

FENCERS CLUB

est. 1883

September 2, 2008

Dear Members, Former Members, and Friends,

Fencers Club's 2008 fiscal year, which ended yesterday, was probably the most eventful year in our 125-year history. During the Summer of 2007 several of the Club's coaches left the Club and many of their students followed them to two new clubs. The resulting diminution of membership dues created additional financial stress on the FC, as we also faced the necessity of moving in May 2008 to a much more expensive space.

I am pleased to report that our annus horribilus has turned into a highly successful transitional year. First of all, three of our members came home from the Olympics with silver medals: Erinn Smart and Emily Cross for the women's foil team event and Keeth Smart for the men's saber team event. In addition, Nzingha Prescod won the Cadet Women's Foil World Championship. Everyone at the Club is enormously proud of these outstanding fencers.

There is more good news. We are happy to welcome Kornel Udvarhelyi and Buckie Leach back to the Club as coaches, starting this week. We have missed them and are glad to have them once again as members of the Fencers Club family.

Lyn Rollins came on board as the Club's new Manager one year ago and has done a terrific job of reorganizing and modernizing our procedures across the board, while continuing our tradition of friendly and welcoming interaction with members, parents, and coaches. During the past year Paul Oratofsky has done an outstanding job, putting in place a software system that allows members to join, and pay for lessons, rent lockers, etc. on line.

As reported earlier, we signed a ten-year lease on a larger space at 229 West 28th Street, three blocks north of our current site, and expect to move within the next few months. The new club will have 19 full-length strips, seven of which will be convertible into half strips (for a total of 26 usable strips), which will allow lessons and classes to operate in one area, while bouts or competitions are going on in other areas. The new Fencers Club will be by far the largest and most modern fencing club in New York.

Although dues and fees are not currently sufficient to fully cover expenses, Fencers Club is on a solid financial footing because of members' contributions. In fact we lowered membership dues this year to encourage new fencers to join and old members to keep fencing. We have a big space to fill when we move. Our financial projections anticipate that the Club will be self-supporting within approximately three years.

We also have contributions coming in, and would welcome more (donations are tax-deductible), that allow us to expand our scholarship program starting this month. This new program will be primarily merit-based. It will provide free membership, and pay for lessons and travel to domestic and foreign tournaments for top-ranked senior fencers, and similar benefits to selected junior and cadet fencers. It is open to fencers anywhere in the United States who want to become members of the Fencers Club and train at the Club. Selections will be made by a committee of Club members and coaches. The purpose of this program is not only to help the FC, but also to help American fencing. We have the largest and best coaching staff in the United States. We will soon have a new facility with a lot of extra space. If we can continue to attract talented young fencers, and provide them with the financial assistance they need, we will also achieve a critical mass of high-level fencers who can train with each other, thereby raising the level of all. If we are successful in this endeavor, the FC would become a de facto national training center. There is still much work to be done on this and other projects but Fencers Club is on the move, and it is better than ever.

We will be honoring our Olympians and welcoming our new and returning members to an exciting new season at the FC with a party on Saturday evening, September 20, from 6:30 to 8:30. We hope to see you there. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to party@fencersclub.com.

Sincerely yours,
James L. Melcher
Chairman

