

# The Link

Polish American Association

*Resources for Changing Lives*

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Polish  
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Serving Polonia Since 1922

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## Thank You

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## Strengthening Families...

For many immigrant women, the unfamiliarity of their new homeland, its culture, and traditions breed anxiety and fear. "Magda" sought help from Polish American Association's (PAA) Women's Services Program, when her anxiety began to interfere with all aspects of her life. She had trouble sleeping, and experienced panic attacks so severe they caused her to quit her job. She did not know what was happening to her. She just lost the ability to effectively deal with her life and particularly her role as a mother to her two children.

Magda had been struggling for months with her anxiety, but did not have the money to see a private therapist. Her English was also limited and therefore she needed to find help in her native language. After just a few counseling sessions with PAA's women's therapist, it became clear that one of the key stressors in her life was her role as a mother. A recent immigrant, Magda was not only dealing with the usual stress of adjusting to life in a new country, learning English, making ends meet, but also trying to deal with raising a teenager and a younger child with many different societal norms than those she knew from Poland.

In addition to individual counseling, Magda was also encouraged to attend PAA's six-week parenting course. Although hesitant at first, Magda was willing to try just about anything to get back to her old self. She approached the classes with an open mind and found a great deal more than she expected. In reflecting on the class she says, "I learned to treat my kids with respect. I learned that

their needs are different than mine." She said she always had specific ideas of what she wanted her children's futures to look like. Now she knows that all she can do is raise them with values, provide them with opportunities to learn from the consequences of their choices, and accept the decisions they make in the future.

Magda said she finally accepted that she does not have to be the perfect parent. She relieved herself of much guilt and anxiety about not loving each child in the same exact way. She realized each of them has unique needs and that she can show her love differently to both children. Magda feels that the classes have already made a positive difference in her relationship with her children. With determination and the help and support of PAA's women's therapist, Magda has made significant strides in resolving her anxiety disorder and building a healthier and stronger family.

Sara Lee Foundation is a Major Corporate Sponsor of PAA's Women's Services program. This program is also made possible through partial funding from the Legion of Young Polish Women and Kraft Foods.

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A special thanks to the Legion of Young Polish Women for brightening the holidays of the women in our domestic violence program and the many other women served by PAA programs with thoughtful Christmas gifts that made them feel feminine and special.

## Baby Shower ...



Charter One Bank employees recently organized a baby shower to help pregnant women in need served by the Polish American Association, and in particular a family who learned that they were expecting triplets. The initiative was coordinated by PAA Board Member and Charter One Regional V.P. of Sales Su Dillet. Pictured above from left: Elena Rodriguez and Su Dillet of Charter One Bank and PAA's Health Outreach worker Halina Szarkowska.

## I And The World...



Polish American Association youth prepare for a showcase of the work they created as part of the "I and the World" project funded by Mayor Daley's Region 1 KidStart YouthNet. This project was aimed at raising self-esteem through art as well as helping youth develop teamwork and project management skills that can be applied in other areas of their life.



## From The Chair...

As the new Chair of the Polish American Association's Board of Directors, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and thank Mitchell Wiet, PAA's chairman for the past two years for the outstanding job he has done.

On behalf of the entire board and staff, we are very grateful for Mitch's effective leadership and commitment, and look forward to working with him as he continues his service on the Board.

Having served on PAA's board since April 2002, I am looking forward to my new responsibilities. I intend to serve this organization with all my energy, knowledge and enthusiasm. One of my main goals as Chair is to increase awareness of the meaningful and quality work Polish American Association does each day to strengthen the vulnerable in our community. I hope that this raised awareness will enable PAA to increase the support it receives from individuals and corporations. An additional and important goal of mine is to engage more of Polonia and others in the important work PAA does. Through our efforts we can change the lives of those who have no other place to turn.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome PAA's newest board members Su Dillett and Lynn M Orawiec. Su is the Regional Vice President of Sales for Charter One Bank and Lynn is the Group Senior Vice President of ABN AMRO/LaSalle Bank's Retail Group. Both women bring a wealth of talent, experience and enthusiasm.

I look forward to the many opportunities to work together to inspire hope and strength in the hearts of those dealing with obstacles and hardship, and to help prepare them with the resources they need to lead productive, healthy lives in their new homeland.

*Izabela Roman, M.D.*

## 2005 Presidential Award Winner Honored

The Polish American Association honored Edward B. Bleka, President and CEO of Quantum Foods, at its Annual Gala & Benefit Auction on Saturday, November 19, 2005. The event attracted more than 450 guests and raised more than \$70,000 for PAA's programs serving nearly 3000 people each month.

