

Fraternally Yours®

 **FCSLA**Life

ISSN 0897-2958

VOL. 110, NO. 9

First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association

JUNE 2024



A garden is
a grand teacher.
It teaches patience
and careful
watchfulness;
it teaches
industry and thrift;
above all it teaches
entire trust.

~Gertrude Jekyll

ŽENSKÁ JEDNOTA

OFFICE HOURS — HOME OFFICE

Monday through Friday — 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Phone: (216) 464-8015 • Toll Free: 800-464-4642
Fax: (216) 464-9260 • Website: www.fcsla.com

EDITOR: Carolyn Bazik

P.O. Box 1617, Reading, PA 19603
E-mail: zjbazik@comcast.net
Phone (610) 373-2743 • Fax (610) 375-8333

FCSLA LIFE

24950 Chagrin Boulevard, Beachwood, Ohio 44122
National President/CEO: Cynthia M. Maleski, Esq. (216) 468-1011
National Secretary/COO: Kimberly Graham (216) 468-1012
Interim National Treasurer/CFO: Franko Rando (216) 468-1017

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:

Reverend Monsignor Peter M. Polando
Cathedral of Saint Columba, 159 W. Rayen Ave.,
Youngstown, OH 44503. Residence: (330) 744-5233
E-Mail: ppolando@youngstowndioocese.org.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT/CEO & CHAIR OF THE BOARD:

Cynthia M. Maleski, Esq., 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (800) 464-4642. Ext. 1011.

NATIONAL DIRECTORS:

Jeanette E. Palanca, 304 W. Exchange Street,
Crete, IL 60417. Residence: (847) 770-3508.
Email: jeanetteeve@outlook.com.
Joann Skvarek Banvich, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (800) 464-4642.
Kristina Menke, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (216) 223-8220.
Email: kristinamenke53@gmail.com.
Kristine Midcap, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (800) 464-4642.

NATIONAL TRUSTEES:

Lorraine Gibas, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (800) 464-4642.
Joseph T. Senko, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122 (800) 464-4642.

NATIONAL AUDITORS:

Mary B. Andreano, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122 (800) 464-4642.
Dennis L. Povondra, 102 South Janda Avenue,
Tabor, SD 57063. (605) 661-6508.
Email: povondra@hcinet.net
Barbara A. Sekerak, 24950 Chagrin Boulevard,
Beachwood, OH 44122. (800) 464-4642.

COURT OF APPEALS:

Bonnita "Bonnie" C. Vavruska • Tabor, SD
Susan G. Moynihan • Cleveland, OH
Cynthia M. Oresik • Schererville, IN
Janet Gaydos Berkemeier • Jackson, MI
Melanie L. Leonard • Youngstown, OH



BE THANKFUL...

*Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire,
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?*

*Be thankful when you don't know something
For it gives you the opportunity to learn.*

Be thankful for the difficult times.

During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations

Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge

Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes

They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary

Because it means you've made a difference.

It is easy to be thankful for the good things.

*A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are
also thankful for the setbacks.*

Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.

*Find a way to be thankful for your troubles
and they can become your blessing.*

Dear Friends,

This month, be grateful for small things, big things, and everything in between. Count your blessings, not your problems.

Remember that it is not happiness that brings us gratitude. It's gratitude that brings us happiness.

Until Next Month,

Warmly, **Carolyn**



First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association 2023 National Officer's Annual Reports

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Reverend Monsignor Peter M. Polando



Madam President, National Officers, and Members of the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association,

Pochvalen Bud Pan Jezis Kristus! Na veky! Amen!

It is an honor and a privilege for me to present to the Board of Directors and membership of the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association the report of the National Chaplain in this final year of my fourth term. I continue to have more learning experiences in participating as a member of the Board in these last four years. My hope is that from these continual experiences I may be able to fulfill my obligations not only

to the Board but also more importantly, to the members of this austere Association. I ask for divine direction from God the Father as I meekly walk in the footsteps and teachings of Jesus Christ our Savior, and guided by the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit, I may have the grace, intelligence, and leadership to guide our Association. To all of you, I thank you for your support spiritually and verbally that will assist me in my fifth term of chaplaincy commencing on 1 January 2024. As I pray daily for all of you and your families in the celebrations of Mass, the praying of the rosary, and participation of the *Liturgy of the Hours*, my hope is for spiritual guidance through our God, in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her parents – Saint Ann, the Patroness of our Association, and Saint Joachim.

- FCSLA Board of Directors. I attended the meetings of the Board of Directors on 27 March, 27 June, 19 September, and 30 November 2023. As I reflect upon the past four years of being on the Board, I acknowledge the fact that the members have, at heart, the good of the Membership when it comes to the business components of the meetings. I applaud them for their wonderful efforts in this area. I take this opportunity to personally thank those members of the Board who will no longer be serving in their elected capacities. Surely, they know how their participation has contributed to the strength of the Association during their tenures.
- FCSLA Executive Finance Committee. I participated in the meetings of the Executive Finance Committee on 13 and 15 February, 16 May, 22 August, and 9 November 2023. The performance of our investments were thoroughly discussed, dividends on our products were suggested for the members of the Board of Directors approval, and the amounts of monies for various donations suggested for the approval of the Board of Directors were arrived upon during the meetings. Once again, I congratulate the members of the management team who have led our Association through these fiscally challenging times and have continued to financially strengthen our Association for the future. To the members of the Executive Committee who are

leaving their positions, I humbly ask Almighty God to bless you for all you have done for the First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association and may He grace you with good health in the future!

- FCSLA Special Meetings of the Board of Directors. Out of necessity, the members of the Board of Directors met to discuss various issues that had come to the attention of the Home Office. These meetings may have been for the sake of information and/or necessity of voting upon outside of quarterly sessions. Such sessions were in a timely fashion, anywhere from one hour to three hours. I participated in these sessions on 23 February, 13 March, 17 May, 19 June, 31 July, and 11 December 2023. Also, I was verbally present for meetings of the *Strategic Relations Committee* on 13 March, 14 March, and 16 April 2023. Lastly, I was present for a *Bylaws Committee* meeting that would be presented to the members of the quadrennial convention on 25 September 2023.
- FCSLA Forty-third Quadrennial Convention. On 6-7 August 2023, I travelled to Indianapolis, Indiana, to visit the J W Marriott, Indianapolis in preparation of the liturgical services to be celebrated during the Convention, 6-8 October 2023. I made the decision that since we were at the convention sight for three days it would be advantageous for us to participate in Mass all three days rather in the hotel rather than find a local church. I believe that this worked out fine since the time of the convention was one less day than previous conventions. I thank the main concelebrants and priests who celebrated the liturgies and the representatives of the Okres/Divisions at our Memorial Service.
- There have been occasions throughout the year, as in previous years, when I have traveled to the Home Office or have been present by telephone conference for participation in various discussions for the good of the order of the Association. I appreciate the persons with involving my input to the issues at hand and the ability to come to a decision and/or resolve of a particular matter.
- My monthly columns in *Fraternally Yours* have been thought provoking for me and, hopefully, inspirational to our members. I must say that during the past year and, particularly at our quadrennial convention, I received several compliments from members who read my articles and made suggestions for future ones. Hooray! You do read my words! Thank you! The main thrust of my words is to share our Catholic Faith through the Sacred Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers and the Saints throughout the centuries, Church teachings, with an emphasis of the Second Vatican Council (which many of us remember was convened in the 1960's), and a better understanding of what is defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. My goal is twofold – to assist you in understanding our Catholic Church and make me, your chaplain, renew my Faith.

Once again, dakujem pecne for electing me as your National Chaplain! I am honored and humbly ask you to pray for me as I do for you, your family, and our officers both locally and nationally. You have my blessings and love!

Message from our National President

CYNTHIA M. MALESKI



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023



132 years of protecting families, improving and touching lives and building communities!

“We are the light of the world”

Very Reverend Monsignor, National Officers and Members of First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America:

As National President, I am pleased and honored to present my 2023 Annual Report to you, in this Year of Prayer with its approach of simplicity and in accordance with Christ's heart.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve this remarkable society and its members.

Pochváleny bud Pan

Ježíš Kristus!

2023: A Consequential Year

With our strong pillars of financial and fraternal strength, First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association continues as a beacon of hope and an essential path to financial security for many individuals in communities across our nation. In several key domains of our mission and business, we saw a society in action, as key stakeholders made decisions impactful to FCSLA in both the short and long terms.

At the same time, we pursued several parallel tracks: (1) year-long 43rd Quadrennial Convention planning and implementation and post-convention steps, (2) in-depth further development and deployment of our refreshed long-term strategic plan and (3) ongoing initiatives and home office operations.

Overall, our major multi-faceted initiatives stretched our resources in an environment of external economic risks of volatility and uncertainty when, at the same time, COVID monitoring and protections were still needed in our home office.

2023 Quadrennial Convention

FCSLA's essential purpose, mission and longstanding traditions, as reflected in our governing documents, bylaws and practices, require planning and management on almost a daily basis by a great team and many other delegates and friends. In order to streamline and shorten the number of days we were physically present at our convention site, much pre-convention and convention work is planned and performed before the convention, including credentials, bylaws, compensation and donation committees, most requiring several meeting sessions. As Convention Chair, I participated in most of these sessions and held touch base meetings with Kim Graham, Katherine Bowes and others at least weekly.

With over 280+ participants and visitors, we saw diversity of age and geography in our delegate base. Friendships were renewed and acquaintances and personal connections made.

The convention awarded substantial donations totaling \$600,000 to 84 worthwhile charities and churches in many cities across our nation. Members of our new Young Adult Leadership Council were present and visible during many diverse towns, cities and neighborhoods of our convention activities, including microphone monitoring and our banquet and fraternal nights.

Our convention was historical in a number of ways. Numerous bylaws provisions were adopted, including proposals for a hired CEO (now elected National President/CEO), an independent director Chair of the board, a proposal to broaden those who are eligible to serve as branch officers and an eye towards more agility to make bylaws changes between convention years. These changes will require significant transition follow up action in 2024 and beyond. Our board bylaws committee made up of Larry Golofski, Chair, Jeanette Palanca, Secretary, Joann Skvarek Banvich, Msgr. Peter Polando, Advisor, Sue Ann Seich, Dorothy Urbanowicz, Dennis Povondra and your National President worked for many months to develop these proposals.

Electronic voting was used for both convention proceedings and election of officers. We recognized several of our priests as they celebrated significant anniversaries, including Archabbot Emeritus Douglas Nowicki, OSB, Abbot Gary Hoover, OSB and Very Rev. Msgr. Peter Polando.

