



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

July 2021

COUNTDOWN TO POLISH FESTIVAL!

By Richard Panek

The 2021 Polish Festival is on! "We are very excited that we will have this opportunity. It will be at Calder Plaza with the renovations at Rosa Parks taking place." said PHS President Adam Porczynski. "We are confident that it will be a great event. People are anxious to get out and do some "normal" things again."

Plan on enjoying 3 days of live Polka Music along with delicious Polish food . Past President Greg Rosloniec has arranged for the best local-Polka bands to provide entertainment. (See below)

There are plans for an updat-

ed Polish History and Culture Tent as well as an exciting new collaboration with Pulaski Days!

The Pulaski Days Pageant, where the Pulaski Days Queen and Her Court are chosen, will be taking place at the festival August 28th. (story on p. 2)

The PHS Board is looking for volunteers for the Festival Committee. There is need for volunteers to help with sponsorship recruitment, set-up and take down of the Festival area, Bar servers, and Token booth. Email phsgrandrapids@gmail.com for information and to volunteer.

The best way to get to know



the great members of the PHS, is to work a shift at the festival and then enjoy the food and music when your are done. You can also support the festival by filling out the

sponsorship form in this newsletter and/or by recruiting a sponsor!

Hope to see you there August 27-29, 2021.

Festival Vendors and Events August 27-29

Polish Food Vendors– dining options will include traditional Kapusta, Pierogi, Kielbasa and Paczki as well as American and Polish beers, wine and soft drinks.

Polish Merchandise Vendors– selling traditional Polish collectibles as well as Polish Logo merchandise.

Activity Tents– Polish cooking demos as well as a Kids Tent with fun activities

Paczki Eating Contest & Busia Queen Contest

Pulaski Days Queen Pagaent– including Peoples Choice Award and Crowning on Saturday Night (See story on Page 2)

Polka Bands– featuring Dave Sliwinski, Jerry Kaminski, Diddlestix, Bill Grusinski and Virgil Baker live as well as the Polka Pops DJ's for your listening and dancing enjoyment!

History of the Festival Heritage Tent

By Matthew Gryczan

For Mike Swidwinski, the polka music and food served up at the Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival every year in downtown Grand Rapids is the ante to get into the game, but it's the heritage piece that really makes it a winning event. Mike and his fiancée Mary Jo Kaminski have manned the Polish Heritage Society tent at the Festival as volunteers for years, acting as tour guides during the three day event to the history behind the imposing winged Hussar battle gear or famous Poles in the 20th century. They spend hours setting up the displays before the Festival, then tear everything down for storage at Mike's home for the next year.

It's been a labor of love for Mike, 70, a retired employee of the Grand Rapids office of the U.S. Department of Justice who moved here from Detroit's eastside in 1997. He credits his deep appreciation for Polish heritage to his parents, both of whom served in the Polish army during World War II. As a youngster, he was a

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Grand Rapids**
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<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes an appreciation of the Polish and Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com.

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Heritage Tent History *cont'd*

member of the Polish Scouting troop in Detroit and attended a school there that taught Polish studies.

“My first visit to our Festival was in 1999,” he said. “When I asked which organization put the Festival on, one of the board members said it was the Polish Heritage Society. I said to him: ‘You have the music and you have the food, but where is the heritage?’”

The board member responded that the PHS knew something needed to be done, but they didn’t have a sense of how to go about the heritage side of the event and who would do it.

That exchange prompted Mike to take up the challenge. He said he put together a half dozen displays for the next Festival that highlighted the legacy of Poland and Polish-Americans “so that it would be an educational experience for everyone who visits.” Starting in that year, Mike added more displays with financial support from the PHS and help from his wife Ursula, who died tragically in a thunderstorm accident in 2008. Now Mary Jo pitches in to create and tend the displays.

Among other work, she fashioned the wings of the striking Hussar display from the wood frame that Mike cut and turkey feathers donated by a neighbor.

