



Polish Heritage

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ACPC Concludes its 77th Convention in Buffalo *by Peter J. Obst*

This year the annual convention of the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) was organized by the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo NY, under the theme: Art and Architecture.

It was held from July 30 to August 2 at the M Hotel in Cheektowaga, New York. The opening ceremonies included a color guard of children from the local Polish Saturday school who sang the national anthems under the direction of principal Mira Szramel. Father Cole Webster gave the invocation and ACPC president Cecilia Larkin welcomed all participants. The keynote speaker was the Honorable Carl Bucki, Chief Judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Western New York state. He recounted the Polish contribution to American history and also the input Poles had to the culture and the building of Buffalo. A proclamation from the Mayor of Buffalo Christopher P. Scanlon was read, followed by a short video presentation on the city. Soprano Laura Kafka-Price closed the morning session with a beautiful rendition of *Czerwony Pas*.

During the business meetings that followed, discussions included changes to the ACPC Constitution and Bylaws, the scope of scholarships granted by the ACPC, ongoing development of its website (www.polishcultureacpc.org), and this year's program for the National Conference for the Social Studies (NCSS), a teachers' convention, where the ACPC hosts a themed booth entitled *Polish Perspectives*. John Cebrowski, from the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria, reported on the six new organizational members who joined the ACPC in the past year.

Elections for officers in the organization were held and Cecilia Larkin was elected to a second term as president. The new executive committee includes: Mark Szpak 1st vice-president; John Cebrowski 2nd vice-president; Tom Payne treasurer; and Rose Kobylinski recording secretary.

To experience the cultural essence of Buffalo the participants made two tours. During the first day, after a presentation on Polish artists by father and son art restorers Henry and Brett Swiatek, the group visited the AKG Art Museum after lunch at the Terrace Restaurant in Delaware



Conventioners pose for a group photograph at Buffalo's Richardson Olmsted Complex as part of the architectural tour of the city. (photo by Barbara Lemecha)

Park. The museum was a surprise to the visitors, as within the walls of its classical and modern buildings are some exemplary works by famous artists including: Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, Amedeo Modigliani, Georgia O'Keeffe, Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Salvador Dali and others. The second stop was the Church of the Assumption where in the presbytery are located five beautiful sgraffito works by Jozef Slawinski, *Scenes from the Life of the Blessed Virgin*, (1963).

On the following day the group went on a double-decker bus tour of Buffalo's significant buildings. The city had its greatest expansion in the mid-1920s, before the Great Depression, when it became home to many art deco and other architectural gems. In addition, several conventioners took side trips to see the Wilcox Mansion where Teddy Roosevelt was inaugurated, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House.

This year's awards banquet emceed by local radio personality Andy Golembiowski was held in the Fillmore Room at the hotel.



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President's Message



President Cecilia Larkin

would sit at the piano and play his music.

The Chopiniana was born in 1993, as a gathering of music lovers where guests could share food and drink and enjoy listening to the music of the greatest Polish composer performed by outstanding pianists and other musicians. The event soon became a staple at the American Polish Cultural Center (APCC), established by the ACPS in the late 1980s, and was eagerly awaited each fall by Polonia and others in the greater Detroit area. Noreen carried on her dream for years until her passing fifteen years ago.

The uncertainty about the future of Chopiniana didn't last long. For two years, it was led by Basia Lisiecka, then Jacqueline Kolowski took over as chair of the event. Better known as Jackie or Jadzia, she was a force to behold who not only made sure that the program continued but at times increased attendance. Notably, in 2017, over 400 guests filled the APCC for the Chopiniana's 25th Anniversary at which the Macomb County Symphony Orchestra performed. During and after the pandemic, the attendance declined a bit but it still was sizeable and grew again thanks to Jackie's perseverance (some would say stubbornness) and tireless promotion. And she made sure that the artists were always top notch. Beautiful music, exquisite dining, wine and friends... almost like in Paris two centuries ago. That's Chopiniana.

My sister Jackie died on July 11, less than three months before this year's concert for which she was making preparations since last year. There was no question that it will go on as planned; the artists were already lined up and a committee was quickly formed to pick up the work and make the event a tribute to the person who put her soul into making it a true celebration of the beauty of Polish music. About three hundred people came to this year's Chopiniana, one of its largest audiences. Nothing will replace our sister to her family and friends but it's comforting to know that her work was so much appreciated and that it will be carried on for years to come.

Another music lover and supporter of musicians left us this past August. The ACPC past president Ted Mirecki learned to play the piano but did not make it his career. Instead, he took every opportunity to show his love of

music by generously supporting orchestras, young musicians and musical events. As Music Committee Chair at the Polish American Arts Association of Washington, D.C., he organized the annual Chopin Concerts for many years and wrote knowledgeable articles and concert reviews. He was a major supporter of the National Philharmonic which was founded and led for many years by a Polish conductor Piotr Gajewski. Ted donated generously to the scholarship programs for young musicians and underwrote their recordings of Polish classical music, old and new. One of these musicians, violinist Kinga Augustyn came down from New York to play at Ted's funeral. On October 1st, she performed at the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York in a concert in his honor.

Both Jackie and Ted were mainstays in the ACPC in various capacities as well as active leaders in other Polish organizations. In 2024, Ted received the ACPC Lifetime Achievement Award; Jackie was awarded one posthumously at the 2025 Convention. It was a privilege to work with them. They will always remain in our memory.

In this Polish Heritage Month, enjoy the beauty of Polish music and celebrate Polish culture!

Celia Larkin

Celia Larkin



At this moving time of year, as Poles honor departed loved ones, the American Council for Polish Heritage pays homage to those members and friends who are no longer with us. Their spirit of dedication and service have touched many throughout our Community and have helped our Organization serve the cultural and educational needs of Polonia in countless ways.

Cześć Ich Pamięci!



photo: Radosław Eski

Earlier this summer, the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston received approval for holding a 250th Anniversary commemorative celebration of General Casimir Pulaski's landing in America – which occurred at Marblehead, Massachusetts, on July 23, 1777 – to fight for American independence. Mark Szpak, as President of the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston, together with Ed Krolikowski, as chair of the ACPC's Revolutionary War 250 Committee, joined in making presentations to two separate Marblehead town committees to secure permission for this upcoming event. The commemoration will take place in July of 2027 at Fort Sewall in Marblehead, Massachusetts, where the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston had already previously co-sponsored the installation of a plaque in Pulaski's honor.

And, at the end of this summer, the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston participated again in the annual Boston Polish Harvest Festival at Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish in South Boston. Visitors to the Polish Cultural Foundation of Boston's tent could sit to have their photos taken in front of a large hanging backdrop making it appear that they were sitting at the Sukiennice across from the Kościół Mariacki in Kraków's Market Square!

submitted by Mark Szpak



Above: Fort Sewall in Marblehead, Massachusetts, site of the planned celebration in July 2027 honoring the 250th Anniversary of General Casimir Pulaski's landing in America at Marblehead to join the fight for American Independence. Insert: Plaque honoring General Pulaski.



Left: Visitors to the Polish Cultural Foundation's booth at the Boston Polish Harvest Festival enjoyed posing in front of Kraków's Kościół Mariacki.

32nd Chopiniana dedicated to the memory of Jacqueline Kolowski

On Sunday, September 28, "Chopiniana," a tribute to Frederic Chopin which was held for the first time in 1993, had its 32nd edition at the American Polish Cultural Center (APCC) in Troy, Michigan.

Envisioned by its founder Noreen Śmiałek Sinclair as an intimate and elegant gathering and concert conjuring up the atmosphere of Parisian salons, where during the first half of the nineteenth century Frederic Chopin entertained and dazzled with his music, the event brought together over 300 people. They enjoyed music, presentations, dinner and even some dancing at the close.

