

Piedmont Volunteer Association NPO

“Janusz Korczak”



WORLD CONFERENCE

Education for Excellence, Diversity,
and Respect:

Transformative 21st
Century Innovations

AUGUST 22 - 25, 2018

SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY



Piedmont Volunteer Association NPO

“Janusz Korczak”

“The contemporaneity of Janusz Korczak’s Pedagogical Work:

Facts and projects of the Vercelli Association in the provincial and national territory”

PRESENTATION

Purposes

The ONLUS Piedmont Voluntary Association “Janusz Korczak” refers to the pedagogical teaching and the moral, civil and scientific message of Janusz Korczak -doctor, educator, writer, persecuted politician and martyr, as well as inspirer of the Charter of the Rights of the Infancy-, and pursues the following purposes:

- Promote the concrete recognition of the rights of children, as subjects of protection, listening and respect;
- Program and implement initiatives aimed at the education of children and adolescents, with particular reference to the environmental education, in the broadest sense of the term, and to the civic education;
- Promote relationships of mutual knowledge and exchange between regional, national and international educational institutions, and collaborates with organizations, institutions and associations for the planning and implementation of targeted and shared projects;
- Program and carry out studies and research on the conditions of childhood and adolescence, as well as professional training and updating activities for teaching staff, and awareness initiatives to promote a more correct and concrete attention to the rights of children and adolescents.

(Extract from the Association' Statute, Art.3) http://www.asskorczakvc.altervista.org/finalita_associazione.htm

Presence on the territory and relations with the Rome National Association "Friends of Janusz Korczak".

- The Association is present and active in the city of Vercelli (Italy) since 1987.
- It collaborates with the National Association "Friends of Janusz Korczak" created in 1983 by Professor Giuliana Limiti of Rome, former Professor of Comparative Pedagogy at La Sapienza University of Rome and President of the OMEP- UNESCO (World Organization for Childhood Education International).

Giuliana Limiti has always worked to make Janusz Korczak known in Italy through teaching, publications, conferences, conventions and stimulate companies to publish Korczak's texts.

- The Piedmont Volunteer Association Janusz Korczak, in the year of its establishment, collaborated with the teachers of a State School of Vercelli who intended to give a new name to their school. As they concurred with Korczak's educational views, and the respect for the child was the foundation of their formative activity, the Association promoted the name of the great educator. Since then, the school was named "Janusz Korczak Infant School".

The Opening Ceremony, held in the presence of the General Consuls of Poland and Israel and of the educational, civil, military and religious authorities, was enlivened by the pupils of the School, who interpreted a fairy tale specially created for the occasion by their teachers on the Rights of the Child entitled: "*The dream of a child*".



1) From left: Deputy Mayor of Vercelli; Piedmont Pres. Association Korczak; Education officer; Consul General Poland; Consul General Israel; Education officer Vercelli Province of Vercelli. 2) Consul General Poland delivers a portrait of J. Korczak; 3) Children on stage conclude their show with a song.

The Italian political, cultural and religious world witnessed the importance of the event, sending numerous messages; among those attending were:

Giovanni Malagodi (President of the Senate), Nilde Iotti (President of the Chamber of Deputies), Amintore Fanfani (President Council of Ministers), Franca Falcucci (Minister of Education), Paolo Emilio Taviani (Gold Medal of the Resistance-President of the Italian Federation of Volunteer Freedom), Jerzy Kuberski (former Minister of Education of the People's Republic of Poland and Ambassador to the Holy See), Cardinal Casaroli (Secretary of Vatican State), Elio Toaff (Chief Rabbi of Rome), Sara Disegni Reichenbach and Nedelia Tedeschi (Representing the Jewish Community and the Jewish Schools of Turin), Rita Levi Montalcini (Nobel Prize), Clotilde Pontecorvo (Full Professor of Psycho-pedagogy at La Sapienza University of Rome), Edoardo Rivolta, Professor of Italian language and literature in Germany, journalist. It was thanks to him that the name of Korczak was known in Vercelli.

Since then, countless works and initiatives have been carried out, with the involvement and collaboration of the community and the patronage of local, provincial and regional institutions. There have been many celebrations, publications, creation of educational learning tools, conferences, provincial and national competitions, humanitarian initiatives, training activities for pupils and teachers, cultural, artistic, musical activities and exhibitions.

The collaboration of the National President "Friends of Janusz Korczak" has never been lacking: together we have worked to spread and stimulate the culture of children's rights, at all levels.

