



Polish
American
Association

Serving Polonia Since 1922

The Link

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PAA Offers Hope and Help to Parents and Families

Statements such as “we are desperate,” or “we feel we are losing our son or daughter” or “I felt hopeless until now” are commonly heard at PAA’s teen substance abuse counseling session for parents. Each week, approximately 15 parents of teenage or young adult substance abusers attend PAA’s counseling session, and often times stay until midnight sympathizing and expressing their feelings to other parents who share the same anguish.

Exasperated from trying to “set the limits” (a catch phrase PAA’s substance abuse counselor uses to signal guidelines for living), talk to, and connect with their children, parents of substance abusers often feel completely helpless, guilty, and responsible for their child’s behavior, even though in most cases the parents are oblivious to the situation until it becomes out of control. Most parents are often unaware of the frequency related to drug abuse among teenagers. The effects of chemical dependency reach far beyond the personal damage to the user – it extends to include the entire family. Parents who feel they are at a breaking point find great comfort and relief at PAA’s meetings and in talking with the other parents.

Based on four components, the program helps parents and teens identify their degree of addiction to substances and what treatment or action is necessary to establish and maintain total abstinence. The first component, Community

Outreach, is spreading awareness among Polish parents that teenage substance abuse is prevalent and help is available. PAA counselor Malgorzata Olczak speaks on Polish radio, talks to Polish newspapers, and attends meetings at high schools to spread the word about PAA’s program. This educational part helps parents recognize early symptoms of drug abuse, high-risk situations for teen and family involvement in raising drug-free children.

The second component of the program, Family Counseling and Support, focuses on the group and individual counseling of substance abusers and their parents. Each family is counseled step by step to determine how serious their child’s drug abuse is, and whether or not to admit the child to a treatment program.

The third component of the program is the most important component for Polish speaking parents: Linkage/Case Management. Because PAA offers only adult treatment services, Linkage and Case Management is the necessary next step, helping parents connect with suitable treatment resources for adolescents. This component identifies what treatment is necessary, seeks out the best method of obtaining treatment through healthcare insurance, and informs the parents of medical or healthcare centers. The substance abuse counselor

accompanies the parents and teenagers to the treatment centers to ensure that the best and proper treatment is diagnosed. Unfortunately, the addiction to illegal substances is an ongoing battle, even after substance abuse ceases. Aftercare, the final step of the program, is designed to encourage and serve as a support system for recovering substance abusers. PAA’s goal in the first year of the program was to serve 30 families. After only six months, 10 of the 30 families have had a teenager admitted for treatment. The fight against substance abuse is not easy, and with wonderful volunteers, such as Grazyna Sobiczewska, co-facilitator of the counseling group and mother of a recovering drug addict, the path for realization and recovery is getting clearer.



PAA Teen Substance Abuse Counselor Malgorzata Olczak, reviews the case file of a teenager and his family who attend substance abuse counseling.

From the Chairman

More than halfway through the year 2000, our progress at PAA is keeping pace with the time. With so many changes taking place in our fast-paced world, it is important that PAA changes with the times, providing what our community needs as it, and the lives of people within the community change. However we change to accommodate our world, we keep the same mission: to provide a resource for changing lives within the Polish community.

That is exactly what we are doing at PAA, and as our community grows, so do we. Many exciting things are taking place at PAA, including the expansion and overall move of our south side office to a better, new location. 6276 W. Archer Avenue has become the new home of PAA on the south side, which undoubtedly will be a contributing factor to reaching out to a larger number of Poles in Chicago. As the PAA staff members are busy arranging their new surroundings, I would like to congratulate them on their new location and wish them the best of luck in their outreach efforts.

The old and the new members of our community are representatives of PAA's 78 years of hard work and service for the people. Our seniors group, which meets weekly, carries on PAA's name and tradition by joining in activities of celebration and education. The new members of our community are lighting a new torch of tradition for the future. PAA's youth will participate in a city-wide community theater project in the fall, representing PAA as one of 7 ethnic groups performing.

Working together, our generations are moving toward being a resource for each other. With support groups for teenagers and parents dealing with the difficult subject of substance abuse, the families of PAA are overcoming the differences and problems that often times widen the gap between generations and people. As our world becomes more complicated, so do our problems. PAA's mission remains the same, and so do the results: better lives for the people in our community.

Support from foundations dedicated to upholding similar missions and from generous individual donor contributions, PAA keeps up with the times. Contributions to any of our programs can help to change the lives of the people in our present day time, promising better lives in the future. I would like to extend my appreciation for your support of the Polish American Association, and invite you to see what is taking place in this issue of The Link!

Stanley W. Jozefiak

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SUMMER: A Time to Learn and Help

Half the fun of a teenager's summer vacation is having a job! Beginning July 7, seven students from Steinmetz, Foreman, Lane Tech, and Taft High Schools began a summer work program at PAA. Working as clerk assistants, recreation helpers, food pantry assistants, and special database project assistants, the students are gaining valuable workplace experience.

