warmer in March and April, we organized several hiking trips in Shenandoah. In April 2021, we organized an Easter egg hunt in Wheaton Park, and then, at the end of May, we organized two-day hiking, camping, and canoeing trip in Shenandoah National Park. This last 2-day event was wildly successful, and participants of the trip expressed interest in doing something similar at the end of the summer. We, therefore, organized another canoeing and camping trip, again in Shenandoah, during the extended Labor Day weekend. *Continue on page 11*



***As a reminder, for all in-person meetings, we will follow CDC and local guidelines. If you or any member of your party feels ill or has been exposed to Covid-19, please stay home and follow the appropriate guidelines.***

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Membership Meeting - Wednesday, January 5

Membership Dues - REMINDER

Greetings from the Hunter Mountain Ski Camp

Bear Plunge Challenge Is Back again!

### OUR MONTHLY RECAPS:

- Gingerbread Cookie Workshop
- St. Nicholas Party
- Old Rag Mountain Hike
- Family Ice Skating
- Historical Corner - PF
- Sokol Volleybal Season - We Play Again
- Sokol for Life Updates
- Czech and Slovak School - Gingerbread Cookie Decorating

### ONGOING

- Join Us and Make a Difference - Support Sokol Washington, D.C.
- Shop with Amazon, earn money for Sokol Washington, D.C.
- Sokol Washington, D.C. Facebook & Instagram
- Thank You

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## MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 8:00

PM

Please join us at our Monthly Membership Meeting, share ideas, and participate in planning future events. It is your opportunity to play a part in shaping the future of our unit and meet our newly elected board.

**We meet every 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month at 8PM. You can participate either in person or via Zoom. If you are interested please RSVP to [sokol@sokolwashington.org](mailto:sokol@sokolwashington.org) we would send you all the necessary information.**

Please respond to [sokol@sokolwashington.org](mailto:sokol@sokolwashington.org) on how you wish to participate.  
All members and non-members are welcome to join.

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## Membership Dues

January 2, 2022



Your membership dues enable our Unit to be part of an American Sokol Organization and continue our many programs – sports, outdoor, social, cultural, and educational.



### **Benefit to You**

Membership in our Unit has a number of benefits – discounts at all our social events; free participation in gymnastics for youth; and for adults, and free participation in pick-up volleyball.

### **SOKOL WASHINGTON MEMBERSHIP DUES**

- Individual Membership (adult/voting) **\$40.00**
- Two Adults Membership (both voting) **\$75.00**
- Family Membership I. (one adult voting / all children up to 26 years & one non-voting adult) **\$50.00**
  
- New Member/Reinstated One-time Administrative Fee Waived

**\$5 late will apply after January 15th!**

**Contact:** [membership@sokolwashington.org](mailto:membership@sokolwashington.org)

Paypal payments: [paypal.me/sokolwashingtondc](https://paypal.me/sokolwashingtondc) (fill your dues, add note - your name: Membereship 2022)

Instructions how to pay your yearly dues by [credit card](#), [cash](#) or [check](#) are on the [website](#).

# Greetings from our Sokol Ski Camp



After not being able to organize a winter ski camp last year, Sokol is back in full strength on the slopes of Hunter Mountain, NY. During the last week of 2021, nine families with 20 children are practicing skiing under the supervision of our expert skiers. Today after a spell of mild weather, the winter finally arrived, changing the countryside around Hunter Mountain to a winter paradise.

## Bear Plunge Challenge Is Back!

Just like last year, we should continue in this fun tradition. This is not for everybody but it has great health benefits. Dip your body in a cold wintery creek/river or lake. It is quite refreshing, right? To prepare for a cool dip it is advised to take a cold shower every day for a couple of days. Please share your pictures with us: [events@sokolwashington.org](mailto:events@sokolwashington.org)

*Note: Dipping outdoors in the hot jacuzzi or swimming on Florida beaches is not considered a challenge ;-*







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## Gingerbread Cookie Workshop



Great turnout for this fun workshop! We learned a lot from Hanka Rehanzel a seasoned decorator. Gingerbread cookies are advance. These were decorated with sugar icing. Back at home, the cookies will soften a bit and be ready for Christmas. (-mgr-)



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## Mikulašská Party OUTDOORS AT THE CZECH EMBASSY

We want to offer a big thank you to the Embassy of the Czech Republic for safely hosting our annual Mikulasska/St. Nicholas Party on December 5th, 2021. Another big thank you is going to all of our volunteers who made the event possible.