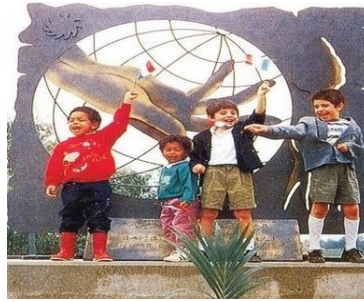
ACTIVITIES OF THE KORCZAK ASSOCIATION

Below are some of the most significant and salient experiences realized by the Association:

- 1) 1991. **Dedication of a public river park/ laboratory**, located along the banks of Sesia River that flows through Vercelli, to Janusz Korczak.

The Korczak Association considered it necessary to build a park/ workshop to offer educational opportunities, especially to infant children, otherwise impossible to achieve. The proposal found immediate and unanimous consent in educational institutions, in the public administration and in the media.

- 2) 1992. **A monument to Janusz Korczak:** The monument was built in the Park Korczak by the sculptor Prof. Guido De Bianchi of Vercelli. At its base, the monument bears the inscription: *"To Janusz Korczak - educator - the children of Vercelli - on behalf of all the children of Italy"*. It was inaugurated with an official ceremony on the 50th anniversary of Janusz Korczak's death.



1) From left to right, in the foreground: Fragonara, Vercelli vice mayor; Polak, General Consul of Poland; Danieli, Vercelli Councillor; De Bianchi, author of the monument; Grimaldi, Pres. J. Korczak Piedmont Ass; Limiti, Pres. J. Korczak National Ass; Castelli, Dirig. Sup. M.P.I. 2) On the monument: Children celebrating J. Korczak school; 3) Group of students explore the J. Korczak River Park.

- 3) 1995. **The naming of "Vercelli Città delle Bambine e dei Bambini"** (Vercelli City of Children), designated by the Municipality of Vercelli.
- 4) 1999. **The naming of an Infant State School to Teresio Castelli:** Teacher, Teaching Director, Inspector, Superior Ministerial Official P.I. and Vice President of the Janusz Korczak Association.
- 5) 1999. **Polychrome decoration in the Vercelli railway station:** The decoration was made with ceramic tiles designed and painted by the students of the infant and primary schools of the city on the theme proposed by the Korczak Association, which reads: *"The children of Vercelli draw and colour their city"*. In every box there are some messages concerning the life of children in urban centres and an exhortation to public administrators, so that they can give greater and better attention to children.



1) Vercelli Railway Station.



2) Polychrome tiles painted by the children.

- 6) 2000. **Iqbal Masih City Park:** The Park was dedicated to the little Pakistani martyr Iqbal Masih who was killed at the age of twelve by the "carpet mafia" and became a world symbol of the fight against the exploitation of child labour. He often repeated: **"No child should ever take work tools but only pens and pencils"**. Children of the infant and primary schools of the city of Vercelli sent drawings and thoughts to testify their profound sorrow for the fate of Iqbal and for the one of too many children exploited at work. Below, as example, a poem of a girl from the Rosa Stampa Primary School in Vercelli titled **"Little children"**:

*"Small children four years old, you already work. And your work is very tiring.
You eat little, you work hard, and they pay you nothing. Many of you die at work.
Some of you, including you Iqbal, have been sent in chains to another state, to make carpets.
Iqbal, finally after twelve years, you gained your freedom". (Giorgia Musso)*

- 7) 2005. **The naming of "Vercelli, Province of Children"**, on the resolution of the Province Office of Vercelli.
- 8) 2007. **The setting up of the Journalistic Editorial Team of Children** for the creation of their own newspaper called **"La voce dei bambini"**; initially born as a monthly insertion of the Vercelli's newspaper "La Sesia", it became an on-line publication later on.
- 9) 2012. **The Culture and Documentation Centre of the Association Korczak dedicated to Virgilio Grimaldi:**



The Centre was named after the late founder and unforgettable President of the Association, who died in 2008.

He worked tirelessly to promote initiatives that enhance attention towards the children, involving the institutions, the administrations at all levels and the whole community. Virgilio worked to ensure that children were considered with respect as citizens as a whole and to have their basic and inalienable rights granted.

The Centre had the full consent of the Technical Inspectors of the Ministry of Education because it was considered the only one of its kind in Piedmont.

The Centre aims to be a historical-pedagogical-didactic reference point available to students, teachers and childhood education learners. Besides the documentation of the Association's activity, dating back to its foundation (1987), there are theses and publications on J. Korczak, Montessori and Froebel didactic materials, among others, and a historic video library from a school of Vercelli province.

The foundation of the Centre **it** has been possible thanks to the effective collaboration of the Municipality of Vercelli, which, with the Province, the Provincial Scholastic Office and the Voluntary Service Centre, gave its patronage to the event. In addition to the city authorities, the National President of the "Friends of Janusz Korczak" Association, **Professor** Giuliana Limiti, participated at the institutive ceremony of the Centre.

