

The Echo Newsletter

Don Kurylowicz Named 2026 PHS Polish Citizen of the Year



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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: pshgrandrapids@gmail.com
PO Box 1844
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844
www.polishheritagesociety.com

The Polish Heritage Society celebrates Don Kurylowicz as the 2026 Polish Citizen of the Year, an honor recognizing his outstanding dedication to community, culture and Polish Heritage.

For decades Don has been a central figure in Cannonsburg Village earning him the nickname of "The Mayor," for his unwavering presence and commitment to bringing people together. Since purchasing what is now known as Honey Creek Inn in 1984, the additions of The Grist Mill- breakfast & lunch cafe, small market, gas station and of course the Bottle Shop, he transformed this corner into a quaint village. At Christmas he hosts a tree lighting, Trunk or Treat at Halloween, and during the month of October the restaurant offers a Polish menu. You will also see a garden that local school kids tend for growing vegetables used in the restaurant. Student artwork is often on display in the shops as well. Don and his team at Honey Creek Inn have been a very popular food vendor at Dozynki Festival, with their innovative and creative Polish food offerings.

Don has even published a cookbook of Polish dishes that are, as he claims, all "100% Busia approved." Join us at the Dozynki Festival at Calder Plaza, August 29th when Don receives this worthy recognition!

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY JULY EVENT SCHEDULE

PHS Board Meeting, Monday, July 20th, 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, July 28th 7:00 pm, Kosciuszko Hall - 935 Park St SW, Grand Rapids.

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

By Richard Panek

When the Water Rose at Diamond Hall

Inside Story of the March 10, 2026 Ice & Flooding Storm

On Tuesday evening, March 10, 2026, the neighborhood around Diamond Hall/Saint Isidore Benevolent Aid Society braced for what looked like an ordinary spring storm. News forecasters predicted the approach of a line of storms that evening with the potential for producing high winds and heavy rain with hail. Inside, the Hall's Tuesday night gathering of the Grand Rapids Dart League was getting underway with about 40 people in attendance.

As the storm approached the neighborhood, the first hailstones rattled across porches like tossed gravel, but within minutes the sound intensified into a steady roar starting by 8:00 pm. Sheets of ice in the form of pea-sized hail bounced off cars and rolled toward the gutters, quickly overwhelming the storm drains along Diamond Avenue.

What happened next caught the Diamond Hall occupants off guard. As hail piled over the drain grates on the streets outside, water began to rise—slowly at first, then with startling speed. Residents later described to local news reporters that they saw the street transform “from wet pavement to a river” in minutes. The parking lot at Diamond Hall then began to fill up like a pond.



Diamond Hall

At around 9:00 pm, water rose to the point where it was starting to seep in through the entrance and delivery doors to the basement level of the Hall where the dart league was competing. According to bar manager Jennifer Van Overloop, the dart players quickly stepped in to help stem the flow. They found bags of left-over deicing salt to use as sandbags outside which deflected the flow, slowing it to a trickle.

Outside, the streets along Michigan were becoming impassable, especially the Diamond and Michigan intersection. Several vehicles stalled mid-turn, their hazard lights blinking through the icy water. Basements along neighboring blocks began taking on water as residents tried—unsuccessfully—to clear the clogged storm drains. The hail was packed too tightly to budge. Unfortunately, with the street storm sewers overwhelmed, water then came up through the basement floor drains of Diamond Hall.

Calling an end to the dart league, Van Overloop and tournament players switched to minimizing water damage by moving whatever contents they could to the second floor. The old carpeting was ruined but fortunately, the water didn't reach the dance floor of the basement area. Diamond Hall Vice President Chris Van Overloop said “hall members and Dart players used shop vacuums and sump pumps that evening to stem the tide, working until 2:00 am after the storm.” It took until 4:30 am to pump all the water out of the basement.

More than twelve hours later the next morning, there were still foot-deep piles of hailstones in the residential areas of Carrier Creek and Diamond streets. Multiple homes were still having their basements pumped out Wednesday afternoon. Local businesses such as Arsulowicz mortuary and others along Michigan sustained water damage that night as well.

The Diamond Hall bar operations were temporarily moved to the upper floor since the storm and members have pitched in to volunteer with water remediation. Saint Isidore Parish was gracious enough to allow storage of some hall contents at the Parish facilities until the basement was restored. According to VP Van Overloop, the unique nature of the storm damage to the hall was deemed an “act of God” by their insurance company so, the members are “on the hook” for the remediation expenses.

However, according to Chris Van Overloop, “The light at the ‘end of the tunnel’ is getting brighter.” Diamond Hall/Saint Isidore Benevolent Aid Society is planning an Open to the Public Grand Reopening. The event will be held on Saturday, July 11, 2026, starting at 1:00 pm. There will be live music by the Packard Family Band from 1-4 with food and a raffle at the event. A free-will offering for attending is appreciated to offset restoration costs. See the Diamond Hall Facebook page for more info.



Polish Heritage Society Membership News and Events

By Marilyn Lignell

As we put June in the record books and move into July, it's always a reminder how the Polish Heritage Society follows the seasons like the calendar. We held our annual general membership meeting and installation of new officers in June, and we are now moving full steam ahead on preparations for the Dozynki Festival!

We'd be amiss to mention the new board without recognizing the contributions of outgoing officers. On behalf of the society and its entire membership, I'd like to extend a heartfelt and appreciative *Dziękuję* to Anthony Zasuwa for his years of service.

The following students have received complimentary memberships as the recipients of this year's Polish Heritage Society Scholarships:

Sarah Kozal

Natalie Grit

Andrew Meerman

Cayla Szubinski

Natalie Andrusiak

We also have Ann Puruleski who joined as a family membership. Ann feels that her Polish and Native American heritage is important to both her and her daughter, and they are equally involved in both. Ann lives in Cadillac and has ventured to Grand



Ann Puruleski and
Daughter

Rapids to Marzanna Butryn's cooking classes. "My relatives immigrated from Poland. They lived in Przysieka and a Polish Genealogy agency helped trace my family back to the early 1800's." Ann will be travelling to Poland in November to place flowers at grave sites and tour the area. Ann has a variety of interests, some of which include cooking, learning the Polish language and polka music!



Marge Andrews

On a solemn note, we are saddened to report that long time member Margaret (Marge) Andrews passed away on May 2, 2026. She was preceded in death by her husband Howard A. Andrews and is survived

by many nieces and nephews, sister-in law Joyce Andrews and brother-in-law Jerome Andrews. Margaret was the owner of Howard Andrews@The Porchman Company. She was also a member of Gilda's Club.

The annual Matka Boska Zielna Mass is slated to be held at St. Isidore Church, 625 Spring Ave. NE, the weekend of Aug. 15.

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. 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.

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. 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 by email at pshgrandrapids@gmail.com. Watch next month's Echo and PHS Facebook for the date and time.

An extraordinary youth choir from Poland, Scholares Minores pro Musica Antiqua is coming to Michigan this month!

This youth early music ensemble Scholares Minores pro Musica Antiqua, is an "artistic music collective" of 200 talented children and young people founded in 1975 in Poniadowa (near Lublin). During half a century, children from Poniadowa performed more than 3,000 concerts in Poland and around the world. Young artists sing works by early masters in many languages and present extraordinary performances featuring historical dances in colorful period costumes while playing replicas of early musical instruments.

They are touring the state this month and will be in Grand Rapids for a performance on July 22 at Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St NE, in Grand Rapids starting at 7:00 pm. For additional info, please contact:

juliamusicmaker@aol.com
or phone: 269-225-7418