It was an extraordinary two-fold celebration as this year the musical tribute to Chopin was combined with the 40th Anniversary Gala of the American Polish Cultural Society (APCS), an affiliate of the American Council for Polish Culture. The concert was dedicated to the memory of the late Jacqueline (Jackie) Kolowski who with unparalleled dedication, energy and passion chaired Chopiniana 12 times. When Jackie unexpectedly passed away earlier this year amid the preparations for this year's event, Zdzisława Gumul picked up the mantle and with the organizing committee made sure that the event was as beautiful as Jackie would have wished it.

The evening had an expansive and varied program, with the pinnacle being a two-part program of classical music, with the first part performed solo by the young and very talented pianist Derek Szlauer, followed in the second part by the excellent "Trio 72", (Derek Szlauer, Joseph Gray and Brendan Callies) performing compositions by Haydn and Mendelssohn. Among the distinguished guests were Richard Walawender, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in Detroit, Kazimierz Brzozowski and Cecilia Larkin, ACPC president and Jackie Kolowski's sister, who was there to pay tribute to her older sibling. Ms. Larkin was one of many people who throughout the evening praised the APCS for its many years of work promoting Polish culture.

2025 Chopiniana



*Top photo: Derek Szlauer (piano), Joseph Gray (violin) and Brendan Callies (cello).
Bottom: Performers Brendan Callies, Derek Szlauer, and Joseph Gray.*

*Written by Alina Klin for the Polish Weekly/Tygodnik Polski
Photos: Alina Klin and Alicja Karlic*



Julia Moore

ACPC Summer Study Report

by Julia Moore

The ACPC Summer Study Scholarship allowed me to travel to Poland and spend a week in Warsaw doing research for my dissertation. I am in the very early stages of my dissertation project as a second year PhD student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and the opportunity to go on a research trip so early in my program has given me the opportunity to have a solid path to follow as my program progresses. I was able to visit the National Library, contact the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), and spend a day in the Fundacja General Elżbiety Zawackiej Archives in Toruń.

Visiting the archives in Toruń was more valuable to me than words can express. There, they host files on women who participated in the Home Army during the Second World War. The files contain everything from photographs, to war reports and correspondences, to letters of recommendations on the women's behalf from Elżbieta herself. As someone who is studying Polish women during wartime, this will most likely be the primary archive for my dissertation. Being able to make connections early is so crucial. I am looking forward to visiting again in the future.

Much thanks to the ACPC for this opportunity. I am happy to be able to continue my journey as a Polish historian with their support.

A Close Up Look at *The People's Pope* with TV Reporter Rich Newberg

by Robert Fronckowiak

It isn't often that a community has close ties to a saint! Polish Buffalo's connections with Pope John Paul II are legendary, including his bond with Anne Odre who was shot along with the pontiff during an assassination attempt in St. Peter's Square on May 13, 1981.

Former WIVB-TV senior correspondent Rich Newberg presented these special moments with archival video at a recent meeting of the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo along with four eyewitnesses to the events. Newberg met the pope "up close and personal" while covering two private audiences with Buffalo delegations in Rome and Poland. He produced and hosted a WIVB-TV special called "The People's Pope," that featured John Paul II's special relationship with the people of Western New York.

Contributing to the special relationship was the medical assistance rendered to children. In 1981, Emilia Smolinska, the six-year old daughter of a Polish Solidarity union member was brought to the United States to have a hole in her heart repaired at the request that Lech Walesa made to County Executive, Edward Rutkowski. The girl's heart had a very large hole, about the size of a silver dollar. This was the first of several children receiving specialized care in Buffalo including several at the request of Pope John Paul II.

In 1985, Newberg had the rare opportunity as a local TV news reporter to meet John Paul II at the summer papal palace outside of Rome. He, along with a group of Buffalonians, had just come from Gdańsk, meeting with Lech Walesa and witnessing a crackdown on Solidarity members demonstrating for freedom from communism. The pontiff took Newberg aside and said, "Without Solidarity, there can be no peace."

Newberg's most moving report was during the pope's return to his homeland in 1999. On a street in Toruń, the Holy Father, now stooped over and frail, stopped the pope mobile and blessed every Buffalonian who journeyed there to witness history in the making. Some even tearfully suggested



left to right: Photographer Don Yearke; Russ Gugino; Jack Kemp (assistant); reporter Rich Newberg; Erie County Executive Ed Rutkowski and Brian Rusk, Polish American Congress Director and organizer of several trips to Poland.

John Paul II was destined for sainthood. During that same trip, Western New Yorkers again had a front row seat to history at a papal mass. A half-million Poles had gathered in a field to receive his blessings. Brian Rusk, who led the delegation, said "the sea of people" had gathered to thank the pope for helping to bring down communist rule in Poland. "It was a note of optimism for Poland," he said, "after being dominated by communism for two generations."

The pope's warm feelings toward Western New Yorkers were established during his visits to the Niagara Frontier in 1969 and '76. He was Cardinal Karol Wojtyła back then and clearly enjoyed his casual meetings with representatives from the Polish community. They took him on a tour of Niagara Falls and church visits to St. Adalbert's and St. Casimir, where he stayed overnight in the church's rectory. He was elected Pope on October 16, 1978.

Video information on Buffalo's special connection can be found online at Rich Newberg Collections, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library (p.2) at *Hearts and Minds Together*, *The People's Pope...*, and *The Funeral of Pope John Paul II*.

Polanki at Milwaukee's Polish Fest

by Susan G. Mikoś

Polanki, the Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee, has been creating exhibits for and coordinating the cultural area at the city's annual Polish Fest since it was first held in 1982. For the weekend of June 13-15, 2025, Polanki brought many new and returning elements of Polish culture to Milwaukee's lakefront festival grounds.

This year's featured exhibit was "The Polish School of Posters," which included works by several important Polish artists. The centerpiece was a set of travel posters by Wiktor Górka, paired with regional costumes from Polanki's collection.

The Folk Art tent showcased demonstrations of pisanki, pajaki, wianki, spinning, wood carving, metal working, and folk-inspired fashion. There was also a children's area with books and activities, alongside a duplicate book sale from the Polanki Library at the Polish Center of Wisconsin.

Elsewhere on the Polish Fest grounds, Polanki hosted a Speakers Forum, with lectures on a variety of cultural topics. New this year was a fashion show of traditional and modern dresses by Recultured Designs.

In yet another area, the Polish Genealogical Society of America shared useful information on tracing family history. Nearby, in the Writer's Corner, author James Conroyd Martin was busy signing copies of his many books.

Finally, Polanki offered a wide variety of Polish merchandise for sale, including a rich array of Bolesławiec Polish pottery, books, and hard-to-find folk art.

Polish Fest is a community-wide undertaking, but Polanki has been a significant contributor, year after year.

As seen in these photographs, this year was no exception.



Polish Institute of Culture & Research at Orchard Lake

from Dr. John Radziłowski

The Polish Institute of Culture & Research at the Orchard Lake Schools kicked off its autumn season with concerts, readings, and an art show. In September, a concert of Polish music by Jacek Kasjan filled the Galeria with music and art lovers who listened to works by Szymanowski and Chopin and viewed selections from our collection of Polish art.

To open Polish Heritage Month the Institute partnered with the Friends of Polish Art to host the FPA Fine Arts Contest at the Orchard Lake Galeria (photo at right). A selection of the work of talented artists working in a variety of media will be on display until the middle of November.

