

Halls Gear Up for 50th Anniversary of Pulaski Days



From left) 2022-23 Pulaski Days Court Member Sydney Vachon and Pulaski Days Queen Haley Kozal will be gracing the halls with their royal presence during this week's festivities.

By Matthew Gryczan

It's only fitting that the grand marshals of the Pulaski Days parade on Saturday will be the families of Walt Ulanch and Ed Czyzyk Sr. – a couple of guys who were “just looking for something to do” on Ulanch's birthday 50 years ago when they hit on the idea of celebrating Revolutionary War hero Casimir Pulaski.

Little did they know that their tongue-in-cheek holiday – where the first woman who walked in the door of Diamond Hall would be crowned the Pulaski Day queen – would become a citywide multi-day celebration funneling hundreds of thousands of people into a dozen halls scattered throughout Grand Rapids.

“I think he's jumping for joy

right now,” said Ulanch's daughter Terry Cole. “He just wouldn't believe that it would still be going on after 50 years.” Ulanch died in 1995 after serving as the Pulaski Days chairman from 1973 to 1991.

Cole said her father and Czyzyk would visit Diamond Hall when bands were playing on Friday night, and Czyzyk found out that Ulanch's birthday on Oct. 5

was near the anniversary of the death of Casimir Pulaski, known as the father of the American calvary during the Revolutionary War. As a lark, the two men talked up Pulaski Day at the hall, “but then they went a little bigger the next year – advertising it as a way to draw people to the club,” Cole said.

Technically, U.S. President Harry Truman first proclaimed October 11 in 1946 as the day to celebrate Pu-

General Meeting to be Held Oct. 16 at Eastern Ave. Hall

Was your grandfather, great uncle or cousin one of the more than 70 men from Grand Rapids who left their jobs and family to fight for the reunification of Poland at the end of World War I?

If you aren't sure, then come to the general meeting of the Polish Heritage Society at noon on Oct. 16 where the society will unveil the names of the local men who joined the legendary “Blue Army” of Gen. Jozef Haller to fight for Poland.

PHS Member Matthew Gryczan, who gleaned the names from the more than 14,000 names listed on the Polish Army in France re-

cruitment records, will give a presentation on why Grand Rapids men would leave the United States to fight for Poland, what training they received, when they fought with the Blue Army and the aftermath.

The meeting will be held at Eastern Avenue Hall, 506 Eastern Ave. NE, and the public is invited to attend.

PHS is requesting that those who wish to attend to RSVP by emailing phsgrandrapids@gmail.com as refreshments will be served.

The PHS board will also address topics of general interest that the public can bring up at the meeting.

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

Email us at pshgrandrapids@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 meets on the 2nd 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 pshgrandrapids@gmail.com.

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laski's heroism during the Revolutionary War, but Ulanich and Czyzyk gave the anniversary more latitude – and more days – by setting it as the first full weekend in October.

When more Polish and Lithuanian halls wanted to join in the celebration, the men insisted that “there wouldn't be competition, but only cooperation” among the venues – along with the rule that there wouldn't be price gouging on beers, she said.

That spirit of cooperation lives on today through the efforts of the Pulaski Days Committee, the umbrella organization that coordinates the efforts of 14 Polish/Lithuanian halls and fraternal organizations that fund and put on the celebration.

Michelle Kershner, chairperson of the Pulaski Days Committee, said past Pulaski Days have drawn more than 300,000 people into the Polish and Lithuanian halls annually, making it the single largest annual fundraiser for the venues.

Throughout this week, a dozen halls throughout Grand Rapids will be filled with polka music and kettles of kielbasa and kapusta. Visitors from Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and other states have made the trip here just to participate, [Kershner said](#).

“The heart of Pulaski Days is to be social – eat, dance and get together with family and old friends, and make new friends,” she added.

As in past years, the week-



Members of the Polish Falcons Auxiliary were working diligently last week on the club's float that will appear in the Pulaski Days parade scheduled to start at 11 a.m. Saturday at John Ball Zoo. (from left) Sue Wright, Diane Krasinski, Taylor Vachon, Jamie Vachon and Lindsay Nelson glue jewels on float lettering.

long event included the flag raising ceremony, parade, golf outing, visits to the halls by the Pulaski Days queen and her court, kielbasa eating contest, Polka Mass and three days of music and food at the halls.

