

## World Boxing Council Supports Ketchel Monument Restoration

Thanks to a lead donation from the prestigious World Boxing Council and contributions from more than 35 people from around the United States, the Polish Heritage Society was able to launch the restoration of the Stanley Ketchel monument in Holy Cross Cemetery last week.

“We have been absolutely floored by the response to our call for help to restore this monument to Ketchel, who is considered the first nationally known celebrity to come from Grand Rapids,” said Matthew Gryczan, chairman of the Friends of the Ketchel Monument committee formed to coordinate the project.

The donation from the WBC – the most globally recognized body in professional boxing that sanctioned fights by Floyd Mayweather Jr., Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Sugar Ray Leonard and a host of other champions -- put the project over the top to reach its goal of \$2,600 to restore the monument that had fallen on hard times.

WBC President Mauricio Sulaimán said his organization was pleased to be able to contribute to restoration of the monument that was erected 112 years ago to commemorate the untimely death of Stanley Ketchel, who is considered one of America’s greatest middleweight boxers.

“It’s only fitting that we should remember and honor the men

like Ketchel, who have given so much to the sport of boxing,” Sulaimán said.

Established in 1963 and known for its iconic championship belt with green strap and gold plates, the WBC has distinguished itself among the four sanctioning bodies in boxing by leading the charge to make boxing safer, set standards, expand the sport globally and lead humanitarian efforts.

With headquarters in Mexico City and affiliations with organizations in 168 countries, the non

-profit WBC continues to promote the sport across all continents and protect the health and well-being of all boxers, the organization’s website states.

Donations from the WBC, descendants of the Stanley Ketchel family and individuals who want to preserve Polish-American heritage and local history made the restoration possible, Gryczan said.

The Polish Heritage Society first recognized the sorry state of the Ketchel monument in August 2023 while it was working on the restoration of another landmark at Holy Cross Cemetery, the Soldiers’ Monument.

The society conducted research into the Ketchel monument, connected with mem-



*Ben Garcia, owner of 3K Garcia Concrete in Grand Rapids, smooths out the concrete base of the Ketchel monument at Holy Cross Cemetery.*

bers of the extended Ketchel family to garner their input, identified and worked with contractors to develop a budget, then launched a campaign to raise the necessary funds through its designation as a 501(c)3 organization.

Money raised by the society is being used to replace the concrete collar at the base of the white Vermont marble monument, recaulk its seams to protect against freeze and thaw action, and chemically

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Blessing of the Baskets Known as Swieconka Coming April 19th

Roman Catholic churches in Polish ethnic areas have celebrated the tradition of Swieconka, the blessing of food nestled in Easter baskets for years. Its roots reach directly back to Poland and other European countries. According to The Catholic Weekly, it appears eggs were blessed at Eastertime as early as the 12th century in West-

ern Europe, “as a symbol of the sealed tomb from which Christ emerged after his resurrection.”

White cloths line the basket or cover the top of the precious cargo which can include decorated eggs, bread, butter, cured meats, salt, horseradish, mustard and greens or herbs that

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids

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49501-1844**

<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at [phsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@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 Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to [phsgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:phsgrandrapids@gmail.com).

**President**  
**Teresa Bonham**

**1st VP**  
**John Theisen**

**2nd VP**

**Treasurer**  
**Michael Jasperse**

**Corresponding Secretary**  
**Susan Ulanowicz**

**Recording Secretary**  
**Matthew Gryczan**

**Director**  
**Rosemary Maciejewski**

**Director**  
**Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa**

**Director**  
**Thaddeus Broda**

**Director**  
**Eric Tetsworth**

**Director**

*(Ketchel continued from page 1)*

clean the monument and nearby gravestones of the boxer himself and his family.

Shirley Gressler-Norton, grand-niece of Ketchel and spokesperson for the descendants, said family members tried to maintain the concrete collar, but “over the years, it deteriorated to the point that it couldn’t be repaired.

“We love that Stanley’s monument is being brought back to its original grandeur, and we certainly want to encourage people to visit the gravesite. It’s a big part of our family’s history, but it’s also a significant story in Grand Rapids history.”

The monument commissioned by millionaire R. P. Dickerson was erected in November 1912 at Holy Cross Cemetery as a tribute to the tragic death of Ketchel, who was murdered in a botched robbery on Dickerson’s ranch near Conway, Mo. It took more than a year to carve the monument at a cost of \$5,000, a huge sum at the time.