The event was enlivened by the **Chorus of Voices of the Municipal School of Music Vallotti**, by the poet Elisabetta Serazzi and the soprano Emanuela Barazia.



1) Ceremony: Public; 2) E. Barazia; 3) E. Serazzi; 4) G. Limiti and M. Carpanese of the Korczak Associations discover a plate at the headquarters.



1) Headquarters of the Association: "Centre of culture and documentation"; 2) Inside: 1st hall with documentation of the Association and historical provincial school library; 3) 2nd room including original Montessori and Froebel material.

10) 2018. **Celebration of the 30th anniversary** of the foundation of the Association in Vercelli.

It was a joyous celebration thanks to the students of the Music School “C.V.M.” and the theatre “Te.Ka.Mù.” of Vercelli, coordinated by their teacher Barbara Truffa, and it achieved a large participation of public and representatives of the institutions and administrations.



1- 2) President of Piedmont Association with the Councillor for Education in Vercelli and the teacher of music and drama;
3- 4) Children protagonist of the show.

The Association' solidarity initiatives

The Association has promoted numerous initiatives and activities addressed to the most unfortunate children, victims of war or natural disasters, including:

- **Rwandan children** hosted by the Municipality of Vercelli (1994).

- **Children victims of the Marche and Umbria earthquake** (1997):

Over 1000 children of infant and primary schools of Vercelli and province participated, donating gifts to their unfortunate friends.

- **Children refugees from Kosovo** (1998):

The demonstration of solidarity was extraordinary, with the participation of over 2,000 pupils from infant and primary schools.

- **Children victims of Abruzzo earthquake** (2009):

Thanks to the generosity of the volunteers, of the sympathizers and of the children who collaborated with the Association and the Civil Protection, we were able to hand out an indispensable scholastic material to the children of Abruzzo.



1) Students of Vercelli deliver their gifts to the children affected by calamity;
2) A group of children greet the volunteers who go to deliver their gifts to the unfortunate children.

Projects and training initiatives

The spirit of Korczak is present in Vercelli and its Province, whenever the Association involves the entire community for the realization of projects, competitions and conferences, both at the Educational institutions and in public places. Among the most salient ones are:

Didactic projects:

1) 1988 to 1989. **"Living the Environment":**

Educational project conceived and coordinated by the Association for infant schools of

Vercelli and Biella provinces. Approximately 3,100 students participated to the activities, which concluded with a conference on teaching experimentation and a summary publication.

2) 1998/99. **"The dialogic child":**

Psycholinguistics Training - Update Course. The aim of the course was to offer, for infant school's teachers, innovative theoretical-methodological tools to promote a communication-linguistic development of children from three to six years and to enhance their diversity, in order to foster cultural and social integration.

At the end of the course, the material realized by the schools and the synthesis of their works was displayed in a provincial exhibition entitled: **"The dialogical child"**. The whole project was subsequently elaborated in the form of "hypertext" and distributed on DVD to the schools of the Province.

3) 2010 -2011. **"Didactic paths for the development of emotional/ affective/ relational competences in the basic school":**

Organization of a creative one-year workshop in a primary school of the province of Vercelli, with the collaboration of some professors of the Catholic University of Milan. The project happily ended with a conference entitled: **"The Other Face of Intelligence"** in which it was presented the work done and delivered a "hypertext" on DVD to a hundred participants, including teachers, school managers and psychologists.



Conference: presentation to the public of the work realized with the participation of the professors of the Catholic University of Milan.

4) 2016. **Annual project in the Province of Vercelli:** the implementation and strengthening of a territorial schools network entitled: **"Networking schools against bullying for the prevention of socio-relational and environmental problems"**

5) 2016-2017. **Annual project to implement a training course for teachers of the Basic School (Infant, Primary and Secondary School) of the Province of Vercelli:** More than a hundred teachers participated to the lectures conducted by Professor Edoardo Martinelli, a former student of Don Lorenzo Milani School of Barbiana, centred on the methodologies and teaching techniques of the school.

Cultural and social events:

- 2016. Collaboration with the Municipality of Vercelli for the creation of a **"VERCELLI 2020 Strategic Plan"**. The Association presented some significant proposals on environmental issues in order to make efforts to become more child friendly and to implement a deliberation of the municipality that reads: **"Vercelli City of Children"**
- 2017. **"FESTA DEI POPOLI" (Festival of People):** Participation in events carried out annually by Organizations, Administrations and Local Authorities.

Exhibitions:

A) Among the many initiatives that took place in Vercelli during the year dedicated to Janusz Korczak in 2012, the Association organized an exhibition titled: ***"Janusz Korczak in Vercelli: his spirit lives in the Piedmont Association"***.