We were blessed by the presence of Archabbot Martin Bartel, OSB, Principal Mass Celebrant and Hon. Ambassador Vincent Obsitnik, who delivered a riveting banquet dinner speech. The Republic of Slovakia was represented by Stanislava Buchtová, attaché to the Ambassador from Slovakia. Allison Koppel, CEO of American Fraternal Alliance, delivered remarks about our multi-faceted national presence among fraternal benefit societies.

A new board of directors was elected including five new independent members and myself, National President/CEO, to serve in that role until the hiring process for a CEO is complete. The convention also confirmed and fortified our commitment to fraternalism and the fraternal benefit systems model.

All changes will require significant follow-up action in 2024 and beyond to align with initiatives in the Governance and Organizational domain of our Strategic Plan.

Strategic Planning

We have embarked on a multi-year plan with focus and priorities set forth in the following domains: Membership and Fraternal, Financial, Operational and Technology, and Governance and Organizational. A strategy map with priorities

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

and our updated progress is presented at each quarterly board meeting.

As we grow and reach for stability in our workplace, we have acknowledged that human resources remains a challenge. Our newly hired Head of Human Resources, Karen McHugh, working with executive management, continues to implement a newly defined cultural awareness strategic plan to meet our staffing needs.

In the meantime, priorities may have become derailed from time to time and adjustments made due to unplanned projects and assignments.

Drawing on our historic roots, an employee team developed a set of cultural values which have been presented to employees, the board and delegates at the Quadrennial Convention.

They are:

- P – Perseverance
- R – Respect
- A – Accountability
- S – Service
- E – Ethics

We hope to further integrate these values more fully as we move forward. They will continue to be incorporated into our action steps and performance planning processes.

An excellent internal team developed and presented presentations to AM Best, which resulted in an Excellent (A-) rating again this year. In 2023, FCSLA Life was recognized FAVORABLY compared to 25 leading American life insurance companies by Standard Analytics, the details of which have been shared in the September, 2023 issue of our magazine.

Many of the initiatives in the strategic plan are “in process” at this point, with the mandates and governance steps taken at the Quadrennial Convention seen as breakthroughs.

Financial

We continue with our longstanding strategic principles which support sustained managed growth. We are a sound, stable and secure fraternal benefit society with a national imprint, poised for even greater growth, aiming to provide financial security outreach for the common good across our nation.

In 2023, the board and organizational focus was on convention mandates, including development of organizational modernization changes, operational sales tool improvements, continual creation and oversight work of various ad hoc board committees and maintaining conservative financial risk practices. An important area of development which remains is product development. We presented and implemented a successful guaranteed issue program in 2023 and a special annuity promotion in December 2023.

Our in-depth financial report reflects growth in investment income, life premiums and a decrease in annuity premiums, where we choose to maintain conservative crediting rates as recommended by the National Treasurer/CFO. At the same time, we saw a healthy income from operations and in net operating income, even during this volatile economic period of time. More details may be found in the report of the Interim National Treasurer/CFO. An asset manager has been engaged to help recommend, manage and identify investment opportunities for our \$1Billion portfolio.

Membership and Fraternal

Our guaranteed issue insurance program is considered a

success where we serve many longtime members, since it fulfills our core mission and is a member conservation tool.

Through this program, we issued 346 new life certificates and increased our life insurance premium by over \$1M. An annuity membership one month promotion was offered in December 2023 resulting in over 40 new members from that promotion alone.

In addition to our 43rd Quadrennial Convention, our main fraternal focus in 2023 was planning, conducting and implementing convention actions, our outreach programs, including matching funds programs in hundreds of neighborhoods across our nation and a 4-year convention donations process reaching a multitude of communities. Our branch and district events provide fellowship and comfort in times of joy, sadness and common cultural awareness across the panorama of American life. In 2023, 104 of our branches held 170 matching funds events resulting in over \$1M raised.

In this post-pandemic world of increased isolation, these gatherings and service-related events become even more crucial for all of us to connect and engage when most needed.

We are proud of our newly formed Young Adult Leadership Council, appointed by each district. The Council convened several meetings beginning in Spring, 2023. As Convention Chair, I invited Council members to our Quadrennial Convention where several of them took visible leadership roles including John Moynihan, Cassie Muffler, Liz Ortiz, Aimee Perri and Terese Gibas. Other members are Laura Drake Rotella, Ian McNeely, Marie Schmehl and Monica Berkemeier. We are grateful for their commitment to national volunteer leadership service. If your district has not nominated someone, please do so soon.

Even as we lived out this frenetic time of activity, we took the time and effort to plan our May 4, 2023 District Presidents Meeting in Beachwood, Ohio, where our District Presidents gathered with your National President and key management to share ideas for the future of our society. In 2023, members of the board and their guests were also invited. Highlights of the meeting included Mass celebrated by Abbot Gary Hoover, OSB, St. Andrew Abbey, a May Crowning Ceremony in the home office and a welcome dinner which was enjoyed by all.

We have a number of notable fraternal programs and benefits accessible to our members. They include a generous Scholarship Program, reaching hundreds of eligible students, our general donation program, our matching funds programs, Join Hands programs, Slovak-American Cookbook, our popular magazine Fraternally Yours, and special events such as debutante balls, opportunities for branch leadership and district meetings.

We continue a number of home office driven events including monthly branch newsletters, a virtual Pro-Life service, Flag Day ceremonies and annual community donations.

During 2023, we marked the passing of His Eminence Josef Cardinal Tomko with a commemorative article in our magazine. Our National Chaplain Very Rev. Peter M. Polando represented FCSLA Life at Cardinal Tomko's funeral Mass in Kosice, Slovakia. We received grateful acknowledgement for our longstanding worldwide charitable work from Archbishop Bernard Bober from the Diocese of Kosice in eastern Slovakia.

We held our recently annual Wreath Laying Ceremony in front of St. Ann's statue at home office for St. Ann's Day, July 26th.

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

The Presidents Club trip to Saint Petersburg, Florida proved to be an excellent forum for hearing from each other and celebrating the success of our top producers from around the country. We enjoyed the added presence of Patrick Braun, former National Sales Manager and board member at the conference, who offered his wisdom and advice.

Operational and Technology

In 2023, our leadership sales team chose to focus in the operational arena, including use of HubSpot (for communications & marketing funnel), new illustration and e-app system, a multi-year effort led by our COO and team virtual meeting platform and launch, increased efficiencies in payment of commissions, net-at-risk underwriting and AccuPoint, a producer identification system. Our new financial literacy videos were launched and are available for use as an educational marketing or outreach tool. We identified and recommended measures to assess sales leadership, greater activities and several ways to increase and enhance meetings with producers and agents.

Our integrated Enterprise Risk Management multi-disciplinary program has been consistently developed and evolved since 2013. Our focus on member needs is reflected in our Information Security Program, including cybersecurity, disaster recovery and business continuity programs.

A series of technological protections continue to be planned and implemented and will evolve as we continue to adapt. Plans are vetted through a multi-disciplinary IT Steering Com-

mittee and are presented to the board as they are board ready or part of budgetary planning. We will continue to simplify the process as we move forward.

Thank You!

It is an honor and privilege to serve as National President/CEO of First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America. We are a sound, stable and secure fraternal benefit society with a national imprint, positioned for even further growth in 2024 and beyond.

Given the significant challenges presented to us, we are proud of the results we achieved in 2023, working together as a board, home office team and branches and districts. I am grateful to Kimberly Graham, National Secretary/COO and Frank Rando, Interim National Treasurer/CFO and other managers as we work together as a leadership team. Personally, I am grateful to our convention delegates for their support so I may humbly continue my leadership service to FCSLA Life as we transition to a new leadership model.

To our members, we look forward to continuing to make your future bright in 2024 and as you navigate your life journey. As a member driven fraternal benefit society, our longstanding philosophy is to affirm, respect and dignify every individual person from the beginning of life to the end of life and beyond.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cynthia M. Maleski,
National President



PAUSE FOR FLAG DAY

By Act of Congress dated August 3, 1949, June 14 of each year has been designated National Flag Day, and

On December 8, 1982, the National Flag Day Foundation was chartered to conduct educational programs and to encourage all Americans to Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance on National Flag Day, June 14, and

National Flag Day celebrates our nation's symbol of unity, a democracy in a republic, and stands for our country's devotion to freedom, to the rule of law, and to equal rights for all,

NOW, THEREFORE, as National President, I, Cynthia M. Maleski, do mark June 14, 2024, as National Flag Day and urge all members of First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America, FCSLA Life, to pause at 7 p.m. Eastern Time on this date for the 42nd annual Pause for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to our great nation.

First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association 2023 National Officer's Annual Reports

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Kimberly A. Graham



Reverend Monsignor, Madam President, National Officers, and Members of First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association (FCSLA Life),

2023 was a demanding and inspiring year as we continue to employ our overall strategic principles to reflect and drive our focus on sustained managed growth. As I review our accomplishments, I am delighted to share with you the significant developments and our progress in the Association's Home Office with you, our members. The past four years have been challenging with the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid

technological change. The World Health Organization announced in May 2023 that we are no longer in the emergency phase of the pandemic. We now have resumed our everyday lives, and the employees are back "in person" at the home office. It was nice to be able to remove the COVID-19 safeguards we had in place such as masks, temperature taking, sneeze guards and social distancing. One of the benefits of the pandemic was the use of virtual meetings, which enabled greater engagement and collaboration.

During a convention year, it is always a busy time at the home office. The 43rd Quadrennial Convention was held October 6-8, 2023, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Organizing a convention requires lots of planning and preparation, but it is worth it in the end. I was fortunate that National Fraternal and Youth Director Katherine Bowes and I together were able to provide our delegates with a successful and worthwhile experience. I thoroughly enjoyed spending time with many of our branch and district officers and members at the convention. We have an adaptable staff and throughout the last year they have seamlessly performed their daily operations as well as assisted with convention duties.

I am privileged to be submitting my annual report and sharing with each of you a summary of the operations of our Association's National Office. FCSLA Life was founded on the belief that financial security should be within reach of everyone. After 131 years, that purpose continues to drive our organization while embracing our Catholic values and Slavic traditions.

As I look back on the past year, we continue to be proud of our many accomplishments. We focus our daily efforts on moving the organization forward by driving operational excellence, increasing our financial strength, and enhancing member value here at FCSLA Life; and we do this in concert with our Strategic Plan. The strategic plan is discussed and updated at every board meeting. The key principles of our strategic

plan are to build upon our rich heritage while embracing our mission and vision and achieving a balance in developing action plans to achieve key corporate objectives and align its focus among its various constituencies. 2023 was our first full year of deployment of the strategic plan. A breakthrough was achieved in the Governance and Organizational domain of the strategic plan to take steps to modernize governance processes. This was approved at the 43rd Quadrennial Convention by the delegates to hire a CEO. In addition, Human Resources Leader Karen McHugh collaborated with a team of our employees to develop our core values which consist of Perseverance, Respectful, Accountability, Innovation, Service-Minded and Ethical (PRAISE). In 2023, we incorporated these core values in our newly revised performance evaluations.

