



Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

The Board of Directors of the Polish Heritage Center would like to thank our wonderful Executive Director and staff for the excellent care they give to the PHC and its many visitors. It has been a pleasure to see the many uses people are making of the Center, its movie, exhibits, gift shop and its resources. Alice Poore's eight-month report in this newsletter is a great read.

The Polish Heritage Center partnered with the Governor Dolph Briscoe Jr., Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (TALL) program and its Director (and PHC Board member), Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, to bring 26 Polish agribusiness leaders for a study tour of Texas agriculture from Amarillo to the Gulf Coast.

Their stop in South Texas included a wonderful celebration hosted by PHC Vice President Randy Pawelek and his wife Debbie at their ranch, a Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Panna Maria, and a tour of the Center. Those activities were followed by a lunch overlooking the San Antonio River and then a tour of the Kiolbassa Provision Company. We received many compliments from the tour members on the Center and our South Texas hospitality.

Our donors are to be commended for their support of the Center, which has allowed us to meet our obligations and even begin an endowment to help sustain the Center over time. May God continue to bless each of you for your support of the Polish Heritage Center as we continue the work envisioned by Bishop Yanta.



What an Exciting Eight Months!

A Progress Report by Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

It is hard to believe that eight months have passed since I became Executive Director of the Polish Heritage Center, and I will say it has been a true learning experience and an awesome journey. This position was most definitely the next step in God's plan for me. With a truly dedicated Board of Directors, a talented staff, and a small but mighty group of volunteers, so much has been accomplished in what I consider to be just a "minute."

The PHC has celebrated several major events during these past months. Most important was the dedication of the Bishop John W. Yanta Room, held September 30, which was a beautiful celebration honoring a true visionary. Since the dedication, we've hosted a 75th, an 85th, and a 14th birthday party, a 4-H Christmas Party, a family Christmas party, a wedding rehearsal dinner, two funeral luncheons, one confirmation luncheon, three organization board meetings, our local deanery breakfast and meeting, five luncheons for tour groups, a family reunion, thirteen school groups for lunch and Polish crafts, a Stick Dance performance, and one classical piano and guitar concert. I am sure each time his room is filled with students and adults celebrating Polish history and traditions, Bishop Yanta is smiling and feeling a great deal of love and satisfaction. This is exactly what he hoped for!!!

Next, the PHC honored Cestohowa's 150th anniversary in September with the opening of the beautiful exhibit which celebrates their community and church. The original plan was to remove the exhibit in January. However, students visiting the center just love this exhibit. We developed a game in which the students spend time guessing and identifying antique objects which are on loan. Then, we discuss the name of the item and its original purpose. Students are almost always wrong, though creative, in their guesses, which makes for a great deal of fun and



laughter. It doesn't take them long to realize how lucky they are to be living in this time with all the conveniences of modern technology. Our plan is to leave the exhibit up until after June so the ACE summer program students can enjoy the exhibit, too. THANK YOU, Cestohowa for sharing your priceless memorabilia with us!

September was the start-up of the Education Outreach program that was so important to Bishop Yanta, and as an educator, so close to my heart. The ACE (Afterschool Center on Education) program was the first to form a partnership with the PHC. Students from six school districts plan to visit the Center during their summer program in June. In the months of September through February, Falls City ISD, Karnes City ISD, Saint Catherine's Montessori School, and Texas State University have sent 752 students to the PHC for a day filled with Polish history, traditions and art. The Center is expecting 362 students from Poth ISD to visit in the month of May. The staff, volunteers and I have received so many compliments from parents and grandparents about how much their child loved visiting the Center and is ready to return. That is the best compliment ever! If you live near the PHC, we would love to add your name to the list of volunteers for Polish crafts and refreshment time. Call the Center at 830-310-8612 if you are interested.

In October and November, the PHC hosted thirteen scheduled tours of the Center, including tours of the first permanent Polish Catholic church and school in the United States. Sam Kotara and Susan Moczygamba McKinsey, both members of our Board of Directors, along with John Wojtasczyk, our visitor associate, have been amazing tour guides for all of our visitors, sharing so many stories that you just don't find in textbooks. What a bonus for our guests!



Photos in this issue courtesy of Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, Elaine Mazurek Stephens, Maureen Brown, Alice Poore and Susan Moczygamba-McKinsey.