It was divided in two sections:

- First section:

Exhibition of two series of precious historical documents, kindly provided by Prof. Giuliana Limiti, concerning 40 very valuable panels on the life of Janusz Korczak and 20 panels illustrating the life of Johan Amos Komenský (Comenius).

- Second section:

A much appreciated exhibition of materials related to the history of the Association from 1987 to 2012. The exhibition was followed by a short concert, offered by the soprano E. Barazia, and a presentation of Prof. Dario Arkel, social-scientist and writer expert on Janusz Korczak.



Exhibition at the Santa Chiara Auditorium in Vercelli; 1) Some elements of the exhibition; 2) E. Barazia; 3) D. Arkel

B) **"ART ... IS LIFE"**: in February 2017, the Association participated with its own exhibition to an abstract-informal contemporary art exhibition in Vercelli, together with other associations and local authorities. This activity aimed to diffuse the thoughts of the great educator and the Rights of Children with the slogan: ***"CHILDREN ARE PEOPLE ALREADY TODAY... NOT TOMORROW"***, particularly among the students.



Exhibition: 1) Panels related to the "Life of Janusz Korczak; 2) Visiting students; 3) President Piedmont Association presents J. Korczak.

Celebrations:

During its 30 years of life, the Association has created and participated in numerous celebrations that have involved the educational institutions, municipal and provincial administrations, and especially children and teachers of infant and primary schools of the provincial territory. Here are some of the most emblematic:

- **International Day of Children's Rights:** Every year, on the 20th of November, a celebration takes place at the Vercelli Civic Theatre.

- **Festival of Children:** The celebration takes place every year on the 21st of March, the first day of spring, in the Janusz Korczak River Sesia Park.

- **Remembrance Day:** The celebration takes place every year on the 27th of January with a message that involves the entire community. The Association also organizes conferences and participates in events to spread the ideas of Janusz Korczak.
- **European Day of the Righteous:** Participation of the Association to the institution of this Festival organized by the City of Vercelli.
- **Inauguration of the Garden of the Righteous.** Participation to an event that took place in a state school of Vercelli, in which a tree of its garden has been dedicated to Janusz Korczak.

CONCLUSION

Piedmont Association "Janusz Korczak", at the end of this report, believes that in Vercelli:

- **The spirit of Korczak** is particularly present on November 20th of each year, when numerous children accompanied by their teachers celebrate the "Day of the Rights of the Children" at the Civic Theatre.
- **The spirit of Korczak** is present on the banks of the River Sesia that flows through Vercelli and in its River Park, when the space resounds of laugh and joy of the children playing their school games, renewed every spring when they celebrate the "Festival of the Children" together.
- **The spirit of Korczak** is present in the scholastic realities of every order and grade, but particularly in the infant schools, where the pupils are welcomed to reflect on the meaning of children's rights.
- Finally, **the spirit of Korczak** is present in the continuous and persistent activity of the children editors of the Journal *"The voice of children"* at the cultural Centre of the Association. The newspaper is entirely written by them with the coordination of the Association, and it can be read on the Association's website.



1) Headquarters of the "Culture and Documentation Centre": children at work for the editorial of their newspaper *"La voce dei bambini"*.



Vercelli Civic Theatre: An example of the many celebrations carried out by the Association to celebrate the "International Day of Children's Rights". On stage: some children of the Vercelli infant schools protagonist of their festival.



Mirella Carpanese,

President of the Piedmont Volunteer Association ONLUS "Janusz Korczak".

Graduated in Philosophy-Human Sciences at the University of Turin (Italy) with the thesis "The development of communication skills in pre-school children";

Expert in communication and language, she has a long experience in teaching children at infant schools;

Education officer at the Provincial Administration of Vercelli, with tasks related to the support of the process of implementation education institutions' autonomy of the educational institutions and particularly to the sector: "Personal care".

Teacher trainer I.R.R.S.A.E., director of courses and working groups, and conductor of creative workshops on behalf of public bodies and school's administrations.

To learn more about the activity of the Association, please visit the website:

www.asskorczakvc.altervista.org

Registered Office c/o C.T.V- C.F. 94,025,190,029.

C. so Libertà, 72

13100 Vercelli (Italia)

Phone: (0039) (0)161.503298; Mobil: 3478637347; Fax: 0161.219964

Cultural Centre: "Virgilio Grimaldi" Culture and Documentation Centre -

Via F.lli Garrone, 20

13100 Vercelli (Italia)

E-mails: associazionekorczak@fastwebnet.it and associazionekorczak@gmail.com

Website: www.asskorczakvc.altervista.org

Translated by Emanuela Barazia on behalf of the Association