As we focus on our younger members, the Young Adult Leadership Council was formed by various representatives who were nominated from some of the districts and at large members. 2023 was an organizational year for the council holding several virtual meetings and drafting a mission statement and goals. A LIMRA study on younger demographics that FCSLA Life participated in was shared with this council. FCSLA Life offers fraternal benefits that align with the future generation's values. Several of the members participated in the 43rd Quadrennial Convention.

FCSLA Life has a low tolerance for cyber risks and appropriate mitigation strategies are in place. In 2023, the Enterprise Risk Management committee made comprehensive additions to the Information Security Program, and we implemented a new record retention policy, new employee privacy training, board cybersecurity training, cybersecurity risk assessment through cybersecurity insurer and company-wide privacy review. The ERM committee reviewed data and experience from COVID-19 to evaluate and improve preparedness for any future pandemic.

FCSLA Life continues to be financially strong. We continued to increase our admitted assets ending 2023 with \$1.1 billion in admitted assets. The staff continues to be accommodating and flexible while evolving and becoming more efficient with a focus on the members and a disciplined approach to unit cost improvement.

Insurance and Annuity Activities: The following report covers from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. A report resembling this is presented to the Board of Directors at each quarterly meeting.

Life Insurance: FCSLA Life sold 679 new Life Certificates (including conversions) in 2023 with a total face value of \$10,048,956. (A total of 372 new Life Certificates - including conversions - were sold in 2022, with a face amount totaling \$9,390,041.)

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Life Insurance Dividends: Dividends are a non-guaranteed value, voted on annually by the Board of Directors. Dividends were distributed in the following manner in 2023:

	2023	2022
Cash dividends via check	\$ 59,869	\$ 60,655
Accumulated dividends	\$ 115,004	\$ 116,672
Dividends used to reduce premiums	\$ 37,651	\$ 38,609
Dividends used to reduce loan balances	\$ 1,611	\$ 1,744
Dividends for paid-up additional insurance (PUA)	\$ 1,176,330	\$ 1,181,957
Total distributed dividends	\$ 1,390,465	\$ 1,399,638
Interest on accumulated dividends	\$ 195,323	\$ 191,604
PUA purchased with dividends	\$ 3,660,759	\$ 3,722,542

Loans: Members with life insurance certificates are eligible to take loans against their certificates as outlined in their contract. A loan may not exceed the contract loan value. Any prior debt will be included in and made a part of a new loan. The interest rate charged is dependent upon the contract language of the certificate, the range being 4%-8%.

	2023	2022
All unpaid loans and interest balance	\$ 1,725,183	\$ 1,828,624
Total number of loans	682	739

Annuities: FCCLA Life sold 314 Annuities in 2023 for a total balance or Face Amount of \$6,029,063. (A total of 300 Annuity Certificates were sold in 2022, with a face amount totaling \$10,850,708.)

Fifty Year Checks: FCCLA Life rewards members who have reached 50 years of consecutive membership with a one-time \$75 check 1,075 members achieved 50-year status in 2023. (991 members achieved this in 2022.)

Post Mortem Benefit: This benefit is a non-guaranteed value, voted on annually by the Board of Directors.

	2023	2022
Amount paid:	\$ 1,575,591	\$ 1,834,214

Slovak-American Cookbook: Since 1952, our recognized cookbook continues to be a popular publication. It features many culinary favorites and is a chosen gift to give to friends and family. It appears with inflation higher at restaurants, more families are cooking at home and purchasing our cookbook.

	2023	2022
Number purchased:	907	1,170

In 2022, we reprinted the cookbook, and it still contains the traditional Slovak-America recipes that were first published in the original edition over half a century ago. The emerald hardback cookbook is now in its 27th printing, with over a quarter of a million copies sold. It is one of the many ways we promote and preserve our Slovak heritage and culture among our members and community. Many branches buy a supply of cookbooks and sell them for a fund raiser or present them to new members in their branch as a welcome gift. Pat Bowles from our staff is always ready to ship the cookbooks out to our members.

Sales: FCCLA Life Home Office staff worked jointly with our National Sales Manager Paul Smithers in many areas, including marketing, new product development, and sales training. Growth in FCCLA Life's membership and distribution channels and expanding our product portfolio were key priorities for 2023 and beyond.

Our strong niche products and developed distribution channels provide growth opportunities. National Sales Manager Paul Smithers continued to work with his Regional Sales Managers to bring our products and tools to our producers so they can bring in new members with balancing sustained managed growth.

As we continue to add digital sales tools such as HubSpot for marketing and CRM and AccuPoint for recruiting. These improved technology tools along with a focus on fraternal benefits to support membership growth strategies assist our sales management team. National Sales Manager Paul Smithers held several sales campaigns throughout 2023 to bring in additional sales. Our Agent Administrator continues to provide support to our producers.

We continued to improve our process of measuring and monitoring sales objectives with the Regional Sales Managers, to quantify their progress in increasing sales. FCCLA Life's marketing and product/sales material has been integrated for use with Agents and Recommenders. Monthly teleconferences are hosted by the National Sales Manager and Regional Sales Managers on a variety of topics focusing on sales ideas, training, and product information for agents and recommenders. Starting in 2024 the monthly sales teleconferences will be held virtually and recorded for future viewing. As of 12/31/23, we have 802 contracted agents, 37 fully licensed recommenders, and 42 Pennsylvania restricted license recommenders.

A special promotion convention campaign kicked off April 1, 2023, for the Guaranteed Issue Life Insurance Program. This type of program allows our qualified members access to purchase additional life insurance and in an easy, affordable way. This campaign brought in 346 new certificates and \$1,095,638 in additional premium. We also offered members the opportunity to receive a free *Family Records Guide*. The booklet will help members to record their wishes and organize life's many details.

In 2023, the Friends and Family Program continued to provide membership referrals. This program allows our members to be rewarded \$25 for referring potential new members if they meet our three requirements. 127 referrals came in from the Friends and Family campaign from January 1 – December 31, 2023.

	2023	2022
Commissions paid to sales force:	\$ 558,744	\$ 971,767

New Business: In 2023, we can issue new business quicker due to the recently implemented tools, i.e., illustration system, eApp, Prescription Check and Net at Risk. These tools allow our New Business Department to assess the risk of potential members faster and encourage ease of new business with our producers. Underwriter Stacey Magoch has worked extremely hard to provide excellent customer service to our producers.

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Recently, we promoted Cindy Smith to join the New Business Department as an Underwriter. Annuities are an excellent component of your retirement plan. At the Executive Committee quarterly meeting, the members discuss a crediting yield rate and based on facts, make a recommendation which is presented to the Board of Directors.

Technology: We hold quarterly IT Steering Committee meetings which cover both the Strategical and Operational areas. At these meetings, the managing officers meet with the IT managed service provider, our IT Manager Prathima Vadi along with our Insurance Manager Paula Dalpiaz and Programmer/Analyst Jim Deak to review computer software and hardware requirements for compliance, security, and potential obsolescence. All pending IT projects are discussed to identify status, options, billable hours, and cost. FCSLA Life is implementing modern technologies and digital strategies to promote growth. In 2023, we held a successful disaster recovery test and hot site test. During this test we again used our virtual meeting program that allowed us to have break-out sessions with our various teams. In 2024, we anticipate launching a new Member Portal that will allow members to view information about their policy.

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM): Our integrated Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) capabilities have been developed and are effective and aligned with its overall risk profile. The ERM committee was led by Chair Karen Visocan, Compliance Officer. The committee consists of the managing officers, Insurance Manager, IT Manager, National Sales Manager, Head of Human Resources, and National Fraternal and Youth Director and holds quarterly meetings.

Brand Awareness: In 2023, we continue to focus on growing our membership by promoting our brand and telling our story. By leveraging multiple marketing channels, it increases our brand awareness. We maintain a presence on social media increasing our followers and engaging our members. This past year we designed and developed a series of financial literacy videos to help members understand and plan for financial security at all states of life. The first video is geared toward children and is called *Learning About Your Money*. The second video is focused on young adults to assist them in achieving *Smart and Savvy Personal Finance*. The last video is directed to adults nearing retirement *Living the Good Life*.

The marketing team also created marketing postcards "Who We Are" that provide introductory information about FCSLA Life.

Website: In 2023, we continue to enhance and update our website www.fcscla.com with the assistance from our website administrator, Dynamics Online, Inc. The staff can use the mobile-friendly WordPress format to allow for quicker updates to the site. We positioned the new website for search engine optimization (SEO) which in the past year increased the traffic and activity to our site. Every month we review our analytics that capture site traffic, visitor behavior, referrals, and other key metrics.

The monthly activity report provides statistics and analysis on the overall number of visitors to our website in 2023, as well as which search engines and search phrases referred visitors to our site most often. The analytics report identifies traffic and activity trends as well as our top queries. It lists

the most popular documents on our site, how often they were viewed, and displays the average length of time spent on the page. In accessing our website, members and potential members gain information about our Association and updates on our products and programs. The forms our branch officers and members use are available on the website to be printed. Graphic Artist Geralyn Radevic assists with updating our website with the latest information and branch activities.

Board of Directors: As part of my role as National Secretary I support the board of directors by attending quarterly Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings taking the minutes of board meetings or resolutions adopted by the board during these meetings. I then record and document the proceedings and prepare them for circulation to the Board of Directors as required by law, regulation, or policy. As National Secretary, I keep custody of these minutes and certify the contents of the records to third parties, including the superintendent of the Ohio Department of Insurance, from time to time. I serve as Secretary as required by Ohio nonprofit statute ORC 1702.34 and fulfill the responsibilities of this role for the association. In 2023, I supported the board working group with its project of updating the Board of Directors' *Policies and Procedures Manual*.

Districts: FCSLA Life currently has 15 active districts. Districts have a key role in our fraternal benefit branch system. They offer assistance and support to the branches in their vicinity to share information and ideas. In addition, many of the districts hold activities and events together. In 2023, we held our 22nd Annual District Presidents' meeting in person on May 4, 2023. This annual meeting gives the national officers and key stakeholders the opportunity to update the attendees on current information, product development, strategies, and procedures. To recap, National President Cynthia Maleski reviewed trends, provided an update on our Strategic Plan, AM Best, and discussed home office operations. Approximately \$17,607 was paid out for the annual district funding for 2023 (as compared to \$15,477 for 2022). The annual district funding guidelines include 3 components. Operations – Each district will receive a base amount of money contingent upon the number of members in each district and if the district holds at least one meeting with an informational sales presentation. Life Insurance and Annuity Certificate Sales – Additional money can be earned by the sale of any new life insurance or annuity certificate attributed to the district. Fraternal/Religious and Cultural Heritage Events/Activities – Districts can earn even more by holding fraternal/religious/heritage events.

