



POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF GRAND RAPIDS

June 2020

Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival Canceled Due to COVID-19

By Matthew Gryczan

The Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival – the longest running ethnic festival held in the city of Grand Rapids – has been canceled this year due to concerns about the possibility that the event may spread the COVID-19 virus among attendees, vendors and volunteers.

The PHS board voted to cancel the event on May 18 and informed city officials, food and merchandize vendors and polka bands that it will not be held this year. However the board has reserved Aug. 27-29, 2021 for next year's festival. The city

transferred this year's registration fee to next year. The annual 3-day festival has been held continuously since its founding in 1979, except for 2006 when city and state budget cuts forced its cancellation.

"We are as disappointed about cancelling the Dozynki festival as everyone else, but we felt it was the socially responsible thing to do," Society President Adam Porczynski said. "We just couldn't determine how to hold an event that drew more than 15,000 people last year and ensure that everyone would be safe from spreading COVID-19."

Porczynski said the society also felt an obligation to food and merchandize vendors, bands and volunteers to inform them as soon as possible of the cancellation so that they could make other arrangements.

Festival Chairwoman Marilyn Lignell said that most of the dozen vendors she had contacted about the cancellation were expecting the news, given so many other festivals in West Michigan have been cancelled as well. "The society has offered to promote on our Facebook page other gigs that our vendors will have this year and find ways to help

where we can," she said. "They all have been important partners with us in making this such a successful event."

During the past 40 years, the Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival has established a reputation for being a fun, family friendly event that showcases Polish culture.

The festival is the major fundraiser for the society. Among a number of its activities, the society awards scholarships annually to students of Polish descent. This year the society awarded \$6,000 to Michigan students.

PHS and St. Isidore Donate Banner to Museum for Posterity

By Matthew Gryczan

As staff at St. Isidore Catholic Church rummaged through its school building in late 2018, they came across a stunning cloth banner of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa holding the Christ Child, painstakingly woven with richly colored threads and vibrant stones.

Surrounding the Madonna portrait were the words "Queen of the Crown of Poland Pray for us" in

Polish. The other side shows the national coat of arms for Poland, a white eagle wearing a golden crown standing proudly against a red background with the words "God Protect our Fatherland" in Polish.

Once lost, the banner may now be included with a permanent collection of local Polish-American history. But the woman who helped save the artifact hopes it will also act as a wakeup call to everyone to

preserve our heritage.

"It's kind of scary to think that items like this may be sitting in someone's attic or – God forbid – a basement," said Marilyn Lignell, who accepted the banner on behalf of the PHS from Msgr. Ed Hankiewicz, the pastor at St. Isidore.

Hankiewicz, a lifetime PHS member and strong supporter of its Wigilia Dinner and Dozynki Festival, immediately recognized the historical value of the ban-



ner and wanted to make sure it was cared for properly.

"Sometimes these items

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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 Matthew Gryczan, Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

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Letter From the President

This is my first letter as the President of the PHS. It is my honor to serve as your board member and help the PHS.

I have been with the PHS since 2010, but my Polish roots go back much further. I am the first person in my family born in the USA. Besides my immediate family (parents and brother), our entire family is still back in Poland and therefore English is my second language. To this day, we still speak Polish at home. So my love for the Polish culture is very deep and am thrilled to be involved with the PHS.

We are in very difficult times currently. What was the norm 3 months ago is not the norm anymore and we don't know when things will return to the way they were or if they will. We are all adjusting the best we can. However, I wish everyone to be safe and take safety precautions to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. We hope and pray things will resolve itself soon.

On that note, I am truly sad to announce that

the Polish Festival 2020 will be cancelled due to Covid-19. We would rather be on the side of caution and keep everyone safe. With that being, just because the Festival is cancelled does not mean that we should stop celebrating our Polish culture. We can take this time to dig deeper into our roots, learn more about Poland, it's culture, history, etc. As a board, this time will be spent to make 2021 much stronger and bringing the festival back much stronger than before!

Thank you for all of your support. If you have any ideas, would like to help, or be more involved, please don't hesitate to come forward. Our board is a volunteer board, and we are only as strong and beneficial as we make it. Every bit helps.



Polish Banner: Donated

lose value to the family, but they are incredibly valuable to the community at large," Lignell said. "Your grandmother's First Communion pillow and hair wreath may not find a place in your home or one of your kid's homes, but it can be preserved and cataloged as part of our permanent history."

Curators at the Grand Rapids Public Museum have recommended that the banner be placed at the climate-controlled Community Archives and Research Center at 223 Washington St. SE. The museum's Collection Committee was scheduled to vote on accepting the banner at its June meeting, but the meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns.

Curator Andrea Melvin examined the banner and recommended that it be included in the museum's collection. "The Grand Rapids Public Museum has been actively collecting significant artifacts and specimens since its founding in 1854," she said. "The vast majority of the collections were donated by people in West Michigan with the understanding that they would be used by the GRPM to help fulfill its mission of education and inspiration through broad public accessibility."

