THE
POLISH HERITAGE CENTER
AT PANNA MARIA

Center Updates
October 2026

Chairman's Column

By: Aloys Notzon,
PHC Chairman and President

October is Polish Heritage Month and all of us are excited to share in so many events celebrating Polish culture. Our last newsletter highlighted some of the homecomings and parish festivals in our heritage communities, which have traditionally been held in and around October. It is appropriate that Polish Heritage Month coincides with the celebrations of the descendants of the Polish immigration to Texas.

September was filled with activities that included the Golden Jubilee of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows (Seraphic Sisters). It was gratifying to see the outpouring of attendees at their successful Jubilee Mass and Gala on Sept. 13 in Kosciusko, Texas. Their 50 years of ministry and service in San Antonio and Kenedy nursing homes, and the Czestochowa Shrine and retreat center are an inspiration of faith and living examples of loving God and loving your neighbors.

The Seraphic Sisters' up-to-date facilities are renowned for their loving care and quality service, which have been recognized as the best in the region. We have been truly honored to know and work with these Polish sisters who were invited by Fr. Peter Kolton and assisted by Bishop John Yanta, Fr. Bernard Goebel and Fr. Frank Kurzaj in getting established in their early years. We commend them not only for their needed services but also for reinforcing Polish culture and traditions. They are truly a blessing.

On Sept. 24, a celebration recognizing the contributions of Poles and Americans of Polish descent to America's 250-year history was held in Washington DC. Featured guests at this observance were President of Poland Karol Nawrocki and Andrzej Poczobut, a dissident in Belarus who has become a symbol of the struggle for freedom and the rights of the Polish minority in Belarus. The event was held in the Union Station Presidential suite, and attendees from Texas included Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, who introduced President Nawrocki, PHC Board members Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey and Susie Kotara, PHC Executive Director Alice Poore, Dr. Martha Respondek and Larry Haas. Also present were members of Congress, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of Polonia from throughout the United States, honoring the remarkable contributions of Poles and Americans of Polish descent to the history, freedom, and prosperity of the United States.

We are especially grateful for the generosity of the people who graciously contributed to the $2500 sponsorship required to attend the VIP reception at the Sept. 24 event: Adrian and Cynthia Yanta, Lambert and Rosalie Titzman, Dr. Martha Respondek and Larry Haas, Susie Kotara and Susan Moczygemba-McKinsey.

In our next newsletter, we will cover the Polish Heritage Center's Oct. 3 event celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the United States, Polish American-style, the 95th Anniversary of Bishop Yanta's life and legacy, and the 5th Anniversary of the opening of the Polish Heritage Center. Time flies. Blessings to you all.





A Heartfelt Message to Our Donors

By Alice Poore, PHC Executive Director

As we look toward the future, we do so with deep gratitude for the generosity that has carried the Polish Heritage Center to this moment. Every gift—large or small—has helped transform Bishop John W. Yanta's vision into a living, breathing place where history is preserved, stories are honored, culture is experienced and heritage is celebrated.

Today, we stand at a crossroads of promise, as the Polish Heritage Center enters a pivotal period of growth and transition. Following the initial start-up phase and the significant accomplishments of the past three years, the Center has emerged as a unique national treasure. Worldwide recognition, public response and visitor engagement have been overwhelmingly positive, affirming the Center's cultural importance and strengthening momentum for the future. This moment presents an opportunity to advance a renewed vision, establish new goals, and secure long-term financial stability.

The Center's programs are flourishing, our visitor numbers continue to grow, and the impact of our mission is felt across Texas and beyond. To ensure that this legacy endures for generations, we must strengthen the financial foundation that supports it. With this vision, the Polish Heritage Center has carefully prepared a plan to initiate a campaign which will kick off in October 2026.

The purpose of our campaign is to develop and launch a fundraising initiative to secure $1 million within the next 15 months, establish a structure for annual giving to ensure sustained support, and encourage planned giving, including bequests and legacy gifts

With your continued generosity, we are proud to share the goals that will shape the Center's future and safeguard the legacy entrusted to us.