Branches and Fraternal Outreach: Our Association is recognized as one of the top fraternal societies active in the United States today. The common bond of branch membership in a fraternal organization provides us with a competitive edge over commercial insurance companies. The branch plays a critical role in delivering this sense of fellowship. FCSLA Life currently has 537 branches in 28 states. It is recommended that Branch Officers review and share the monthly Branch Newsletter with their officers. In 2023, our branches remained committed in their participation of the Matching Funds activities. It amazes me all the innovative projects our branches are involved with in their local communities. The branches should be applauded for being so creative in continuing our philanthropic outreach:

NATIONAL SECRETARY'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

	2023	2022
Branches		
# Projects	170	170
Amount Raised	\$1,076,258	\$1,006,746
Amount Matched	\$100,803	\$101,339
# Branches Participating	104	104
# Branches Completing the maximum projects	52	48
Districts		
# Projects	7	9
Amount Raised	\$8,330	\$11,660
Amount Matched	\$4,096	\$5,600
# Districts Participating	5	6
# Districts Completing the maximum projects	2	3

In 2023, to recognize the March for Life in Washington, D.C. we held a virtual prayer service conducted by our National Chaplain Monsignor Peter M. Polando. Join Hands Day is held the first Saturday in May and promotes volunteer projects involving people of all ages working together. In 2023, most of the districts and branches were back in person participating in outdoor activities on this day of community service in very ingenious ways.

	2023	2022
Branch fraternal activity reimbursement	\$ 199,119	\$ 125,438
Branch compensation	\$ 708,642	\$ 640,698

Scholarships: For the 2022-2023 annual scholarship program, FCSLA Life awarded 233 scholarships in the amount of \$264,000 to students from elementary school to graduate school. This is one of the most generous annual benefits our association offers to members. Applications are available on our website as well as being posted in the January and February *Fraternally Yours*. 2023 was the fifth year for the Florence Hovanec Memorial Award and the John & Geraldine Gaydos Award. The Anna Hurban Scholarship Fund, which began in 2017, continues to be a vibrant part of FCSLA Life and creates an opportunity to provide our young members access to affordable education for deserving students. If you want additional information on this opportunity to help our student members by contributing to the current fund, look for details in the upcoming issues of *Fraternally Yours*.

St Anne Day Wreath Laying Ceremony: The wreath laying ceremony started in 2020 when we were in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and could not have our usual in person celebration of the Feast Day of Saint Anne who is our official patron saint. National President Cynthia M. Maleski, decided we would still celebrate Saint Anne with a wreath laying ceremony outside at the resident statue to mark her feast day and honor her for her guidance. Our National Chaplain Monsignor Peter M. Polando offered a blessing. It was so popular with our home office staff that this has now become an annual tradition.

Flag Day Ceremony: Last year we resumed our FCSLA Life Flag Day ceremony at the home office. Everyone met outside to honor the American Flag by reciting the Pledge of

Allegiance and singing the National Anthem led by National President Cynthia Maleski. The mayor of Beachwood joined our "Flag Day" celebration.

My Fraternal/Educational Activities: In 2023, I attended the Spring and Fall Slovak Catholic Federation meeting. I also attended the Ohio and Pennsylvania Fraternal Alliance meetings. In addition, I went to the Life Insurance Council (LIC) Annuity meeting, Eastern European Congress of Ohio event, American Fraternal Alliance Spring Symposium, Fraternal Societies of Greater Pittsburgh seminar, 100th Anniversary of Slovak Day at Kennywood, Optimum Re Underwriting Seminar, and Ohio Department of Insurance Cybersecurity tabletop exercise. I also had the

Home Office Staff: At the FCSLA Life Home Office, I continue to be impressed by the dedication of our committed and knowledgeable staff whose devotedness to our current members, new members, branch and district officers, and producers is remarkable. The national officers have confidence in this loyal staff, as they are the individuals with the daily expertise and understanding of our organization. In 2023, due to several retirements and future growth, new staff members were hired, and we continue to engage our staff in cross training where needed.

A.M. Best Review: In preparation for the interview and review process with the A.M. Best analysts, the FCSLA Life executive leadership team prepares a significant annual business report. This review covers many areas including management, financial, sales, operations, fraternal, strategic planning, investments, and enterprise risk management. Our presentation highlighted our recent accomplishments and favorable assessment. We are pleased and proud that FCSLA Life has maintained an A- (excellent) Rating for 2023 from A.M. Best.

In closing, I would like to thank National President Cynthia Maleski for her passion, innovation and leadership built on a foundation of integrity and trustworthiness to move this association forward. I want to recognize Interim National Treasurer Frank Rando for his financial insight. I appreciate their guidance and collaboration during this past year. As we bid farewell to the following board members, Dorothy Urbanowicz, Sue Ann Seich, Larry Golofski, Suzanne Strohl and Patrick Braun, I thank each of them for their years of service and commitment to the association. I look forward to working with the newly elected National Officers on the Board of Directors.

As I look back on the past year, I was extremely amazed by how our branches and districts were able to remain active and committed coming out of the pandemic. Your loyalty to our association is amazing. Lastly, I thank our producers who represent FCSLA Life, selling our products to bring financial security to our members. As your National Secretary, I thank you for your conviction and trust, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you, the FCSLA Life members. I value and appreciate the excellent Home Office staff for their commitment and flexibility this past year. As we transition into 2024, I am energized for the projects we have planned to accelerate our strategic digital transformation as FCSLA Life continues to thrive and grow for future generations.

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Frank Rando



National Directors and Members of First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association (FCSLA Life). I am pleased to present the 2023 National Treasurers' report of FCSLA Life.

Economic conditions in 2023

FCSLA Life is significantly impacted by economic conditions in the United States, particularly interest rates that affect our investment options and annuity crediting rates. Interest rates, inflation and the stock market returns continued to be volatile in 2023 as it was in 2022. Inflation, cool down a bit in 2023 ending the year at 3.4% down from 6.5% in 2022 which is

measured year over year. In addition, the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank actions, including raising short term rates in 2022 and 2023 to reduce inflation, resulted in short term bonds yielding more than longer term bonds, creating an inverted yield curve. Inverted yield curves are not the norm, and sometimes signal a coming recession. In addition to the interest rate inversion, interest rates continued increasing after bottoming out in the summer of 2020 at under .6% for the benchmark 10-year U.S. Treasury rate. Since that time, rates have increased materially with the 10-year U.S. Treasury yielding 3.9% at year-end 2023, the same as it was in 2022, but it has been a wild ride swinging from 3.253% to 5% during the year. 2023 was supposed to be a tough year for stocks. However, consumers shrugged off higher interest rates, and investors were more optimistic than fearful largely due to exuberance around AI, as a result, the S&P 500 rallied over 24% by the end of 2023.

Financial Statements

This report includes comparative balance sheets and income statements for 2023 and 2022. As in the past, the financial statements will be audited by our independent auditor. The audit of our 2022 financial statements resulted in an unqualified opinion. In addition, National Auditors and National Trustees review financial records pursuant to the Constitution and By-laws. FCSLA Life follows the accounting rules promulgated by the Ohio Department of Insurance and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), and these rules are collectively referred to as Statutory Accounting Principles.

Balance Sheet

Total assets declined by \$24 million to a total of \$1,103.9 million on December 31, 2023, a decrease of 2.1%. Cash on hand at year end increased by \$8.1 million to \$26.4 million in 2023.

FCSLA Life maintains most investment assets (99.8%) in bonds. These bonds consist of corporate bonds (93.6%), state and municipal bonds (3.9%) and mortgage-backed securities and other bonds (2.5%). Every year bonds mature or are called (approximately \$28.9 million in 2023), and the proceeds are reinvested in new bonds. During 2023 FCSLA Life purchased bonds for approximately \$78.1 million. Some of the purchases in 2023 were part of an Investment Optimization Plan. Lower quality bonds and bonds that were maturing soon were sold. The funds from those sales were reinvested

in higher quality, better yielding bonds. The investment yield from the Optimization Plan resulted in 16% better yield on that block.

We continue to use a balanced approach of buying a diversified mix of bonds to meet long insurance and annuity commitments. Corporate bonds and municipal bonds are subject to credit rating changes, upgrades, and downgrades, from the major credit rating agencies (Moody's, S&P and Fitch) and the NAIC. During 2023 the total dollar amount of bonds that were below investment grade fell from \$58.2 million on December 31, 2022, to \$25.7 as December 31, 2023, triggered by the Investment Optimization Plan reducing our bond default risk.

A list of all bonds and stocks purchased, matured, and disposed of during 2023 is included at the end of this report. We disposed of most of the block of stocks that were acquired over many years, and some from the mergers in 2017. There was no strategy involved in our less than 1% portfolio of stocks, selling them to invest in High Quality Bonds was a positive strategic move in 2023. Other assets include real estate of \$4.8 million (the home office) and policyholder loans of \$1.8 million. At the end of 2022, FCSLA Life engaged an investment firm to assist in the investment of FCSLA Life assets, subject to the investment policy set by the Board of Directors. The firm provides portfolio evaluation, risk management, security selection and security trade executions services, in collaboration with FCSLA Life management and Board of Directors. The engagement of the outside investment firm improved risk management, resulting in higher yield than would otherwise be the case, and provide more efficient (less costly) trade execution.

In 2023, life insurance reserves decreased by \$.4 million to \$307.5 million. Life reserves are the direct result of new life sales, death claims and surrenders, and are impacted by changing mortality risk as our membership demographics changes. Annuity reserves decreased by \$22 million to \$662.3 million. Annuity reserves are the result of annuity sales, less annuity payments to members/beneficiaries and interest earned on member balances. Annuities now represent 68.3% of FCSLA Life business, as measured by reserve balances.

Life and annuity reserves comprise 97.5% of all liabilities, and other liabilities include death claims payable of \$3.2 million, accumulated dividends and interest of \$5.1 million, and the asset valuation reserve of \$12.3 million. The surplus fell by \$.5 million in 2023 as a net result of 1-Bond Impairment (Signature Bank) for \$1.9M off-set by gains from Operations.

