

# The Echo Newsletter

## Dożynki Festival Coming August 28-30

You can start laying out your best red duds for the upcoming Dożynki Festival in August and show your Polish pride. Or better yet, become part of the festival yourself as a volunteer! If you ask any volunteer whether it's fun and worth the time, you'd get a resounding "Tak!" And with the current SignUpGenius system on the PHS Facebook page, it's easy to sign up for something that suits your fancy. Regardless of how you participate, one thing is for certain: it's family friendly fun for all ages.

Dożynki has established a reputation for being a fun, family friendly event that showcases Polish culture, featuring live music and a large dance area, the Char Czarnecki Children's Tent, vendors offering Polish cuisine and items, and the heritage display featuring local Polish-American history and the contributions of famous Polish-Americans.



*Malbork Dancers to perform at Festival*

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.

We also have a huge surprise baking for this year's harvest festival! Metro Detroit's favorite culinary influencer, Jerry Bojo (The Polish Papa), is officially bringing his kitchen secrets to Grand Rapids! Get ready to level up your Polish cooking game because he will be hosting LIVE cooking demonstrations Saturday and Sunday.

The festival is the major fundraiser for the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids, a non-profit organization founded in 1963 to perpetuate and advance the Polish culture that has been so integral to metro Grand Rapids. Among other activities such as the Christmas Wigilia dinner and the Matka Boska Zielna, the society awards scholarships annually to students of Polish/Lithuanian descent who attend Michigan colleges and universities.

See the full event schedule inside this newsletter.

To volunteer for the PHS Festival, scan the QR code below to access the SignUpGenius app:



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The Polish Heritage Society meets at the Polish Falcons at 6:00 pm on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October.

This newsletter is published monthly. Submit story ideas or content contributions to Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by emailing:

phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

or by mail:

PHS  
PO Box 1844  
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

[www.polishheritagesociety.com](http://www.polishheritagesociety.com)

### POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY AUGUST EVENT SCHEDULE

**PHS Board Meeting**, Monday, August 17th, 6:00 pm at Polish Falcons - 957 Fulton St SW, Bar will be open. PHS members are encouraged to attend.

**Rozmowa Polish Language Club**, Tuesday, August 25th 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall - 935 Park St SW, Grand Rapids.

See PHS website and Facebook page for more details and other events.

## Matka Boska Zielna Mass is at Saint Isidore Church August 15 at 4:30 PM

St. Isidore Church and the Polish Heritage Society invite you to join us for the celebration of the Matka Boska Zielna Mass on Saturday, August 15 at 4:30pm.

This ceremony of grandeur is an annual favorite for local Catholics and PHS members. Traditionally 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 natural disasters. Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz will celebrate the Mass which commemorates the Assumption of the

Blessed Virgin Mary. The service will include a Mass with traditional flowers and herbs, music sung in Polish, and a procession to and crowning of the statue of Mary in the church courtyard. All are welcome, regardless of religious affiliation. There will be a reception following the liturgy

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

## Busia Queen's Year in Review

This past year has been a busy one for our current Busia Queen Laurie Lesiewicz. As the Busia Queen representing the Polish Heritage Society, her regal responsibilities included attending the annual Wigilia Dinner as well as participating in the Pulaski Days parade. One of the perks of being Busia Queen is that the PHS makes a \$250 contribution to a Charity or Non-profit of her choice in her name. Laurie chose the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Congenital Heart Center. Laurie's granddaughter Harper (6) is a Congenital Heart Warrior. Harper is doing very well thanks to this Heart Center and her care team, that will provide follow-up care through Harper's life.

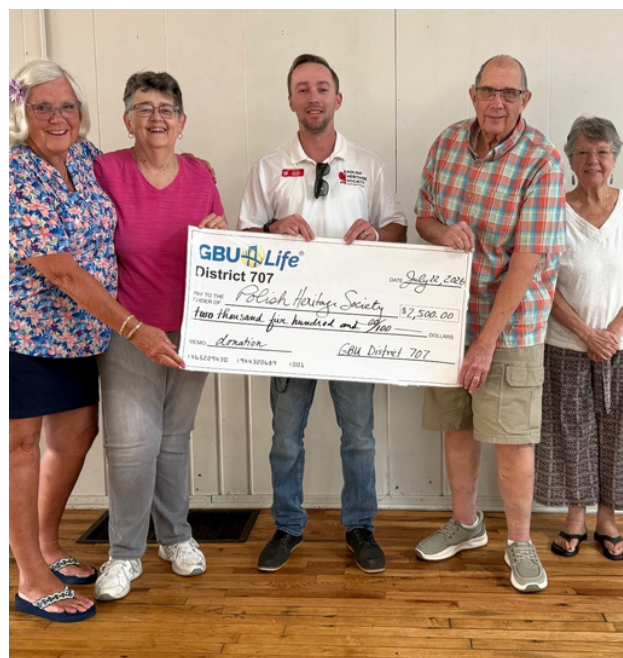
Laurie went above and beyond her expected royal duties as Queen by attending as many Polish cultural activities as possible.