Author Alex Storzyński joined us for a reading from his latest book, *Spies in My Blood*,



an evening co-sponsored with the Kosciuszko Foundation Michigan Chapter. (photo far right) Please follow us on Facebook and check our website for our upcoming events: www.picrol.org





Lilia Kieltyka, president of the Polish Cultural Club of Greater Hartford, Inc. (PCCGH) recently completed a long-term project as part of the New Britain, Connecticut Sister City Committee. Under her leadership and planning, relations were reactivated with officials in Pultusk, Poland, her family's hometown and one of the Sister Cities that New Britain established in the early 1990s. An iconic New Britain "BEE" sculpture (left and top right) was gifted to the town and arrived just

in time for its presentation during the town's Św. Mateusza - Dni Patrona three-day festival held the weekend of September 19. This was a wonderful and memorable event which included participation by all town organizations. The BEE will be displayed in Pultusk's outdoor "Miasta Partnerskie Park." Lilia remarked that "the best part was seeing the BEE so well received by the children. It's a happy BEE and kids love it. It will make

a great addition to the town park, and being able to share this project with my family in Poland was especially fulfilling."

Fran Pudlo, Lilia Kieltyka and Ursula Brodowicz traveled to Pittsburgh, PA in mid-July to meet with internationally renowned Szopka artist, Dave Motak. Dave offered the PCCGH the opportunity to take over the "Mini-Szopka Workshop" he created and taught successfully for many years. The three ladies learned first-hand how the workshop is conducted. They constructed a personal mini-szopka in a few hours and brought home supplies to carry the project forward. It was fun to spend time with Dave and a rewarding experience overall. Since Szopka making has been a major element of the PCCGH's mission for over forty years, this workshop will add a new dimension in promoting this beautiful art tradition. Dave's transfer will always be a testament to his artistry and legacy. It is expected that Hartford's "Mini-Szopka Workshop" will be offered in 2026 for the enjoyment of both children and adults.

The ACPC's 77th Convention held in Buffalo, NY this summer brought recognition and special excitement as Club member, Fran Pudlo, was selected to receive the prestigious Founders Award. She has served the Polish Cultural Club in various capacities over the past 25 years, is currently on the ACPC's Membership Committee, involved with her parish, SS. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartford, and supports other organizations of Connecticut Polonia as well.

On August 14, Central Connecticut State University in New Britain announced the appointment of Dr. Karolina Kołpak as the next Stanislaus A. Blejwas Endowed Chair in Polish and Polish-American Studies. Dr. Kołpak brings an impressive record of scholarship, teaching, research, and a commitment to an interdisciplinary and inclusive approach to Polish, Polish-American, and Polish-Jewish studies. Lilia Kieltyka, served as a member of the international Search Committee. The Polish Studies Program at CCSU has grown over 50 years into one of the most significant university-based initiatives of its kind in North America. It owes its existence to the generosity of Connecticut's Polish-American community (including the PCCGH), which raised significant funds matched by the State of Connecticut.



Lilia Kieltyka with family members in Pultusk, Poland.



Mini-Szopka Workshop with Dave Motak (left to right): Fran Pudlo, Ursula Brodowicz, Dave Motak, Lilia Kieltyka.



Dr. Karolina Kolpak.



ACPC Founders Awardee Fran Pudlo and PCCGH President Lilia Kieltyka.



A DAY OF HISTORY AND HONOR IN WARSAW

by Timothy Kuzma,
PFA National President

On August 6, 2025, I had the privilege of representing Polish Falcons of America at the inauguration of Poland's new President, Karol Nawrocki, in Warsaw. It was a profound honor—for me personally and for our organization—to be present for a day that blended state ceremony, faith, history, and civic pride. I attended with my wife, Patti.

The morning began in the Sejm, where a joint session of the Sejm and Senate (the National Assembly) convened for the swearing-in. After taking the constitutional oath, President Nawrocki delivered a forceful address that set out themes of national sovereignty, rule of law, and security. "The free choice of a free nation has brought me before you today... As a Christian, I forgive ... what was happening during the elections," he said, striking a conciliatory note amid sharp political debate. He pledged dependability in office: "For five years, every hour, every day, every week, with every decision and every legislative initiative, I will fulfill my commitments." He also stressed defense and alliance priorities: "I will strive to make the Polish army the largest NATO force in the European Union."

Underscoring his stance on Europe, the President added that he would "be the voice of those who want a sovereign Poland... in the European Union... but... Poland will remain Poland," and that he would "never agree to the European Union taking away Poland's competences" not provided for in the treaties.

At noon we joined a beautiful mass at St. John the Baptist Cathedral, offered for the Homeland and the new president. The liturgy was celebrated by Archbishop Wojciech Polak, Primate of Poland, and the homily was delivered by Archbishop Adrian Józef Galbas, S.A.C., Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw.

In the afternoon, the ceremonies moved to the Royal Castle for a formal reception and the investiture connected with Poland's highest state orders—an elegant reminder of the continuity of Poland's civic traditions.

Later in Piłsudski Square, at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the President assumed command of the Armed Forces during an impressive military ceremony. The pageantry and setting offered a moving tribute to service and

sacrifice in the cause of a free Poland.

While in Warsaw, we also met with Marzena Kruk, Director of the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), to continue our ongoing cooperation. Director Kruk kindly invited us to the opening of a new IPN exhibit at the Museum of the Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the Polish People's Republic—the memorial museum at the former Mokotów Prison, a place of profound remembrance. IPN has been mounting exhibitions there, deepening public understanding of Poland's 20th-century Communist-era trials. It was an honor to be included.

The exhibition is titled "Murdered City. Reliefs of Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann." The exhibition also features two of

her other works related to Warsaw, a city the Germans wanted to murder (the cover of the first edition of Władysław Szpilman's memoirs—the story featured in the film *The Pianist*—titled "Death of a City" and the woodcut "Burnt City"). The exhibition, dedicated to Warsaw—a city unimaginably affected by the barbarity of World War II—centers on the reliefs of Maria of Spain-Neumann from the series "Murdered City," created at the turn of 1964/65, held at the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance. The reliefs are a symbolic, artistic tribute to the graphic artist's friends who perished in the Warsaw Uprising, and to Warsaw, her hometown. The exhibition will also feature works by Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann from the collections of the Zachęta National Gallery of Art and the Warsaw Public Library. The objects pre-

sented in the exhibition are complemented by photographs from the Institute's collection, taken by Henryk Śmigacz and Antoni Snawadzki, showing the gradual but systematic destruction of Warsaw. The exhibition will document both the destruction of the capital during the siege in 1939 and the destruction resulting from the insurgent fighting and the barbaric destruction of the city by the Germans in 1944.

For the Polish Falcons, the day's ceremonies were a powerful reminder that public life draws strength from memory, community, and service. Being present—in the Sejm, in the Cathedral, in the halls of the Royal Castle, and at Piłsudski Square—was both moving and meaningful. We were grateful to witness a new chapter in Poland's civic story and to represent our members at such an historic moment.



*Patti and Tim Kuzma at the inauguration
of Poland's President Karol Nawrocki*



In July, the Greater Hazelton (PA) Area Polonaise Society became a new member of the American Council for Polish Culture. Our society was formed on September 17, 1977 by a small group of Polish Americans, which included Thomas Kopetskie, who was an active member for 47 years until his passing in 2024 at 94 years old. The main purpose was for Americans of Polish descent to share their heritage and continue their customs along with contributing to the Greater Hazelton area culturally and educationally. Over the years tens of thousands of dollars were donated to worthwhile charitable programs in the Hazelton area, in the United States and in ancestral Poland. Tom Kopetskie was the driving force behind having Hazelton PA in Sister Cities Inc. and, in 1993, eventually formed a Sister City bond with Gorzów Wielko-polski, Poland.

At its peak, the Society had close to 300 members. Our events included the Pączki Ball, Świeńconka, Polish Constitution Day, and scholarship programs for local students and Annual Scholarship Picnic, the Celebration of Polish American Heritage Month and Wigilia. We also have a Memorial Mass each year to remember our members who have passed on to eternity but cannot be forgotten due to their dedication to keeping their Polish heritage and customs alive for future generations.