Income statement - Operating Results

Total revenue for 2023 was \$73.6 million vs. \$88.5 million in 2022 consisting primarily of \$4.7 million of life premiums, \$17.1 million of annuity premiums and \$51.1 million of investment income. The largest decrease in revenue was from annuity sales that decrease by \$15.7 million in 2023.

FCSLA Life currently offers three types of annuities (Silver, Gold, and Platinum Elite) each with differing credit rates and early surrender fees. As of December 31, 2023, the crediting rates were Platinum (4.0%), Gold (3.85%) and Silver (3.75%).

Investment income was \$51.1 million in 2023, an increase of \$.5 million from 2023. Most of the pick-up was related to

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

higher interest from cash on hand. These higher interest rates on cash were not available for the past two years.

The changes in life and annuity reserves were a decrease of \$21.6 million in 2023 were a net result of premiums received, interest credited, and benefits and surrenders paid. Insurance benefits of \$8.4 million (insurance benefits were \$10.1 million in 2021) represent death benefits paid to the beneficiaries. Annuity benefits include annuity surrenders, annuity withdrawals and annuity payments to beneficiaries and were \$65.2 million, an increase of \$16.5 million from 2022. This benefit fluctuates based on mortality and members withdrawing annuity funds to help fund retirement or other cash needs. Surrender benefits of \$5.7 million represent life insurance surrenders which were \$2.4 million more than 2022. Commissions paid to recommenders and agents decreased by \$.4 million in 2023 consistent with the decrease in premiums.

Revenue after direct life and annuity related expenses was \$13.9 million in 2023, versus \$13.6 million in 2022. Revenue less direct life and annuity expense is a measure of the funds FCSLA Life has available to pay general operating expenses and fraternal expenses, after benefits and other direct costs or providing benefits are paid. Because of the conservative reserving practices of the association, even though sales were lower, and claims were higher; it has minimal impact on the current year profitability.

Sales and operating expenses include the expenses necessary to operate the life insurance and annuity business as well as to administer fraternal benefits and operate the home office. These costs include officer and employee salaries and benefits, outside professionals (primarily actuaries, asset manager, attorneys, and accountants), technology and other office related expenses. Total operating expenses were \$7.6 million in 2023 and \$6.4 million in 2022. Inflation accounts for some of the increase, but the primary driver of the increase was the first-time use of an Asset Manager. We believe they will pay short and long-term dividends through Portfolio Management and Investment optimization initiatives. Some of the initiatives included a sell-off of Stocks and used the funds to purchase fixed income investments, higher quality bonds. We also benefitted from new NAIC accounting rules to allow us to reposition our Bond securities, we sold and purchased more than \$40 million of Bonds in December alone. Our book Investment yield netted a 22% increase in the earning yield on the purchases vs. the yield from the bonds sold.

In 2023 FCSLA Life spent \$4.0 million on direct fraternal related activities, the same amount was spent in 2022. These fraternal costs include branch and districts funding, fraternal activity reimbursement, official publications, conventions (we accrue expense annually), donations, matching funds, scholarship awards, and postmortem benefits. During 2023, postmortem benefits of \$1.6 million were paid to the beneficiaries of deceased members, in comparison with \$1.8 million in 2022. FCSLA Life is one of the few fraternal benefit organizations that provides this fraternal benefit.

FCSLA Life paid \$1.4 million in dividends in both 2023 and 2022, and net income was \$3.6 million in 2023 vs. \$.4million in 2022.

Financial Strength

Surplus is the most direct measure of financial strength, representing the assets less liabilities, and surplus decreased

from \$109.7 million 2022 to \$109.2 million in 2023. The level of surplus is well above statutory requirements and remains near record levels for FCSLA Life.

A second way to measure FCSLA Life financial strength is our solvency ratio. Our solvency ratio is 111% at the end of 2023, the same ratio it was for 2022. This means that we have approximately \$111 in assets to cover every \$100 of liabilities.

A third way to measure financial strength is evaluation by an independent third-party firm. In 2023, A.M. Best renewed our A- (Excellent) rating, consistent with the rating in 2022. Although an A.M. Best rating is not required for insurance companies, it is considered the insurance industry gold standard for measuring financial strength. The process is so demanding that many fraternal choose not to go through the rating process, either because of the extensive resources required or because the fraternal knows that its rating will not be favorable.

Financial Challenges

We look at Operating Income (Income less operating expenses before Fraternal Expenses, Dividends, and Capital Gains/Loss) closely. It is a measurement of how the business is doing operationally. We continually achieved Operation Income from the \$6 million to \$8 million range in the last five years. The Operating Income in 2023 declined by .9 million from 2022, \$6.2 million in 2023 vs. 7.1 million in 2022. The factors that drove this were related to the lower revenue from Annuity premiums and increase in operation expenses previously discussed. The Operating Income is used to pay member Dividends and Fraternal Benefits which is in the millions for our membership, our communities, scholarship programs, charitable giving, etc. The home office works extremely hard to make sure our operation runs efficiently, keep costs down, and most importantly that our members are satisfied. The Sales Team, Managers, Agents, Producers, and recommenders that generate new business/members and premium for the association to safe keep for the future benefits of the members that entrust us to do so. We continue to work hard to manage the funds to generate "Spread" that is cash received and invested to earn enough income to cover the cost of managing the members' Insurance and Annuity accounts, which allows for extra funds to be part of our fraternal activities. So, there are many facets to the financial side of this business and not much has changed since its inception 132 years ago. We continue to build on our strategic plan and make the necessary tweaks when needed. The Financial challenge is to keep improving our association for generations to come.

Closing Remarks

Thanks to our National President Cynthia M. Maleski and to National Secretary Kimberly A. Graham for their leadership. Thanks also to the Board of Directors for their commitment, diligence, and work in 2023. I have had the pleasure of working for this association since 2016 when I was hired as the Controller. I am thankful to the leadership in believing in me to serve the role of Interim National Treasurer until a qualified National Treasurer is hired. I have and will continue to assist in the process in any way. I am grateful to our Branch Officers and Directors that devote a significant amount of their valuable time and talent to keeping FCSLA alive and well at the grass roots level. Finally, and certainly not least, thank you to our hard-working team members in our Beachwood, Ohio Headquarters, who serve the members at FCSLA Life every day.

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Balance Sheet

12/31/2023

Assets

Cash & Short Term Investments	\$	26,421,720
Bonds		1,051,130,677
Preferred Stock		1,020,000
Common Stock		332,946
Investment Income Due & Accrued		14,065,590
Property Plant & Equipment, Net		4,590,301
Certificate Loans & Accrued Interest		1,729,677
Other Assets		531,681
Interest Maintenance Reserve		4,123,749
Total Assets	\$	1,103,946,341

Liabilities

Life Reserves	\$	307,527,081
Annuity Reserves		662,375,672
Death Claims Payable		3,646,219
Unearned Premiums		385,996
Matured Endowments		366,229
Provision for Dividends Payable		1,400,000
Accumulated Dividends & Interest		5,237,772
Accrued Convention Donations		37,500
Provision for Future Conventions		43,749
Asset Valuation Reserve		11,173,376
Interest Maintenance Reserve		0
Other Liabilities		2,494,363
Total Liabilities	\$	994,687,957
Surplus		109,258,354
Total Liabilities and Surplus Funds	\$	1,103,946,311

The original 2023 Annual Financial Statement for FCSLA Life printed in the April'2023 magazine has been amended to reflect a few Statutory Requirements related to how Negative IMR is to be reported. The Assets total increased by \$4.1 million and the Liabilities total increased by \$4.1 million. The Net change to Net Income and Surplus change by \$47,976. The corrected figures are reflected in the Amended Annual Statement included herein.

SLOVAK CATHOLIC FEDERATION BOARD MEETING

The Slovak Catholic Federation held their Board meeting at St. Cyril & Methodius in Danville, PA on April 15th. Pictures are from the liturgy held at their Church, declared by the Vatican, in June 1989, as a Minor Basilica.



From L-R : Msgr. Peter Polando, Rev. Thomas Nasta, Rev. Michale Brunovsky, OSB (celebrant), Rev. Andrew Hvozdovic, and Msgr. Robert Siffrin.



Back Row L-R: Scott Pogorelec, Kevin Collins, Rev. Thomas Nasta, Rev. Andrew Hvozdovic, Rev. Michael Brunovsky, OSB, Msgr. Robert Siffrin, Mike Ekoniak, and Brother Gabriel Balazovic, OSB

Front Row L-R: Sr. Thomas More Dzurnak, SSCM, John Andrzejewski, III, Sr. Michael Ann Orlik, SSCM, Thera Kluchinski, Dolores M. Evanko, Cynthia Maleski, Kimberly Graham, Sr. Barbara Sable, SSCM, and Loretta Ekoniak.

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

Income Statement For Period Ended 12/31/2023

12/31/2023

Revenue

Insurance Premiums	\$ 4,798,838.00
Annuity Premiums	17,114,088
Investment Income	51,549,521
Amortization of Interest Maintenance Reserve	(313,712)
Rental Income	416,556
Other Revenue	27,951
Total Revenue	\$ 73,593,241.91

Expense

Increase in Reserves - Life	\$ (430,460.00)
Increase in Reserves - Annuity	(21,565,408)
Insurance Benefits	8,435,790
Annuity Benefits	65,242,091
Commission Expense	558,744
Surrender Benefits	5,753,428
Matured Endowments	65,992
Interest Expense	672,423
Salaries - Employees	810,471
Payroll Tax Expense	60,219
Underwriting Expense	44,460

Life and Annuity Expenses

Revenue Less Life and Annuity Expenses \$ 13,945,490.93

Bank Service Charges	143,180
IT Expenses	396,026
Accounting Fees	206,038
Actuarial Fees	123,080
Legal Fees	79,339
Consulting Fees	111,950
Employee Benefits	637,064
Fees - Directors	197,273
Salaries - Employees	1,732,281
Salaries - Officers	733,961
Temporary Office Expenses	95,193
Payroll Tax Expense	182,750
Depreciation Expense	228,016

Utility Expense	122,882
Postage and Printing	300,426
Advertising & Marketing	183,796
Travel Expense	77,481
Insurance Department Fees	128,031
Sales Related Expense	308,710
Rental Expense	416,556
Building Expense	177,222
Insurance Expense	68,082
Office Related Expense	136,280
Dues & Subscriptions	78,369
Human Resources	60,219
Other Expense	28,109
Investment Expense	690,056

Sales and Operating Expenses \$ 7,642,371.47

Revenue Less Sales & Operating Expenses \$ 6,303,119

Post Mortem Benefits	1,575,591
Misc. Member Benefits	110,101
Donation Expenses	150,677
Change in Accrued Convention Donations	150,000
Convention Expenses	122,436
Branch and District Funding	694,477
Fraternal Activities	201,630
Official Publications	744,722
Scholarship Awards	257,218