The list includes the GR Public Museum Ethnic festival, the City Santa Claus Parade, multiple Hall Christmas Parties, Fish Fries, Dyngus Days and multiple breakfasts. Laurie said she had a great time visiting places and meeting people as Busia Queen. We would like to thank Laurie for representing the PHS to the Grand Rapids Community and are looking forward to selecting our next Queen at the Dozynki Polish Festival.



Laurie and Harper

## GBU Life Supporting PHS Festival



Polish Heritage Society Board Member Tad Broda recently accepted a sponsorship check from GBU Life for the 2026 Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival to be held August 28-30<sup>th</sup> at Calder Plaza in Grand Rapids, Michigan. GBU Life is a member-owned, not-for-profit fraternal benefit society that provides life insurance and annuity products. Originally founded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 13, 1892, it offers financial protection while supporting community outreach and charitable projects.

Pictured above with Tad (Center) are left to right: Nancy Borek, GBU Treasurer & Lifetime PHS Member; Gayle Clouse, GBU President; Al Bierfeldt, GBU Vice President; Ingrid Bierfeldt, GBU Secretary.



# Dożynki Festival Program

FREE  
ADMISSION  
ALL 3 DAYS!



**Polish Heritage Society Dożynki Harvest Festival**  
Calder Plaza, Grand Rapids, August 28-30, 2026



**Friday, August 28**  
Dożynki Festival Events

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- |                 |   |                                                                         |
|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>11:00 AM</b> | / | Token Booth, Beer Tent, Food and Merchandise Vendors Open.              |
| <b>12-9 PM</b>  | / | Heritage Display Tent Open                                              |
| <b>12-6 PM</b>  | / | Recorded Polka music courtesy of Polka Pops WYGR 94.9 FM 1530 AM        |
| <b>2:00 PM</b>  | / | Demonstration Tent- Polish Cooking Demo                                 |
| <b>4:00 PM</b>  | / | Instagram Chef "Papa Bojo" Meet and Greet                               |
| <b>5:45 PM</b>  | / | PHS Board Intros and Polish Citizen of the Year Award to Don Kuryłowicz |
| <b>6-10 PM</b>  | / | Gerry Kaminski's Polka Network and Tony Blazonczyk's New Phase          |
| <b>7:00 PM</b>  | / | Pączki Eating Contest                                                   |
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## Saturday, August 29

### Dożynki Festival Events

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- 11 AM** / Token Booth, Beer Tent, Food and Merchandise Vendors Open.
- 12-6 PM** / Bruce Packard's Family Band
- 12-9 PM** / Heritage Display Tent Open
- 12-3 PM** / Char Czarnecki Children's Tent Open
- 12:30 PM** / Demonstration Tent- Pysanki Egg Decorating Demo
- 2 PM** / Demonstration Tent- Taste of Wigilia Cooking Demo
- 4 PM** / Demonstration Tent- Papa Bojo Cooking Demo
- 4:45 PM** / Pączki Eating Contest
- 6 PM** / Demonstration Tent- Kotlet Schabowy Cooking Demo
- 6-10 PM** / Jerry Kaminski's Polka Network & IPA Tribute Band
- 7 PM** / Main Stage Dance Area- Learn to Polka with Alana Magniant
- 





## Sunday, August 30

### Dożynki Festival Events

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|                |   |                                                                |
|----------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>12 PM</b>   | / | Token Booth, Beer Tent, Food and Merchandise Vendors open.     |
| <b>12-5 PM</b> | / | Dynabrax Band                                                  |
| <b>12-5 PM</b> | / | Heritage Display Tent Open                                     |
| <b>12-3 PM</b> | / | Char Czarnecki Children's Tent Open                            |
| <b>1 PM</b>    | / | Demonstration Tent- "If You're Polish, You Should Be Pickling" |
| <b>1:45 PM</b> | / | Busia Queen Contestant Introductions and Voting Begins         |
| <b>2 PM</b>    | / | PRCUA Malbork Youth Dance Performance                          |
| <b>3 PM</b>    | / | Close of Busia Queen Contest Voting and Coronation             |

Scan below  
for PHS  
membership



Scan below  
to be a  
festival Sponsor



**Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids Announces our:  
2026 Busia/Babcia Queen Contest**

**(Application may be made on this form and emailed or printed and mailed USPS)**



Please send all questions to the attention of Judi Serba at [pbsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pbsgrandrapids@gmail.com)  
Email this completed form to the attention of Judi Serba [pbsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pbsgrandrapids@gmail.com)  
If you'd rather print and mail form, please send to:  
Polish Heritage Society/Attn: Judi Serba  
P.O. Box 1844  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-1844

Attention all Busias and Babcias—you are already the queens of your families, but have you ever dreamed of expanding your realm? Are your favorite outfits missing the addition of a red, Queen sash and sparkly tiara? Do you secretly practice your "royal wave" when no one is looking?

