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Anthony Zasuwa

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.

The Polish Heritage Society publishes this newsletter monthly. Submit story ideas and content contributions to Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to: phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

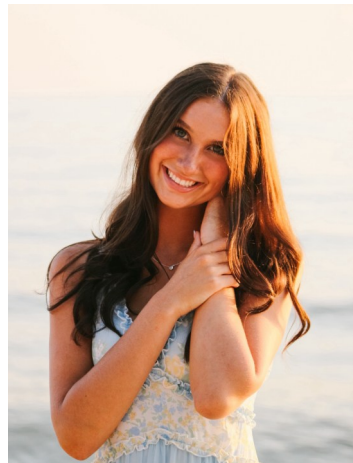
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## Polish Heritage Society 2026 Scholarship Winners Named

By Teresa Kozal

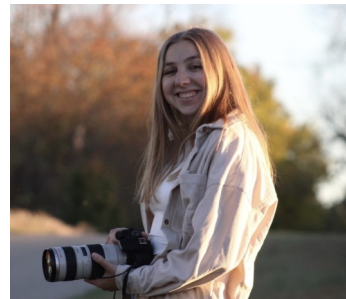
This year the PHS received 17 applications for the annual scholarship program, Here are the five winners selected by the Scholarship Committee.



*Natalie Grit*

Natalie Grit graduated from Byron Center High School and has been accepted at both University of Michigan and Michigan State where she plans to study Secondary Education Social Studies, Psychology with a career goal of teaching High School History, Government and/or Psychology AP classes and be a golf coach. Natalie has been on the golf team all 4 years participating in the West Michigan Junior Golf Tour and Callaway Golf Tour.

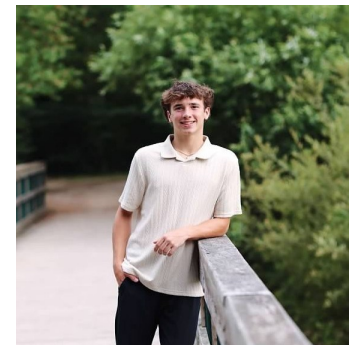
She is a member of the National Honor Society, serves as a Peer Tutor, and participated in the Honors Choir earning several awards. While on the JV tennis team she was awarded the Commitment and Determination Award. Natalie concluded her high school years with perfect attendance all 4 years. Kids Food Basket, Blood Drives, youth golf camps, Fine Arts volunteer at events, community Easter Egg Hunts are just a few of community activities she has been involved in, plus she owns her own pet sitting business.



*Sarah Kozal*

Sarah Kozal is a graduate of Kent City High School and will be a Senior at Albion College where she is double majoring in English-Creative Writing-and General Communications. She aspires to be a screenwriter. Sarah is a member of the Track and Field Team, Student Athlete Advisory Committee, The Albion Review, International Student Union, Stu-

dent Volunteer Bureau and Active Minds. She has also been named to the Dean's List every semester since 2023, honored as a New Albion College Fellow, recognized for academic excellence during Honors Convocation and named to the MIAA Academic Honor Roll.



*Andrew Meerman*

Andrew Meerman is a Graduate of Hudsonville High School and will be enrolling at Ferris State College to study architecture in the Fall. Throughout his high school career, he played football and baseball, coached youth sports, as well as officiated youth games. Andrew has consistently maintained Honor Roll status and was inducted into the National Honor Society, in addition he was recognized as a Hudsonville Public School Eagle of Excellence, an honor given to a student who

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Polish Heritage Society June Event Schedule

**PHS General Membership Meeting and Picnic**, Sunday, June 14th, meeting will be on the patio of 6th St Hall \* Knights of St Casimir Aid Society 649 6th St NW, 1:00 pm A light lunch will be provided

**Rozmowa Polish Language Club**, June 23rd 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall - 935 Park St SW, Grand Rapids.

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

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demonstrates strong character, leadership, academic dedication inside and outside the classroom. Andrew also served on the Student Council for four years, and helped organize blood drives, school assemblies and other activities to promote positive school culture and climate. During his junior and senior year he placed at the state level in the Michigan Industrial & Technology Education Society (MITES) competition for his architectural drawings and 3D Modeling.



*Cayla Szubinski*

Cayla Szubinski is a graduate of Hopkins High School and currently enrolled at Davenport University in the Honors Accounting curriculum with a career goal of being a Forensic Accountant. She has served as President and Secretary of the ACFE (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners), and a Panther Prowl Leader at Davenport. This group helps to create a comfortable & exciting environment for students to make new friends, explore campus, and be success-

ful at Davenport. Cayla is also on the golf team and a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Sorority and still manages to help coach the Hopkins High School girls golf team.