Edward Bleka was recognized with PAA's 2005 Presidential Award for his commitment and outstanding investment of resources to the Polish American Association among the many other charitable causes he supports locally and internationally.



**Polish American Association Board Chair Dr. Izabela Roman bestows the organization's 2005 Presidential Award on Edward B. Bleka.**

**Polish American Association sincerely thanks the sponsors who made this year's gala an incredible success.**

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## The Rough Road to Recovery...

For most parents, dealing with a child's addiction to drugs or alcohol is a frightening and heart-breaking experience. Now, picture parents who arrived in the U.S. a little more than a year ago, work two jobs to support their family, have little time to master English and have no health insurance. These parents receive a call from the hospital emergency room that their son has overdosed on drugs.

En route to the hospital they are reeling from the shock. There must be some mistake - their son, though not perfect, didn't appear to them as abusing drugs. They knew he has had a hard time adjusting to life in the US - trying to fit in, learn English and find new friends. But how did it come to this.

They learned at the hospital that their 16-year-old son had a serious drug problem, and that this time he was lucky. Because the parents spoke very little English and had no health insurance, the hospital social worker referred the family to Polish American Association (PAA).

The teen substance abuse prevention and treatment program Teen Turning Point, a component of the Benjamin B. Green-Field Youth Development Program, provides extended case management to teens who suffer from addictions. The program begins with a thorough assessment, and a family intervention to encourage the teen to recognize their problem and voluntarily participate in treatment. Individual and family counseling is a key component. Additionally, when there is a need for outside support systems such as detox and a residential treatment program, PAA coordinates with these facilities and the family to ensure a comprehensive plan.

In the case of this young man "Tomek", the withdrawal symptoms were so severe that PAA

needed to quickly find a detox program and then residential treatment for long-term care. Complicating the matter was the family's lack of health insurance. Finding space in programs that are low-cost or free is difficult. Luck must have been on Tomek's side, as PAA's case worker quickly found a residential facility for him. The light at the end of this tunnel was quickly extinguished when Tomek ran away while being transported from detox to the residential facility.

Tomek was missing for a week. He was found when arrested for petty theft to support his drug habit. PAA staff worked with the police to hold Tomek until they could find a detox and treatment program to which he could be directly transported, to keep him from running again. PAA staff conducted a family intervention that at last caused Tomek to accept that he had a serious problem and to enter treatment voluntarily.

Anyone familiar with the difficult process of kicking an addiction like tobacco, sugar, alcohol or drugs knows that success often does not come at the first attempt. For Tomek, admitting he had a problem and agreeing to treatment was a significant step on his road to recovery. There have been many youth in PAA's Teen Starting Point who have successfully completed treatment and have gone on to achieve great things. But, perhaps their greatest achievement is winning this battle and staying strong in their life-long struggle to stay clean.

PAA is grateful to the Benjamin B. Green-Field Foundation and the Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse for funding Teen Starting Point, a substance abuse prevention and treatment program.

## WAYS TO SUPPORT PAA

### Chairman's Brunch 2006

*The Chairman's Brunch will take place on April 30, 2006.*

*The Polish American Association (PAA) is pleased to announce that world-renowned designer Christopher Radko will be our honored guest.*

*The Chairman's Brunch is one of the PAA's major annual fundraisers, which provides the organization with much needed funds to support our programs. For more information or to receive an invitation, please call: 773/282-8206 ext.308.*

### ANOTHER WAY TO HELP PAA

**At No Cost To You Through MidAmerica Bank's CommUNITY Banking**

Here's how it works: Open a new personal checking, savings, CD or Money Market account and Mid America Bank will make a one-time donation per account to Polish American Association (TIN #0816).

Additionally, all account holders will continue to earn much needed funds for PAA on an on-going basis. MidAmerica Bank will contribute to PAA an amount equal to a percentage of the total interest earned and paid annually on every account designated for PAA.

If you already bank with MidAmerica Bank, talk to your teller at the next visit or call 708-452-2316 to "link up" your account(s) so PAA can benefit from MidAmerica's additional contribution based on interest paid to you. To make this even easier, Polish American Association's TIN # is 0816.

*Please note: The matching percentage contribution does not affect the amount of interest earned by you the account holder. Your account information will not be shared with anyone; only the names linked to PAA will be known to*

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

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



## Coming to America?



PAA's Director of Immigration Services Grazyna Zajackowska recently completed a week-long series of major media appearances in Poland to inform the Polish public, future visitors and potential Polish émigrés to the U.S. about the current American immigration system, its laws, recent changes and new developments after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The initiative was aimed at underscoring the importance of legal immigration and the consequences of overstaying the validity of visas or unlawful boarder crossing.