

August Heats Up With Polish Heritage Society Activities

By Matthew Gryczan

While it isn't an official proclamation, you could say that August is "Take Pride in Being Polish" Month in Grand Rapids!

There's at least one activity just about every week this month that will help you reconnect with your Eastern European heritage – or learn something about that culture that has so strongly influenced the city.

And best of all, the activities are free or carry a modest admission fee.

In this month alone, you can learn how to make tasty kielbasa or decorate Easter eggs with delicate patterns so fine that your kids will consider them keepsakes. Or learn to hop the polka to the sounds of some of the Midwest's best polka bands. Attend a religious service that conjures up the reverence and grandeur of a European cathedral, or learn some Polish while you whip up a delicious dish.

And get out and vote for the PHS Busia Queen, or run for the royal office yourself!

Here's your August calendar for all things Polish:

Aug. 10 and Aug. 17, 10 a.m.-noon each day

Learn Polish language and cooking at Polish National Aid

Society (Jackson Street Hall), 921 Jackson St NW. (See Membership News on Page 3)

These are the last two Saturdays of the 5-week Polish language and cuisine classes that cost \$30. On Aug. 10, participants will learn to make Szarlotka (apple cake), and on Aug. 17 participants will learn to make Zupa Ogorkowa (pickle soup).

The classes are led by Polish Heritage Society Busia Queen Lucy Maciejewski Preston and local Polish language instructor Marzanna Butryn.

For more details on the class, please call PNAS Jackson Street Hall at (616) 774-9011 or e-mail Butryn at butryanmarzanna@gmail.com.

Aug. 11 midnight

Deadline is midnight to apply as a contestant for PHS Busia Queen 2024-2025 at the Dozynki Festival.

Potential contestants need to complete and return an application that can be found on the PHS website <https://polishheritagesociety.com> under the menu item Festival, then Schedule of Events/Music and at the bottom of the page "Busia Queen Application."

Two basic requirements are that the Busia Queen must have at least one grandchild by the second Sunday of August and that she must be present at the election to be eligible for the honor.



Calder Plaza in Grand Rapids will be filled with everything Polish August 23-25 during the Annual PHS Dozynki Festival

Festival goers cast ballots to name the new Busia Queen on the last day of the three-day Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival that is being held this year at the Calder Plaza in downtown Grand Rapids. Contestants are encouraged to invite family and friends to vote on their behalf.

The lucky lady who is named Busia Queen will be crowned at the festival and presented with a ceremonial sash, which she will wear to represent the

PHS at the Pulaski Days parade, the Wigilia dinner, Polish Heritage Night at the Griffins, Matka Boska Zielna service and one non-PHS sanctioned event of the winner's choosing. Two benefits of being named Busia Queen include a \$250 donation made on the winner's behalf to the charity of her choice and a free annual membership to the society.

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**Polish Heritage Society
of Grand Rapids
PO Box 1844
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<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at 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.

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Aug. 14, 7 p.m.

The annual Matka Boska Zielna Mass will be held at St. Isidore Church, 625 Spring Ave. NE.

This ceremony of grandeur is a traditional favorite for local Catholics: a Mass with a blessing of flowers and herbs, music sung in Polish, and a procession to and crowning of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church courtyard. All are welcome, regards of religious affiliation.

In Poland, Matka Boska is celebrated at the Feast of Our Lady of Greens, where herbs are blessed and then woven into wreaths that are hung near holy pictures and used as medicinal recipes as protection against illness and natural disasters.

Here the service is held at St. Isidore Church, which features intricate and deeply hued stained glass windows and Stations of the Cross written in Polish.

The Polish Heritage Society is an active sponsor of the celebration, providing flowers, herbs and the woven crown for Mary and refreshments at the reception. In past years, the Pulaski Queen and her Court and the Malbork Dance Ensemble of Grand Rapids have attended.

Anyone who would like to volunteer to help for Matka Boska by way of setting up tables 2 hours prior to the event for the reception, bringing cookies or baked goods, and clean up afterwards should contact Marilyn Lignell at phsgrandrap-ids@gmail.com.

Aug. 21, 4 p.m.

Sausage making class at St Adalbert's Fraternal Aid Society (5th Street Hall), 701 5th St NW. Free admission, but participants must reserve a spot to attend. To make a reservation, please email Bonham at teresabonham@gmail.com. Space is limited.

The Polish Heritage Society is sponsoring a free class on how to make Polish fresh sausage, taught by internationally known cookbook author and blogger Anna Hurning.

PHS President Teresa Bonham, who organized the class with 2nd Vice President Mike Kozal, said the class will walk through the prep before making the sausage, talk about spices used and present the technique of preparing and cooking this traditional fresh Polish sausage.

"We'll finish the presentation by cooking and tasting the sausage on the spot," she said.

Hurning's cookbooks and merchandise from the Piękny Polish Pottery Store will also be available for purchase at the demonstration.

Aug. 23-25, various times

This is the granddaddy of all the ethnic festivals in Grand Rapids: the annual Dozynki Polish Harvest Festival! And admission is free!