In the Fall months, the Polish Heritage Center took a huge step forward in our marketing approach. Our first billboard went up in Floresville on Hwy. 181 and you can't miss this beautiful advertisement. Also, the Polish Heritage Center is now featured in the Texas Information Guide which is distributed to all tourist centers in Texas. In September, the center had a visit from "Texas Monthly" and several months later the PHC was featured in an article about Panna Maria. The PHC is in the development stage of a new brochure which will soon be available in hotels in San Antonio, Austin, and Corpus Christi.

December was the month for our annual *Dziękuję* party to celebrate our friends and supporters of the Polish Heritage Center. We had a wonderful evening with great food and fellowship and an introduction to my now favorite potato and cheddar pierogi, courtesy of Apolonia Catering in Austin. This was my chance, along with new staff, to meet wonderful people who have amazing stories of their Polish heritage and their beautiful connection with Bishop John W. Yanta! We also held our first Christmas Fair on December 9. It was a small event with only a few crafters; however we have already begun plans for this year's fair to be held on Saturday, November 2, and are expecting more vendors to participate. If interested, please call the PHC for details.



In the month of January, I had the wonderful opportunity to attend my first PAHA (Polish American Historical Association) conference in San Francisco. Sam and Susie Kotara, our librarian/archivist Lauren Robinson, Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz and his wife Kathy, and I all represented the Polish Heritage Center. This four-day event was a fabulous opportunity to meet Polish authors, historians, and university professors from all over the world and to promote our uniquely beautiful Center. Partnerships were formed with several renowned historians for future virtual presentations. These events will be posted on our website so please join us!

February was an awesome month. Our first Red & White Gala was held on February 15 in Panna Maria Hall. It was a beautiful event, with 247 people attending. As with every event in Panna Maria, so many helped to make this evening fabulous. The food was outstanding! Thank you, Zach and Linda Yanta and Zach Jr., for donating all the delicious ribeye steaks and Duane Korzekwa from

Outlaw Catering for cooking them to perfection. Kristin Tatsch worked her magic in creating a gorgeous and delicious charcuterie table, and Asia from Apolonia Catering in Austin served her delicious pierogis and apple crumble cake. Tammy Felux from Event Design made Panna Maria Hall a showpiece and Vivian Janysek and Hattie Foster Amsler created the most beautiful flower arrangements to help us celebrate the evening. Guests were entertained by the Dueling Pianos from Houston who played all our old favorites. A very special thank you to Randy Pawelek, Gary Pawelek, Sam Kotara, Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey, Shelly Laskowski, Debbie Pawelek and my wonderful staff for always going all out for every event we have at the PHC. Most of all, I am so grateful to each supporter who sponsored a table. Because of your generous donation, we were able to reach that evening's goal which will allow us to continue to follow the vision of our founder, Bishop John W. Yanta.

March brought the Polish Heritage Center its first classical concert. Duo Klavitarre featured Jolanta Ziemski, a pianist, her husband, Maciej, a guitarist, and their son Marcel, also a pianist. We hosted a lovely audience with a happy hour and a wonderful performance by this talented family.

To say we have been busy is a definite understatement, but we are moving in a wonderful direction and trying to carry out all the plans Bishop John W. Yanta envisioned for the Center. Again, thank you to all of the generous supporters of the PHC for helping us sustain the Center and promote all of the programs and events planned for this year, and a great big thank you for supporting me as your Executive Director!



**THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA**

13909 N FM 81
PO Box 25
Panna Maria, Texas 78144



PHC Hours: Wed. – Sat. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
www.polishheritagecentertx.org
(830) 310-8612

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News from the Heritage Communities

Praying for White Deer and the Texas Panhandle

The largest wildfire in Texas history took out huge swaths of the Texas Panhandle in early March. We sent our thoughts and prayers to our friend Carolyn Rapstine of White Deer. This is her response from March 18:

The terrible fires in the Texas Panhandle are out. There was so much damage to the grasslands in the northern part of the Panhandle with so many cattle lost, fences, structures and gates all gone. Many cattle that were hurt had to be shot and had to be hauled off to be destroyed.

The fires did not reach White Deer. The fires were all north of Interstate 40, but we did have parishioners that lost some grassland near Lefors, TX, another smaller fire that was put out quickly.

We still have a lot of wind but everyone is being very cautious. I went to Amarillo on Wednesday (March 13), about 50 miles from White Deer, and saw about 5 fires on my way home. They were quickly put out but the winds are so bad this time of the year. White Deer has mostly farmland but with grassland and pastures surrounding.

Thank you for your prayers and thinking of us. Please pray for rain.

Blessings,

Carolyn