By 2020, as with many organizations, our Society membership dropped to about 30 members. Older members either dropped out due to illness or relocation or had passed on and middle-aged and young adults were busy working or raising families. Covid did not help the situation either. However, our president Tom Kopetskie did not give up. He held regular meetings, where only about seven members would attend. He still had the Scholarship Picnic, the Polish American Heritage dinner and Wigilia.

In 2021, I joined the Society and formed an instant bond with Tom. He became like a second father to me. The Society has been able to grow to our present count of 75 members. With the new members, we are able to bring new life and ideas to the table. We resurrected many of the past events and brought back many Polish traditions to a new generation. Tom was thrilled in seeing the Society he helped to form start growing again. In 2024, however,

Tom passed away and I became president. It is my



Right: Celebrating the Polish Constitution on May 6 were Society members (seated) Cheryl Sabol and Marianne Serra; (standing) Cindy Burczyk.



*Bottom left: Tom Kopetskie
Bottom right: Young Society members enjoying the Scholarship Picnic on July 15.*



One of the Society's recent projects has been preparing 142 Jared Boxes to be donated to the young patients of Geisinger's Janet Weis Children's Hospital.

personal goal and that of all our society members goal to keep Tom's dream alive for years to come.

As far as our more recent events, our Pączki Ball was held on Tuesday, March 4, 2025; although it was put together in just six weeks there were 85 people in attendance. A Polish/Cajun buffet was served along with multi flavored pączki for dessert. Live music was provided by Denny Hardock. Zywiec beer and Raspberry Pączki Vodka from Michigan were available for purchase.

Our Polish Constitution Dinner was held on Tuesday, May 6; the guest speaker, Bill Minsker, spoke on his teaching semesters for 25 years in Poland. We held our scholarship picnic at Tweedle Park, Weatherly PA on Tuesday July 15 with 83 in attendance. A \$1,000 scholarship was awarded to Alex Composto, a 2025 graduate of MMI Preparatory School in Freeland PA. He did his speech based on the book *Prisoner B-3087*.

While going through Tom's scrapbooks, I was able to once again bring back some of the Society's events that were so near and dear to Tom's heart such as the Pączki Ball, Polish Constitution Day and the Scholarship Picnic.

"Tom, we hope we are making you proud."

Scholarship recipient Alex Composto (left) with Kathy Roach and Bob Wydock whose families sponsored the scholarship.



EDWARD PISZEK REMEMBERED

Edward Piszek Historic Marker

by Peter J. Obst

At noon on Saturday, September 20, 2025, a small group of individuals gathered at the entrance to a nature preserve in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, to dedicate a Historical Marker commemorating Polonia icon Edward Piszek. Peter J. Obst, President of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia welcomed those present. He read a letter received from Bogdan Klich, Head of Mission at the Republic of Poland Embassy in Washington, D. C. Katherine Dowdell, representing the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), made a short speech citing some of Edward Piszek's many accomplishments. Janusz Romanski, Commander of the Polish Army Veterans Association, District 10, presented Peter Obst with the Gen. Casimir Pulaski medal in recognition of his achievements. Among those present was John Ferro, Conservation Director at Wissahickon Trails, the organization which administers the nature preserve. The preserve was created when the Piszek family donated land surrounding historic Emlen House, Edward's long time residence, to Montgomery County.

Then a cover, bearing the logo of the PHMC was removed from the gold and blue sign. The following words were presented to the public for the first time:

Edward Piszek (1916-2004)

Entrepreneur who cofounded Mrs. Paul's Kitchens in Phila. in 1946. The company marketed its innovative frozen seafood products nationwide, earning Piszek the nickname "Fishcake King."

A visit to his ancestral homeland in the 1960s inspired him to promote Polish culture, heritage and causes, including founding the Copernicus Society, saving the Kosciuszko House with historian Edward Pinkowski, and funding an anti-tuberculosis campaign.

Under PHMC rules, the state of Pennsylvania is obligated to maintain this sign in perpetuity. It is a fitting tribute to a man who made such a large contribution to Pennsylvania and the Polish American community there. Writer Jake Morgan, working with Edward, produced the memoir: *Some Good in the World: A Life of Purpose* published in 2001 by University of Colorado Press, 235 pages (available on Amazon - photo far right.)

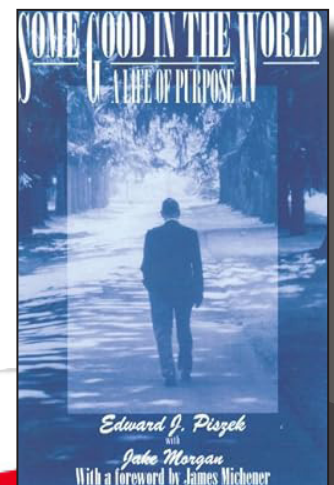
Information about the activities and membership in the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia may be found on the web page: www.poles.org/PHSP



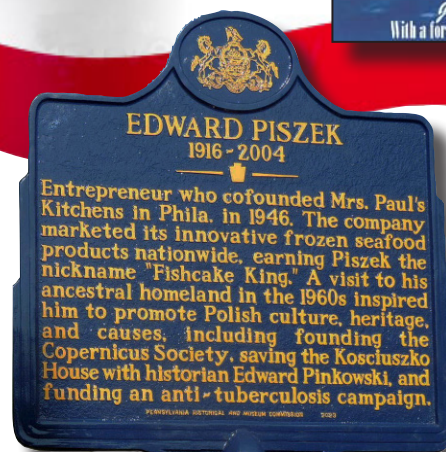
Photo Above: (left to right) Diana Blichasz, John Ferro, Wissahickon Trails Conservation Director, with daughter Chloe; Alexandra Golaszewski-Kelly; John B. Kelly III; Peter J. Obst, president, Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia; Katherine Dowdell, representing the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; John Wisniewski; Janusz Romanski, Commander of the Polish Army Veterans Association, District 10.



Edward Piszek



Below:
State of Pennsylvania historical marker commemorating Edward Piszek.





Left: Group photo of Friends of Polish Art members and friends at the recent FPA summer picnic held at Barb Hantz's home.

First photo on right: Ann Bankowski, Brian Malski and Patty Malski distributing Polonia organization material at Novi Community Festival.

Far right: Juror Martin Skalski (second from left) and committee members (Alina Klin, Brian Malski, Elijah Majeski and Ania Bieciuk) reviewing entries submitted for the 29th FPA Fine Arts Competition.

The summer was a busy but also exciting time for Friends of Polish Art (FPA). We accomplished quite a lot and are now in the process of planning several events for the fall.

Beginning in June, FPA attended the Novi Community fest where we distributed flyers about our upcoming events and membership applications and coordinated a performance by the PRCUA Gwiazda Dancers.

In July, members and friends gathered at the residence of Barb Hantz for a summer picnic which turned out to be quite a bit of fun. We played lawn and board games, had plenty to eat and drink and enjoyed each other's company. At the end of the month, FPA members travelled to Buffalo, New York to attend the ACPC convention organized by the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo. The business meeting agenda included a keynote address from Hon. Carl Bucki and an informative presentation by Henry Swiatek and his son Brett of Swiatek Studios. Following the second day of meetings, attendees had lunch at the Terrace Restaurant in Delaware Park and visited the AKG Museum and Assump-

tion Church. Participants also attended the awards banquet recognizing artists and community members from Buffalo, as well as the Sembrich Vocal Concert featuring this year's winner, Jules Furgal. On the final day, we took an architectural tour of the city that included a stop at the redeveloped Buffalo Waterfront along Lake Erie. Congratulations to Polish Arts Club of Buffalo for hosting a great convention!