*Natalie Andrusiak*

Natalie Andrusiak is a recent graduate of Forest Hills Eastern and will attend Butler University in the Fall to study Health Sciences and Pre Dentistry with a career goal of Pediatric Dentistry. During High School Natalie was a 4-year letter winner on the women's rowing team and was Captain her senior year. She was also recognized as WZZM13 Scholar Athlete of the Week, WOOD Radio Meijer Prep Athlete of the Week, placing in the state and national level in rowing. Other extracurricular activities for Natalie were Choir, National Honor Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, American Sign Language Club, plus volunteering at Kids Food Basket.

ed as a new Director to replace Anthony Zasuwa who withdrew his nomination. The Board would like to thank Anthony for his years of service to the PHS.

The installation of Board Officers and Directors will take place at

## PHS and Halls Active in Memorial Day Preparations



Throughout the Grand Rapids area many members of the PHS, Polish Halls as well as the of the VFW and American Legion were active preparing for Memorial Day by planting American flags at the graves of veterans.

May 16th, members of American Legion 459 placed flags on veteran graves at Mt. Calvary and Greenwood Cemeteries. Also on May 16th, Saint Ladislaus Aid Society teamed with the Catholic War Veterans at

Holy Cross Cemetery to place flags which were blessed by PHS member and fellow service veteran Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz.

The PHS was instrumental in the restoration of the Polish Blue Army Monument at Holy Cross Cemetery some years ago. Former PHS Board member Matt Gryczan, who led that project, has also refurbished the flags and artificial flowers at the Blue Army Monument at Holy Cross in time for the Holiday.

*Monsignor Hankiewicz blessing the flags*

## Board Election Results

On Monday, May 18th, the PHS held board elections. Dozens of members were in attendance for the Board Meeting and election held at the Polish Falcons Hall. Judi Serba was elect-

the June General Membership Picnic. The Picnic is scheduled for 1:00 pm Sunday, June 14th, at the outdoor patio at Sixth Street Hall, Knights of Saint Casimir Aid Society, 649 Sixth Street NW. President Teresa Bonham has arranged for a member of the

Knights of Saint Casimir to give a historical presentation about the Hall and the Polish Armory. A light lunch and beverages will be provided. Members are welcome to bring sweets (fruits or pastry/baked goods) to pass.

## Plan Now for Polish Dozynki Harvest Festival Coming August 28-30, 2026

Work continues in planning the Polish Dozynki Harvest Festival taking place on the weekend of August 28th thru the 30th, 2026 at Calder Plaza. The festival is our main fundraising activity and our volunteers and sponsors make it happen.

The PHS is always looking for volunteers and here are some of the many ways to get involved to make this one of Grand Rapids most successful Ethnic festivals:

-help with set-up and take down. If you like the immediate gratifi-

cation of using your energy and ingenuity to make a festival venue change before your eyes, this is for you. Many hands will make for light work. (Set up starts on Thursday evening, August 27th and take down is at 4:00 pm on August 30th.)

-if you have a unique talent, skill or expertise that exemplifies Polish Culture, you could give a presentation in the Demonstration tent. Popular topics include Polish cooking as well as folk art and crafts. Email phsgrandrap-

ids@gmail.com if you wish to be a presenter for more information.

-work the token booth cheerfully greeting people, selling tokens and Tee-shirts. This is a fun job, and you get to meet lots of happy festival-goers. Like making people even happier than when they buy their tokens? Work at the bar! (Must be 21)

Sign-up Genius notifications will be available soon for volunteers to make a commitment to help out at the Festival. It is a great way to plan your shift so that

after working, you can enjoy the Festival!

Finally, you could be a Festival Sponsor or ask a business owner you know to consider sponsorship of the event. All volunteer workers as well as sponsors get some tokens for festival food or drink.

Sponsorship opportunities available for members and friends of the Polish Heritage Society range from Keg, Band or Tent Sponsorships all the way to Presenting Sponsorship. See pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter for all the details.

### Polish Movie on Netflix



Netflix's 'It Takes a Village' or 'Podlasie' is a Polish comedy drama movie that centers on the life of Halina, an old woman and cheesemaker residing in the village of Bodzki in Poland. The story starts when Halina leaves Jan at the altar during a full-fledged wedding ceremony. Despite her deep love for Jan, Halina is forced to call off the wedding due to her financial difficulties. Heartbroken in its aftermath, Jan decides he must win Halina's heart at any cost and marry her.

The narrative delves deep into the grounded themes of love, family, and community spirit, while also featuring enthralling visuals. Polish with English subtitles.

### Polish Heritage Society April Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting took place on Monday April 20, 2026 at the Polish Falcons and was called to order at 6:00pm by President Teresa Bonham. Board members Jasperse and Sharpe were excused due to business travel commitments.

In addition to the PHS Board, there were four general members in attendance.