Although working is a new experience for Beata Bors, Aneta Dejnorek, Diana Cionczyk, Justyna Chlebowicz, Sylwia Birkos, Mariola Placek, and Mirek Dorosl, they are no strangers to PAA and feel comfortable around the office. Youth Outreach Worker Marek Prejzner commented that, "the majority of the students participate in the Youth Development program, so we have known them for at least 10 months. We have worked together in the past, and continue to work well together now." For most of the students, this is their first paying job. How will they spend their paychecks? Surprisingly, not in the way that many teenagers probably would. Coming from large families with many brothers and sisters, some of the students' paychecks will help to supplement their family incomes. One student is planning on saving his money for a trip to Poland.

PAA is delighted to have the students here and is excited for them as they gain experience, skills, and are part of our team for the summer! Special thanks to Chris Long for volunteering to oversee one of the summer projects!



Pictured above from left to right are PAA summer employees: (first row) Justyna Chlebowicz, Mariola Placek, Aneta Dejnorek, Sylwia Birkos, (second row) Beata Bors, Diana Cionczyk, and Mirek Dorosl.



All in a day's work: the students are pictured hard at work in one of the conference rooms.

Art: More than a Picture

The last few months have brought a flurry of activities in the arts at PAA.

Art Therapy: Monsters, sad faces, and dark colors are common pictures drawn by the children who attend a weekly art therapy session at PAA. While their mothers are attending a support group for battered women, a certified art therapist works with the children, helping them to express emotions commonly linked to abusive environments. Children in violent homes often do not have words to express their feelings, so chalks and paints become their voices. As their individual family situations improve, the children's drawings become brighter with happy scenes and happy faces.

Improvisational Troupe:

Our youth leadership group has incorporated improvisational theater into its activities. Eva Darga, youth outreach worker, and Angela Forfia, former development associate and improv actor began the group to give self-confidence and performance skills to teenagers. The group has been very successful with a performance at this spring's Snowball event and plans are underway to continue the group in the fall.

A Halloween Treat:

PAA has been chosen as one of only seven Chicago organizations participating in this year's "All Hallows' Eve Ritual Celebration" by the award-winning Redmoon Theater. Last year, more than 10,000 people joined in the holiday's real meaning of remembering the dead. Using masks, inanimate objects, and an international range of puppetry styles, this fall, PAA seniors and teenagers will participate in creating and acting in a portion of Redmoon's production.



Pictured at left is PAA staff and volunteers who participated at the Spring Snowball Event for Youth.

Approximately 100 youth and staff attended the event, which was held at Camp Duncan near Lake Zurich, IL.

SENIORS ON THE MOVE!

Every Friday, at 10 a.m., the community room of PAA's northside Cicero office is filled with lively chatter and familiar faces for the weekly Senior Citizens meeting, when 12 to 26 Polish speaking seniors meet for 3 hours. Many members of the group are widowed and miss the chance to share good times with other seniors because of language barriers. Special events, such as holiday parties for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Valentine's Day help to fill the void many lonely seniors feel. Teresa Stachowicz, Senior Specialist, coordinates and directs the meetings, based on the group's interests.



Formed in October 1999, PAA's seniors group continues to grow as a network for lonely elders looking for companionship, socialization, and active participation. The months of May and June held two red-letter days earmarked on the seniors' calendar. On May 12, Teresa and eighteen seniors embarked on a daylong venture to the Empress Casino in Hammond, Indiana on a charter bus. The seniors enjoyed an affordable lunch buffet that offered something to everyone's liking. Teresa noted that the excursion was the first for many of the seniors who had never been to a casino. Everyone enjoyed the excitement, and a trip to a different casino is being planned for the fall.

June 5 was the date for another big adventure. The seniors visited the Field Museum downtown. With Teresa's granddaughter, Anna Nasiadek, translating and PAA driver, Ted Gomulka, providing transportation, the trip was a success. After eating breakfast at the museum, the rest of the day was spent exploring the Museum's many exhibits including popular "Sue," the T-Rex, and hearing musical instruments from Africa.

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Thank you ...to Henry and Isabel Smogolski for their very generous gift of stock sales proceeds...to all who donated to this spring's Snowball Event: **Prosser Vocational High School, The Financial Services Corp., Curie High School, Steinmetz High School, Chicago Public Schools...**to those foundations who generously support our programs: **Polk Bros. Foundation, Sara Lee Foundation, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, Marshall Field's Project Imagine, Nalco Foundation, Fannie Mae Foundation, Retirement Research Foundation...**to Kashia Puharic and Integra Communications...to Ira Simon and Simon Uniforms...and a very special thank you to State Representatives Michael Madigan, Robert Bugielski, and Richard Bradley!

WE'VE MOVED OUR SOUTHSIDE OFFICE LOCATION to 6276 W. ARCHER AVENUE! DETAILS IN THE NEXT LINK!

SAVE THE DATE!
FRIDAY DECEMBER 1,
2000

**PAA ANNUAL HOLIDAY
GALA! HONORING
LOT POLISH AIRLINES!**

**WHITE EAGLE BANQUETS
6839 N. MILWAUKEE AVE.
NILES, ILLINOIS**



State Representative Richard Bradley (center) recently visited PAA to discuss problems regarding today's youth with Youth Counselor Krystyna Lukawska (right) and PAA Executive Director Karen Popowski (left). Representative Bradley garnered a \$20,000 state grant to help support a youth program.