Others have noticed the value of Mike’s displays. “We have taken the display on



two occasions to the Detroit area, one at the Polish Cultural Center for a competition of Polish dance groups and the other for the Polish Numismatic Society. We’d had more requests, but it’s tough to accommodate them when we spend so much time at our own festival.”

Mike is working with PHS Trustee Richard Panek to begin the transition of the exhibit from his care to the organization as he approaches “his second retirement.” But while he may be paring back his involvement in the exhibit, Mike hasn’t lost his passion for Polish heritage. “It just needs to be done,” he said. “Poles and Polish-Americans have made some significant contributions to the world, and that shouldn’t be forgotten.”

Pulaski Days Queen Pageant *Saturday Night, August 28, 2021*

The PHS Board along with the Pulaski Days planning committee, have agreed to hold the Pulaski Queen Pageant during the Polish Festival Saturday night. The novel format was planned due to pandemic uncertainty but it will add to the fun of festival.

“This is an important event for Pulaski Days” said Michelle Kershner, Pulaski Days Chairwoman. The PHS participated in the

Save the Halls Drive last year and this is another way to support Polish activities.

Events are as follows:

6-7 pm Pageant with introduction of candidates

7-8 pm Social Hour/Peoples Choice Award where the candidates mingle with the crowd. Get a selfie with future Royalty!

8 pm Crowning of the Queen & Court

PHS Member News

By Marilyn Lignell

Welcome new board member Angela Walejewski-Zazuwa.



Angela is the oldest of 3. Her great grandparents are directly from Poland. "My heritage has always interested me," Angela said. The other side of her family is English. "Grandma met my grandpa during the war and she moved to Grand Rapids." Angela has always had ties to the west side. "I graduated from West Catholic in 2004, went to GRCC then transferred to Western for my bachelors in health science. While there I gave campus tours." Angela met her husband Anthony 14 years ago. They reconnected and got married in December 2020. "We have 2 kids Izabella 10 and Kaz 9 and now a recent addition to the family a black lab puppy named Jadzia."

Matka Bosk Zielna

St. Isidore Church and the Polish Heritage Society invite you to join us for Matka Boska Zielna on Sunday, August 15 at 6:00pm.

Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz will celebrate Mass commemorating the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The evening 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. There will be a reception following with some refresh-

ments. If you are able to bring treats, please drop them off downstairs in the gathering hall before Mass.



September 20, 2020 General Membership Meeting Minutes

The annual general membership meeting of the Polish Heritage Society was held on September 20, 2020 at Pinery Park.

Attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Dennis Ziolkowski, Michael Jasperse, Greg Rosloniec, Adam Porczynski, Anthony Zasuwa, John Theisen, Richard Panek, Matt Gryczan and Theresa Bonham
Absent: Elena Chaidez

Minutes from the last general membership meeting passed. Treasury Report: Approx. 13,300 profit from Festival 2019. Approx. bank balance is 46,500.00.

Old Business: Elections

Board of Directors
Term Ends

President: Adam Porczynski
2021

1st Vice President: John Theisen
2021

2nd Vice President: Anthony Zasuwa
2022

Treasurer: Mary Ann Bergevin
2022

Recording Secretary: Dennis Ziolkowski
2021

Corresponding Secretary: Elena Chaidez

2022

Trustee: Michael Jasperse (3 year term)
2022

Trustee: Matthew Gryczan (1 year term)
2021

Trustee: Richard Panek (1 year term)
2021

Trustee: Theresa Bonham (3 year term)
2021

Trustee: Greg Rosloniec (3 year term)
2022

Hired a 3rd party accounting business to manage books and file all reports for our 501(c)3 status. The IRS has accepted our 501(c)3 as of January 2020. Thank you Marty for all the work you did to make this happen. Our Polish Festival was cancelled this year due to Covid. New Business: Wigilia Dinner will be voted on at next month's meeting to see if we will host it or if it will be cancelled. A big thank you to Matt for taking over the newsletter. Richard did an in depth presentation on Casmir Pulaski that was very interesting and knowledgeable.

The next general membership meeting will be in June of 2021

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 _____

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