

## Busia Queen Crowning a Highlight of Dozynki Festival 2024



*Outgoing 2023-24 Busia Queen Lucy Maciejewski Preston places the Busia Queen's Sash on Dolly Stefaniak Pelton at the 2024 Dozynki Festival at Calder Plaza.*

By Matthew Gryczan

It may not be correct to say that it was a contest when there was only one contestant, but everyone agrees that this year's Busia Queen is a winner.

Capping off the Dozynki Festival at the Calder Plaza on Aug. 25 was the coronation of De-  
lores Helen Stefaniak Pelton – or as everyone knows her, Dolly.

It was clear to the Busia Queen committee at the get-go that Dolly wanted the job mightily. The formal application for Busia Queen has space on it for about 100 words to explain the question: "Why would you like to be Busia Queen?" Dolly responded with a "Please see attached 4-pages" 700-word application, written neatly with great penmanship within the margins of ruled notebook paper.

Reading through the applica-

tion, it's obvious that here is a woman who loves being of Polish descent almost as much as she loves being a grandmother and great grandmother.

There is "so much more to say about the God-given gift of being Polish and carrying on the culture, but not enough time or space," Dolly wrote. She did a wonderful job answering the question with the time and space she had.

Dolly wrote with gratitude about being raised "with the culture and values that are so distinctly rich, regal and respectful." Since genealogy records of her family were destroyed, she and other relatives reconstructed the family's history that centered around the family farm at 10 Mile and Pine Island Road in Sparta.

"My aunts and uncles were given paper and a few questions," Dolly wrote. "The stories came back written in beautiful cursive, and their stories came alive in today's world...My remaining Aunt Anne at 102 years of age still reads 'The Book,' and it fills her heart."

Dolly has been married to her husband Tom for 56 years, and together they have 3 children, 12 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

On the day of the Busia Queen contest, emcees Teresa Bon-

ham and Marilyn Lignell did their best to make it seem like a competition by asking questions at the food and beverage tent that only Dolly could answer in the affirmative.

And true to form, Dolly acted with utter surprise when she was called up to receive the crown and ceremonial sash from outgoing queen Lucy Maciejewski Preston, who distinguished herself throughout her reign as being highly active.

Preston shed a tear or two as she recounted the year and her gratitude for serving in the role. Earlier she said, "being Busia Queen means being everyone's Busia."



*2024-25 Busia Queen Dolly Stefaniak Pelton with the 2024-25 Pulaski Days Queen and her Court*

## Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

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<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at [phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com).

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 [phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com).

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## Polish Heritage Society Seeking Members to Form Grant Committee

Do you know of an organization or cause that could use the financial support of the Polish Heritage Society? Would you like to have some input into which organizations or projects are eligible for PHS grant money?

At its September meeting, the Polish Heritage Society board created a new subcommittee to formalize a system where grant money is distributed to organizations and projects that further the mission of the PHS and need financial assistance.

The grant subcommittee will consist of five individuals: one of whom will be a PHS board member who will serve as its chairman, the PHS treasurer, and three PHS members in good

standing who are not on the board.

The subcommittee will solicit and review applications for grants based on certain criteria, then forward recommendations to the full board for its review. Grants will be awarded once a year.

The new system seeks to formalize the grants that the PHS issues each year, in addition to the annual scholarships given out to students who pursue post high school education. In past years, the board has issued grants following the conclusion of the Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival – the largest single fundraiser for the PHS – and at various times of the year.

Individuals who wish to be considered for a seat on the subcommittee can send their intentions to the general PHS email site: [phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com). They will be contacted at a future date and given an application that has yet to be constructed.

Organizations and projects that have received PHS grants are as varied as the Polish National Aid Society in particular, Pulaski Days Halls in general, restoration of the Soldiers Monument at Holy Cross Cemetery, St. Michael's Ukrainian Church for its war effort, and a local chapter of the YMCA.

## Dozynki Demonstration and Children's Tent Highlights



*Artist Maria Bereza demonstrated the time-honored Eastern European tradition of Pisanki, intricately decorated Easter Eggs. The free demonstration was just one of many which also included a demo on Polish cuisine. Plan on attending next year for more Polish cultural immersion.*



*It wouldn't be Dozynki festival without Char Czarnecki demonstrating the folk-craft of weaving flower and herb crowns for the girls and ladies in attendance. Young and old alike were crowned with the harvest of the fields and gardens in this unique Polish celebration of life and its bounty.*

## Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins on Jan. 31

In what has become a winter tradition, the PHS has set aside a block of 175 seats at Van Andel Arena for Polish Heritage Night at a Griffins hockey game.

This year Polish Heritage Night is set for Jan. 31 when the Griffins will face off against the Colorado Eagles at 7 p.m. The Malbourn Dancers also are scheduled to perform on the course.

Game organizer Anthony Zasuwa said the entire block of seats sold out this past year, so he expanded the block of seats available for the upcoming event. Look for more details in this newsletter, on the PHS Facebook page and on the PHS website.



# PHS Membership News



By Marilyn Lignell

For many of the volunteers who make the Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival possible, the end of August is always an exhausting but satisfying time.

While the three-day event is going on – really four days when you include the Thursday setup – sometimes we can't find the time to say "thank you" during the chaos. But now that the dust has settled, I'd like to shout out a huge "Dziękuję" to all who helped!

And I'd like to extend an extra big Dziękuję to PHS board member Rosemary Maciejewski for signing up more than 30 new or renewing members at the Dozynki. The following is a list of the new or renewing members :

Nancy Borek

Jill Bugay

Linda Carpenter

Bonnie Compton

Heidi Czarnopis

Jesse Douglas

Sharon Dykstra

Norman Gurak

Harold Hedlund

Carol Hennessy

Andrew Holroyd

Courtne Janikowski

Haley Kozal

Mike Kozal

Lisa and Lawrence Krzykwa

Matthew Kuczynski

Raya Lasiewski

Michael Lundie

Alana Magniant

Mary Jo Mikula

Kathryn Potas

Rebecca (Bialas) Rodriguez

Sarah Rodriguez

Edward Sakowicz

Deb Snyder

Laura Strahlendorf

Bayleigh Tuori

Tom Tuori

Linda Wells

Tim Weyhmiller

Patrick Wioskowski

Kaitlin Milke joined as a lifetime member.



*Kaitlin Milke*

The PHS sent out two cards of support this month. One went



*Hadley and Harrison Palmer on their Wedding Day*

lifetime member Donna Mileski, who also happens to be my mom. Donna fractured her hip a week before festival and was really disappointed that she couldn't come down and see all of her friends.

The second card was a congratulation card to member Hadley and husband Harrison Palmer. Hadley and Harrison were married on Sept. 7.

Our PHS calendar of events follows the seasons of the year here in Grand Rapids, and planning has begun for our annual Wigilia dinner during December.

More than 100 years ago in Grand Rapids nearly every family of Polish immigrants – no matter their station in life or wealth -- celebrated the centuries old tradition of Wigilia, the Christmas Eve vigil supper that included the singing of carols and sharing of the Oplatek wafers. We continue these traditions at our event.

This year's Wigilia dinner will be held Dec. 7 at the West Leonard Banquet Facility, 1140 Muskegon Ave NW, which formerly was the Knights of Columbus, Council 3104, hall. We'll be sharing information in the October newsletter.



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:

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