



Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon, PHC Chairman and President

Welcome to our new Executive Director

The Polish Heritage Center Board of Directors has completed its nationwide search, and I am delighted to announce that Alice Poore will be the Executive Director of the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria. Her extensive background in Education as a teacher, administrator and grant manager from the South Texas region will help us advance in our mission to educate the younger generation. (see article from Alice)

The Board would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work and commitment to the Center from Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey who served as acting Executive Director during the interim. As always, we are grateful for our staff, Lauren Robinson and Mirna Estrella, and their dedication to the Center, as well as for our friends and volunteers who step up to help whenever needed.

Noted author and historian Dr. T. Lindsay Baker has generously contributed his books, maps and other research materials to the Polish Heritage Center. Now he's given his time to meet descendants and others interested in Polish history on September 6 at 6 p.m. at the Center. We find his work to be inspirational. Thank you for your support, Dr. Baker.

We would also like to recognize Lauren Dziuk for her work at the Center this summer. Check the PHC website for her "Polish Word of the Week" series as well as videos about individuals featured in our exhibits. Lauren is starting her freshman year at Texas A&M in College Station. We look forward to her visits home.

The Center has been a hub of activity with the Kenedy Rotary Club meeting and tour, the Cestohowa exhibit development, virtual programs and birthday celebrations among some of our events. We always have time for you, so please come see us.



My Story

By Alice Poore
PHC Executive Director

After 48 years in education, I have left my most recent position with the Karnes City Independent School District to begin a new adventure as Executive Director of the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria. Bishop John Yanta had a vision to "instill pride and knowledge of Polish heritage, ancestors, and the culture for this generation and for all future generations." I am honored to be a part of his vision. My connection to the school districts in and around Karnes County will help to ensure that all our children have the opportunity to visit the Center and learn about the Polish culture that has had such an impact in our community.

My husband Bobby Poore and I will celebrate our 48th anniversary this month. We are both originally from San Antonio but have been residents of Karnes County since 1978. The last ten years we have lived in Falls City and consider ourselves FC Beavers fans.

We have two daughters, Dr. Amy Witte and Kristin Tatsch. We are very blessed that they, along with their families, also live in Falls City, which gives us the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with them. Bobby and I have four grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Through the years, it has been important to me to be very active in community and church organizations. I have been a member of the Karnes City ISD Education Foundation since 2012 and now serve as Director of Grants. I enjoy traveling and gardening, and I try to make time for these as much as possible. I have a love of cooking and enjoy sharing this love with my family several times a week at family dinner.

I am looking forward to working with the wonderful team at the Polish Heritage Center. I invite everyone to visit the Center and experience this state-of-the-art facility that depicts, in the most beautiful way, the challenges and successes of the first Polish immigrants in 1854 to present day. Hope to see you at the Polish Heritage Center soon!

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

Celebrating Cestohowa

By Susan Moczygamba-McKinsey, PHC Board Secretary



Beginning in September 2023, the Polish Heritage Center will present an exhibit celebrating the 150th anniversary of Cestohowa and the parish of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The exhibit celebrates one of our heritage communities, the people who built and have sustained it, and the traditions they faithfully follow.

Here's an excerpt from the Exhibit early history panel:

“The families migrating north up Cibolo Creek found land costing about 75 cents per acre. In 1734, a small outpost, El Fuerte del Cibolo, had guarded herds of mission cattle in the area. The ancient Spanish ranch land between the San Antonio River and Cibolo Creek was mostly covered with tall prairie grasses and a few areas of mesquite and live oak. Small brush and weeds were controlled by deliberate fires occasionally set by previous ranch operators. Cultivation proved successful for the new immigrants and livestock flourished. For housing, wood was cut locally or was imported. Sandstone outcrops provided material for those choosing to build a stone dwelling.

About five miles upstream from Panna Maria in 1869, 39 families voted to build a school and chapel, which they named St. Joseph School, later shortened to St. Joe. In 1873, with the school built and more families coming into the area, the parish was started under the name of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in honor of the Blessed Mother's birthday. Fr. Felix Zwiardowski would come up from Panna Maria monthly to celebrate Mass. A new community was born.”

The Polish Heritage Center exhibit Celebrating Cestohowa will begin with an open house September 23. It will include a short performance by the children of Cestohowa parish. Also in keeping with another of the Bishop Yanta's visions for the Center, that it be a pilgrimage site for all of the Polish heritage communities of South Texas, there will be a blessing of the Cestohowa “window,” the illumination in the PHC Chapel exhibit, on that date.