At the end of August FPA representatives participated in the annual Polish Day Parade held in Warren, MI. during the city's Birthday Bash. The group carried the organization's banner and distributed candy to children along the parade route. Prior to the parade, a few members collaborated with The Parade Company to design and create this year's parade float. The float celebrated Poland's millennium and its historic ties with Italy, which began with King Zygmunt the Old's marriage to Italian duchess Bona Sforza, later Queen Bona.

A couple of weeks after the Polish Day Parade, FPA members and friends attended the Detroit City Football



South Carolina

A New Chapter for South Carolina's Polonia

The Polish community in Upstate South Carolina, although modest, has grown steadily and become increasingly vibrant over the past three decades.

In the late 1980's, the Polish-American Club of South Carolina was established, providing a framework for monthly gatherings, picnics, cultural events and English language lessons for the small Polish community and newly arriving immigrants. In 2002, however, as the needs of the community shifted, the club was dissolved. In 2009, Malgorzata and Piotr Zwolski, in an effort to provide the Polish community with a place to worship in their native language,



Middle photo on right: Girl Scouts participating in a children art competition arranged by FPA at Camp Bialowieza, MI.



Bottom right: Evelyn and Maria Kasperek visiting FPA table at the Detroit City Football Club Polish Heritage game on Sept. 5.

Club (DCFC) Polish Heritage Game, where FPA was recognized for its support of local Polonia organizations, groups, clubs, and students. During the game, FPA distributed business cards and promotional swag to visitors who stopped by our table to learn about FPA, inquired about upcoming events, or to just say hello. Attendees received a souvenir Polish Heritage game tee shirt and DCFC also agreed to donate a portion of ticket sales to FPA scholarship fund.

The final summer event organized by FPA was the Szopka workshop. Members, friends and families who attended initially received building instructions and tips from workshop instructor Chuck Pelshaw and then proceeded to build their own Szopka. After a couple of hours of construction, participants concluded the session by having cider and donuts together.

We are now preparing to host our fall events and programs. On Oct. 5 there will be the opening of the 29th Fine Arts Competition followed by the General Membership meeting on Oct. 25th where we will present awards to the Literary Competitions winners. In November we will host the annual Szopka Competition and conclude the year with our annual Wigilia scheduled for Saturday, December 13.



asked Father Theo Trujillo at St. Mary Magdelene Catholic Church in Simpsonville, SC, about the possibility of holding mass in Polish at the church. This September, the Polish community celebrated 16 years of monthly Polish language masses. The church embraced the Polish community and provided a space for its members to gather, and to share their heritage at international festivals and during religious holidays, such as during the Blessing of Easter Baskets on Holy Saturday. Participation in these events grows every year.

The Polish community grew as did job opportunities in the booming automotive, computer and medical sectors in Greenville and surrounding areas, attracting Polish immigrant and Polish American professionals and their families to the area. In turn, older Polish Americans retired in the South to enjoy the mild weather.

In September 2025, Maria-Teresa Palbow, recognizing a growing need to unify and serve the Polish community beyond the church walls, established the Polish American Society of Greenville, SC. This nonprofit organiza-

tion will serve as the primary social organization for the Polish American community in the area. It will highlight the presence of the Polish community in this region, raise awareness of the contributions of Poles to America's legacy, organize cultural and educational events, encourage everyone with Polish roots to get involved in the activities of the organization, and celebrate and share our Polish heritage, language, and culture with the public.

Among its first initiatives is a creative campaign providing easily accessible information about Poles who have left a lasting mark on the America's history and society. This initiative, which will be featured this October, during Polish American Heritage Month, is meant to spark curiosity about Poland among residents and raise awareness about the Polish community in this region.

The newly formed Polish American Society of Greenville, SC will be an exciting new chapter for South Carolina's Polonia.

submitted by Maria-Teresa Palbow



Above: Sembrich Award winner, mezzo-soprano Jules Furgal with Members of the ACPC Music Committee, (left to right) Pianist Ivan Docenko, Jarosław Gołombiowski, Ms. Furgal, Celia Larkin, Laura Kafka-Price, Music Committee Chair Magdalena Wór and Polish Arts Club of Buffalo President Robert Fronckowiak.

Left: Polish Heritage Dancers folk group performs a traditional Polonaise at the Awards Banquet (photo by Mark Szpak)

The following individuals were presented with awards :

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Irene Harzewski

Distinguished Service Awards:

Judge Carl L. Bucki,
Maestro JoAnn Falletta

Cultural Achievement Awards:

Sophie Hodorowicz Knab,
Dr. Thomas Witakowski

Jan DeRosen Award (father and son):

Henry J. Swiatek and Brett Swiatek

Founders Award: Frances Pudlo

A special appreciation was shown for the recently deceased Jacqueline "Jadzia" Kolowski, a past Founders Award recipient and sister of ACPC president Cecilia Larkin. A long time activist in the ACPC, feisty but always dedicated to the organization's goals, she will be very much missed at our future events.

The convention concluded with the traditional musical concert performance at Canisius University's Montante Center, a de-sanctified church converted for musical performances. Guest artist, composer and classical guitarist, James Piorkowski, Professor Emeritus at SUNY, began the program. The Polish Arts Club of Buffalo invited his return

engagement on its 80th Anniversary. James presented a number of his original compositions for solo guitar from his albums *Sentient Music* and *In the Shadows of Winter's Moon*.

The featured performer was Jules Furgal, a Mezzo-Soprano from Chicago, Illinois, winner of this year's the Marcella Kochańska Sembrich National Vocal Competition. In addition to being featured in this recital, Jules received a \$3,500 scholarship which will be used toward a master's degree in Vocal Performance at Northwestern University. Accompanist for the recital was Ivan Docenko, a well known pianist, accompanist and versatile musician in Western New York.

Everyone agreed that this was a very well organized and productive convention. Our thanks to Robert Fronckowiak, president of the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo, who along with his club members made every effort to make the convention run smoothly.

Next year's ACPC convention is scheduled to take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, over August 12-15, 2026, the year of the American Semiquincentennial, and will be hosted by the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia. Its theme will be connected to Polish contributions in the American Revolutionary War. Additional information may be found on the website: www.poles.org/PHSP/Convention





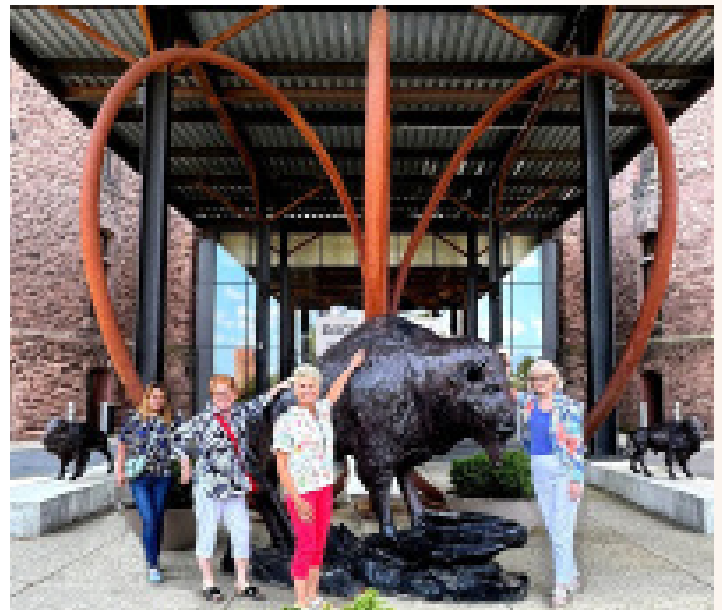
*Honored at the 2025 Convention were:
Front row: Irene Harzewski, Lifetime Achievement Award; Francis Pudlo, Founders Award; Sophie Hodorowicz Knab, Cultural Achievement Award
Back Row: Brett Swiatek, Jan De Rosen Award; Dr. Thomas Wiatakowski, Cultural Achievement Award; Henry Swiatek, Jan De Rosen Award
Not shown:
Maestro Joann Falletta, Distinguished Service Award; Honorable Carl Bucki, Distinguished Service Award*

Photo by Peter Sloane/Am-Pol Eagl

*Below: In the inner courtyard of the Richardson Olmsted Complex (with Buffalo!):
(left to right) Edyta Dudek, Margaret Butler, Laura Kafka-Price and Celia Larkin.*



*Polish posters lined the wall of the convention conference room.
(photo by Peter Obst)*



Debbie Majka makes a presentation on the proposed 2026 ACPD Convention to be hosted by the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia. (photo by Barbara Lemecha)



Pre-banquet reception in the hotel garden, (left to right) Andrzej Urbaniak, Stasia and Olek Skrypczuk, Celia Laarkin, Laura Kafka-Price, Dick Larkin and Debbie Majka.