Direct Fraternal Expenses 4,006,852

Income (Loss) from Operations \$ 2,296,267

Dividends to Members 1,388,727

Subtotal INCOME (LOSS) \$ 907,540

Capital Gains (Loss) 2,756,129

NET INCOME (LOSS) \$ 3,663,669

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

BONDS ACQUIRED DURING 2023

Description	Y T M	DUE	PAR
JANUARY			
METROPOLITAN WASH D C ARPTS AUTH DULLES TOLLRD RE	4.982	10/01/2035	3,000,000.00
MORGAN STANLEY GOLDEN ST TOB SECURITIZATION CORP CALIF TOBSETTLE	5.948	01/19/2038	275,000.00
5.531	06/01/2041	3,000,000.00	
FEBRUARY			
METROPOLITAN TRANSN AUTH N Y REV	5.769	11/15/2040	1,575,000.00
METROPOLITAN TRANSN AUTH N Y REV	5.800	11/15/2040	150,000.00
MORGAN STANLEY	5.798	01/19/2038	1,725,000.00
METROPOLITAN TRANSN AUTH N Y REV	5.820	11/15/2040	360,000.00
MARCH			
BANK 2019-BNK17 AS	5.833	04/17/2052	1,000,000.00
MAY			
IQVIA INC	5.656	05/15/2028	1,750,000.00
JUNE			
CGMS 231 B	7.692	07/20/2035	2,000,000.00
MAGNE 36 B	7.786	04/22/2036	2,000,000.00
JULY			
DCP MIDSTREAM OPERATING LP	6.032	11/03/2036	2,825,000.00
ASHTAD CAPITAL INC	5.947	10/15/2033	3,000,000.00
AUGUST			
CHARLES SCHWAB CORP	6.138	08/24/2034	1,150,000.00
CHARLES SCHWAB CORP	6.057	08/24/2034	1,850,000.00
FOND DU LAC COUNTY	6.186	11/01/2042	285,000.00
SEPTEMBER			
VDCR 231 A2A	6.773	09/15/2048	2,000,000.00
OCTOBER			
GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP INC	6.563	10/24/2034	1,000,000.00
NOVEMBER			
UBS GROUP AG	7.097	08/12/2033	2,050,000.00
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO	6.423	10/23/2034	2,000,000.00
M&T BANK CORP	7.340	10/30/2029	2,000,000.00
DECEMBER			
VDC 2020-1 A2	6.626	09/15/2045	1,270,000.00
SORT 2021-1 A1	7.048	03/15/2061	716,260.15
COREBRIDGE FINANCIAL INC	5.774	01/15/2034	1,365,000.00
USRE 211 A1	7.099	10/20/2061	1,030,000.00
ARES XLIV 3R1	7.440	04/17/2034	3,000,000.00
MDPK XXXII BR	7.396	01/22/2031	2,000,000.00
OSD 27 B	7.861	04/16/2035	2,000,000.00
THAYR 1R AAR	7.513	04/20/2034	3,000,000.00
BARCLAYS PLC	6.366	09/13/2034	2,800,000.00
BNP PARIBAS SA	5.640	01/20/2033	3,500,000.00
HSBC HOLDINGS PLC	5.946	03/09/2034	2,800,000.00
SORT 2021-1 A1	7.026	03/15/2061	1,641,932.13
UBS GROUP AG	5.662	07/15/2026	1,000,000.00
HSBC HOLDINGS PLC	5.623	03/09/2044	1,000,000.00
MANUFACTURERS AND TRADERS TRUST CO	5.919	01/27/2026	1,000,000.00
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP INC	5.570	05/01/2036	620,000.00
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL GROUP INC	5.566	07/10/2035	500,000.00
ATHENE GLOBAL FUNDING	5.651	11/19/2030	3,650,000.00
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON CO	5.512	12/01/2041	3,650,000.00
LLOYDS BANKING GROUP PLC	5.434	08/11/2033	3,050,000.00
IMPRL 22NQM3 A1	4.625	05/25/2067	2,496,013.25
MFRA 23NQM4 A1	6.078	05/01/2064	1,000,000.00
			78,084,206

FEBRUARY

BED BATH & BEYOND INC	4.915	0.000	1,620,000
CATERPILLAR INC	8.000	8.000	1,000,000
DR HORTON INC	4.750	4.750	2,000,000
WELLS FARGO & CO	3.450	3.450	200,000

MARCH

ALLERGAN INC	2.800	2.800	27,000
COOPER TIRE & RUBBER CO	7.625	7.863	300,000
DELL INC	7.100	6.200	5,500,000
GENERAL ELECTRIC CO	5.500	5.500	61,000
LINCOLN NEB WEST HAYMARKET JT PUB AGY	5.800	5.799	100,000
NATIONAL FUEL GAS CO	3.750	3.750	106,000
NEW ORLEANS NAVY HOUSING LLC	5.754	5.680	150,000
OWL ROCK CAPITAL CORP	4.250	4.125	2,010,000
XEROX CORP	3.800	3.889	50,000

MAY

APPLE INC	2.400	2.400	50,000
GLOBE LIFE INC	7.875	7.875	2,700,000

JUNE

BANK OF N T BUTTERFIELD & SON LTD	5.250	5.470	500,000
BERKELEY CNTY S C UTIL REV	3.000	3.000	100,000
COLUMBUS OHIO	3.000	3.199	50,000
OKLAHOMA DEV FIN AUTH LEASE REV	4.500	4.500	100,000
RIO RANCHO N MEX GROSS RCPTS TAX REV	4.050	4.267	40,000
WHEELING W VA WTRWKS & SEW SYS REV	3.375	3.813	50,000

JULY

TWDC ENTERPRISES 18 CORP	7.550	7.185	700,000
FIDUS INVESTMENT CORP	4.750	4.751	2,500,000
GEICO CORP	7.350	7.350	3,000,000
HERSHEY CO	7.200	5.599	2,679,000
INDEPENDENT BANK GROUP INC	5.875	4.466	1,000,000
MICHIGAN ST	3.800	4.102	45,000
ONSLow CNTY N C LTD OBLIG	4.000	4.000	25,000
WEYERHAEUSER CO	7.125	7.125	420,000

AUGUST

AETNA INC	7.250	7.250	1,512,000
ROSEMONT ILL	6.750	6.701	100,000

SEPTEMBER

HILLENBRAND INC	5.000	4.618	1,850,000
RALSTON NEB	5.000	5.000	150,000

OCTOBER

OHIO ST HIGHER EDL FAC COMMN REV	4.250	4.349	35,000
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY	2.134	36.484	20,000

NOVEMBER

CNA FINANCIAL CORP	7.250	7.250	500,000
WESTERN MICH UNIV REVS	5.250	5.529	35,000

DECEMBER

ADVANCE AUTO PARTS INC	3.900	3.840	2,000,000
ATHENS-CLARKE CNTY GA UNI GOVT DEV AUTH REV	3.625	3.625	30,000
AUTONATION INC	3.500	4.419	2,000,000
AXOS FINANCIAL INC	4.875	4.482	1,900,000
BEST BUY CO INC	4.450	5.000	2,000,000
BLOCK FINANCIAL LLC	5.250	4.929	2,000,000
BLOCK FINANCIAL LLC	3.875	3.695	2,000,000
CAPITAL SOUTHWEST CORP	3.375	3.170	3,000,000
CENTRAL OHIO SOLID WASTE AUTH	4.625	4.625	50,000
DOMTAR CORP	6.250	5.715	2,816,000
FNB CORP	4.950	5.131	1,000,000
FRONTIER CALIFORNIA INC	6.750	5.667	45,000
FRONTIER NORTH INC	6.730	0.000	450,000
RELX INC	7.200	5.960	3,000,000
HARLEY-DAVIDSON INC	4.625	4.572	2,000,000
TALCOTT RESOLUTION LIFE INC	7.650	6.901	1,640,000
HILLENBRAND INC	5.000	4.616	150,000
LEGG MASON INC	4.750	4.219	2,000,000
MINNESOTA LIFE INSURANCE CO	8.250	5.100	1,000,000
NEUBERGER BERMAN GROUP LLC	4.875	5.145	503,000
NORDSTROM INC	6.950	5.572	2,000,000
NORFOLK SOUTHERN CORP	3.850	3.850	100,000
AUGUSTAR LIFE INSURANCE CO	8.500	7.598	2,000,000
OLD REPUBLIC INTERNATIONAL CORP	3.875	4.370	3,000,000
PVH CORP	4.625	4.088	2,000,000

BONDS MATURED, CALLED or SOLD DURING 2023

Description	Coupon Rate	STAT Book Yield	PAR
JANUARY			
AMERICAN TOWER CORP	3.500	3.500	100,000
CVSPAS 009 A2	9.350	7.753	1,997,682
MBIA INC	7.000	6.958	500,000
UNION PACIFIC CORP	2.950	2.950	40,000

NATIONAL TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023

PEMBROKE PINES FLA COMMUNICATIONS			
SVCS TAX	4.706	4.231	2,000,000
SCHENECTADY N Y CITY SCH DIST	4.300	4.238	100,000
SHERWIN-WILLIAMS CO	7.375	7.023	2,000,000
STEELCASE INC	5.125	4.700	1,240,000
TRANSAMERICA CAPITAL II	7.650	7.089	1,500,000
WALMART INC	7.550	4.499	8,607,000
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE INC	4.800	4.267	2,000,000
VENDE 1998-2 G	6.750	3.817	202
TOTAL BONDS			\$ 90,053,884

