

May 20th Election to Decide Second Vice President

By Matthew Gryczan

For the second year in a row, the Polish Heritage Society will be holding an election at its May meeting to fill a contested board seat.



Anthony Zasuwa

Incumbent 2nd Vice President Anthony Zasuwa is being challenged by Director Michael Kozal for that officer's spot.

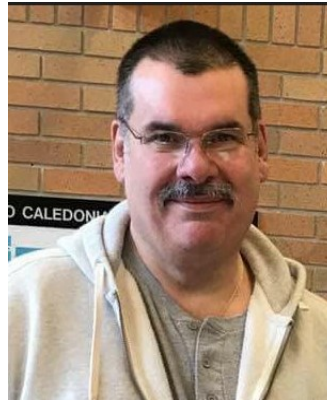
Candidates for all of the other board positions are running unopposed.

All active members of the society are eligible to cast votes at the May 20 election to be held at the Polish Falcons Hall, 957 Fulton St W. To be considered active, an individual needs to be a life member or have annual dues current. Those who wish to vote should bring their membership cards that they received in the April newsletter to prove their active status.

The board will convene its regular public meeting on that day at 6 p.m., and the election will be held promptly at 6:30 p.m.

Six candidates for board seats have been approved by the society's Nominating Committee to vie for the five available seats of 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Correspond-

ing Secretary, and two Director seats.



Mike Kozal

The following candidates are running unopposed: Michael Jasperse, Treasurer; Susan Ulanowicz, Corresponding Secretary; Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa, Director; and Eric Tetsworth, Director. Ulanowicz and Tetsworth will be new members of the board. Walejewski-Zasuwa is the

spouse of Anthony Zasuwa.

In past years, no elections were held as the total number of candidates always matched the number of available seats open, and no seats were contested.

Both candidates who are running for the 2nd Vice President office have been involved in the PHS and Polish heritage activities. Zasuwa, 44, said he first became involved with the PHS by volunteering to help with setup of the Dozynki Festival in 2015, then joined the board for the past seven years. He has been responsible for arranging the food vendors at Dozynki and has revived, organized, and made Polish American Night at the Grand Rapids Griffins ice hockey team an annual event since 2019.

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PHS Polska Bus Trip April 27th took 53 people to the Polish Museum of America

PHS Seeks Facebook Page Editor

The Polish Heritage Society is looking for an individual to become the editor of its Facebook page.

After many years of service, PHS Corresponding Secretary Elena Chaidez has decided to step down from the board and responsibilities of editing the PHS Facebook page to allow others to become involved in

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of Grand Rapids**
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The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes Polish/Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society meets on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October. 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.

President
Teresa Bonham

1st VP
John Theisen

2nd VP
Anthony Zasuwa

Treasurer
Michael Jasperse

Corresponding Secretary
Elena Chaidez

Recording Secretary
Matthew Gryczan

Director
Rosemary Maciejewski

Director
Martin Rogalski

Director
Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa

Director
Michael Kozal

Director
Thaddeus Broda

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In addition to his PHS activities, Zasuwa serves on the board of the PRCUA Malbork Dance Group that teaches traditional Polish folk dances to youth ages 3 through 18, and he is the fraternal organizer and president of the Grand Rapids society of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA). Zasuwa also is a member of the Polish Falcons and St. Adalbert's Aid Society halls and attends the monthly Pulaski Days Committee meetings.

Kozal, 63, joined the board as a director in 2022 and has been a volunteer at the Dozynki Festival for the past four years, concentrating on bringing in corporate sponsors, handling media relations and live exhibitors. During his time as director, Kozal has been working with the Pulaski Days Committee to find ways in which that organization and the PHS can improve the stability of the city's 14 halls.

In August last year, Kozal became intimately involved with the restoration of the Polish National

Aid Society, informally known as Jackson Street Hall. Kozal has assisted the hall with updating its bylaws, handling the accounting of the estimated \$600,000 project and seeking out corporate sponsors for the restoration. He is involved with the creation of an umbrella organization to purchase consumables for all the halls, restoration proposals for the St. Isidore's Benevolent Aid Society/Diamond Hall and Sons and Daughters Club, and is a member of Jackson Street and Diamond halls.

Ballots will be distributed at the meeting with the offices and candidates listed. Voters will be asked to cast no more than one vote for 2nd Vice President, out of two names listed. If a person casts two votes for 2nd Vice President, his or her ballot will be disqualified. The Nominating Committee will tabulate the votes, and winners will be declared by simple majority.

The installation of officers and directors will take place at the general meeting to be held at 1 p.m. June 9 at St. Isidore the

Laborer Church, 628 Diamond Ave NE, in Grand Rapids.

The PHS encourages members in good standing to consider joining the board, as it is the only organization in the metro Grand Rapids area that promotes an appreciation of Polish and Lithuanian culture.

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the organization. She and members of the PHS Communication Committee are available to coach the incoming Facebook page editor with the techniques of posting and accessing content.

"I'd like to take this opportunity to express the board's gratitude for all the volunteer work that Elena has done to raise the profile of the organization and connect with its membership," said PHS President Teresa Bonham.

