

## **Szczesliwego Nowego Roku!**

(Happy New Year in Polish)

The Grand Rapids Polish Heritage Education Society has a busy year ahead. The society board and volunteers are continuing to plan the Polish Dozynki Harvest Festival for 2020 and are looking for more volunteers to help head and support different departments from start to finish.

Our next Festival Planning Meeting is 6:00 PM, Monday January 13, 2020 at the Polish Falcons Hall. All members are welcome. We have several mentors that are willing to guide you through the process. We currently have 3-4 people doing most of the initial planning and we really need more help, mainly to have succession plans and share knowledge of what goes into planning our festival.

It is OUR festival, OUR main fundraiser, OUR responsibility to have it run smoothly and accurately so we are able to fulfill our mission and make money for scholarships and community engagement. You will find it very rewarding to know that you are part of such a well-organized and attended festival. It is fun to be involved with groups of people sharing new ideas and ways to make our festival even better.

If you are interested please contact **Adam Porczynski at 616-443-1191 or [aporczynski@farmersagent.com](mailto:aporczynski@farmersagent.com)**. Come join our team and Thank you!!

### **PHS Board Meeting Schedule**

The PHS Board meets at the Polish Falcons Club the third Monday of the month at 6:00 PM. We welcome society members to participate and learn more about the functioning of the club. In lieu of a board meeting, there will be general membership meetings in June and October of 2020 (dates and times to be announced). There will be no December Board meeting due to the Wigilia Dinner.

### **Polish Heritage Education Society Scholarship Program**

In November, the PHS board approved funding for the following scholarships available to college students for the Fall 2020 school year:

Grand Valley State University – one \$1,500 scholarship and one \$1,000 scholarship.

Aquinas College – two \$1,000 scholarships

Grand Rapids Community College – two \$500 scholarships

Davenport University - \$1,000 scholarship

Universal scholarship - \$1,000 scholarship to a college or university of the student's choice.

Students must have a 2.75 grade point average and must be of Polish descent. Financial need will be taken into consideration. All applications must be submitted by March 15, 2020. The above colleges

have our application. Also, many high schools in the Grand Rapids area have our application. You may request an application or ask questions from Mary Ann Bergevin, 616-455-4334.

### **Past President's Corner**

Former PHS President Ruth Anne Lomas was in attendance for the beginning of our last PHS Wigilia Dinner. She opened the evening with a heartfelt address to the membership with recollections of her past service to the society. Ruth Anne expressed her warmest wishes for the continued success of the Society and encouraged young people to get involved. The following are highlights of Ruth Anne's biography and record of service to our organization:

Ruth Anne was born and raised on the West Side of Grand Rapids where her father worked for American Seating. She overcame adversity as a young mother of 3, attending GVSU to earn a BS in Elementary Education and started her professional career in Special Education. She subsequently earned a Master of Education degree in Learning Disabilities in 1985.

Around this time Ruth Anne's mother became involved in the Polish Arts Club. This organization later grew to become the Polish Heritage Society. Ruth Anne took the position as Corresponding Secretary for the society and later served as President from 1983-1987. When she retired from teaching, she again served as PHS president from 1997-2001 and again from 2005-2009.

Ruth Anne wishes to remind members that the PHS is now over 50 years old and that the current membership has the privilege of continuing the legacy of preserving our Polish Heritage. The best way to do this is by attending PHS activities, volunteering at our events and inviting others to join. Thank you, Ruth Anne for your words of encouragement and service!

### **Malbork Dance Group News: Amber Gillette named Director**

Amber Gillette counts Pulaski Days in Grand Rapids as one of her favorite holidays – after all, that was the weekend that her husband Christopher proposed to her in 2014 after visiting the halls. Now she's taken that acquired love of things Polish to the next level as the newly elected director of the P.R.C.U.A. Malbork Dance Group-Grand Rapids chapter. "I just love what we're doing," said Amber, 28. "The kids are so cute when they're out there dancing -- it's so much fun to watch them."

Having grown up in Burnips from a family of Dutch and German extraction, Amber wasn't familiar with the Polish heritage in Grand Rapids. "My husband is from the Westside, so when he first said 'Let's go to Pulaski Days,' I said: 'What the heck is that?' After that, we started going to more Polish events and I loved it -- especially the food," Amber said. She became involved with the Malbork group after watching a friend's daughter perform.

