



**Polish  
American  
Association**

# The Link

Serving Polonia Since 1922

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## *Easter—A Season for Hope and Surprise*

A group of men, who are clients in PAA's Turning Point day center for homeless men, rolled up their sleeves, boiled, dyed and hand decorated more than 300 Easter eggs "Pisanki." The brightly and beautifully colored eggs were then carefully placed in straw Easter baskets with other traditional items that are part of the centuries-old tradition of the blessing of Easter Food "Swieconka." More than 150 of these baskets were prepared for distribution to PAA's food pantry clients.

"We wanted to give our food pantry clients something special as a sign of the hope symbolized by the Easter season," said Executive Director Karen Popowski.

The baskets contained the traditional items rich with religious symbolism: butter in the shape of a lamb (to remind us of the goodness of Christ); horseradish (symbolic of the Passion of Christ); eggs (new life and the Resurrection); Polish sausage (indicative of God's generosity); salt (a necessary element in physical life, which Jesus used as symbolism "You are the salt of the earth");

bread with a cross on it (symbolic of Christ, the true Bread of Life).

"Decorating the eggs and preparing the baskets also allowed the men in our day center for the homeless, many of whom are recovering alcoholics, to feel needed and to give something back to others in need," said PAA's Supervisor of Supportive Services Dorota Lewandowska.

The Easter baskets were made possible by the generosity of Polish businesses such as Andy's Deli, which donated all the sausage, and bakeries that participated in the PAA's Paczki Days for the Poor.



*Clients of PAA's Turning Point day center for homeless men decorated more than 300 Easter eggs "Pisanki" that were included in traditional Easter food baskets distributed to PAA's food pantry clients as a special Easter surprise.*

and the Anti-Hunger Federation, along with bread and pastries donated by Forest View Bakery. Approximately 75 percent of the clients served by the food pantry are poor elderly, and the remainder is needy families.

Nine Chicago-area bakeries and delicatessens donated a portion of the proceeds from the paczki they sold on February 22, Fat Thursday, and February 27, Fat Tuesday, to the PAA's food pantry, raising nearly \$6000. Participating bakeries included: Alliance Bakery, Andy's Deli & Bakery, Cicero Deli, Kasia's Deli and Catering, Laramie Bakery, Montrose Deli, Oak Mill Bakery, Racine Bakery and Smakowski Bakery.

PAA Board Member and proprietor of Oak Mill Bakery, Bogna Iwanowska Solak, was the first to enthusiastically sign on to Paczki Days for the Poor. "As a Polish immigrant myself, I understand the need to care about those who don't always enjoy the sweetness of life," said Solak. Paczki Days for the Poor was such a success that PAA hopes to make it an annual effort.

Paczki Days for the Poor, organized for the first time this year, were aimed at raising awareness and funds for those in need who are served by the PAA's food pantry. The PAA's food pantry, which was started more than 18 years ago, serves more than 500 people with supplement food provided through the Greater Chicago Food Depository



*Bogna Iwanowska-Solak, PAA Board Member and proprietor of Oak Mill Bakery was the first to sign on to participating in Paczki Days for the Poor. Nine bakeries participated and raised more than \$6,000 for PAA's Food Pantry, by donating a portion of the proceeds from the paczki sold on Fat Thursday and Fat Tuesday.*

## From the Chairman ...

Changes in the political landscape and shifts in government funding of social services are prompting organizations like PAA to examine their methods of service delivery. As state and federal government agencies are more fiscally constrained, social service agencies can't rely on maintaining current levels of government funding.

Because three-fourths of PAA's funding comes from government grants and contracts, we anticipate some of our programs and services will be affected. At the same time, however, federal legislation is being considered to motivate private charitable contributions.

PAA began developing its strategic, long-range plan several months ago to better prepare the organization for the future. We are evaluating our programs and services in an effort to be responsive and evolve the organization to meet the changing needs of the Polish community, as well as to plan for challenges all social service organizations will be facing.

As part of our strategic planning process, we have developed a short survey to help us solicit input about our programs and services, better understand what motivates donors, and to learn what information about PAA makes an impact. Hundreds of surveys have been distributed among various audiences in the Chicagoland area. We would like to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to provide us with your ideas and input by completing and mailing back the survey. You can find a copy to print on our website at [www.polish.org](http://www.polish.org) under the category of Events/Employment or call 773-282-8206 ext.308 if you would like us to mail or fax you a copy.

