

PHS Member Starts Support Ministry for Ukrainian Refugees

By Jarek Kozal

While many Americans sit in front of the television watching coverage of Russian aggressors as they destroy Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens are defending their sovereign nation and millions of Ukrainian women, children, and elderly citizens are fleeing to the bordering nations of Poland, Slovakia, Moldova, Romania, and Hungary. More than 3.5 million refugees have left Ukraine last week, and 2 million of them have already crossed into Poland. Having family and friends living in various regions of Poland, I receive information daily about the humanitarian crisis that the Polish people are facing. Poland is a country slightly larger than the state of Michigan, and each day more than 100,000 people are arriving in Poland with only the clothes on their backs and a suitcase in hand. No one is being turned away at the Polish border, including refugees traveling with their pets.

Polish citizens, knowing all too well what it means to live under Russian oppression, have banded together as a nation and have gone individually and as families to the Polish-Ukrainian border. Here they have transported Ukrainians to any village, town, or city in Poland they are willing to go. The Poles have opened their homes, train stations, churches, schools, hotels, and sports centers to refugees and have provided them with

food, water, clothing, a warm bed, and personal care items. The Polish outreach to their Slavic brothers and sisters is one of the most loving acts of justice I have ever witnessed in my life. The people of Poland and the humanitarian foundations to which they belong have organized these selfless acts of compassion without government help. What I have witnessed makes me proud of my Polish heritage and fills me with great gratitude. The government of Poland is currently too tied up in military planning and refugee processing to help individual Polish families who have opened their hearts and homes to the Ukrainian refugees.

As I watched the news, read the Polish newspaper, and spoke to my Polish family, I found myself weeping for the people of Ukraine. By virtue of our humanity, the Ukrainians are our brothers and sisters, and I could not sit by idly without doing something as well. For this reason, I asked my family and friends in Poland what I could do to help. All of them indicated that there is great need for financial support. Although clothing, shelter, food, water, and personal care items are available to the refugees, their host families truly need the financial resources to purchase more of these items. The border towns of Przemyśl and Medyka are under the most pressure, but they are also receiving the

most support from Poland's humanitarian organizations.

Other cities, towns, and villages in Poland are also receiving refugees, and there is a need for financial support in those locations as well. The small city of Krotoszyn in west-central Poland, where my Kozal relatives live, has already received and is supporting many Ukrainian refugees. The residents of Krotoszyn have also collected money and hosted fundraising events in order to help those who will still be arriving.

To help the Ukrainian refugees and their Polish host families, I have created a webpage on my family's website:

www.kozal.net/stand-with-ukraine.html

and opened a share in my personal account at Lake Michigan Credit Union (LMCU) – account number 14118221.

The share is number 11, and is titled Blessed Bishop Kozal Fund.

Email kozalj@gmail.com with any questions.

For those who do not know, Blessed Bishop Michał Kozal was a cousin of mine from Poland who was murdered in Dachau concentration camp in 1943 by the Nazis. He was beaten and used as an example to others in the camp, but he was a constant source of spiritual inspiration and comfort to those in the camp. I hope to be inspirational in my own attempt to raise funds for the host families in Krotoszyn, who are caring for their (and our) Ukrainian brothers and sisters.

**Polish Heritage Society of
Grand Rapids**
PO Box 1844
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<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes an appreciation of the Polish and Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

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Festival Planning Committee Meeting April 18

The PHS Board members are planning for the upcoming Dozynki Polish Festival to be held August 26 thru 28, 2022 at Calder Plaza. The next Festival Planning Committee meeting is Monday, April 18 immediately following the next Board Meeting at the Falcons (approximately 6:45 pm).

Subcommittees and volunteers are needed to plan, manage, and participate in the following activities for a successful festival:

Sponsorship recruitment and marketing

Festival Set-up and take-down

Token Booth cashiers and runners

Family activities/Children's Tent

Heritage Tent exhibit set-up, staffing and take-down

Beer Tent servers

Contest organizers for Busia Queen, Paczki Eating Contest

Runners for Ice, Pop, and Trash collection.

The Festival is our main fundraising event and a perfect opportunity to get more involved in the PHS. Working the Festival is a great way to meet and get to know your fellow PHS members. You always make some new friends working Festival. Working a shift (or 2) then staying for the great food, drinks and music is one of the best ways to celebrate Polish Heritage in Grand Rapids.



Polish Hall History *By Theresa Bonham*

Did you know that there are 14 Polish Halls or Social Clubs in the Grand Rapids area? All were founded by immigrants under the objective of serving God and country, by assisting members and their families while fostering loyalty and respect for the laws of their new American home. These organizations were crucial, especially in times of sickness, death or other misfortunes, at a time when there was no government safety net or social security.

One of the oldest Polish Halls (established in 1896) is **Eastern Ave Hall**, also known as Sacred Heart Benevolent Society. The first years meetings were held at founding members homes and in 1907, construction began on the current club on the corner of Eastern and Harvey at a cost of approximately \$9000.00.

