



**Polish  
American  
Association**

# The Link

Serving Polonia Since 1922

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## The Polish Community In Metro Chicago...

PAA commissioned a report, entitled *“The Polish Community in Metro Chicago: a community profile of strengths and needs,”* based on Census 2000 data. The report, generously funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services, was released in the Fall of 2004 to government, business and civic leaders with the intention of helping planners and policy makers in the public and private sectors to reach and provide services to the Polish community.

The report was also shared with leaders in the Polish-American community in an effort to provide them with key information to carry out efforts on behalf of the constituencies they serve. PAA and its Board of Directors will use the findings in this report to evaluate program offerings and continue to advocate on behalf of those who need us most.

Some key findings of the report:

- The Chicago metro area is home to nearly one third of Polish immigrants in the U.S.
- The Polish foreign-born population in the Chicago area is nearly 139,000, which approaches the historical high of 165,000 reached in 1930.
- Nearly half of the Polish immigrants living in the Chicago area arrived after 1990, a 66 percent increase from the previous 10 years.
- Nearly 182,000 persons in the metro area speak Polish at home, making it a population larger than Aurora, the second-largest city in Illinois.

Get the full report on our website at [www.polish.org](http://www.polish.org) under Polish Community.

## Bridging The Digital Divide

Krystyna was without work, and nearly every job she applied for required some basic computer skills. At 50, she thought it was too late to learn how to use a computer. Then she heard on Polish-language radio that Polish American Association (PAA) was offering free, basic computer literacy courses. Although she was apprehensive, she decided to give it a try.



Krystyna’s story is very typical. Since PAA began offering Basic Computer Literacy Courses in July 2004, more than 200 people have enrolled and more than 100 are on waiting lists.

The courses, funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunities as a part of the Bridging Digital Divide Program, aim to help underprivileged and underserved communities participate in the new computer age. In fact, the average student is

a woman between the age of 40 to 64, who has a low to modest income.

The emphasis of PAA’s courses is on helping students familiarize themselves with a basic knowledge of MSWord, e-mail and the internet. The classes are conducted in Polish, so those with limited English skills can participate. Small class sizes, convenient scheduling in six- or 12-week cycles on weekdays and weekends, help many take advantage of the opportunity.

### ***Government Budget Cuts Jeopardize Vital Services...***

***Polish American Association and hundreds of organizations that serve the poor are expressing great concern about President Bush’s 2006 budget plan.***

***The proposed budget aims to dramatically cut programs that are desperately important to the most vulnerable members of our communities. Should these cuts be approved by Congress, they would severely affect some of the services PAA provides to hard-working and low-income adults and their families. These include ESL education, vocational training, employment, youth and domestic violence services.***

“I am so impressed with the students I teach. They are determined to learn as much as they can because they know they will have better opportunities at work, be able to participate in what their children are doing, and for those who are older, not feel so isolated. They do not let their age, English proficiency and economic situation become a barrier,” said instructor Dominika Golojuch.

## From The Chairman...

*The coming of spring marks a time of renewal and hope. Many of us look at the season as a time for change and new opportunities.*

*As we eagerly anticipate the opportunities that lie ahead in PAA's work of helping to restore hope in the lives of those who are most vulnerable, I am pleased to welcome two new members, who were elected to the Board of Directors of the Polish American Association.*

*Dr. Krystyna Kiel is a radiation oncologist at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and professor of radiology at Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. She is the daughter of Polish immigrants. Dr. Kiel volunteers her time by serving on various boards and committees including the board of the American Cancer Society.*

*Chester Lizak is a partner at DiMonte and Lizak, and concentrates in the trial and appeal of civil and criminal matters. He is a member of the Chicago Society, the Advocate Society and former director of the Copernicus Foundation Board, and a member of several professional organizations.*

*We welcome them both, and look forward to their energy and ideas in accomplishing the important mission and work of the Polish American Association.*

*PAA's staff, board and volunteers always strive for excellence and quality in serving our clients. A testament of their dedication is the thousands of lives that are changed for the better each year. In recent months their work received additional recognition. PAA is honored and grateful to have been selected for the following awards:*

- *PAA was among seven organizations to receive SBC Illinois' Beyond the Call Community Award in recognition for outstanding local community commitment and service programs. PAA was honored for making a difference and improving the quality of life in northwest Chicago and surrounding communities. Local leaders, once elected officials assisted SBC Illinois in selecting recipients for these.*