There was an enormous outpouring of grief when Ketchel’s body was bought back to Grand Rapids – with what some believe was the second largest funeral in Michigan history. Approximately 5,000 people jammed the streets around St. Adalbert’s Basilica for the funeral – second only to U.S. President Jerry Ford’s funeral here in 2006.

In October of 1910, thousands lined sidewalks in the rain to see Ketchel’s hearse pulled by four horses, followed by 20 more carriages bearing family and friends.

As the procession passed, many followed behind making a loop through the downtown to St. Adalbert’s Basilica, where six girls bore funeral flowers and the

Polish Military Band played Chopin’s familiar Funeral March.

The Ketchel monument has been a lodestone for decades for boxing champions and those just entering the sport. When asked in 2000 if he had any personal plans while he was in Detroit for his only bout in Michigan, heavyweight champion Mike Tyson said his only desire was to visit Grand Rapids and pay respects to Ketchel.

Aspiring boxers still visit the monument to the “Michigan Assassin” – often toasting “Old Stanley” with a shot of liquor after they’ve enjoyed a night on the town.

Ketchel was named to the International Boxing Hall of Fame, and he is enshrined in the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame. In 2004, The Ring magazine ranked Ketchel as the eighth-best middleweight in history.

Since 1989, the Michigan Golden Gloves organization annually has been giving out the Stanley Ketchel Spirit of the Golden Gloves award at the conclusion of its West Michigan tournament to the boxer who “best exemplifies the courage, desire, spirit and respect expected of a Golden Gloves fighter.”

With thanks to all, here is a list of donors to the Ketchel monument:

The World Boxing Council

Ketchel family

Anne Savage

Polish Heritage Society

Craig Cebelak/The Sacred Heart Society of St. Isidore

Linda and David Johnson

Brian Lentz/Golden Gloves of Michigan

Matt and Ann Gryczan

Joe and Jan McCormick

Robert and Cheryl Wojcik

Dale Sugimoto

Jeffrey Portko/ Advocate Law Office

Steven and Jamie Vachon

Shirley and John Gressler-Norton

Christi and Steve Osmolinski

Steve Prawdzik/ The Sports Project

Gail Park

Nancy Bierlein

Anne Hirsch

Jennifer Frieburger

Diane Cusick

Marilyn and Dan Lignell

Penny Skrycki

John Theisen/in memory of James, Louise and Jerry Theisen

Michelle Steffen

Laurie Schaut

Cathleen Piechocki

Bruce Kielty

Ally Ross

Dan Faber

Mazen Sarwar

John Radzilowski

Adrianne Zuidema (Cooke)

Susan Ford

Mark Szczytko

Janice Smith c/o Piekny Polish Pottery

Marzanna Butryn

Thad Zale

(Swieconka Continued from page 1)

will be eaten at the Family Easter Dinner.

If you are interested in celebrating the Polish tradition of Swieconka, Seven Catholic churches in the Grand Rapids area will hold the blessings at various times on Saturday April

19th, 2025.

Call the Church office or check the Church Bulletin for times.

Holy Spirit Parish, 2230 Lake Michigan Drive NW, Grand Rapids, (616) 453-6369.

St. Anthony of Padua, 2510 Richmond Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI, (616) 453-8229

Sacred Heart of Jesus, 151 Garfield Ave SW, Grand Rapids, (616) 459-8362.

Basilica of St. Adalbert 654 Davis Ave NW, Grand Rapids, (616) 458-3065.

St. Isidore, 628 Diamond Ave NE, Grand Rapids, (616) 459-4731.

Our Lady of Consolation, 4865 11 Mile Rd NE, Rockford, (616) 866-0931.

St. Paul the Apostle, 2750 Burton St. NE, Grand Rapids, (616) 949-4170.

## Polish Heritage Society February Board Meeting Report

The Board of the Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids met on February 17, 2025 at 6 p.m. at the Polish Falcons Hall. Members present were President Teresa Bonham, 1st Vice President John Theisen, Treasurer Michael Jasperse, Recording Secretary Matthew Gryczan, Director Rosemary Maciejewski, Director Eric Tetsworth, and Director Thaddeus Broda. Those absent were Corresponding Secretary Susan Ulanowicz, Director Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa. Members present were Richard Panek, Sarah Sharpe, Anthony Zasuwa.