Throughout the years the club has often been used for meetings, weddings, receptions, parties, political rallies, concerts and recitals. New members are always welcome to help preserve Polish heritage in West Michigan. The hall is always open to the public the first full week of October for Pulaski Days as well as other events throughout the year. Visit Eastern Avenue Hall on Facebook for more information.

Local Parishes Offer Swienconka Services

Blessing of the Easter Baskets

On Holy Saturday before Easter Sunday, families throughout metro Grand Rapids will bring carefully prepared baskets of food to local parishes to celebrate Swienconka – the Polish tradition of giving thanks for the abundance that God provides. Many parishes will be participating.

During a Blessing of the Baskets service, the priest blesses the participants and the baskets to commemorate the end of the Lenten fast. The baskets often contain a number of items that are symbols and reminders of the resurrection of Jesus.

If you aren't familiar with Swienconka, consider participating this year! It's a beautiful tradition that instills a sense of wonder in children and adults alike, maintaining a link to our Polish Catholic heritage going back to the 7th century.

The basket is typically lined with a white linen, decorated with sprigs of boxwood, the typical Easter evergreen, and covered with white linen or decorative lace. Some of the most popular food contents and their symbolism are below:

- Butter (Maslo) - Often shaped into a lamb (Baranek Wielkanocny) or a cross reminding us of the goodness of Christ.
- Easter Bread (Chleb) - A round loaf topped with a cross or a fish, symbolic of Jesus, the Bread of Life.
- Horseradish (Chrzan) – This distinct taste symbolizes the Passion of Christ.
- Decorated Eggs (Pisanki) - Indicates new life and Christ's Resurrection from the tomb.
- Sausage (Kielbasa) - A pork sausage, symbolic of God's favor and generosity.
- Ham (Szynka) - Symbolic of great joy and

abundance. Some prefer lamb or veal. The lamb also reminds Christians that the Risen Christ is the "Lamb of God."

- Smoked Bacon (Slonina) - A symbol of the overabundance of God's mercy and generosity.
- Salt(Sol) - A necessary element in our physical life. Symbolic of prosperity and justice and to remind us that people are the "salt" of the earth.
- Cheese (Ser) - Symbolic of the moderation Christians should have at all times.
- Candle – Often marked like the Paschal Candle lit during the Easter Vigil, it represents Christ as the Light of the World.
- Colorful Ribbons and Sprigs of Greenery - Attached to the basket as signs of joy and new life in the season of spring and in celebration of the Resurrection.
- Linen Cover - Drawn over the top of the basket for the trip to church where it is joined with the baskets of others to await the blessing.

The baskets can be as large or small as you like: most families already have wicker baskets that already have been used for

Easter candy. A number of families also already color Easter eggs, and red eggs are a traditional color for the basket. Local meat markets and specialty grocery stores have the lamb butter, kielbasa and other food items.

The following Parishes, among others, offer Blessing of the Baskets. Check your church bulletin or parish calendar for more information.

Our Lady of Consolation, 4865 11 Mile Rd NE, Rockford, 49341, (616) 866-0931, noon

Sacred Heart of Jesus, 151 Garfield Ave SW, Grand Rapids, 49504, (616) 459-8362, 10:00

St. Anthony of Padua, 2510 Richmond Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504, (616) 453-8229, 1 p.m.

St. Isidore, 628 Diamond Ave NE, Grand Rapids, 49503, (616) 459-4731, 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

St. Sebastian, 9408 Wilson Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49316, (616) 878-1619, 10:15-10:45 a.m.



@Ron Nicholl Photography...

Chicago Style Polish Easter *by Mary Panek*

My initial introduction to Polish food was traveling to downtown Chicago with future mother-in-law Halina Panek to shop for Easter Sunday morning brunch. We drove to a Polish neighborhood and stopped at a half-dozen specialty shops – the fish monger, busily scaling a large fish with the fish scales flying in the air, delightful bakeries with the aroma of fantastic bread, and hot crossed buns, the butcher with small smoked hams, a variety of sausages etc. Some of my favorite new foods were zurek (white barszcz) and horseradish with grated beets.

On Holy Saturday Halina, would prepare a beautiful basket to take to church for blessing. She would line the basket with a freshly pressed linen and would place butter molded in the shape of a lamb, hard boiled eggs, sausages, horseradish, breads, salt, pepper, and some herbs. The baskets would be placed on the sanctuary floor and the Priest would bless the food to be enjoyed the following morning.

Traditional cold buffets include a variety of salads. I enjoy the following radish salad recipe which is unusual by American standards. Radishes can be grown early in our Michigan gardening season, and

they germinate quickly. When my children were young, I would plant the seeds to spell their names and they could see the little green shoots pop up and reveal the surprise! The next recipe calls for stuffing hard-boiled eggs with a mushroom filling – unique and fitting for your Easter buffet.

