

## Matka Boska Zielna to Take Place August 14



*Stephanie Kovitz tends her flower garden*

By Matthew Gryczan

As the month of August approaches, Stephanie Kovitz starts to pay particular attention to flowers and herbs growing in her Westside garden to see if they could play a part in one of the most beautiful religious ceremonies tied to Polish heritage in Grand Rapids – the Matka Boska Zielna Mass.

“What better way to honor our Blessed Mother than with fresh and colorful flowers and herbs?” asked Kovitz as she surveyed the groomed garden that she keeps with her husband, John. “It’s just a wonderful tradition and feast day.”

Kovitz will join a group of an estimated 150 people who will gather at St. Isidore Church, 625 Spring Ave. NE, at 7 p.m. Mon-

day, Aug. 14 for the celebration.

Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz will lead the service that is a traditional favorite for local Catholics: a Mass with a blessing of flowers and herbs, music sung in Polish, and a procession to and crowning of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church courtyard.

After the service, there will be a reception in the downstairs auditorium of the church where light refreshments will be served.

PHS Lifetime member Sue Popma said she ordered a special Polish candy treat called Ptasia Mlecsko online for the reception since it proved to be such a hit as a refreshment last year. The

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Dozynki Festival Coming Aug. 25-27

You can start laying out your best red duds for the upcoming Dozynki Festival in August and show your Polish pride.

Or better yet, get on the Polish Heritage Society website and become part of the festival yourself as a volunteer!

If you ask any volunteer whether it’s fun and worth his or her time, you’d get a resounding “Tak!” And with the current SignUpGenius system on the PHS website, it only takes a minute to

sign up for something that suits your fancy.

Regardless of which side of the token counter you choose, it’s fun for all; live music, great food and beverages, a children’s tent, contests, plus vendors with items you won’t find elsewhere.

As the longest running ethnic festival in Grand Rapids, Dozynki has established a reputation for being a fun, family friendly event showcasing Polish culture, with live music and a large dance area, a children’s tent, vendors offering Polish cuisine and items, and a tent that ex-

plains local Polish-American history and the contributions of famous Polish-Americans.

Other fun activities during the festival include the paczki eating contest, crowning of the Busia Queen and a performance by the P.R.C.U.A. Malbork Dance Ensemble, a dance group for youth ages 3-18 that teaches traditional Polish folk dances with authentic garb.

For the first time ever, the wife-husband team of Anna and Mark Hurning from Wronia, Szczecin, Poland will make an appearance at the festival to instruct visitors in authentic Polish cuisine. Through their Polish Your Kitch-

en brand, the Hurnings will demonstrate how to make some Polish dishes and sell cookbooks containing their recipes.

Let’s look over the lineup of Polka music, probably the happiest music in the universe.

Friday.

- Noon to 4 p.m.: Virgil Baker’s Just For Fun Band
- 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Close): Tony Blazonczyk and New Phaze Band

Saturday

- Noon to 4 p.m.: Bruce Packard Band

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Polish Heritage Society  
of Grand Rapids**  
**PO Box 1844**  
**Grand Rapids MI**  
**49501-1844**  
<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com).

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes Polish/Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society meets on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October. The society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Matthew Gryczan, Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com).

**President**  
**Teresa Bonham**

**1st VP**  
**John Theisen**

**2nd VP**  
**Anthony Zasuwa**

**Treasurer**  
**Michael Jasperse**

**Corresponding Secretary**  
**Elena Chaidez**

**Recording Secretary**  
**Matthew Gryczan**

**Director**  
**Rosemary Maciejewski**

**Director**  
**Martin Rogalski**

**Director**  
**Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa**

**Director**  
**Michael Kozal**

**Director**  
**Thaddeus Broda**

*(Matka Boska Continued from page 1)*

chocolate-covered bar with a soft marshmallow-like interior is a well-known Central European confectionery originating in Poland. The candy is made by E. Wedel, one of the most recognized chocolate confectioneries in Poland that has exclusive rights to use the name Ptasia Mleczko, which translated means "Bird's milk."

"I bought a box for Matka Boska last year, and this little girl just lit up when

*(Festival Continued from page 1)*

- 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Close) Gerry Kaminski's Polka Network, alternating with Jimmy K and Ethnic Sounds
- Sunday
- Noon to 5 p.m. (Close) Trent Urbytes and

she saw the candy," Popma said. "I was so delighted that I've decided to order two boxes this year."

Kovitz said she has participated in Matka Boska for at least the past decade as a way of exercising her Polish heritage. She first began to participate by bringing her mother, Adeline Cholewin, to the service, as both her parents were first generation Polish-Americans.

In Poland, Matka Boska is celebrated at the Feast of Our Lady of Greens, where herbs are blessed and then woven into wreaths that are hung near holy pictures and used as medicinal recipes as protection against illness and

Polka Riot

When it comes to food, there's plenty to choose from.

- St. Isidore Benevolent Aid Society/Diamond Hall: Polish combo plates and more
- Cannonsburg Village/Honey Creek Inn: potato sausages to drunken mushrooms

natural disasters.

The Polish Heritage Society is an active sponsor of the celebration, providing flowers, herbs and the woven crown for Mary and refreshments at the reception.

In past years, the Pulaski Queen and her Court and the Malbork Dance Ensemble of Grand Rapids have attended.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to help for Matka Boska by way of setting up tables 2 hours prior to the event for the reception, bringing cookies or baked goods, and clean up afterwards should contact Marilyn Lignell at [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com).