Treasurer Jasperse presented his report which was approved without changes. The Finance Report has historically shown a consistent positive balance so the Treasurer will seek options for transferring some funds into a money market account to earn interest. There will be an annual budget plan prepared for presentation at the May meeting.

President Bonham said the society should improve Polish American night at the Griffins and ask the Van Andel staff to help with marketing of the event. The plan is to raise the visibility of Polish American Night during the game as in previous years. Member Zasuwa reported that 114 people attended and Van Andel will be sending a check for the PHS

portion of Polish American night ticket sales.

Director Tetsworth reported that he is developing the language list of Polish words and phrases for the upcoming Rozmowa Polish Language Club meeting. Bonham said she would promote the event during Polka Pops, and Gryczan said he would post the language list on Facebook.

Member Panek reported that pianist Cezary Karwowski has moved his availability for a Grand Rapids concert to Saturday, June 7 due to a scheduling conflict with a competition in Poland. Venue deposit has been paid and sponsorships as well as media partnerships are being recruited and an initial large sponsorship has been received. Online ticketing platforms are being assessed with the aim of having tickets for sale by April.

Panek reported that he had received 11 checks for the bus trip to Detroit, with a list of 5 more people who want to register. He has confirmed the itinerary and tickets are \$80 per person. Gryczan said he would post a promotional item on Facebook, and Panek said The Echo would be running a story in its March edition.

Gryczan reported that the PHS has collected \$900 for the Ketchel project. He said he

appeared on the Sports Project radio show where the subject was entirely about Stanley Ketchel and the fundraising efforts to restore the monument.

Gryczan also reported that he had been working with Crain's Grand Rapids Business on its story of how Polish heritage events boosts the local economy, such as Pulaski Days, Dozynki and the recent bus trip of Detroiters to Grand Rapids.

Bonham reported that she send applications to various school districts, but no filled out applications so far.

Gryczan and Tetsworth said they would serve on the committee for board nominations and a third person is required.

Bonham said she wanted to appoint Sharpe to the open position of director as she brings a new set of skills to the board. Gryczan made a motion to approve the appointment, seconded by Maciejewski, passed unanimously.

Bonham said the by-laws do not spell out many specific responsibilities of the 2nd Vice President, so she has decided to hold off from submitting an appointment as she is looking for someone with specific fundraising/sponsorship recruitment skills to conduct the work that Mary Panek did for last year's Dozynki.

First Vice President Theisen reported that the date for the Dozynki Polish Festival is confirmed with the city of Grand Rapids, that Adam Porczynski is scheduled to apply for the city's festival grant Feb. 22-24, all the equipment has been reserved and the bands largely are set. He said the city is looking to reconstruct the Calder Plaza, so the Dozynki may need to temporarily move to Rosa Parks Circle in the future. Bonham reported that she had mailed out contracts to food vendors that participated last year and added another vendor. She was looking for a potential bakery. Gryczan said he was working with Sharpe on promotion of the Dozynki, and all communications with media need to go through her for consistency.

Gryczan reported that Aubrey has agreed to maintain the website for a monthly fee of \$75, three hours of work at \$25 per hour. He provided Aubrey with a system of keeping track of her time using Excel spreadsheets. Sharpe has agreed to take on the responsibility of directing the content that goes on the website. All members of the board are responsible for generating photos and copy for website items.

***Festival Sponsorship Forms are on page 5 and 6 of this newsletter.***



## Polish Heritage Society Piano Recital is Local Premiere for Newly Discovered Chopin Work

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids is presenting a June classical piano recital by Polish pianist Cezary Karwowski.

Mr. Karwowski will perform over an hour of music featuring the works of legendary Polish composers, including Frédéric Chopin, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, and others. A highlight of the evening will be the West Michigan premiere of Chopin's recently discovered composition, *Waltz in A Minor*. This historic performance provides a rare live opportunity to hear this newly unveiled gem from one of the world's most beloved composers. The event will take place on the evening of Saturday, June 7, at 7:00 PM at the St. Cecilia Music Center, located at 24 Ransom Avenue NE, Grand Rapids, MI.

Karwowski, who has taught at the Chopin Foundation of the United States, is doing doctoral studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is excited to be performing the new Chopin piece which was recently transcribed as a *Waltz Mazurka* by renowned U of M

Professor of Music Dr. Logan Skelton.

"In addition to this piece, I will also perform music by Polish-Americans Friedman, Hofmann, Godowsky and Rosenthal" Karwowski said.