Radish Salad

Salatka z Rzodkiewek

- 1 lb. radishes, thinly sliced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 green onions, sliced
- Ground white pepper
- ½ cup dairy sour cream
- Lettuce leaves
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- Dill springs

In a medium bowl, combine radishes, green onions, sour cream, chopped dill and salt. Season with white pepper to taste. Serve chilled on lettuce leaves. Garnish with dill. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Heberle, Marianna Olszewska. Polish Cooking. Rev. ed. ed., HP Books, 2005.

Eggs Stuffed with Mushrooms

Jajka faszerowane pieczarkami



Mushroom Stuffed Eggs

-
- 6 large, fresh mushrooms
 - 4 hard-boiled eggs
 - 1 tablespoon butter
 - 2 tablespoons sour cream

Wash mushrooms well, dry, dice fine and sauté in butter. Sprinkle with salt and simmer until liquid evaporates, then set aside to cool. Peel the hard-boiled eggs, slice in half lengthwise, and scoop out the yolks. Mash the yolks, add sour cream, and the sautéed mushrooms, and mix until smooth. Salt and pepper to taste. Fill the whites with mixture and decorate each egg half with a spring of parsley.

Strybel, Robert. Polish Heritage Cookery. Hippocrene Books, 1995.

Membership News

by Marilyn Lignell

Long time PHS member Mike Swidwinski, passed away peacefully in the comfort of his own home on Thursday, March 10, 2022.



Born to Weronika and Kazimierz Swidwinski in Fairford Park, County of Gloucestershire, England, on October 4, 1949, he was the second of four children. They immigrated to Canada in 1956 and came to the United States in 1958.

Mike is survived by his beloved companion of 13 years, Mary Jo Kaminski; loving daughters Anna (Brent) Elkins and Lara (Justin) Botting; and grandson Milo Botting. He is also survived by his Mother, Weronika Swidwinski; Sisters and brother, Basia (Phil) VanHulle and Misia (Damian) Fedorko; and John (Annette) Swidwinski. He was preceded in death by his Father Kazimierz and Wife of 30 years Ursula.

Mike joined the Army in 1970 and served as an MP. He then earned a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice at Wayne State University and a Master's degree in Public Administration at Central Michigan University. In 1977 he married Ursula Hojnacki and they shared two daughters. He joined the DEA

as a Special Agent in 1983 and would go on to continue in this field until his retirement, 22 years later in 2005.

In his free time, Mike loved to spend time with his grandson, travel, and hunt. He enjoyed sailing on his boat, and was an avid reader.

Mike was a member of the Polish Heritage Society and took great pride in curating his cultural and historical exhibit each year at the Grand Rapids Polish Festival. He was involved in Polish Scouting and was a founding member of his church, Our Lady of Czestechowa in Sterling Heights.

A military burial will be held at St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, 2044 Gooding St., Conklin, Michigan 49403 on May 14, 2022 at 11:00am.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to the following:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

or

Polish Scouting Organization of Michigan, 4116 Lindow Dr, Sterling Heights, MI 48310, with a notation of "Kitchen Renovation Fund."

PHS February Board Meeting Report

A meeting of the Polish Heritage Society was held on February 21, 2022 at the Polish Falcons Hall. Vice President John Theisen called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Dennis Ziolkowski, John Theisen, Anthony Zasuwa, Michael Jasperse, Martin Rogalski, Theresa Bonham

Absent: Richard Panek, Adam Porczynski, Elena Chaidez, Angela Zasuwa

Minutes from the last meeting were approved as printed with two corrections. 50.00 to Malbork Dance and West Catholic Band 100.00 for advertising. Minutes were sent via e-mail to the board. Motion was made by Theresa and seconded by Michael to accept. Motion passed.

Treasurer Report: The financial report was given. The society received an e-mail that the Merchant fee of 17.00 was waived. Motion was made by Martin seconded by Michael to accept the report. Motion passed.

Correspondence: The checks for renewals were given to Mary Ann for deposit. Member information is given to Marilyn. Nothing else to report.

Old Business:

No final count yet on Griffins game, approx. 70 to 80. Will have numbers at next month's meeting. Will also receive a check from the Griffins based on number of tickets sold.

Bulk mailing to stay as is for now, cost per mailing one factor. More to follow.

Festival dates need to be put on all advertising venues and maybe some teasers as we get closer to festival. Sponsors are also very welcome, any amount, since we are now a nonprofit society.

Elections – nothing new

New Business:

Jackson Street Hall sent a letter for support on their upcoming project. More to follow.

Follow up of tax letters...did they go out, sponsors and bands ?

Close meeting: Motion by Martin seconded by Anthony. Meeting ended at 6:25pm. Motion carried

Next meeting is March 21 at 6pm at Polish Falcons Hall. Meetings are generally every third Monday of the month.

Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5

Annual Adult Membership \$20

Annual Family or Business Membership \$35

Lifetime Membership \$150

ONLINE

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

MAIL

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

P.O. Box 1844

Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____