- *The Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County honored PAA, and four other organizations as part of its "Above and Beyond" domestic violence awareness program that honors organizations that provide assistance to those in need of safety and support.*

- *The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) awarded PAA the highest performance grant for an Illinois community-based organization. The performance grants are based on student progress and attendance at English-As-A-Second Language (ESL) classes.*

*We at Polish American Association wish all of our clients, donors, and volunteers the renewal, optimism and hope that comes with spring.*

*Mitchell J. Wiet*

The Link is a publication of the  
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## 2005 Chairman's Brunch

PAA was pleased to host world-renowned Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz at the 2005 Chairman's Brunch. Polish American Association also honored Ernest R. Wish and LaSalle Bank at the event with Solidarity Award for their lifetime giving to the organization. Solidarity Awards recipients are individuals and organizations that contribute to PAA at the Solidarity Circle level, which includes those who have made gifts in excess of \$50,000 during their lifetime. The Brunch was generously underwritten by PAA supporter Camille Einoder.



*(Pictured left to right) PAA Board Vice Chair Dr. Izabela Roman, Camille Einoder, Prof. Magdalena Abakanowicz, PAA Executive Director Karen Popowski, and PAA Board Chairman Mitchell Wiet.*

## 2004 Presidential Award Winners Honored

The Polish American Association honored Dr. Mark Sobor and Anna Zolkowski Sobor at its Annual Gala on Saturday, November

13, 2004. This dynamic husband and wife team was recognized with PAA's 2004 Presidential Award for their commitment and outstanding investment of time and resources in the work of Polish American Association among the many other charitable causes they support in Chicago and its Polish-American community. Dr. Mark Sobor is also being honored



with a 2005 Jefferson Award for his community service.

# New PAA Website...

PAA is proud to have been only the second nonprofit organization in the Chicagoland area to launch its own website in 1996. Our bilingual website has enabled us to reach hundreds of thousands of people all over the U.S. and around the world.

Financial constraints, and the technology used in the years when the site was created made it very difficult to keep the site current and use its full potential for strengthening communications with our donors and clients.

We are pleased to announce



In 2004 alone, people from more than 50 countries visited our site, most were from the U.S., Poland, Germany and Canada. Many people find our site as they search the web for information about Poles, Polish Americans, and services and issues such as adoption immigration, U.S. citizenship, and substance abuse.

that our new website is up and running, and features more current and comprehensive content, improved navigation and a more interactive approach. PAA is grateful to the Chicago Society for providing some of the funds to help with the redesign of our website. Please visit us soon at [www.polish.org](http://www.polish.org), and come back often, as we hope to continually update and add to our content.

# Immigrant Teens Making a Difference...

Teens who are part of PAA's Benjamin B. Greenfield Teen Development Program discuss many complex and personal issues during their weekly meetings and activities. The program, since its inception in 1995, focuses on helping immigrant youth adjust to life in their new homeland, by enhancing self-esteem, strengthening social and leadership skills, as well as substance abuse prevention and living a healthy lifestyle.

Dating violence was a topic that kept resurfacing for many months after two high-profile murders of women in the Polish community by their boyfriends. The teens talked with concern about friends who were involved in relationships that showed danger signs. They wanted to find a way to create more awareness about dating violence among their peers.

Working together with PAA staff, they found a solution. The teens decided to create a brief five-minute video about teen dating violence: the startling facts, the warning signs and how to let other teens recognize when they are in an unhealthy relationship. Once the idea was born, the teens worked with staff to write grant applications, which resulted in funding for the video from the Youth Innovation Fund.

Now they are busy making their vision become a reality, researching facts and preparing a script for the video. They hope to have a finished product in June that they can distribute through PAA's website, at local high schools, and to their peers.



*We mourn*

*the loss of our wonderful  
Polish Pope John Paul II  
and celebrate  
his life of service.*

*1920 - 2005*

**"Man is great not because of what he has,  
not because of who he is, but because of  
what he shares with others."**

*Pope John Paul II*

**DONATE YOUR USED CAR OR BOAT TO  
POLISH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION.**



*Call 773-282-8206 ext. 315 for details.*

**A special thank you to Frank  
Zabielski, who was the first indi-  
vidual to donate a car, a 2002 Kia, to  
Polish American Association.**

# The Link

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## Polish American Association

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## Thank You...

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