From all of us at PAA, we wish you a safe, relaxing and fun-filled summer!

*Stanley Jozefiak*

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## 2001 Chairman's Brunch



*(left to right) PAA Chairman Stanley Jozefiak, with Poland's Ambassador to the U.S. Przemyslaw Grudzinski and Chicago's Consul General Ryszard Sarkowicz. Both men were honored at PAA's Annual Chairman's Brunch, held this year in April at the Ritz Carlton. The occasion marked the newly appointed Ambassador's first official visit to Chicago.*

## Resource Room Opens Its Doors to the Community

PAA recently established a Resource Room for community use at its Learning Center located at 3815 N. Cicero in Chicago. PAA's Resource Room offers free computer and Internet access to those seeking employment or needing lab time to improve their computer skills. Computers can be used to write resumes, conduct Internet job searches, and improve office skills on current software applications. There are also computer software programs available at the Resource Room for those wishing

to improve their typing, math, and English language skills. The Resource Room also makes available a fax machine, VCR and resource materials such as resume-writing books, directories, videos, current newspapers and classified ads for those searching for employment, as well as workshops on job search skills. During the weekends, the Resource Room is open Saturdays 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Sundays 12:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. and staffed by tutors, who are available to answer questions. No appointment is needed.

## Donor's Legacy Lives On

Helen Yourevich, a Russian immigrant from Manchuria, and her Polish husband, Anthony, will be remembered in a special way at the Polish American Association. During their lifetime, both were supporters of the Polish American Association (PAA) focusing much of their charitable giving on youth programs.

After Mrs. Yourevich's death in California last July, PAA was notified that she had requested that a special gift be made to the PAA from her trust. PAA is grateful for the Yourevichs' ongoing generosity and will use the contribution to support youth and family programming.

## To Achieve the American Dream

The decision to purchase a home is one of the more important decisions we face in our lives. For many of PAA's clients, who are recent immigrants, it also carries additional emotional meaning. It's a major step toward trying to find their place in American society and establish roots in their new "homeland."

During the last three years, PAA conducted an extensive Homeownership Education Campaign that reached thousands of Polish-speaking residents in the Chicago area and was received with an overwhelming response. The need for unbiased homeownership information in the Polish language has inspired PAA to create a comprehensive housing program that will enable more Polish immigrants to enter the home-buying market.

PAA's new Community Housing Information Center was started with the help of grants from the Fannie Mae Foundation and the City of Chicago's Housing Department. The Center is aimed at providing clients with information and counseling necessary to facilitate knowledgeable and thoughtful home-purchasing decisions, as well as guiding our clients toward achieving the fiscal awareness and responsibility associated with large purchases.

Although many of our clients have a working knowledge of English, it is usually not sufficient to comprehend complicated legal and financial documents associated with home purchases. The Community Housing Information Center addresses this issue by providing information and services that include: bilingual information about housing issues such as tenant rights and

homeownership information; predatory lending issues; educational/informational sessions about home purchase, home safety, access to financing resources, and available City housing programs; financial referrals and loan packaging for home improvement and home purchase.

The Center also provides information and guidance to those clients who have already obtained a loan in order to address any post-purchase problems.

"We're very excited because this Center enables us to send clients through the full cycle of home-buying education and, just as importantly, to serve those in need of rudimentary financial advice and guidance," said program coordinator Lidia Jachimowicz.

One of the most unique offerings of PAA's Community Housing Information Center is a 40-hour course that combines home-buying information with an ESL component, essentially providing students with two distinct, but related, learning opportunities.

The first class to complete the course in March of 2001 was unified in their positive assessment of the course with comments like: "This class helped rid me of the many doubts I had about



*Housing program coordinator and nationally certified housing counselor, Lidia Jachimowicz, teaches the 40-hour Homebuyers Course at PAA's Community Housing Information Center located at 4808 W. Bernice, around the corner from PAA's main office.*

buying a home." "The information was invaluable!" "Excellent!" Lidia Jachimowicz, the course instructor and nationally certified housing counselor by the Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute, found the students' enthusiasm rewarding and inspiring, as she prepared for the next group.

The Center also offers monthly, two-hour seminars featuring professionals from various arenas associated with the home-buying process as guest speakers. The seminars are part of a series titled How to Buy a Home in the U.S.A. Topics covered in the seminars held to date include: The Role of Credit History in the Home-buying Process; What You Should Know About Home Loans; and How to Find Your Dream Home.