HUNTINGTON INGALLS INDUSTRIES ORD	19	---	4,145
DIAMOND OFFSHORE DRILLING, INC.	38	---	45
NRG ENERGY ORD	102	---	4,307
FIRST CITIZENS BANCSHARES CL A ORD	113	---	162,387
NORTHROP GRUMMAN ORD	118	---	57,348
SCULPTOR CAPITAL MANAGEMENT			
CL A ORD	120	---	1,488
WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY SRS A ORD	120	---	1,182
KINDER MORGAN CL P ORD	134	---	2,231
DONNELLEY FINANCIAL SOLTN ORD	162	---	8,444
NAVIOS MARITIME PARTNERS UNT	185	---	4,131
ORCHID ISLAND CAPITAL ORD	300	---	1,864
UGI ORD	434	---	9,031
AT&T ORD	500	---	7,592
CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER CO	500	2.247	15,000
SOUTHERN ORD	500	---	33,480
CEDAR FAIR UNT	600	---	21,014
MARTIN MIDSTREAM PARTNERS UNT	600	---	1,434
ANNALY CAPITAL MANAGEMENT REIT ORD	787	---	12,039
OMEGA HEALTHCARE REIT ORD	800	---	27,189
OLD REPUBLIC INTERNATIONAL ORD	1,000	---	27,864
VECTOR GROUP ORD	1,274	---	13,272
ALLIANCEBERNSTEIN HOLDING UNT	1,400	---	38,707
DIVERSIFIED HEALTHCARE ORD	1,500	---	3,148
RITHM CAPITAL ORD	1,700	---	15,908
STARWOOD PROPERTY REIT	1,700	---	30,115
COMPASS DIVERSIFIED ORD	2,000	---	35,423
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GAS CO	2,000	4.444	47,600
AMERICAN FINANCIAL GROUP ORD	2,019	---	223,847
MEDALLION FINANCIAL ORD	2,500	---	16,239
GENERAL MOTORS ORD	6,348	---	184,540
JPMORGAN CHASE ORD	8,967	---	1,266,753
XCEL ENERGY ORD	9,000	---	539,080
ALLSTATE ORD	23,002	---	2,899,328
AMBAC FINANCIAL GROUP ORD	24,839	---	290,112
DANA INCORPORATED ORD	66,855	---	855,082
DECEMBER			
AMEREN ILLINOIS CO	50	4.176	3,213
AMEREN ILLINOIS CO	500	4.333	34,125

STOCKS MATURED, CALLED DURING 2023

	SHARES	STAT Book Yield	PROCEEDS
FEBRUARY			
EATON VANCE TXMGDGLDVEIN	4	---	32
PROSPECT CAPITAL ORD	3,142	---	17,362
MARCH			
ALERISLIFE ORD	101	---	132
APRIL			
ARES CAPITAL ORD	1,026	---	19,436
JUNE			
NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC CO	1,000	4.545	55,188
DOUGLAS ELLIMAN ORD	701	---	1,242
SEPTEMBER			
ICAHN ENTERPRISES UNT	301	---	5,268
OCTOBER			
TRITON INTERNATIONAL ORD	700	---	58,211
NIAGARA MOHAWK POWER CORP	450	3.500	34,663
PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC CO	1,000	0.000	14,500
DIVERSIFIED HEALTHCARE TRUST	2,000	5.967	25,700
GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP INC	4,000	8.217	81,879
US BANCORP	5,000	7.265	93,749
METLIFE INC	5,500	6.905	123,749
CHS INC	16,000	8.000	463,996
RMR GROUP CL A ORD	16	---	356

TOTAL STOCKS 203,727 \$7,894,170

St. Ann Lodge Br. S-114 Annual Scholarship Luncheon

St. Ann Lodge Br. S-114 in Lorain OH will hold our Annual Scholarship Luncheon on Sunday, July 21st at 1:00 PM at the American Slovak Club 2915 Broadway. All members are invited and encouraged to attend. Please make your reservations by calling Bernie Danevich at 440-960-2605. Deadline for reservations is July 16th.

A reminder: Our Annual Bingo Social will be held on October 20th and the Annual Meeting & Christmas Party on December 15th.



2024 Slovakia Heritage Tour

Sept. 6-15, 2024

Celebrate the fall harvest and the beautiful culture, history and countryside of Slovakia, up close and personal, on the 2024 Slovakia Heritage ten-day, small group tour. From September 6-15, we'll explore age-old cities, medieval towns and historic sites as well as folk-life museums, the Tatry mountains and picturesque villages. We'll join in a few of the festivals that bring alive Slovakia's long music and craft traditions. Optional genealogical research, and ancestral village and family visits available. **For more information:** Visit www.slovakiaheritage.com or contact Judith Northup-Bennett, Slovakia Heritage Tours, 978-544-5144(text 978-894-6622), or slovakiaheritagetours@gmail.com

The First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association Donates in support of King's College's Times Leader Building Project

The First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association (FCSLA) donated \$5,000 to King's College's Times Leader Building Project. The donation was approved at the 43rd Quadrennial National Convention of the FCSLA.

This Project will entail the conversion of the former Times Leader Building into a hub of teaching and learning for King's College's first Doctoral Program, Occupational Therapy, in the heart of downtown Wilkes-Barre.

This initiative is aimed at preparing career-ready candidates for a high paying in-demand profession that supports community needs. Once the Times Leader Building Project is completed, and the Occupational Therapy Program is at full capacity, there will be an anticipated 164 students enrolled in the Program.



(L to R): Greg Morgan, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at King's College, Magdalen Iskra, FCSLA District President, Rev. Thomas P. Looney, C.S.C., Ph.D., President of King's College, Martha Iskra, FCSLA District Vice President, and Michelle Giovagnoli, Director of Institutional and Academic Grants at King's College.

We Want to Hear From You!

- Did your children, grandchildren receive special awards or achievements in school?
- Baptisms? Confirmations? New Members?
- Participated in Volunteer & Community Projects?

If they are members of the FCSLA Life please email us a photo and short article about their special achievements!

E-mail: zjbazik@comcast.net



1st Holy Communion



Raymond Paul Simon received his 1st Holy Communion on Sunday, May 5, 2024 at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in New Prague, MN. He is pictured with his grandparents, Paul and JoAnne Maruska. They are all members of Branch W001 in New Prague.

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

Brynlee Ann Spaniol (Wildwood, MO) is the daughter of Matthew Ryne Spaniol and Jenilee (Novotney) Spaniol (Both of Branch 66) received First Holy Communion on April 13, 2024 at Ascension Catholic Church in Chesterfield, MO.



Anna Hurban District in Cleveland Ohio Annual Day of Recollection in Honor of Sts. Ann and Joachim



Sponsored by: First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association
Anna Hurban District, Cleveland, Ohio

Location: Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine
21281 Chardon Road, Euclid, Ohio 44117

Contact Info: Gianna: 216-468-1021 [or gianna@fcsla.com](mailto:gianna@fcsla.com)
Cleveland District Fraternal Coordinator

Date: Friday, July 26, 2024

Schedule: 10:00 A.M. Confessions
11:00 A.M. Mass - In Chapel
12:00 P.M. Luncheon in St. Ann's Hall at Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine
2:00 P.M. Cash Raffle Drawing = \$100 Prize
2:30 P.M. Benediction and Rosary

Cost: \$30.00 Lunch, \$5.00 ea. Cash Raffle Tickets for \$100 Cash Prize Drawing

Menu: Pork Tenderloin, Potatoes, Broccoli Cheese Casserole, Tossed Salad,
Bread w/Butter, Dessert, Drink (coffee, tea, milk, or soda).

RSVP: RESERVATIONS ONLY **RSVP by July 15, 2024**

Bus Pickup Locations:

9:00 A.M. - St. John Bosco Church 6480 Pearl Road, Parma Hts., Ohio 44130

9:30 A.M. - St. Monica Church 13623 Rockside Road, Garfield Hts., Ohio 44125

Please complete the form below & return with payment to:

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: FCSLA OKRES CLEVELAND DISTRICT

ATTN: Gianna, c/o First Catholic Slovak Ladies • 24950 Chagrin Blvd., Beachwood, OH 44122

RSVP Required: Please respond by July 15, 2024

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY IN CASE WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU REGARDING THIS RSVP

Ordering # _____ Lunches x \$30.00 each = Total Lunches \$ _____

Ordering # _____ Raffle Tickets x \$ 5.00 each = Total Raffles \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Planning to ride bus - **Select Bus Pickup Location:** # _____ seats - St. John Bosco

_____ seats - St. Monica

Frances Jakabcin Eastern PA District Meeting

The Frances Jakabcin Eastern District of PA recently gathered for their Spring district meeting at the Northampton Community Center in Northampton, PA, graciously hosted by Branch Presidents Ann Marie Bachman of Br. 484 Egypt and Mary Anne Pohl of Br. 443 Northampton.

During the meeting, attendees were briefed on upcoming events:

- Knoebels outing scheduled for July 11th, 2024
- St. Anne's event, currently in the planning stages for either July 21st or July 28th
- Sales seminar, also in the planning phase

District President Grasso emphasized the significance of engaging young individuals in our endeavors, announcing her intent to conduct marketing research targeted at younger members.

Moreover, the meeting witnessed the induction of new officers for the Nesquehoning and Hazelton Branches. The assembly also voted to maintain the current district board officers.

Looking ahead, mark your calendars for the next gathering slated for September 15th at the Carriage House in Hellertown, PA. For any inquiries, please reach out to Michele Mrazik Grasso at 610-762-1973.





New Annuities, New Rates!

It's Up, Up and Away with FCSLA Life's NEW flexible premium deferred Elite Annuity contracts!

**These rates are effective 6/1/24*

PLATINUM

5.20%
APY*

(10 Year Fixed Annuity –
Contract FPA(10)-0415)
(Maximum Issue Age 79)

GOLD

5.10%
APY*

(7 Year Fixed Annuity –
Contract FPA(7)-0713)
(Maximum Issue Age 85)

SILVER

5.00%
APY*

(5 Year Fixed Annuity –
Contract FPA(5)-0713)
(Maximum Issue Age 85)

***The Guaranteed minimum rates for the three products listed above issued on January 1, 2023, or later will be 3.00%.** The crediting rate is reviewed quarterly by the Board of Directors and will never go below the minimum guaranteed contracted rate. Anyone who purchases an Elite Series annuity is a member of FCSLA Life and may be eligible for generous fraternal benefits of membership.

- FCSLA Life founded in 1892
- FCSLA Life is rated A- Excellent by AM Best (October 2023)
For the latest rating and more information, access www.ambest.com.
- FCSLA Life has over \$1.1 billion of assets invested in highly rated and well diversified portfolio.

For more information, contact your local recommender, agent or the FCSLA Life Home Office at 1-800-464-4642 ext 1065.



First Catholic Slovak Ladies Association of the United States of America • a fraternal benefit society domiciled in Beachwood, OH • 24950 Chagrin Blvd., Beachwood, Ohio 44122 • 800.464.4642 • www.fcsla.com

BRANCH J-368 & BRANCH S-456 celebrates HALLOWEEN & ALL SAINTS DAY across the states



Vintage Slovak dress on display at the Czech & Slovak Educational Center and Cultural Museum in Omaha, NE



Newest member in J-368 holding mask on All Hallow's Eve



Cowgirl Barbie Geraldine Berkemeier of Ann Arbor, MI S-456 ready to wrestle some bucking broncos on Halloween.



Louise Brelje from J-368 dresses up as St Lucia on December 13th Feast of St Lucia, patron saint of the blind.



Brothers Henry Berkemeier & Franz Berkemeier S-456 grilling what? Why of course....Omaha Steaks from Omaha, NE.