The new exhibit also recognizes the 125th anniversary of heritage community Kosciusko and the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph's, the Polish parish in Bryan, TX.



From the PHC exhibit, *Trekking Inland*

Texas Polonia with Dr. Jim

During October, which is Polish Heritage Month, you will have an opportunity to learn more about the history of Texas Polonia from the comfort of your own home. Texas A&M professor and PHC Board member Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz will present five virtual lectures beginning Oct. 3, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, from 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. These lectures are part of the series sponsored by the University of St. Thomas in Houston and its John Paul II Institute.

This lecture series is open to students for credit or can be audited, which means no papers to write or tests to worry over. The cost is \$100 per person. You can find information about how to register for this UST class on our website at polishheritagecentertx.org, or scan this QR code.

Dr. Jim is a noted ag guy, but his passion is history, especially the history of the waves of Polish immigrants who came to Texas beginning in the mid-19th century through the present time.

You'll learn some fascinating facts about some remarkable people who left their Polish homeland to contribute to building Texas, even figuring prominently in the Texas Revolution. We invite you to take advantage of this wonderful learning opportunity.



| Help Us Sustain the Center

By Susan Moczygamba-McKinsey, Board Secretary

We've received some wonderful feedback from many of you who enjoyed our last special edition newsletter that honored our founder Bishop John Yanta and the people he honored – the Polish immigrants who settled in South Texas. Many of you are descendants of those remarkable people and so treasure this keepsake. Our thanks again to the Silesian Profiles Committee who compiled the list and whose research is available in the library at the Polish Heritage Center.

Most of you have contributed at one time or other to the Polish Heritage Center and for that we are forever grateful. You helped get the Center built! Several of you continue to give to the Center, for you realize that keeping a treasure like this open and operating takes sustaining funds. You are our heroes.

Now we're reaching out to the rest of our donors who we haven't heard from in some time. As we streamline our operations and utilize our precious resources as best as we know how, we'd like to know that you continue to value the Polish Heritage Center. So please send a contribution and let us know you continue to support this venture and that you want to continue receiving our communications. Every dollar helps as we keep alive the Bishop's vision and the PHC mission to "keep vibrant and relevant the history, values, beliefs, customs and traditions of the Polish settlers and their descendants at this first and oldest permanent Polish settlement in America and to inspire, engage and educate our visitors."

We are a 501(c)3 non-profit, and you will receive a receipt and our sincere thanks, either way you choose to donate. You may make a donation online at polishheritagecentertx.org, or mail donations to:

Polish Heritage Center, P.O. Box 25
Panna Maria, Texas 78144



PHC chairman Aloys Notzon celebrated a milestone birthday with family and friends last month. Joining the festivities were Polish Consul General Monika Sobczak from the consulate in Houston and Dr. Piotr Przybylski, director of the John Paul II Institute at the University of St. Thomas in Houston.

“Footprints” Kicks Off Virtual Series

The fall season of virtual programs provided by the Polish Heritage Center kicks off Thursday, September 21, at 6 p.m. with “Footprints of Polonia: Polish Historical Sites Across North America.” Based on the book of the same title, it chronicles the countless contributions of Polish immigrants and their descendants on communities in North America as seen in churches, cultural centers, bridges and cemeteries across the continent.

Book editor and presenter is Ewa E. Barczyk, emerita, Associate Provost and Director of Libraries, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, president of the Polish American Librarian Association and board member of the Polish American Historical Association. Scan the QR code or visit polishheritagecentertx.org to access the program.



The Kenedy Rotary held its August luncheon meeting at the Center. The group toured the Center as well as Immaculate Conception Church and the old St. Joseph's School (now museum) in Panna Maria.



Father Thomas Swierc and his father, Tommy, visited the Center recently. We celebrated Fr. Thomas' ordination just last June. He is now parochial vicar at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Corpus Christi.

Lauren Dziuk of Falls City and her new buddy Emelie Derhalli touring the Center. Lauren worked with us this summer and has now started her freshman year at Texas A&M in College Station. Look for her Polish Word of the Week series, people profiles and mini-travelogues at polishheritagecentertx.org.





**THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA**

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



News from the Heritage Communities

**Happy 150th Anniversary to
Cestohowa and The Nativity
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Catholic Church**

Join us for an open house at the PHC,
kicking off the Celebrating Cestohowa
exhibit.

Saturday, Sept. 23, starting at 10 a.m.

Photo by Lauren Robinson