Her daughter Finley is involved with about 20 other members of the group that performs traditional Polish folk dances in costume regularly at festivals and events throughout West Michigan. Formed two years ago, the local Malbork chapter provides costumes and instruction at no charge, with separate practice sessions Thursday nights for 3- to 8-year-olds and 9- to 18-year-olds. The group is scheduled to

perform Jan. 24 in the concourse of Van Andel Arena for a special Polish-American night before the start of the Griffins hockey game.

Much of Amber's responsibilities involve working with group choreographer Michelle DeBack and parents to ensure the children and young adults can perform at events. Amber also handles administrative functions and liaison work with the national Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, a fraternal and insurance organization based in Chicago. Members of the P.R.C.U.A. can enroll their children in Malbork groups, attend sporting events and language schools, and participate in trips to Poland.

### **Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins!**

Friday, January 24

Join us for a fun night of hockey with your friends and family at the Griffins! You can be part of a fun night filled with high fiving the starting line-up of players as they go on the ice and your group will have a great block of seats together to watch the game!

January 24th will feature:

- Pre-game Polish Dancing Performance
- High Five Alley
- Exclusive savings on tickets
- \$22 Lower Level Tickets in the D- Zone with beer and hot dog wait staff
- \$2 hot dog and beer deals from 6-8pm

1. Go to [www.griffinshockey.com/promocode](http://www.griffinshockey.com/promocode)
2. Enter POLISH as your promo code
3. Select seats and complete purchase

Tickets are \$22- a savings of over \$3- plus no fees or taxes

### **Firekeepers Casino Trip with Polish Falcons**

Sunday, January 26, 2020

Departs Polish Falcons at Noon returning at 7pm

\$30 person ~ includes transportation and drivers tip = \$20 free slot play and \$5 in points for all guests (points can be used for food, drink, merchandise, or more additional free slot play)

Sign-up by Jan 15th

Sign-up sheet at the club. See PHS Facebook page for details

Must be 21

## Poles in Texas

Did you know that the oldest Polish settlement in the United States is 60 miles SE of San Antonio, Texas? Panna Maria, Texas was founded by a Franciscan missionary, Father Leopold Moczygemba, who started recruiting immigrants from Silesia in 1852. The Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria (PHCPM) Foundation was established to recognize and celebrate the Polish immigration to Texas, which began at Panna Maria.

The first families came to Texas from the culturally distinct southwest area of present-day Poland called Upper Silesia. They came to escape Prussian oppression and establish a new life at the invitation of Father Moczygemba, who was ministering to the German-speaking Catholics in Texas.

Settlers began arriving at Indianola in early December 1854. With carts to haul them inland being scarce, they walked to their land grants near San Antonio. The immigrants arrived at their yet unnamed future settlement on Christmas Eve, 1854 where Father Moczygemba celebrated their first Mass in Texas, at midnight, under a large oak tree. They named the settlement Panna Maria (*Virgin Mary* in Polish) and established the Immaculate Conception Church, the first Polish parish in the United States. The oak tree still stands at the site. The town that was established quickly became an insular Polish enclave due to four factors:

1. It was bypassed by the railroads.
2. Settlers were unionist in the years leading to the Civil War and were occasionally massacred in Texas during this period.
3. Polish Resurrectionist priests arrived from Europe maintaining the uniquely Polish Catholic character of the town.
4. A sisterhood of Polish teaching nuns was established to provide education.

In the following years, immigrants from the Polish region of Upper Silesia settled in other areas of Texas where they established parishes in Cestohowa, Kosciusko, Bandera, St. Hedwig, Falls City, Yorktown, San Antonio, Meyersville, Las Gallinas, White Deer, and McCook.

Bishop John W. Yanta, a descendant of those first settlers and the first Bishop to be descended from the 1854 Polish immigration to Texas, established the Heritage Center Foundation on August 24, 2011. His dream is to build a Polish heritage center that would record the history of the trials and triumphs experienced by his ancestors beginning in the 1850s and extending to the present. The Center was blessed in *October 2014*.

### *Interesting Facts:*

The Texas Silesian dialect continued to be spoken for several generations.

The Panna Maria Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

If your travels take you to San Antonio, Texas, see if you can make time to visit the Polish Heritage Center at 13897 North FM 81, Panna Maria, Texas 78144.