Held outdoors and divided into two groups due to Covid precautions, the event still turned out to be quite beautiful. Wintry sunny weather added to the magic atmosphere of the season. It was a joy to behold happy smiles on the faces of our childrens and youth as they played and sang Christmas carols just before St. Nicholas with his entourage arrived.

Whiffs of klobásky, palačinky (crepes), bramboráky (potato pancakes), pastries, hot apple cider, and mulled wine were pleasant aromas of the season hovering around. (-mgr-)







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# Christmas Eve Family Ice Skating



Christmas Eve is traditionally a day for the family. In typical Czech and Slovak Households it is a day of preparation of food for dinner, fairy tale stories on TV, and listening to Christmas carols. We took a break from all That and we met at an ice rink at Pentagon Row. Both experienced and beginners enjoyed this winter activity, shared homemade Christmas cookies, and burned some calories before the big Christmas feast.

*The weather was perfect – crisp air and ice satisfied our longing for a taste of winter.*

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# Old Rag Mountain Hike



**The Old Rag Hike** is rated as the best hike in the mid-Atlantic region and is always a popular place. The weather forecast was not the best, so the mountain was not as crowded as usual. The hike's popularity is due to the fun rock scramble in the upper ascent, which often causes delays. But we were lucky this time. Crowds stayed home to avoid rain and wind, but the bad weather never came. Because of the Sokol rule – "There is no bad weather, only poorly dressed people," – we could enjoy relative solitude on the hike. rain and wind.

We climbed and jumped over rocks on the top; we had a lunch break with an excellent panoramic view. We all made it down safely from the summit (3,284 ft). We celebrated our successful climb with a visit to Sharp Rock Vineyards. There we enjoyed a treasure hunt and campfire sing-along as well as delicious roasted sausages with mulled wine and hot chocolate.



## P.F. CARDS

also known as "PEEFKA"

The custom of sharing New Year's greetings has been enjoyed by cultures for centuries, dating back to the ancient Chinese, who exchanged messages of goodwill to celebrate the New Year, and the early Egyptians, who used papyrus scrolls to convey their greetings. However, in the current Czech Republic and Slovakia territories, the tradition of paper New Year cards expressing wishes for the coming year can be traced back to the first half of the 19th century. They became an alternative to Christmas Cards. Some sources say it originated with Karl, Count Chotek of Chotkow and Wognin (1783 – 1868), an Austrian chancellor, Government President (Gubernialpräsident), and school reformer of Bohemia and honorary citizen of Innsbruck and Prague. They began sending New Year cards excusing themselves from not giving new year wishes to all of their friends in person. Creating and sending personal New Year cards became very popular, especially among artists. One of the first to send his own New Year cards was Josef Bergler (1753 – 1829), a painter and the first director of the Prague Academy.

New Year's cards with the inscription P. F., standing for the French "pour féliciter," meaning "to congratulate" in English, have been used exclusively as New Year's congratulation in the Czech and Slovak context for more than a hundred years. It is believed that Viktor Stretti (1878 – 1957), a well-known Czech etcher and lithographer, first created and sent his New Year cards using these two French words, which were later abbreviated only to "P.F."