The 2022-23 Pulaski Days queen is Haley Kozal, 22, a recent graduate of Aquinas College with a bachelor's degree in counseling psychology who was sponsored by Diamond Hall.

Her court member is Sydney Vachon, 22, who is in her second year of graduate

school at Ferris State University College of Pharmacy and was sponsored by Polish Falcons Hall.

This year's Pulaski Days parade scheduled at 11 a.m. Saturday will follow a different route on West Fulton Street than past years. This year the parade will start at the John Ball Zoo, then proceed east to Seward Street.

For a full schedule of Pulaski Days activities, reference the Pulaski Days Committee website at <https://www.pulaskidays.org>

Community News — Awards, Art and Coming Events



By Marilyn Lignell

Hello members! This past month Grand Rapids was the place to be to have some fall fun!

At the annual Kielbasa Idol competition, eight West Michigan meat markets engaged in a friendly contest to see who produced the best kielbasa, as judged by a panel of judges and the general public. The competition was held on a beautiful September 10th evening at St. Adalbert Park, at the corner of Fifth and Davis NW, with live music and dancing.

Competing this year event were: **Lewandoski's Market, 1107 Walker Ave. NW; EA**

Brady's, 621 Lyon St. NE; Leyen & Sons, 844 West Leonard St.; Carvers GR Finest Meats, 435 Ionia SW; Ken's Fruit Market, 3500 Plainfield Ave. NE; Grist Mill Market, 8000 Cannonsburg Rd. NE; Hooligans Artisan Meats, 6523 Airline Road in Fruitport; and Big Top Market, 3630 Clyde Park Ave. SW.

"It's a great community event that is fun for all ages," said organizer Ed Sypniewski. "We have been holding this event for 11 years, and it is nice to get folks together at St. Adalbert Park to enjoy some music, kielbasa and beer!"

He went on to say that some of the proceeds go to the Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids, providing winter coats for area children in need. The votes were counted, and the community and judges agreed that Lewandoski's Market was the 1st Place winner!

Lewandoski's owner Gary Szotko said he participates because "it's held in our neighborhood, at our neighborhood Catholic Church, and it supports the Knights of Columbus Council affiliated with the Basilica. It's great to talk to customers outside of the shop to evangelize Polish food and Polish heritage."

The 2nd place Judges Award went to Leyen & Sons and the 2nd place People's Choice award to EA Brady's.

October is Polish American Heritage Month, so why not shop at all of these fine



PHS member Gary Szotko, owner of Lewandoski's Market, gave his 2022 Kielbasa Idol award a prominent place in his store at 1107 Walker Ave NW.

meat markets for kielbasa to make your own comparison!

PHS member Charlotte Ambrose has an entry in ArtPrize again this year. It is located in a window at the Grand Rapids Police Department on Monroe Center. The name of this beautiful, soulful water color piece is "JAZZ fills the air". Charlotte describes her piece as illustrating "the impact music has on the soul."

At its Sept. 19 meeting, the PHS board of directors set the following dates and places for free and ticketed events.

Oct. 15 -- The PHS will be manning a booth at the Cultural Heritage Festival hosted at the Grand Rapids Public Museum from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Museum admission varies, depending on age and residency. Children 17 or under are free if Kent County residents.

Nov. 21 – Board meeting of the PHS at 6 p.m. at Polish

Falcons Hall, 957 W. Fulton St.

Dec. 10 – PHS Wigilia, the society's signature event that starts with members sharing the Christmas wafer (oplatek), dining on a 7-course meal and listening and singing Polish Christmas carols. More details will be forthcoming in the November newsletter.

Feb. 10 – Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins Hockey game, featuring pre-game Polish dancing courtesy of the Malbork Dance Group, along with special deals on hot dogs and beer. A portion of the ticket sales are donated to the PHS. Ticket prices will be announced at a later date.

Aug. 25-27 – Dozynki Festival at the Grand Rapids Calder Plaza. The longest running ethnic festival in Grand Rapids will return for a three-day run. Admission free.



PHS member Charlotte Ambrose has an original watercolor entry in ArtPrize named "JAZZ fills the air."

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

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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.

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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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