- That Polish Girl Catering/Lewandoski's Market: Polka bobs and pierogi
- J and C Concessions: Polish sausage and burgers
- Barry G's Italian Ice: frozen desserts
- The Lemonade Trailer: lemonade and snacks

## The 2023 Dozynki Festival Busia Queen Contest is Now Open!

The Polish Heritage Society is accepting applications for the sought-after position of Busia Queen, a year-long honor that is bestowed upon a lady who has at least one grandchild by Aug. 18.

An election will be held Aug. 27 during the end of the three-day Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival at the Calder Plaza in downtown Grand Rapids to name the new Busia Queen, with festival goers casting ballots.

The lucky lady who is

named Busia Queen will be crowned at the festival and presented with a ceremonial sash, which she will wear to represent the PHS at the Pulaski Days parade, the Wigilia dinner, Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins, Matka Boska Zielna service and one non-PHS sanctioned event of the winner's choosing. Two benefits of being named Busia Queen include a \$250 donation made on the winner's behalf to the charity of her choice and a free annual membership to the society. Those seeking to become Busia Queen must be present at the election on Aug. 27 to be eligible for the honor.

To be included as a candidate in the election, a woman needs to complete and return the application that is found on the PHS website <https://polishheritagesociety.com> under the menu item Festival, then Schedule of Events/Music and at the bottom of the page "Busia Queen Application." After downloading and completing the application, candidates can either mail a physical copy to the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids, P.O. Box 1844, Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844 or email the completed application to [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com). All entries must be received before midnight Aug. 18.

# PHS Membership News



By Marilyn Lignell

There's a saying that goes: "By looking back, we can sometimes look forward." That surely holds true for a lot of what I have to report this month!

To start off, the Now and Then Historical Library in Dorr is looking for some help in locating relatives of Walter Kudlicki, who immigrated to the United States on August 29, 1909.

Library president Linda Stoepker said they have a petition for citizenship that Walter applied for while living in Grand Rapids, and the library would like to return it to one of his descendants. If anyone has any knowledge of his relatives, or perhaps you are one of them, please contact Linda at the-nandnow1807@yahoo.com or 616-681-0333.

Going with our theme of looking back, I am thrilled to announce the Polish Heritage Society turns 60 this year! We're planning a little celebration of the anniversary in October – more on that in the September issue of The Echo.

The Polish Heritage Society was originally called the Polish Arts Club, and two of the original members were Lorraine and Gerald Hardebeck. I visited their home this past month to learn more about those early

years, and Lorraine's memory was sharp as ever – the excitement and pride about the soci-



*Lorraine and Gerald Hardebeck with Chopin bust*

ety welled up as she talked about its origins!

"My husband Gerry's uncle, Edward Symans, came back to the United States after traveling all over the world and wanted to showcase Polish culture to the Grand Rapids area," past PHS president Lorraine said. "Ed wanted to bring Polish music and art to the forefront of the Polish community feeling that it been neglected."

Ed knew a lot of people of Polish descent in Grand Rapids, and he convinced Lorraine to join him in starting the Polish Arts Club. Soon were about 20-25 members of kindred spirits, meeting in each other's homes and working with the community at large to accomplish their mission.

Some of their early activities included arranging exhibitions of Polish Art at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, speakers from the Kosciusko Foundation in New York, Chopin competitions

at St. Cecilia Music Center, The Boys Choir of Poland and bus trips to Chicago and Detroit.

In 1970 when he became president, John Arsulowicz thought the society should increase membership by not focusing exclusively on the arts – that's when we became known as the Polish Heritage Society. With more than 250 members now, we try to support a variety of activities that in one way or another keep alive Polish tradition and culture. Some of my fondest memories have been inviting ArtPrize artists from Poland over for meals with other Polish Heritage Society members.

The most visible event we sponsor is the annual Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival in August – the longest running ethnic festival in Grand Rapids. Here's where I make a pitch to ask you, dear reader, to become involved. Please make an effort to volunteer if for only one shift! It's easy to do: just go to our website, look under the Festival tab at the upper right hand corner and do to Sign up to help!

The PHS welcomes new member John Mitchell and his family to the society. John was born in Chicago to parents both of Polish descent, his mom being a first generation born in this country. "I spent many happy summers at my grandfather's cottage on a small lake in southwest Michigan," John said.

Making his own path in life over a 40-year stint, John lived in St. Joseph, Glenn Haven, South Haven and eventually skiing the slopes near Denver, Colo. Now in retirement with his wife, Virginia, the couple

moved to the Grand Haven/Spring Lake community to "live in a smaller community by the water and the lakes of Michigan."

John and I share a common disappointment that our grandparents worked so hard at becoming "Americanized" that we lost out on some of the paramount lessons and information we could have gained about our Polish heritage and culture. Like John, my knowledge of Polish heritage and culture was very limited. When my father joined the PHS and maybe even more so after he died, I wanted to gain more knowledge especially about the customs.



*John Mitchell*

I am excited that John and Virginia have joined our society to learn more about Polish customs and history, and – looking forward -- I see us sponsoring even more activities in the coming year!

Save the date of October 22nd for a guided historical tour of The Basilica of St. Adalbert's 654 Davis St. NW, Grand Rapids. The current Basilica Church was completed in 1913. Come learn about the historical significance of this church and the Polish Community. Details to come in upcoming newsletters.





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 \_\_\_\_\_