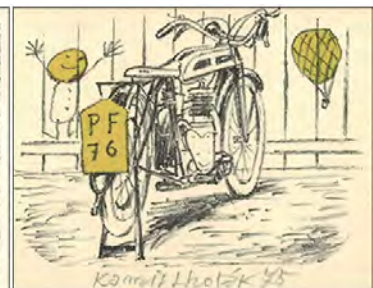
This tradition has changed enormously over the years, especially with the Internet and advances in software. Today highly personalized P.F. cards, also referred to as just "peefka", can be made with a few clicks of a mouse by almost everyone or bought in practically every store. However, receiving a P.F. card with warm-hearted wishes is still a joy. standing for the French words "**pour féliciter**," which means "to congratulate" in English, have been used exclusively as New Year's congratulation in the Czech and Slovak context for more than a hundred years. It is believed that Viktor Stretti (1878 – 1957), a well-known Czech etcher and lithographer, first created and sent his New Year cards using these two French words, which were later abbreviated only to "**P.F.**"

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Josef Bergler - New Year card for 1808



Viktor Stretti - P. F. card for 1905



Viktor Stretti - P.F. for 1945

Kamil Lhoták - P. F. for 1976

Sources: Wikipedia, University Palacky, Narodni Galerie Praha, ResearchWriter.cz, Webumenia.sk, Moravska Galerie, GreetingCards.org





## Volleyball Tuesdays

9:00 - 10:15 PM

Pick-up volleyball has been a favorite weekly adult sports activity for our members and friends of both genders, varied ages, and skill levels for many years.

**WHEN:** January, every Friday from 8-10 pm

**WHERE:** [Jackson Middle School](#)

Main Gym (Room 304)

[3020 Gallows Road Falls Church, VA 22042](#)



## With Sokol for Life

*"The world doesn't end outside the door;  
we learn from animals to run, jump, climb, and more ...."*

Since winters in the DC area are usually without snow, we decided to move indoors and have winter activities inside. We practiced paper snowball fights, biathlon, ice hockey, skipping on ice floes, and rolling giant snowballs, and those skills were later tested in our "Winter Olympics," with medals and diplomas. We also learned songs and dances to improve our sense of rhythm and motor skills. We plan to practice more singing in January as we stay indoors for a few more months. (-dm-)



**WHEN:** Tuesdays at 6 pm

**WHERE:** Little Falls Library, Bethesda, MD

**CONTACT:** Veronika Clewner [se.sokolem@sokolwashington.org](mailto:se.sokolem@sokolwashington.org)



**December was a busy month for us.** We held our usual Czech classes - our youngest group enjoyed winter theme activities. Our other two classes continued working on Czech grammar and vocabulary. We learned about various Christmas traditions in the bi-weekly art class and made traditional snowflake decorations. The highlight of the holiday season was decorating delicious gingerbread cookies. A huge thanks to Hanka Rehanzel, who shared her time and talent with us.



Starting in January, we are opening two new classes - a Slovak class for 4 to 8-year olds and a Czech course for non-native speakers ages 11-13. Both classes will focus mainly on vocabulary. There is a waitlist for the Slovak class, but we have a couple interested. (-MK-) \_\_\_\_\_

**Decorating Gingerbread Cookies.** The creativity of the school children was unstoppable! The enthusiasm with which they created their "masterpieces" was admirable. Of course, there was a reward at the end...  
*.....children could eat them*



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## Shop with Amazon Smile and Support Sokol Washington, DC



**AmazonSmile** is a program that donates 0.5% of your eligible purchases on *Amazon* to a charity of your choice. All you need to do is start your shopping at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). The donation will be made at no extra cost to you and you can choose from nearly one million public charitable organizations. Select American Sokol Washington, DC before you begin shopping on your first visit to AmazonSmile.

Please support us every time you shop at **AmazonSmile**, at no cost to you. It is a simple and automatic way for you to support us! You only need to select (Search) American Sokol Washington, DC before you begin shopping on your first visit to AmazonSmile. 0.5% from your shopping through Amazon Smile will go to support our American Sokol Washington, DC

**Your Smile will directly benefit all our activities and is greatly appreciated!**

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### Make a Difference - Support Sokol Washington

All your contributions to the American Sokol Washington, D.C., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, are charitable tax-deductible contributions.



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### We are on Social Media

Sokol Washington, D.C. offers additional ways for members to communicate and stay informed about additional events we may not include in our monthly newsletters.