Thousands of visitors will descend on the Calder Plaza on this weekend to enjoy live music and a large dance area, a children's tent, vendors offering Polish cuisine and items, and a tent that explains local Polish-American history and the contributions of famous Polish-Americans.

Other fun activities include the paczki eating contest, a demon-

stration of Polish cooking by Anna Hurning, a demonstration of the pisanki art of decorating eggs, crowning of the Busia Queen and a performance by the P.R.C.U.A. Malbork Dance Ensemble, a dance group for youth ages 3-18 that teaches traditional Polish folk dances with authentic garb.

For more detail on events, visit the PHS website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com>, but here's a lineup of polka music -- probably the happiest music in the universe.

Friday

• **1 to 5 p.m.: Virgil Baker's Just For Fun Band**

• **6 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Close): Box On**

Saturday

• **Noon to 5 p.m.: Bruce Packard Band**

• **5 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Close) Gerry Kaminski's Polka Network, alternating with Box On**

Sunday

• **Noon to 4:30 p.m. (Close) Tony Blazonczyk and New Phaze Band**

Other new activities this year include a live demonstration of local artist Maria Bereza on how to perform the art of coloring eggs for special occasions such as Easter and Christmas, and a booth manned by the Polish Genealogical Society of Michigan to share practical advice on how to research your family's Polish heritage.

There also will be a live demonstration by Polish cookbook author and YouTuber Anna Hurning, who last year served up a delicious batch of chilled beetroot soup topped with hardboiled eggs.

PHS Membership News



Bob and Marilyn shared a love of their Polish heritage with many people, and they enthusiastically were involved with many Polish events, supporting their daughters and grandchildren in "everything Polish." Bob is survived by four daughters Angie (Chuck) Amsis, Rachel (Scott) Sikkema, Melody Love (Dan) Hudson and Robin (Jonathan) Kelley.

By Marilyn Lignell

Before I give a roundup of the goings on in the PHS and other happenings, I'd like to make a pitch for members to volunteer for the upcoming Dozynki Festival on the last weekend of this month.

Many hands make light work, and we can always use some more hands – even inexperienced ones!

It's easy to sign up: just go to PHS website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com>, click on the Festival Tab and go to Sign Up to Help. The SignUp Genius shows all the open spots where we need help, and you can pick the days and times you like. The whole process takes less than 2 minutes.

And please remember, this is the annual money-maker for the PHS that allows us to give out annual scholarships to students seeking post high school education!

Our hearts go out to the family of Bob Aniszko, who passed away July 25 at the age of 74. Bob was preceded in death by his wife Marilyn "Busia Queen" Aniszko, who he met in high school at a Catholic Central/West Catholic dance.



Bob Aniszko

He will be deeply missed by his beloved grandchildren that were his pride and joy. Bob was a veteran of the Vietnam War serving in the U.S. Army and a retiree of Wolverine Worldwide. A memorial Mass was celebrated Aug. 2 at the Basilica of St Adalbert. The family requested contributions to be made to Corewell Hospice or the Polish Heritage Society.

We welcome new member Wendy Gulbis to the Polish Heritage Society! Wendy is a Grand Rapids native who is Polish on her mom's side (Walendziak and Bielecki grandparents).



Wendy Gulbis

"I am looking forward to meeting others in the Polish Heritage Society," Wendy said, adding that she is now exploring her Polish heritage. Married with two children, she volunteers at the Rockford Area Museum and loves to travel, one of her favorite places being Sault Ste. Marie. "I also enjoy watching cooking shows and competitions on TV," she offered. "And I wish I had someone to do the clean up for me as the chefs do there!"

With her interest in cooking, I was not surprised to hear that Wendy attended the Polish language and cooking class being offered by Polish language teacher Marzanna Butryn and PHS Busia Queen Lucy Maciejewski Preston at Jackson Street Hall on Saturdays. "They are so much fun," Wendy gushed. "And I love being surrounded by all these people having a love for Poland."

After hearing all the great things about the Polish language and cooking class, I ventured out to see what all the fuss was about.

As I walked into the hall, I was immediately greeted by a lot of smiling faces. There were a

dozen women all eager to learn some Polish and make a Polish dish. The air was so light and happy, everyone shying away a little when Marzanna asked if anyone had made last week's recipe, Łazanki.

Member Barb Hess had made it and was amazed at how it seemed to get better with each day. "Leftovers on day three were the tastiest," she said. Marzanna went on to start teaching the Polish alphabet and moved into today's recipe which was Kluski Śląskie, potato dumplings.



Barb Hess (right) and daughter Allison Pitsch

It was all hands on deck as the dough was kneaded and worked until there were no cracks. The beautiful little dumplings were put into boiling water to cook and accompanied by some goulash and red beet salad with horseradish.

The food was ever so tasty, and the company heartwarming. There are still a couple classes left, and they may try this again in the fall. See registration information on the frontpage of this newsletter to sign up for the August 10 and 17 classes.



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 _____

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