Celebrating Ninety-Five Years of Commitment to Our Heritage

by Evanne Addams

On September 27, 2025 the Polish Cultural Council and the Central Council of Polish Organizations (CCOPO) celebrated the 95th anniversary of CCOPO's founding in May, 1930. The event was a tremendous success, with guests enjoying exquisite food, a lively Polish trivia game, spirited dancing to live music, and — as always — an array of wonderful gift baskets and silent auction items. A live auction of a Solidarity poster ripped from a wall in Warsaw in 1990 and signed by Lech Walesa at his September 26, 2025 lecture in Pittsburgh, was the highlight of the evening. The PCC is grateful to the ACPC for their generous donation in support of the organization. The evening was an event to celebrate the rich history of both organizations.

Established as an umbrella organization for what had been a collection of Polish groups across Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania, the CCOPO played a vital role in uniting the local Polish community under one umbrella organization. One of its most cherished contributions has been to sponsor the annual Polish Day picnic at Kennywood Amusement Park — a beloved tradition that brought together Polish immigrants to celebrate their shared heritage. Through time, the event grew with the addition of new generations of Polish Americans, becoming the park's largest ethnic event.

In the 1950's the Historical Committee of the Central Council of Polish Organizations was formed and was instrumental in placing plaques around the city of Pittsburgh recognizing Poles with significant historical accomplishments in America and the world.

Post World War II, as successive generations of Polish Americans were growing up speaking little or none of their ancestral language, the CCOPO responded by sponsoring Polish language classes for the community. With volunteer instructors and church halls provided at no cost, classes at multiple levels were offered free of charge to students of all ages. Over the years, this popular program has served more than a thousand learners and remains active to this day.

In the 1980s, CCOPO expanded its cultural outreach by establishing the annual Bal Polonaise, featuring the formal presentation of Polish debutantes and further enriching the community's cultural life.

In 2002, the Central Council of Polish Organizations transitioned into the Polish Cultural Council (PCC), becoming an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Its new Board of Directors — comprised of former CCOPO leaders and a new, culturally engaged generation of Polonia — set out to broaden the organization's mission by highlighting Poland's rich contributions to the arts and sciences.

Through the years, the PCC proudly allied with leading institutions including Carnegie Mellon University, the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Science Center, WQED public television and radio, Carnegie Museum and Music Hall, Carnegie Library, as well as Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Duquesne University, and Chatham University. Through these collaborations, PCC brought world-class Polish cultural programming to the community.



Top: The PCC celebrated its 95th Anniversary at the elegant Edgewood Club.

Center: Featuring member-prepared Polish gourmet foods, the PCC's Ostatki continues to be an extremely popular event. Far right: One of the 200 couples who participated in the PCC's Bal Polonaise.

The organization has celebrated more than 200 debutantes at the Bal Polonaise; revived cherished traditions through the Karuzela Chorus Christmas Concert featuring Polish kolędy; and hosted beloved annual events such as the Ostatki Mardi Gras Party and Christmas Wigilia Celebration. The Karuzela Polish American Folk Ensemble, now with more than 200 alumni, represented a proud Polish folk custom. The PCC's Polish language classes remain a favorite among members, while the crown jewel of our programming — the Annual Polish Film Festival — draws audiences each fall who are eager to explore contemporary Polish cinema.

None of this would be possible without the continued generosity of our Polish community. The Polish Cultural Council extends heartfelt thanks to the ACPC, as well as to all organizations, businesses, and individuals whose generous support over the years has sustained our mission. Together, we keep Polish culture alive — and we couldn't do it without you!

submitted by Joanne M. Gruszkos

Activity at the Polish Center continues to keep us busy. We've hosted several tours for school-age children and seniors coming from all over New England. Plus, many people from around the country who came for the "Big E," New England's State Fair, made time to visit the Polish Center as well. It's very heartwarming to watch how people connect with their Polish heritage, with many sharing stories as they view the exhibits. We expect it will be a busy fall as well.

The Annual Golf Tournament was another exciting event held at Ludlow Country Club. With over 100 attendees enjoying a day of golf, a delicious Polish dinner and vying for almost 90 donated raffle gifts, it couldn't have been a more perfect day.

Donations of artifacts, books and clothing continue to come in. Our curator has been diligently working in the archives and has discovered the history of the owner of a Haller's Army soldier's uniform. It's a fascinating tale and the exhibit will be redesigned to share the story and bring it to life in a future exhibit.

The Polish Center hosted its first "First Responders Night" recognizing public servants from our host city of Chicopee, MA. Police Sgt. Thomas Gazda, Firefighter James Stefanik, EMT Drew Brzoska, and Sheriff Corporal Alex Jendrysik were all recognized for their efforts. Senator Jake Oliveira presented each with a citation from the Massachusetts State House.

The Polish Center is also embarking on an exciting project to create an Annual Educational and Cultural Enrichment Program. It will focus on children and young adults and will offer lectures, classes, workshops and concerts on Polish history, culture, traditions, noted leaders and famous people of Polish decent. The goal is to have events monthly throughout the year.

A warm summer evening on July 15 found many at the "Polish Heritage Night" at the Valley Blue Sox baseball home game against the rival Newport Gulls. The Polish Center hosted a VIP tent party at the stadium catered by Bernat's Polish Deli in Chicopee which offered kielbasa dogs, pierogi and much more. The featured adult drink of the night was the *Szarlotka* cocktail, made with Polish vodka and apple juice. The stands and tent held many Polish people who enjoyed celebrating their heritage – including a few of the ballplayers. Oh, and our team won!

We encourage anyone who is traveling through New England to be sure to make time to visit the Polish Center of Discovery and Learning. The Polish Center continues to look for ways to share our stories and will be planning more exhibits and events throughout the year. It will be a memorable visit for all.



Massachusetts Senator Jake Oliveira (left) presented citations during "First Responders Night" hosted by the Polish Center.



A winged Polish Hussar greeted "Polish Heritage Night" attendees at the Valley Blue Sox home game on July 15.



**The Polish Center of
Discovery and Learning**
Embrace Your Heritage

PAAA Inaugurates Anniversary Year By Honoring Founders, Past Members

by Matthew Stefanski

As the crisp early autumn sun glistened on the Indiana limestone exterior of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Polonia gathered within its vast walls for prayer. Within this, the largest Catholic church in North America, lies the Chapel of Our Lady of Częstochowa, one of 82 Marian chapels dedicated to the Blessed Mother. Featuring a replica of the famed Black Madonna supported by sculpted angels and crowned with gold, the chapel became the setting on October 4 for a special Polish American Heritage Mass, organized at the request of the Polish American Arts Association (PAAA) of Washington, D. C.