As our Busia Queen, you will be a key ambassador of Polish heritage, goodwill, and lots of fun, in the Grand Rapids community. If you have attended our Dozynki Festival in the past, you may have seen the crowning of the Busia Queen, fighting back your own FOMO (fear of missing out). This just might be **your** year!

**There are only a few, simple requisites to being Busia Queen.**

- ☒ You have at least one grandchild or will have at least one grandchild by August 9, 2026
- ☒ You are a resident of Kent County
- ☒ You are in attendance at Dozynki (on Sunday of the weekend festival) to participate in the contest: presentation, introduction, voting, crowning
- ☒ You are willing to serve as a PHIS ambassador to promote Polish Heritage at events such as: riding on the Pulaski Day Float, Matka Boska Mass, Wigilia Dinner, attend an event at one of the Polish Halls in Grand Rapids—a dinner, holiday party, special (fun night) event, or fundraiser
- ☒ You are willing to bless a local charity of your choice with a PHIS donation
- ☒ You will be sure to bring your family, neighbors, coworkers, friends and fans to vote for you

**Kindly Apply Below:**

My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_ At Dozynki, please ask me about (highlight or circle your option choice):

Why I want to be Busia Queen

My favorite Polish traditions

Polish foods I like to cook

I certify that the information in this application is true. I give the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids permission to use my name, photographs, and activities for publicity purposes.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## PHS Advent Choral Program with Collegium Cantorum Polonia December 19<sup>th</sup> at St. Isidore



*Collegium Cantorum Polonia at the Vatican during a past international tour*

Chance encounters can often open doors to new opportunities. Such was the case last year when PHS member Stephen Kusmierczak had the good fortune to attend a performance of the Collegium Cantorum Polonia in Chicago. Stephen, a native of Chicago, does business there and has ties to Chicagoland Polonia. It was at a Polonia event that he met Arkadiusz (Arek) Gorecki, musician and director of the Collegium Cantorum Polonia.

The Collegium Cantorum is an amateur choir which specializes in the performance of Polish choral pieces. They especially excel at the performance of classic sacred music (in both Polish, Latin and English). Stephen saw an opportunity to invite the group to perform in Grand Rapids. Gorecki was immediately interested since the group has extensive touring experience and has performed at Orchard Lake in suburban Detroit in the past.

A day trip with the group to

Grand Rapids was proposed and planning was started to find a suitable venue. PHS member Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz and Saint Isidore Church Music Director David Harwood were contacted about putting on an Advent program of sacred music at the church. After viewing a YouTube video of one of the choir's performances at Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church in Chicago, Harwood and Monsignor welcomed the proposal.

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, Gorecki met with Kusmierczak, Hankiewicz, Harwood and PHS member Richard Panek to tour the church and check the acoustics. Quietly entering the church, Gorecki walked ahead into the middle of the sanctuary vocalizing a few strong notes listening to the response from the space. He immediately turned to the group with wide eyes and a broad smile saying,

"The acoustics in this church are absolutely perfect for sacred choral performance." Music director Harwood noted that they, in fact, are better than those of the Basilica due to the size of the space. Gorecki agreed that amplification of the singers would not be necessary because of Saint Isidore's acoustic qualities. The next part of the tour was of the choir loft to check the quality of the organ, a key to performing some of the proposed pieces. Harwood played selections of music on the organ including the Polish classic "Serdeczna Matko" for Gorecki. According to Harwood, the 1,200-pipe organ was built by the legendary M.P. Möller company in 1940 and underwent a complete restoration in 2025.

The music directors agreed on a program date of Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. Harwood proposed that the Collegium Cantorum sing with the Saint Isidore Choir for the 4:30 PM Saturday

Vigil Mass to be followed by the Collegium performing an open to the public program of Christmas music for 60-90 minutes. Planning and discussions with the PHS Board resolved that this program would be presented free as a "Christmas Gift" from the PHS to the Grand Rapids Community.

The program will feature traditional Polish Christmas carols known as kolędy. According to music historians, kolędy telling the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, first appeared in Poland at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. Gorecki and Harwood are also planning classic Christmas pieces to be performed in Latin and English. Grand Rapids has a large and vibrant Choral and Liturgical musical community and this event will be especially appreciated by anyone interested in Christmas carols, choral and organ performance.

The PHS will be accepting free will donations at the performance and the Kosciuszko Foundation of New York has provided a grant to underwrite a portion of the costs of the event. This program is part of an ongoing series of PHS events presenting Polish fine arts cultural programming. Please save the date and plan to attend!



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**

Scan the QR code with your phone camera to become a member:



**OR BY 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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