- **Strengthen Financial Foundations** Expand and stabilize funding sources to support long-term operations and growth.
- **Enhance and Grow Educational & Cultural Programming** Build upon current programs and introduce new initiatives that deepen engagement with Polish history, culture, and heritage.
- **Increase school tours** for 4th, 7th, and 11th grade students beyond the ten surrounding school districts, and Catholic Campuses.
- **Advance signature programs** including Texas Polonia Youth Day, Polish Cooking School, Polish Art Contest, cultural events, new exhibits, and traveling exhibits.
- **Preserve and Maintain the Polish Heritage Center** Ensure the continued care, maintenance, and stewardship of the facility and its collections.
  - Provide ongoing care for the PHC building, including future interior and exterior painting.
  - Update and maintain technology systems to support exhibitions, education, and operations.
- **Develop new initiatives** that broaden cultural engagement and community participation, including:
  - Adult Polish Cooking Classes
  - Polish Dance Classes
  - Polish Language Classes
  - Polish Art Contest for Adults
  - Expanded cultural events and workshops
  - Future Exhibits
  - Polish Art Classes for Adults

Your support is essential. By contributing to this campaign, you help safeguard the Center's future—its educational programs, its cultural initiatives, its historic collections, and the building that houses them. You make it possible for children, families, scholars, and visitors from around the world to experience the richness of Polish heritage for decades to come.

There are many meaningful ways to support the Polish Heritage Center, and every contribution directly strengthens our mission to preserve, celebrate, and share the history of Polish settlement in Texas. Your generosity ensures that future generations can experience the stories, traditions, and cultural legacy entrusted to our care.

Ways to Make a Contribution

Financial Gifts
Support our daily operations, exhibitions, educational programs, and preservation work through one-time, monthly or annual recurring donations.

Heritage Fund Contributions
Provide long-term stability by giving to our designated fund supporting ongoing preservation and cultural initiatives.

Memorial & Honorary Gifts Make a donation in honor or memory of a loved one, ensuring their legacy is reflected in the continued work of the Center.

Planned Giving — Include the Polish Heritage Center in your estate plans to create a lasting impact for future generations.

More Donation Details – Are you taking the standard deduction? You can still take up $1,000 as an above the line deduction for charitable contributions ($2,000 if you are married). Ask your tax advisor today! Here's a great link for more information: https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc506

This campaign is more than a fundraising effort. It is an invitation to join us in securing the future of a place built with love, faith, and devotion to the story of Texas Polonia. Together, we can ensure that Bishop John W. Yanta's vision and the Polish Heritage Center, continue to shine as a beacon of culture, history, and community.

Scan the QR Code

In honor of Polish American Heritage Month, we launch this two-part look at Poland today. Our sincere thanks to PHC Board member John Cebrowski for his research and scholarship.

The Polish Eagle is Soaring

By John Cebrowski, PHC Board Member

For many years, the storyline about Poland in the United States has centered on the struggles and deprivations of the partition period, two World Wars, and communist subjugation. But since the democratic transition in 1989, and specifically over the last ten to fifteen years, Poland has been experiencing a "golden age," undergoing a historic transformation from a post-communist state into a European powerhouse. From economic milestones to technological advances, and massive infrastructure overhauls, contemporary Poland is a story of vitality, ingenuity and determination.

Poland has more than caught up – it has rocketed up - to the rest of Europe and the world.

1. Attaining "Developed Market" Status

Poland officially achieved developed market status on September 24, 2018, when the global index provider FTSE Russell upgraded the country from "Advanced Emerging" to "Developed Market," thereby joining the ranks of the world's most advanced economies. This milestone cemented Poland's status as an economic dynamo in Europe. The UN and the World Bank recognize Poland as a high-income, developed economy.

2. Stunning GDP Growth and Ascension to the G20

Poland officially became a top 20 economy in 2025, with its economy crossing the $1 trillion threshold, according to data verified by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Back in 1990 its GDP was just $66 billion, making Poland the 36th largest economy in the world. That giant leap represents a monumental transition from its dire communist episode.

While Western European titans like Germany and France have faced relative economic stagnation, Poland is standing out as the fastest-growing heavyweight in Europe with an estimated year-on-year growth of 3.5% in Q1 2026.