According to an October 29, 2024 CNN report by Jack Guy, the new Chopin piece was discovered in the archives of the Morgan Library & Museum in New York City. It is the first new work attributed to the Polish composer in nearly a century.

The manuscript, measuring about 4 by 5 inches, was found by curator Robinson McClellan in 2019. Curious about the unfamiliar measures on the page, McClellan consulted Jeffrey Kallberg, a Chopin expert from the University of Pennsylvania, to help authenticate it. Research, including analysis of handwriting, paper, and ink, strongly suggests the waltz is

indeed Chopin's work, written in the 1830s.

At about one minute in length, this waltz is shorter than any other by Chopin but is considered a complete, tightly composed piece. The manuscript's small size indicates it may have been intended as a gift to be stored in an autograph album. Despite its brevity, the waltz is notated with dynamics, fingerings, and accents, showing Chopin's intent for it to be performed. He likely composed the piece in his early 20s, a time of significant artistic growth.

Chopin, born in 1810, is renowned for his solo piano compositions. He passed away at just 39 in Paris. His legacy endures, particularly in Poland. This discovery, the first of its kind since the 1930s, has captivated the classical music world. The announcement has spurred performances and widespread media attention.

"We are honored to host this exceptional recital and bring attention to Poland's profound influence on classical music," said Richard Panek, Cultural Ambassador for the Polish Heritage Society. "This event reflects our commitment to celebrating and preserving our shared Polish-

American cultural heritage."

Plan to experience an unforgettable evening filled with elegance, passion, and the timeless beauty of classical piano. This event is a true must-see for music enthusiasts and those who appreciate the artistry of Poland's finest composers.

### ***Polish Piano Legacy; Music of My Home***

**Date: Saturday, June 7, 2025  
Time: 7:00 PM**

**Venue: St. Cecilia Music Center,  
24 Ransom Avenue NE, Grand  
Rapids, MI.**

**Cost: \$25**

**Buy tickets by scanning the QR  
Code below:**



***For Recital Sponsorship Opportunities or if you need to order paper tickets contact Richard Panek at (616) 490-3231 or [rwpanek@gmail.com](mailto:rwpanek@gmail.com)***



*Cezary Karwowski will be performing the newly discovered Chopin Waltz in A Minor*



*Image of the Chopin Waltz in A Minor manuscript*



## August 22-24, 2025 POLISH FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES & BENEFITS

|  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>PRESENTING SPONSOR</b>  | <b>\$5,000</b>                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly visible branding with banners at key traffic locations.</li> <li>Sponsor recognition in radio advertisements during the Polka Radio Hours on 94.9 FM, 99.5 FM, and 1530 AM</li> <li>Fifty (50) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Four (4) Parking Passes.</li> <li>Sponsor name in social media, and PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul> |                                      |
| <b>CULTURAL TENT or BEER TENT SPONSOR</b>  | <b>\$2,500</b>                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly visible branding at either the Polish Heritage Society Cultural Exhibition or the BeerTent.</li> <li>Fifty (50) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Two (2) Parking Passes.</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>  |                                      |
| <b>POLISH ROYALTY VIP TENT SPONSOR</b>   | <b>\$2,500</b>                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private tent positioned in a prime location within Calder Plaza. Banner can be displayed on the tent.</li> <li>Seating for 20 – room for your corporate clients, loving family, or close friends!</li> <li>Fifty (50) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>                        |                                      |
| <b>ENTRANCE SPONSOR (Three Available)</b>  | <b>\$1,000</b>                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A highly visible signage recognition is available at one of the three entrances to the Polish Festival.</li> <li>Twenty-five (25) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>  |                                      |
| <b>POLKA BAND SPONSOR (Three Available)</b>  | <b>\$1,000 Fri or Sat, \$500 Sun</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available on a first come, first serve basis; sponsor the Polka Band on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.</li> <li>Twenty-five (25) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>  |                                      |
| <b>CULTURAL ACTIVITY SPONSOR (Four Available)</b>  | <b>\$500</b>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsor either the Children's Tent, Busia Pageant, Paczki Eating Contest, or Demonstration Tent.</li> <li>Ten (10) Polish Festival Tokens to be used for authentic Polish cuisine or beverages.</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>   |                                      |
| <b>KEG SPONSOR</b>   | <b>\$100</b>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote your organization by sponsoring a keg! Includes a printed sponsorship board listing at the beer tent –one of the most popular stops for visitors of the Polish Festival!</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>  |                                      |
| <b>BANNER SPONSOR</b>  | <b>\$100</b>                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote your organization with a display banner on the Festival fencing all 3 days</li> <li>Company/Organization name on PHS's website for one year (with direct link).</li> </ul>  |                                      |