Please check out American Sokol, Washington D.C. on Facebook and Instagram

If you have a cultural, folk, educational or sporting/athletic event you would like to share with our members, please **CONTACT:** [media@sokolwashington.org](mailto:media@sokolwashington.org)

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### Join Us and Become a Member

Thank you for your interest in becoming a member of Sokol Washington.

#### **Benefits to our Unit**

Your membership dues enable our Unit to continue our many programs – sports, outdoor, social, cultural and educational.

#### **Benefit to You**

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**CONTACT:** [membership@sokolwashington.org](mailto:membership@sokolwashington.org)

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### Newsletter Publication and Information

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Photographers: Dagmar Merkova, Misa Pazderova, Veronika, Clewner, Monica, Rokus; in this issue additional Photographers: Mirka Mirmrova, Veronika Katzor

Please send news, articles, and pictures before the 15th of the prior month.

**CONTACT:** [media@sokolwashinton.org](mailto:media@sokolwashinton.org)

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*... continue ...*



At the beginning of September 2021, the county lifted some COVID-19 restrictions. Returning to Carderock Elementary School, we were able to resume our Friday activities for children and our weekly volleyball practices for adults. We also started something completely new. For pre-school-aged children (from 3 to 6 years), we initiated ‘Se Sokolem do života,’ an activity developed by the Sokol in the Czech Republic, involving new games to help develop physical skills.

With our regular activities resuming, other annual events—new and old—took place during the Fall of 2021. Fall events started with a short gymnastics exhibition at the Czech embassy ‘Olympijska Vesnicka’ event. There, our young Sokoliks performed a pre-rehearsed routine of flips, cartwheels, and handsprings. After that, we organized our typical fall annual events, such as the all-day LKM bike event, the Sokol membership appreciation picnic, and the 3rd “Beh Republiky” 5k run for adults and 1k run for children.

Come Winter, we once again couldn’t host Mikulasska indoors, as we usually do. However, this time, we organized ‘Mikulasska nadielka’ at the Czech embassy as an outdoor event. The event was very successful, with live performances by our Sokoliks and serving our traditional holiday foods. I believe that everybody who attended Mikulasska had fun.

It may go without saying, resuming our regular events did not mean a complete return to normal. When indoors, we had to follow COVID-19 requirements, and often, things just had to take place outside (for events that would usually avoid the cold air). Nevertheless, we were relieved by the hint of things returning to pre-Covid normalcy and happy for Sokol to remain united.

When I look at everything that we have organized this past year, I am grateful for our Sokol organization’s outstanding team of volunteers. We have our dedicated and hard-working regular volunteers, and we also have many Sokol members and friends who are willing to step in whenever additional help is needed. I’d like to express my fullest gratitude to everyone volunteering for our community. I THANK YOU for all your work.

Additionally, I express my gratitude to the Czech Embassy. They have always been a critical supporter of Sokol Washington and especially during the pandemic. Thank you, Embassy representatives, for helping us to keep our organization functional when COVID hit our area. We could keep our activities alive with the space you provided for us.

Finally, I would like to thank the Czech Embassy, the Slovak Embassy, the Czech and Slovak governments, SVU, and ASO for our organization’s financial and non-financial support. We, of course, could not make our activities happen without the aid you provided.

To conclude my notes of reflection and gratitude, though, with sorrow and love, I ask that we remember and thank the Sokol members we have lost this year. In 2021, we say goodbye to Oliver Peter Gunovsky, Marianne Jesse-Solfronk, and Klara Sever with heavy hearts. These three members were dear friends to Sokol Washington. They were active, selfless, and, most importantly, kind-hearted individuals. We will miss them greatly, and, as we reminisce, recalling warm memories, we won’t forget to celebrate the beautiful moments that we shared.