The key drivers of the "Polish Miracle" have been:

- Shock therapy market reforms and comprehensive EU integration;
- Strong manufacturing tied to Western European supply chains;
- A predictable business environment with sound regulations, making it a foreign investment hub;
- A boom in higher education resulting in approximately 46% of young adults holding a university or tertiary degree, creating a highly competitive and highly skilled labor force;
- Emergence as a deep-tech powerhouse; and
- The renowned resilience and creativity of its people.

3. Astonishing Infrastructure Leap

Since 1990, Poland's network of modern highways and expressways has exploded from just a few hundred kilometers into a massive 5,465-kilometer grid network. The railway network has undergone a massive quality-driven renaissance focused on modernization, speed, and electrification. High-speed capability emerged in 2014, with trains operating at speeds of 200 km/hr. As part of the mega-hub Port Polska strategic plan, construction is underway for a brand-new 480-km high-speed line linking Warsaw, Łódź, Poznań, and Wrocław which will allow trains to reach 320 km/hr. The Port of Gdańsk is undergoing a massive multi-billion-euro expansion to solidify its status as the largest container and cargo port on the Baltic Sea. All this will fundamentally transform domestic transport and international trade.





4. Flourishing Leadership in Technology and Science

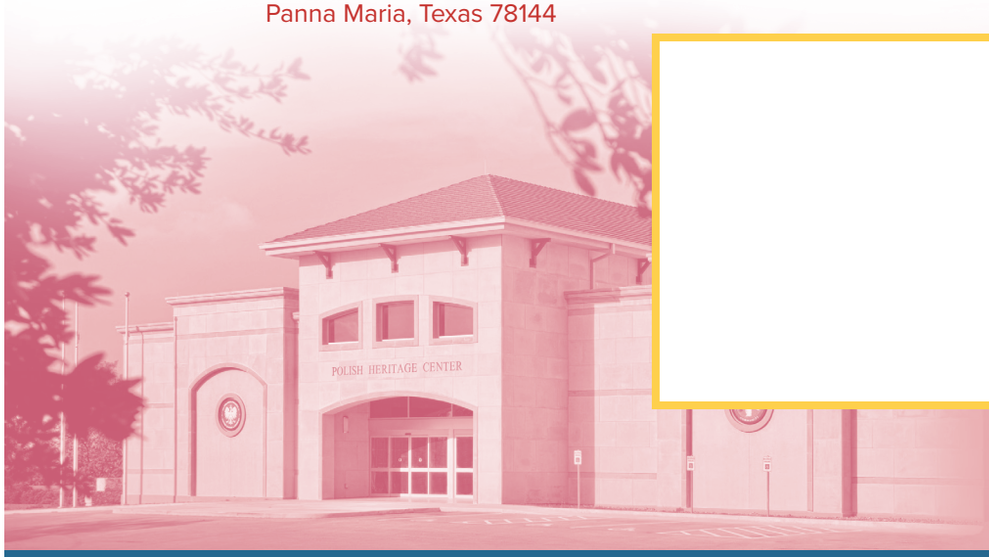
Poland has emerged as a deep-tech powerhouse thanks to the worldwide success of The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt and Cyberpunk 2077 which remains an intense point of pride with the younger generation. The Polish mobile payment system BLIK has revolutionized the financial market, securely processing billions of transactions annually and expanding into international markets.

The EagleEye Satellite Launch in 2024 became the first entirely Polish-designed and built Earth-observation satellite providing high-resolution imaging for scientific, environmental, and security purposes. PW-Sat, built by Warsaw University of Technology students tested innovative deorbit sails designed to clean up space debris. Polish astronomers have measured the mass of free-floating planets through the Milky Way for the first time. Polish astronaut Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski traveled to the International Space Station on the Axiom-4 mission, operating 13 advanced Polish experiments.

Dr. Jarosław Duda of Jagiellonian University developed a data compression algorithm that has become an industry standard, and is now embedded globally in software by Apple, Meta, and Google. Polish oncology researchers received the international Pfizer Research Foundation Prize for developing a cell-based therapy to target aggressive brain tumors, and Polish student engineering teams have taken top global honors in multiple categories at the James Dyson Awards, an international design competition.

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News from the Heritage Communities

Blessings To Our Seraphic Sisters!