St. Isidore didn't find any information with the banner, but translation and research work by lifetime members Mike Swidwinski

and Matthew Gryczan determined that the banner was made by J. Gramlewicz, a company that was in existence in 1926 and based in Poznan, Poland that manufactured flags and banners.

The PHS can assist those who want to consider donating artifacts of local Polish significance to the GRPM by writing to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com. To explore the museum collection visit: grpmcollections.org. Artifact donations can be offered directly to the museum through the following form: <https://www.grpm.org/contact/>

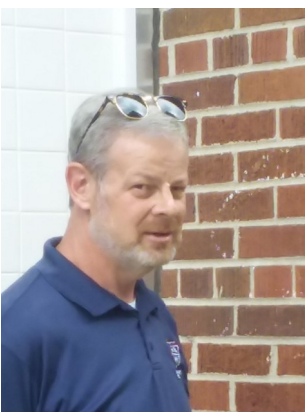
PHS Member News

By Marilyn Lignell

As an update to last month's newsletter, we are sad to report the passing of PHS lifetime member Father Dennis Morrow on May 16. Although the funeral service at St. Andrews was smaller due to COVID-19, the local police and fire departments gave Father Den all the honors they could bestow including a 21-gun salute police, ringing of the last alarm bell, a band of bagpipers playing Amazing Grace and procession with a horse drawn caisson. Rest in peace, Father Den.

On a different note, the PHS would like to welcome a new life member: Scott Ambutavicz! Scott has been active in the society for years, and his decision to become a life member is inherent in his strong ties to his Polish/Lithuanian roots. "I always felt a deep connection to my great grandparents and my grandparents," Ambutavicz said.

He said his grandparents began to feel the push for Polish immigrants to leave their past behind and be-



come Americanized, leaving some of the important customs and traditions lost and forgotten. "I joined the Polish Heritage Society to reconnect with these customs and traditions, and to share with others the beau-

ty of our Polish roots."

Scott was on the Polish Heritage Society Board for about nine years until he needed to assist his mom whose health was failing. Scott wrote the newsletter, set up a Polish Heritage

Society email account, was responsible for setting up Polish language classes and chaired Matka Boska for years. He is proud to have been a part of bringing the society into the 21st century.

Meeting Minutes — April 20

By Dennis Ziolkowski

(Abbreviated for space) The PHS meeting was called to order by President Greg Rosloniec at 6 p.m. via Zoom.

Roll call in attendance: Mary Ann Bergevin, Adam Porczynski, Dennis Ziolkowski, Elena Chaidez, Anthony Zasuwa, John Theisen, Matt Gryczan, Greg Rosloniec, Richard Panek, Michael Jasperse, Quorum present.

The next order of business was the resignation of Greg Rosloniec as president. Due to the required time commitment of the position and time away from family, he thought in best interest of the society to step down. He will remain on the board as a director. Adam Porczynski is the new president and ran the rest of the meeting. Minutes from the last meeting were approved as printed. Motion was made by Elena and seconded by Michael to accept. Motion passed. There was no March meeting due to the virus stay at home order.

Treasurer Report: There were no deposits or checks written during the month. Approximate balance in check book is \$53,759. Motion was made by Michael, seconded by Dennis to accept the report. Motion passed.

Correspondence: Checks for membership renewals are given to Mary Ann for deposit and member information is going to Marilyn Lignell.

Old business: The Whitecaps baseball game for Polish American night scheduled for May 8 has been rescheduled for September 3.

Adam reported that he is waiting for a response from the IRS on the society's request for a 501(C) 3 designation.

New Business: A motion by Matt, supported by John to go back to a monthly newsletter due to the many things coming up in the society. Motion passed.

A motion by Matt, seconded by Elena, to purchase pins and membership cards for members. Mary Ann, Elena, Anthony, John, Matt, Greg and Richard votes yes, and Michael and Dennis vote no, Motion passed.

At next month's meeting, the board is committed to making a final decision on whether to hold this year's Polish Festival due to COVID-19.

As the scholarship committee, Marilyn and Mary Ann reviewed and approved scholarship requests.

If the 501(C) 3 is approved, we will have different reporting requirements, obligations and responsibilities. We should look into purchasing Quick Books or Aplos computer accounting systems to make the treasurer's job a lot easier and simpler.

The board discussed the upcoming election in May for installation of officers on June 1. According to the new bylaws passed last year, all positions on the board are for 2 years, unless a person is serving the remainder of a term in a vacant position.

A motion made by Greg, seconded by John, to purchase four \$25 gift cards from local businesses to serve as prizes for an online bingo game operated by Dawn Rozinski on Facebook, in exchange for listing as a prize sponsor on Facebook and mentions during the games. Motion passed.

Meeting ended at 7:05pm.

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

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