Before I conclude this writing, I would like to share a story from only a few weeks ago. The story takes place during one of our hiking trips; it was at Shenandoah National Park on Saturday, December 18, with a group of 6 adults and nine children. The trail which we took that day was the well-known Old Rag. Early in the morning, the group of fifteen set off from the bottom of the trail. The goal was to reach the summit, which we did around noon, and the reward, once we were there, was a nice view and a lunch break. While some began to eat their snacks, I decided that I wasn't yet hungry. I knew that as soon as the others packed up their lunch boxes, they'd be hurrying down at a faster pace than I, so I let them know that I'd give myself a head start. I would merge onto the loop trail and then make my way towards the Weakly Hollow Fire Road. From there, it would be an easy walk to the parking lot. So, off I went.

The trail from the summit, down towards the 'Old Rag Shelter,' was about 2 feet wide. As I followed it through the woods, I noticed that it was not as well-marked as the first part of the trail. Nevertheless, it still seemed obvious which way I should go. As I continued downwards, my feet followed the path as my mind followed my own thoughts. In other words, I wasn't paying much attention. With a blurred indifference, I noticed the trail becoming narrower and abnormally steep. Even my passing question—am I going the right way?—didn't grab at my consciousness. It was only when the trail's slope became too extreme that I thought it better to pause and re-examine my route. I stopped slowly, glanced around at the bush-covered ground, and turned a full 180 degrees. Something was off, and I thought about walking upwards to retrace my steps. However, I realized that I no longer even saw a path at that moment. I looked around, confused.

Far ahead of me, there was a pile of rocks...maybe if I could reach those...before I followed that thought, I let it sink in that I might be lost. All around me, I saw the great jungle-like Shenandoah Forest. I thought that I might not even have a signal on my phone. My phone! I remembered my phone, and though it did not work back down in the parking lot, I decided to check it anyway. I opened it up, and this time, I saw the three LTE bars to my luck. I dialed Peter Touma's number, and, to my luck again, he answered again.

"I am lost; I need your help," I told Peter. He understood the situation as I explained it and said that he would yell my name. "No, Peter, I can't hear you from here...But I am behind the huge rock. Let me climb on the top of that rock first. Perhaps I will hear you then." I told him that it would first take me 5-10 minutes to get there. "I'll call you when I am there." I started towards the rock and, once I reached it, climbed up. I could hear it immediately. Not over the phone, but outside, through the air, with my own two ears. It was Peter's voice. "Mi-lo-shiiiiii, Mi-lo-shiiii!" And I, with joy in my voice, "yeeees, I can heear you!" We yelled to each other, back and forth, as I followed his voice back up to the Old Rag trail. There, I finally encountered Peter, in person, and everyone else.

The moment I stepped up the group, Peter did not hesitate a second in converting the situation into a teachable moment. He welcomed me back and turned to the children straight away. "This is what you do if you ever find yourself in a similar situation." The lesson went straight through both ears, or so it seemed, at the moment. The excitement of rescuing lost Milos, now over, was redirected into an urge to hike down to the parking lot finally. (I might have shared some of that urge, too). No doubt, if the lesson had occurred in a Sokol classroom and not towards the end of a full-day hike, the children would've listened better.



But attentive or not in the moment, I am sure that the lesson stuck with them. That is what comes with these kinds of community trips and adventures. We learn from one another—we learn from the experiences—even when it isn't all put into words and written with pen and paper. I think that I learned my lesson, too.

Thank you for remembering and reflecting upon Sokol year 2021 with me. It was a challenging year, but, as always, and in many ways a rich and rewarding one. As I conclude, I would like to point you towards resources to learn more about Sokol activities and support our organization. Please visit our newly revamped website for detailed information about Sokol Washington, including calendars and event descriptions. Our organization received a grant from the American Sokol Headquarters, and we have used the money to organize our website design better.

Would you please support us if you like what our organization provides to Washington DC's Czech, Slovak, and Moravian communities? Unpaid volunteers run Sokol, but we still need funding to run our events and activities. If you are graciously willing to support our organization financially, the easiest way to donate is to visit our (newly revamped ) website [www.sokolwashington.org](http://www.sokolwashington.org). Click on the red button on the upper right corner, 'Donate now.'

*Thank you! I wish you a happy, healthy, and relaxed 2022.*

*May it be free of stress and full of love and fun.*

*Milos*