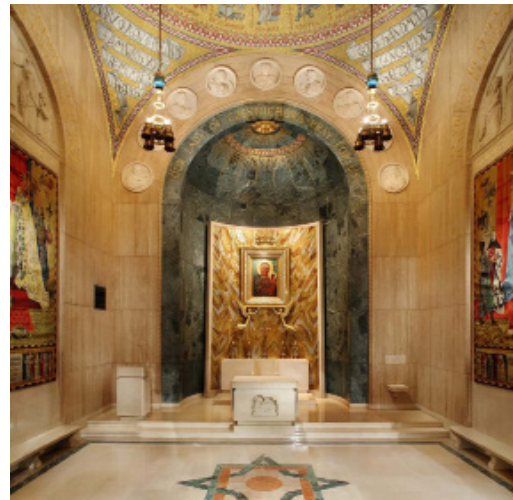
The liturgy was celebrated by Father Paweł Sass, M.A., S.T.L., a native of Poznań and pastor of Nativity Roman Catholic Church in Washington. As the musical notes preceding the start of the mass rang out over the large rounded arches of the romanesque style basilica, curious visitors and happenstance pilgrims approached the chapel to inquire about the service. Two Filipino-American pilgrims from Chicago gladly took a seat in the Chapel upon learning of the mass, and moments later a pair of Polish Pallottine sisters visiting the shrine also entered, delighted to discover the celebration.

In his homily, Father Paweł reflected on Poland's history, its deep Catholic faith, and the role of art in sustaining national identity during times of oppression. Invoking the intercession of saints Adalbert, Stanislaus, Maximilian Kolbe, and Faustyna Kowalska, Father Paweł led prayers for Polonia and for the souls of departed PAAA members in whose memory the mass was offered. The liturgy, celebrated in English with Polish hymns, featured moving renditions of *Czarna Madonna* and *Barka*—one of Pope Saint John Paul II's favorite songs—led by Janusz Biliński, music director at Our Lady Queen of Poland Parish. His son Oliver accompanied on violin and offered a touching *Ave Maria*. The congregation concluded the Mass with the signing of the patriotic hymn *Boże, coś Polskę*.

Afterward, participants joined a docent-led tour of the Basilica's history, art and architecture. A highlight included the monumental *Christ in Majesty* mosaic by Jan Henryk de Rosen. The Basilica also honors Pope Saint John Paul II in four distinct depictions, including a mosaic within the Częstochowa Chapel. The Polish pontiff visited the Shrine twice—first in 1976 as Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, and again in 1979 as Pope.

Details of tapestries in the Our Lady of Częstochowa Chapel depicting Polish historical figures.

Photo: Editor's personal collection.



Held on October 4 to inaugurate Polish American Heritage Month, the mass also served as the formal beginning of PAAA's 60th anniversary jubilee, which will continue with events throughout the coming year and culminate in a grand gala celebration next summer.

Top photo: In his homily Father Paweł drew attention to the chapel's rich iconography, including mosaics of Polish saints and large tapestries portraying milestones such as the 966 baptism of Poland's first ruler, Mieszko I, and the 1656 proclamation of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Poland by King John II Casimir.

Bottom photo: Measuring 3,610 square feet and composed of 3,000 shades of Venetian glass, de Rosen's Christ in Majesty is believed to be one of the largest depictions of Christ in the world. Dedicated in 1959, it remains the centerpiece of the Great Upper Church. Photos: Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.



Submitted by Jim Grinaker
 Author Joshua Mazrin (center) with member of the Polish American Society of St. Petersburg, and the Polish-American Association of Sarasota, including Dr. Mark Pienkos (far left), National First Vice President, Polish American Congress; Ann Pienkos, Past President, The Polish-American Association of Sarasota; Jim Grinaker (right of center), President, Polish American Society of St. Petersburg, and Tom Rokoz, board member and Past President, Polish American Society of St. Petersburg.

Polish American Society of St. Petersburg Welcomes Founder of New Kolbe Institute

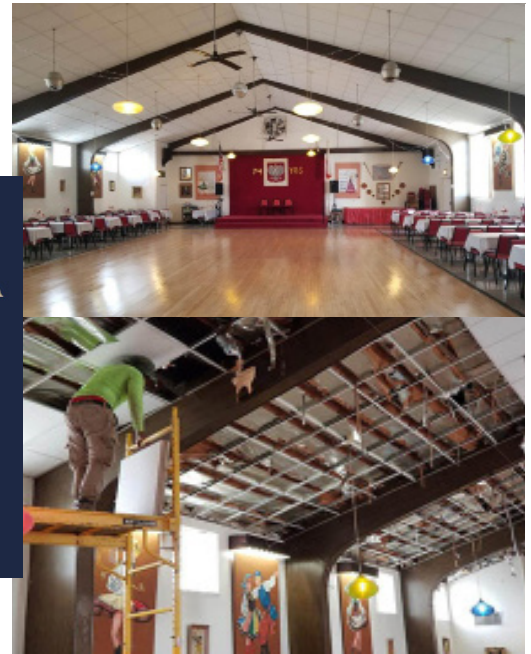
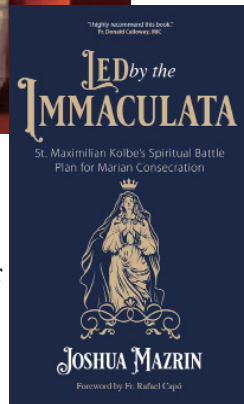
On July 31st, The Polish American Society of St. Petersburg, Florida, welcomed author Joshua Mazrin for an inspiring talk about the life of St. Maximilian Kolbe. Most are familiar with the story of this Polish saint sacrificing his life at Auschwitz, volunteering to take the place of another man in a starvation bunker. But Mr. Mazrin also highlighted lesser known aspects of his life, such as the way Kolbe's publications and radio broadcasts strengthened the spirit of the Polish people before the war, particularly their love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He also highlighted Kolbe's work on an international level, including Japan.

The Polish American Society of St. Petersburg welcomed many members of the community, including the Knights of Columbus, as well as visitors from the Polish American Society of Sarasota. Mr. Mazrin is the author of a book on the spirituality of St. Maximilian Kolbe, called *Led by the Immaculata: St. Maximilian Kolbe's Spiritual Battle Plan for Marian Consecration* available online and through Ave Maria Press. He also launched a new non-profit called the Immaculata Institute, which promotes Marian devotion and consecration in the spirit of St. Maximilian Kolbe. For more information, see: <https://www.immaculatainstitute.org>

Historic Dance Hall Resortation

After months of determined effort, the Polish American Society of St. Petersburg has completed extensive restoration work on its cherished clubhouse and historic floating dance floor, both of which suffered severe damage during Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Located at 1343 Beach Drive SE, in St. Petersburg since 1957, the Society's hall appeared largely unharmed from the outside after the storms. Inside, however, Helene's storm surge sent about a foot of water into the building, flooding the hall and endangering its most prized feature — a 1950s-era floating dance floor made of Canadian maple. The floor, supported by a flexible underlayment that gives it a distinctive spring, has long been at the heart



of the club's tradition of Polish-American polka music and dancing. Thousands of guests over the decades have celebrated on its maple boards, which are among the few remaining hardwood "floating floors" in the region. When the floodwaters soaked beneath it, the floor warped and buckled under thousands of gallons of trapped water. Many feared it was lost.

However, our members and neighbors came together to save it. Over a three-month period, they used shop vacuums, fans, and dehumidifiers to gradually dry the wood.

Beyond the dance floor, the storms caused extensive structural and interior damage. Portions of the roof were torn off, the ceiling had to be completely replaced, and several doors rotted out by saltwater intrusion were replaced. (see photo inserts above.) Air conditioning units, kitchen appliances, and rusted furniture were replaced, while the terrazzo floor was refinished.

Volunteers contributed countless hours to the restoration, with total repairs exceeding \$100,000. The Polish American Society raised about \$92,000 of its \$150,000 restoration goal through donations from roughly 130 members and local supporters. The remaining expenses were covered in part by the club's reserve savings.