Individuals who would like to learn more about the opportunity to become Facebook editor should send an email to phsgrandrapids@gmail.com

Polish Genealogical Society and PHS Partnering at Dozynki, Offering Webinar

In response to requests by its members on how to conduct family history searches, the Polish Heritage Society has forged a collaboration with the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan (PGSM) to offer guidance in genealogy.

To kick off the new relationship, the PGSM is offering a free Zoom webinar at 2 p.m. May 18 on Polish Culture and Traditions, which will provide an overview of Polish folk art, costumes, music, and dance. Pre-registration is required. Free registration is open to everyone by visiting pgsm.org.

Members of the PGSM also will man a booth Aug. 23 and 24 at the upcoming Dozynki Festival to give practical tips to festival goers on the commitments of time and cost that it takes to develop a quality family history.

Mary Gryka Ammar, editor-in-chief of the PGSM Polish Eaglet journal and corresponding secretary, said her organization has about 400 members, making it the largest in Michigan dedicated to promoting research in Polish genealogy, and historical preservation. She added that individuals who don't have experience in conducting genealogical research

will find that there is a remarkable number of resources available via the internet.

As an example of internet resources, Gryka Ammar said the PGSM is presenting the free May 18 webinar that will be led by PGSM President Therese Leszcz and Vice President Valerie Koselka, both experienced Genealogists.

With a decade of conducting genealogical research, Leszcz has created and will show bilingual genealogy templates, with a family sheet, individual worksheet, pedigree sheet, and relationship chart.

PHS Membership News



Mary Ann, life member and past PHS board treasurer, celebrated her 80th birthday on February 27 and has kept the story of her grandmother's arduous journey to the United States close to her heart.

Mary Ann's grandparents, Joseph and Anna Rajewski were married in Golina, Poland in June 1909. They had their first child nine months later. In November 1910 the anticipated war between Japan and Russia, forced Joseph to take exile in the United States with the idea that he would return to Poland. He travelled with his sister through Baltimore, Maryland and ended up in Chicago. Anna was forced to stay back because at that time children under 6 were not allowed to make the voyage. Sadly, when their baby was 2 years old, she died of diphtheria. Anna then made plans to join her husband and set off on the voyage with Joseph's brother.

While at sea, Anna's boat got stuck on an iceberg, ironically this was one year after the sinking of the Titanic. They sat on the iceberg for a week, fearing they would run out of food and starve to death, but a big storm blew in and pushed them off the iceberg and they safely arrived to their destination.

Joseph and Anna settled in Muskegon where Joseph worked for Brunswick for 40 years, and they rented until they were able to pay cash for a home that they built as two apartments. Mary Ann's mother Irene and her husband Edward Zechlinski raised their children in one of the apartments and her grandparents

resided in the other.

Mary Ann has fond memories of her grandparents and parents speaking only Polish in the home, along with memories of shopping at markets close by, foods prepared from scratch and enjoying many holidays together.

Mary Ann was fortunate to go on a tour in Poland with two of her cousins and they made a stop in Golina where they were able to meet more relatives, share a lot of Polish food, spend the night and tour a church in Gniezno the next day. Meeting relatives in Poland was by far the highlight of her trip.

In the PHS world, we share the news of the passing of a member's mother, prayers needed for the sick and two families that had the excitement of a wedding.

On behalf of the PHS I would like to send out condolences to life members Gerry and Mona Kaminski on the death of Gerry's mom Mary Ann Kaminski-Zoppa on March 13, 2024. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Saturday, March 16 at Holy Redeemer Church in Jenison.

Please keep Marc Mileski in your prayers. Marc had a stroke April 16 and is currently rehabbing at Blodgett. He seems to be making great strides and a full recovery is hopeful.

Wedding bells were ringing for two life member families! The Szotko family (Lewandoski's Market) closed shop early to celebrate the wedding of son Alex and Lauren Murphy on April 26th.



Alex and Lauren Szotko

Also tying the knot was PHS past president Adam Porczynski and Stacie Verdine on December 31st. Adam is still a chair of the Dozynki Polish Festival and you can usually find Stacie working right along side him. Wishing both couples a life of good health, love and happiness.



Adam and Stacie Porczynski

By Marilyn Lignell

Mother's Day in the United States falls on Sunday, May 12. Rather than a particular Sunday, in Poland, Mother's Day (Dzień Matki) is always celebrated on May 26th, no matter what day of the week. First celebrated in Krakow in the early 1900s; it's not a public holiday and was said to grow in popularity during World War II and after.

As we celebrate mothers and grandmothers of now, I can't help but wonder and appreciate how our mothers or grandmothers made their way to the United States in the first place.

Because a person's memory is limited by the years of his or her lifetime, it is important to unite with family members and keep their history alive and passed down through generations. I hope you enjoy the following story.

Every month I sit down with Mary Ann Bergevin and we prepare the newsletter for mailing and the conversation often turns to Mary Ann's childhood and the influence her grandmother and mother had on her life.

Correction

In the March issue of The Echo, the story "Restoration of Jackson Street Takes on Religious Fervor" gave an incorrect total of contributions by early March. The club had amassed well over \$300,000 for its budgeted \$600,000 restoration project in the form of cash, building materials, services and labor.



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
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