PAA's Community Housing Information Center is positioned to be an important step for many immigrants who want to achieve the American dream.

## Hats Off To...

PAA Board Member **Rev. Edmund J. Siedlecki** was recently awarded the prestigious Pope John XXIII Award by the Association of Chicago Priests. The Pope John XXIII Award is given to one priest each year for excellence in priestly ministry and significant contributions to the life of the Church in Chicago. This Priest carries the vision and courage of Pope John XXIII in his ministry. PAA has been blessed to have Rev. Siedlecki on its board of directors for 10 years

and has experienced his generosity and leadership first hand.

Congratulations to PAA Board Members **Bogna Iwanowska-Solak** and **Grazyna Maneykowski** and former PAA Board Member **Dr. Aleksandra Mazurek**, who were all selected for the "Polki 2000" exhibit honoring the achievements of Polish-American women. Their stories were part of a recent exhibition at the Polish Museum of America, The exhibition is now traveling to Krakow,

Poland. We applaud their accomplishments and are grateful to them for lending their talents to PAA.

PAA Board Member **Rev. Thomas J. Paprocki** will be honored at the DePaul University College of Law's Eighth Annual Alumni Service Awards Luncheon for Outstanding Public Service. In addition to being Pastor of St. Constance Parish, Rev. Paprocki is a co-founder and board member of the Chicago Legal Clinic. Congratulations!

# Polish American Association

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*Thank You . . .* to all those who made our 2001 Chairman's Brunch a success, especially Poland's Ambassador to the U.S. Przemyslaw Grudzinski, Chicago's Polish Consul General Ryszard Sarkowicz, Crate&Barrel, Ludomir Januszkiewicz, and all those who generously supported us by donating to and attending the event, including Stanley and Susan Jozefiak, Geraldine and Harold Lichterman, Ernest and Joan Wish, Rev. Martin Borowczyk, Mariusz and Margaret Hauer, Mike and Natasha Isaacs, Ted Makarewicz, Anna Mazur, Aleksandra Mazurek, Rev. Thomas Paprocki, Sandra and John Pikarski, Rev. Edmund Siedlecki, Mark and Anna Sobor, Ted Szywala, Don and Joan Versen, Mitchell and Fran Wiet, Scott and Mariana Winslow, Altheimer & Gray, Ameritech, ComEd, Bank One, Chicago Society PNA, General Press Colors, LaSalle National Corp., Legion of Young Polish Women, MA Steel Erectors, New Century Bank, Oppidian Inc., Rafalo Construction Co., Resurrection Health Care, and the Polish Women's Alliance ... To the foundations that provide support for our programs: Fund for Immigrants and Refugees, Karol Uryga-Nawarowski Foundation, A. Montgomery Ward Foundation, Owens Foundation, WPWR TV-Channel 50, William G. McGowan Foundation, Chicago Tribune Charities, Retirement Research Foundation, and The Heritage Foundation ... To the individuals, organizations and corporations that have made generous donations to PAA's Miracle Fund: Henry and Isabel Smogolski, Dan and Shirley Boho, Roger and Judy Kovack, Geraldine Lichterman, Leo Niemiec, Robert Paszczak, Karen Popowski, Rev. Edmund Siedlecki, Jeanne M. Sowa, Mark Chudzinski, John Cina, Greg Kobelinski, Walter Kurczewski, John and Bozena McLees, Daniel and Mary Pankiewicz, John Peldyak, Joanna Sawicka, Alice Siorek, Barbara Tomaszewska, Congregation of the Resurrection, Helen Yourevich Trust, Kenard Management Corp., McMaster-Carr Supply Co., Phoenix Remodeling Inc., Polish Women's Alliance of America ... To Andy's Deli and Bakery for donating sausage for Easter baskets made for our food pantry clients ... To Courtney Boho for coordinating a Student Council Food Drive at Carmel High School to benefit PAA's Food Pantry ... and to all those who are not mentioned here but have given to PAA in time, money or prayers, *dziękujemy bardzo!*



*(left to right) PAA Board Member and Brunch Committee Chair Geraldine Lichterman, presents the Ambassador and Consul General with gifts from PAA. The Chairman's Brunch, one of the PAA's major fundraising events, each year honors a notable individual who has made a contribution to the Polish Community.*