The hall reopened to the public in late March, welcoming a record crowd for its annual Dyngus Day celebration. Thursday gatherings, trivia nights, and dance events continue throughout the year, with full operations resuming in November.

Editor's note: Donations to support this effort can be made at: <https://square.link/u/XEWc8M4b>



2025 Scholarship recipients include (left to right):
 rear row: Jacob Lewis, Patrick Chrzanowski, Maximilian Lipski, Stanley Wolanin, Tyler Szajda.
 front row: Dr. Teresa G. Wojcik (Chair of the Scholarship Committee), Kevin Purcell, Mateusz Pytel, Diana Garderewicz, Victoria Opiatowski, Mikolaj Kastelik, Alexander Gray
 (not present: Jozef Antoniak) photo by Teresa Wojcik

of a biographical book about Rudolf Modrzejewski (Ralph Modjeski), the chief engineer and builder of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in Philadelphia *Człowiek z Pogranicza Epok* by Prof. Józef Glomb. Each book held a bookmark that listed the accomplishments of the first Polish colonists at Jamestown Virginia, including their successful protest in 1619 which resulted in them getting full voting rights in the management of this English colony.

Each of the following students received a scholarship check for \$1,500 dollars:

Jozef Antoniak - Fordham University - political science;
Patrick Chrzanowski - Penn State - mechanical engineering;
Diana Garderewicz - Arcadia University- pre-med program;
Alexander Gray - University of Kentucky, pre-med program;
Mikolaj Kastelik - accepted at several colleges for data science;
Jacob Lewis - University of Pittsburgh - social studies;
Maximilian Lipski - Penn State - mechanical engineering;
Victoria Opiatowski - Penn State - biomedical engineering;
Kevin Purcell - Penn State - business management;
Mateusz Pytel - Penn State - global supply chain management;
Tyler Szajda - Virginia Polytechnic Institute - architecture;
Stanley Wolanin - University of Northern Florida
 - international diplomacy

Information about these scholarships may be found on the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia website: <https://www.poles.org/PHSP/PhilaSchol.html>

2025 Scholarships Awarded

On May 4, 2025, the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia (PHSP) distributed this year's Scholarship Awards at a luncheon after mass at the Our Lady of Częstochowa in Doylestown, PA. Funds for these scholarships are raised by the Society at various functions. This year there was a sizeable bequest made by the family of Joseph Zazyczny, former Councilman in the City of Philadelphia, in his memory.

Dr. Teresa Wojcik, announced the scholarship recipients. She is an assistant professor of Education at Villanova University and currently serves as the Chair of the Department of Education and Counseling. Along with Mary Kay Pieski, She operates the non-profit Eagle-Orzel Educational and Cultural Exchange, Inc. which organizes summer English-language camps in Poland.

Each student received a rose and the English translation

Polish-American Association of Sarasota

submitted by Ann Pienkos

The Polish-American Association of Sarasota (PAAoS), in conjunction with the Polish Saturday School in Sarasota, commemorated the 246th anniversary of the death of Casimir Pulaski at the Battle of Savannah during America's Revolutionary War. Pulaski died on October 11, 1779.

The school children were involved in two ways. First, a patriotic poem was recited. Second, a patriotic Polish song was sung. Both were done in Polish. The program also included a presentation on the importance of the life of Casimir Pulaski by Dr. Mark Pienkos. This is the seventh time that Pienkos has given the keynote address on Pulaski's heroism and life.

Those in attendance received a Polish flag and a souvenir poster created in 1976 for the Bicentennial of the United States by renowned artist Edmund Lewandowski. The poster features Casimir Pulaski, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and George Washington, as well as depicting the contributions of Poles in science, music and literature, as well as the efforts of Poles to build America industrially



We are proud to celebrate its 50th anniversary of operation during a special Gala scheduled on Sunday, November 16. Besides an exquisite dinner served at the Stoneybrook Golf and Country Club, the event will feature a keynote address delivered by ACPC second vice president John

Cebrowski, the Polonez being performed, operatic soprano Laura Kafka-Price and the awarding of the "Ignacy Paderewski Civic Achievement Award" to deserving individuals, and a local Polish organization, for their dedication promoting Polish values and traditions. A commemorative journal will be presented to each guest highlighting the history of the PAAoS. Music and dancing, as well as a raffle will also take place.

Since 1975, the PAAoS has been a leader in promoting the rich Polish history, culture, traditions, and language. The PAAoS sponsors many activities designed for not only its many members, but also anyone interested in learning more about one of the world's strongest nations – and a major ally of the United States ... dating back to America's

Forum Competitions – Fostering Talent



Former, long-term President of the Forum, Mrs. Elżbieta Rudzińska presents the Polonia Parent of the Year award to one of the winners.



Laureates of the Forum's Literary and Artistic Contest.

The Forum of Polish Teachers of the West Coast is an organization with a long-standing tradition and a strong commitment to the development of Polish education in the United States. It has operated continuously since 1998 and currently brings together 13 Polish schools from eight states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Texas, and Washington.

Among the Forum's key educational initiatives are two important competitions that have significant value for the Polish-American community.

The Literary and Artistic Contest is an initiative aimed at students of Forum schools aged 5 to 18, now celebrating its third edition. The contest aims to support and develop students' linguistic, literary, and artistic skills, as well as prepare them for the STAMP 4S Polish language exam.

This year's contest themes are:

- My passions and achievements
- A thousand years ago – a story about Bolesław Chrobry, the first King of Poland
- Poland – places worth seeing and why

The competition is a wonderful opportunity to showcase talent, foster creativity, strengthen national identity, and promote the Polish language and culture among the younger generation of the Polish diaspora.

The second important initiative, co-organized by the Forum, is the international competition "Polonia Parent of the Year – Rodzic na 6", which aims to recognize and honor parent volunteers whose children attend Polish heritage schools around the world.

The idea for the contest was born in 2018 during the 15th Convention of Polish Teachers and Parent Committees in Portland. The Forum became a co-organizer in 2021. This school year marked the 8th edition of this special event.

The goal of the competition is to honor outstanding parents who actively support the work of Polish schools and contribute to their growth. "Polonia Parent of the Year – Rodzic na 6" is a tribute to those who are their children's first teachers and who actively build intergenerational bridges. Thanks to their involvement, Polish schools can operate more effectively, expand their programs, and become places not only of learning, but of community building. Our dream is for the competition to reach every continent. For more information, visit: <https://www.polonijnymrodzicna6.com>

Thanks to initiatives like these, the Forum of Polish Teachers of the West Coast continues to strengthen its role as a leader in Polish education on the U.S. West Coast. The organization effectively combines educational, artistic, and social efforts, proving that collaboration between teachers, students, and parents brings real results in building national identity and maintaining a living connection to Poland. Visit the Forum website: <https://forumnauczycielipolonijnychzachodusa.org/>

submitted by Malgorzata Grondalski

War for Independence.

Monthly meetings (September – May) feature lively and friendly conversation that includes fun, food and refreshments. In addition, the PAAoS sponsors annual classical concerts, periodic lectures, awarding of scholarships, and celebrating General Casimir Pulaski Day in October and Polish Independence Day in November when the Ignacy Paderewski Civic Achievement Awards are presented. The PAAoS also supports the activities of other Polish organizations on the Suncoast, including the Mikołaj Kopernik Polish Saturday School in Sarasota.

A major initiative being undertaken by the PAAoS is establishing a sister cities relationship between Sarasota and Sopot, Poland. Interestingly, in all of Florida, there is only one city that has a sister city relationship with a city in Poland. The Florida city is Gainesville. The Polish city is Rzeszów. In the near future, the PAAoS hopes Sarasota becomes the second city in Florida to have a special connection with Poland!

The Polish-American Association of Sarasota, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization. The PAAoS is also a proud member of the American Council of Polish Culture and the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County.

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Please email all submissions to djm713@yahoo.com.

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