Treasurer's report was deferred to the next meeting due to Jasperse's absence.

Under Old Business, the Pysanki class was discussed and the event was well received. The artist teaching the class was pleased with the Echo article about her prior to the class.

Don Kurylowicz was elected Citizen of the Year and will be announced to the public at Dozynki Festival.

Under New Business, the election slate for the May 18 meeting was determined as follows:

- i. Directors: Angela (incumbent), Anthony (incumbent), Judy Serba(nominee)
- ii. VP: Eric (unopposed)
- iii. Corresponding Secretary: Tad (unopposed)

On May 18<sup>th</sup>, from 5:30-6:30 the general membership will be able to cast ballots. Votes will be tabulated and winners announced at 6:30 pm.

The Grant committee met after the March meeting to determine which local organization was deserving of a PHS grant to further the aims of the PHS (Promoting Polish Heritage in GR). The Marbork dance group was picked to be the grant recipient of \$2000 for this year. Malbork will use the funds to purchase new costumes for the dancers. Matt Gryczan from the grant committee will send out letters to inform unsuccessful applicants.

The Festival committee has confirmed three food vendors so far: Slings Weenies, Diamond Hall and the Honey Creek Inn. The committee is looking for one more food vendor for the event. It was decided to provide the West Catholic High School First Robotics Team with a grant of \$300 because they exhibit at Dozynki regularly. Matt Gryczan volunteered to present pickling in the demonstration tent at Festival.

Marketing festival dates to start with social media and Echo. John Theisen will get the Band line up to Sarah for publicity.

PHS is exploring possible collaborations with the West Michigan Genealogical Society Meeting adjourned 6:35pm

# Polish Heritage Society Membership News and Events

By Marilyn Lignell

It is with profound sadness that we share the passing of our dear friend and dedicated community member, Lucy Maciejewski Preston.

Lucy was a vibrant and cherished part of the Polish Heritage Society, and she served our community with incredible passion as our Busia Queen during her reign in 2023. She generously committed herself to the restoration of the Jackson Street Hall, which was just one of many acts of kindness she offered throughout her life in the community; to be around her warm spirit was truly a beautiful place to be. She famously said that "being Busia Queen means being everyone's Busia," and she lived out those words through her kindness and dedication to our society.

We are holding her entire family close in our hearts during this difficult time. She will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her.



*Lucy Maciejewski Preston*

William (Wil) Bowman, lifetime PHS member, graduated from Cooley Law School on Saturday, April 25, 2026, in East Lansing, MI.

Pictured here is Wil and his wife of almost one year, Kara Bowman. Wil will tell you that his remarkable level of success and extraordinary achievements were highly fueled by Kara's altruistic support over the past three years. Some of Wil's notable accomplishments are: Dean's Fellow, cum laude graduate distinction, Leadership Achievement Award, Distinguished Student Award, Dean's List, Honor Roll. They are looking forward to living in Grand Rapids, where Wil has accepted a position with the firm of Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge, and Kara will continue to grow her thriving photography business. Congratulations Wil and Kara!



*Wil and Kara Bowman at the Cooley Law School Graduation*

PHS welcomes Dolly Pelton as a lifetime member. Dolly was crowned Busia Queen at the 2024 Polish Heritage Society Dozynki Festival. She has been married to her husband Tom for 58 years. Dolly loves being of Polish descent almost as much as she loves being a grandmother and great grandmother.



*Dolly Pelton at the Annual Pulaski Days Parade in 2024*

The PHS participates annually in the Ethnic Festival held each fall at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. This past year, PHS representatives met the leaders of the local Latvian community at the Museum Ethnic Festival who shared their cultural heritage which is very similar to Polish in cooking, art and dance.

Latvia, a Baltic country just north of Lithuania, suffered greatly under Communist rule like Poland did until regaining independence in 1990. There happens to be a very active Latvian community here in Grand Rapids. In fact, the members of the local Latvian hall are busy planning for the XVI Latvian Song and Dance Festival tak

ing place in Grand Rapids, July 1-5, 2026.

This event may be of particular interest to PHS members who are fans of ethnic folk music and dance. The five-day festival expects to draw about 4,000 guests and participants from across the United States, Canada as well as Latvia. The event will include choir concerts, dance, gatherings, art, and other cultural events that showcase Latvian traditions. The main choir will consist of more than 400 singers, while the dance troupe is expected to number nearly 750 dancers.



*Latvian Dance Troupe*

This is a major cultural event for the Latvian diaspora and a celebration of all things Latvian. If you happen to be in town July 1-5, you may enjoy attending some of the events. Information is available at [www.dziesmusvetki.us/program](http://www.dziesmusvetki.us/program)

## XVI Latvian Song and Dance Festival

Grand Rapids, Michigan  
July 1-5, 2026