**YES, We/I would like to be a 2025 Polish Dozynki Festival Sponsor!**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presenting Sponsor \$5,000      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Tent Sponsor \$2,500                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beer Tent Sponsor \$2,500       | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish Royalty VIP Tent \$2,500                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entrance Sponsor \$1,000        | <input type="checkbox"/> Polka Band Sponsor \$1,000 Fri or Sat, \$500 Sun |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activity Sponsor \$500 | <input type="checkbox"/> Keg Sponsor \$100                                |
| (Select Activity below)                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Banner Sponsor \$100                             |
| Children's Tent  |   |
| Busia Pageant  |   |
| Paczki Eating Contest                                    |   |
| Demonstration Tent                                       |   |

Sponsor (organization or individual name), exactly as it should appear in print:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Direct Web Link: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Send an invoice for this sponsorship: ☐ mail ☐ e-mail

Please mail your completed form with check payable to *Polish Heritage Society*.

Questions:

John Theisen [PHSgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:PHSgrandrapids@gmail.com) or  
John.Theisen@comcast.net



# PHS Membership News

By Marilyn Lignell

Congratulations to life member Charlene Czarnecki for being awarded this year's West Catholic Falcon by Choice Award for her profound impact on West Catholic. It is awarded annually to three to five individuals who have distinguished themselves in their significant contributions and commitment to West Catholic. Several nominations were received this year but Char's story stood out as particularly inspiring and worthy of this recognition. Char is invited, along with nine people of her choosing, to participate in Falcons Award Night (FAN) being held at the Gilmore on West River Drive. The evening will include a cocktail hour, dinner, a video showing Char and others contributions, and an awards ceremony.



Sarah Sharpe

The Polish Heritage Society is excited to announce that life member Sarah Sharpe has joined the Board as a Director. Along with serving on the board Sarah will be helping out with our PHS website. She has



Malbork Dance Group at the 9th Annual Spring Recital held at West Catholic High School

a 20-year career with Marriot International, holding several positions in operations, sales and leadership. She also has experience in computer technology. Before the pandemic, Sarah served as an adjunct professor for the hospitality department at GVSU and was awarded Faculty Member of the Year in 2017. Sarah said that she loves meeting and connecting with people and is passionate about finding new ways to serve her community.

Congratulations to the Malbork Dance Group on their 9th Annual Spring Dance Recital. The theme this year was "Candy Land" which was evident by the colorful "pieces" decorated by the kids on the stage. Director Natalia Szczygiel and Choreographer Michelle Marcinowski did an amazing job taking us on a tour around Poland through costumes and dance. It was evident that the 46 dancers had practiced quite seriously throughout the year, their dances were very well orchestrated. The recital ended with a heartwarming send off to Kelly

Czyzyk with a dance with her father, having graduated from the Malbork program.

Enclosed this month are your 2025 membership cards! If you have received a blank card it is because we do not have record of your payment. Please renew your membership if you want to continue to receive the newsletter and enjoy the benefits of being a member.

With the PHS initiative to restore the Ketchel Monument and the new Rozmowa language and fellowship meetings, our membership has had a big increase!! The following is a list of new members as of this printing. A big Witamy to all of you!

## Lifetime members:

Margaret and Anthony Prusinski  
Brian Lentz  
Craig Cebela  
Joe and Jan McCormick  
Robert and Cheryl Wojcik  
Anne Savage  
Shirley Gressler-Norton

Christi and Steve Osmolinski

Steve Prawdzik

## Family Membership

Todd and Brooke Krupiczewicz

## Annual Membership

Shelly Davis

Jeanette McDonald

Judith Taylor

Paulette Longwell

Janese Grzybowski Passenger

Judy Froedtert

Michelle Sequin

John Kotecki

Jason Kotecki

Jennifer Freiburger

Bruce Kielty

Dan Faber

Ally Ross

Diane Cusick

Susan Ford

Adrianne Zuidema

Laurie Schaut

Mark Szczytko

Cathy Piechocki

Membership Card



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 \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_