MATCHING FUNDS ACTIVITIES

BRANCH J368

GROWING by LEAPS & BOUNDS!

Matching Fund event held as a Halloween party and 4th Birthday Party in AKRON. J-368 is GROWING by LEAPS & BOUNDS!

Pictured at our Matching Fund Halloween and 4th Birthday Party in AKRON.



Louise Brelje of Ann Arbor, MI J-368 sneaking a cookie.



Babcia Janet Berkemeier S-456 of Jackson, MI w dog; Ciocia Gretchen Hentemann S-456 holding Gerard Hentemann, J-368 both of Grand Rapids, MI; Dziadek Frank Berkemeier S-456 of Jackson, MI, Birthday Girl: Francesca DelMedico of Akron, OH, J-368 next to cousin Louise Brelje J-368 & mother Ciocia Andrea Brelje S-456 holding Paul Anton, J-368, all of Ann Arbor, MI; Ciocia Monica & Nick DelMedico S-456 owners and hosts; grandparents Tim & Jenny DelMedico of AKRON.



Three sisters and young mothers with their babies are in Branch S-456 & J-368 Gretchen Berkemeier Hentemann w Gerard of Grand Rapids, MI; Monica Berkemeier DelMedico w Angelo of Akron, OH; Andrea Berkemeier Brelje w Paul Anton of Ann Arbor, MI.



Standing/Sitting from L to R and Donning the Fashionable FCSLA Aprons are Monica DelMedico with mother Janet Berkemeier; Sitting is Andrea Brelje. In the front mixing the cookie batter are cousins: Francesca DelMedico, Louise Brelje & Paul Brelje.



Outdoors are Members are Monica DelMedico, Janet Berkemeier & Andrea Brelje of S-456 assisting the Junior branch Angelo DelMedico, Louise Brelje and Francesca DelMedico of J-368 with a Science Experiment (with Baking Soda & Vinegar & a Water Based Green Dye).



Francesca DelMedico with cousin Louise Brelje dipping a cup of Green Brew.



Family Time Recipes

PIMENTO CHEESE SAUSAGE BALLS

1 pound sausage
1 (12 oz) container pimento cheese
2 cups Bisquick
1/4 teaspoon red pepper
Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the uncooked sausage and pimento cheese until mixed thoroughly.

Add in the Bisquick and red pepper. Mix well with your hands (or electric mixer), until combined well.

Scoop and roll into 1-inch balls. Place sausage balls onto a prepared baking sheet (lined with parchment paper).

Place baking sheet into preheated oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until they're golden brown. Enjoy!
Pimento cheese sausage balls may be kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one week. You may also freeze them before baking, then thaw and bake before serving.

STRAWBERRY SPINACH SALAD

For the dressing

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon dry mustard powder
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon poppyseeds
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 small red onion, about 1/4 cup
1 cup olive oil

For the salad

2 cups sliced almonds, toasted
16 ounces baby spinach, chopped
2 pounds strawberries, sliced (about 6 cups sliced)

8 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
3/4 small red onion, sliced thin

Make the dressing: Add 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar, 1 teaspoon dry mustard powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon poppyseeds, and 3/4 cup sugar to a blender. Chop a small red onion in half, then in half again. Add one quarter of the onion to the blender (save the rest for later.)

Blend the ingredients until smooth. With the blender running, add in 1 cup vegetable oil in a slow steady stream. Adding the oil while the dressing is moving allows it to emulsify immediately,

instead of separating (oil and vinegar) every time you're not shaking the bottle. Scrape the dressing into a mason jar or container and set aside.

Toast the almonds. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread 2 cups sliced almonds on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake at 350 for about 4-7 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes. The nuts are toasted when they have turned a light golden brown. Don't walk away! They burn fast. Take them out of the oven and set aside to cool.

Prep the salad. Only chop what you will eat right now.

Hull and slice about 6 cups strawberries. Slice the rest of the red onion that you used for the dressing.

Add the goat cheese to a bowl and gently crumble with a fork. In a large bowl, add the spinach, and top with sliced red onions and sliced strawberries. Only add however much you plan to serve now. Save the rest for later.

Add the goat cheese in crumbles on top of the strawberries, onions, and spinach.

Pour some of the dressing over the salad. How much you use is totally up to you! I rarely use all of it. Use tongs to toss it all together.

Sprinkle the top with the toasted sliced almonds. Toss again if you want, or leave the almonds on top (and add more goat cheese) for a pretty presentation.

CREAMY BACON PASTA SALAD

24 oz small pasta noodles
4 cup frozen peas (thawed)
24 oz thick cut bacon (cooked and chopped)

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

For the Creamy Dressing:

1 1/2 cup mayonnaise
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
2 teaspoons salt (to taste)
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon black pepper, to taste

Cook the pasta noodles in a large pot of water according to their package directions, until cooked al dente. Drain the water, and rinse the noodles in cold water.

While the pasta is cooking, make sure the peas are thawed, bacon is cooked and crumbled, and Parmesan is grated. Set aside.

In a small bowl, add the mayonnaise, olive oil, vinegar, sugar, salt, garlic

powder, onion powder, and black pepper. Whisk them together till combined.

Add the pasta, peas, bacon, and Parmesan to a large bowl. Pour the dressing over the top. Stir it all together till everything is coated evenly in the dressing.

Cover the pasta bowl with a lid or plastic wrap and place it in the fridge to chill for 1 to 2 hours, or serve immediately.

STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE LEMON BARS

cooking spray
1 (18.25 ounce) package lemon cake mix
1/3 cup prepared lemonade
1/3 cup butter, melted
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup white sugar
1 egg
1/4 cup strawberry preserves
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1/4 cup sprinkles, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9x13-inch baking pan with cooking spray.

Beat together cake mix, lemonade, and butter until a soft dough forms. Press half the dough evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan.

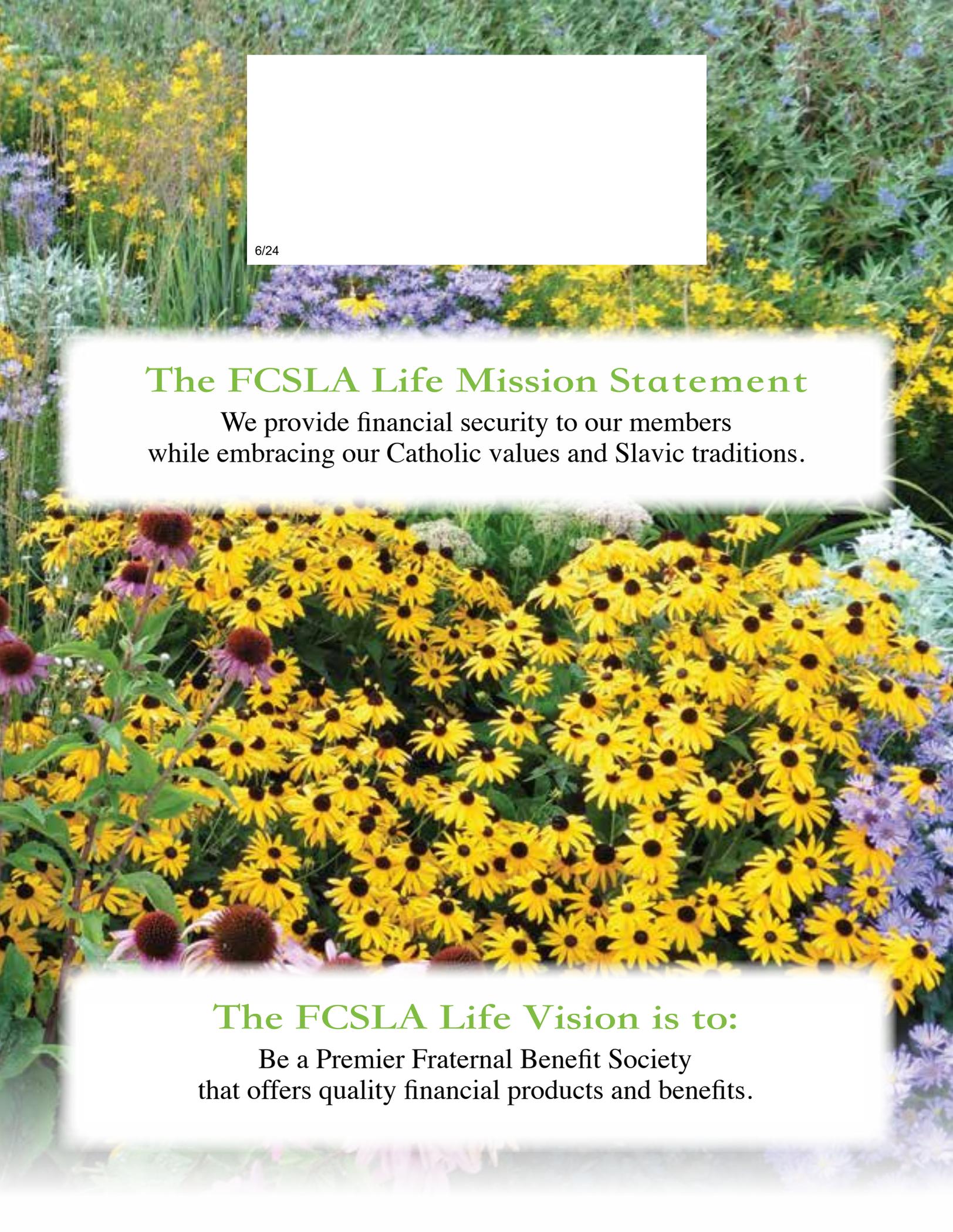
Beat together cream cheese and sugar in a bowl until creamy. Add egg and beat again. Spread cream cheese mixture over the dough in the pan.

Place strawberry preserves in a microwave-safe bowl. Heat in the microwave until melted, about 30 seconds. Drop by small spoonfuls all over the top of the cheesecake layer. Drag a knife very carefully through the cheesecake to swirl in the strawberry preserves.

Take a small piece of the remaining dough and press it flat in the palm of your hand. Rip the dough into pieces and scatter over the cheesecake, covering as much of the surface as you can.

Bake in the preheated oven until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool on a wire rack for 2 hours. Refrigerate until completely chilled, about 4 hours to overnight.

Stir the confectioners' sugar and lemon juice together in a bowl. Drizzle mixture over the chilled cheesecake and top with sprinkles. Let icing set, about 15 minutes. Cut into 24 bars. Keep refrigerated.



6/24

The FCSLA Life Mission Statement

We provide financial security to our members while embracing our Catholic values and Slavic traditions.

The FCSLA Life Vision is to:

Be a Premier Fraternal Benefit Society that offers quality financial products and benefits.