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fall 2016

inside...

PAA program news, events, announcements, and more!

Dear PAA Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter. We want to connect with you regularly and bring you updates on what is going on at the PAA in hopes that you can join us as a program participant or a supporter. Some of you may remember that we used to issue a similar publication some years ago. So it is an old idea in a new digital format more in line with our virtual times.



Magdalena as a citizenship instructor during her early years at the PAA.

I am also new in my role of an Executive Director even though I am not new to the PAA. As a matter of fact I have been with the organization for over 19 years performing different roles along the way. Being a citizenship tutor, an ESL instructor and a program administrator allowed me to experience firsthand how the PAA's mission of providing resources to change lives gets fulfilled.

Today I am extending an invitation to you to experience it yourself by becoming involved in the PAA's work. Get to know us by enrolling in one of our many programs, volunteering your time and talent where it can make a true difference, or being a guest at our events. Now, you can also become a PAA member. Of the many benefits of a PAA membership, one seems to stand out. It makes you a part of a vibrant community of individuals, families and businesses for whom helping others is not just a cliché but a way to make their lives purposeful. And that is priceless.

With appreciation,

Magdalena Dolas
Executive Director

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THE GUIDE TEAM

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Connect with us on social media for more updates!

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-  [@PAAchicago22](https://twitter.com/PAAchicago22)
-  youtube.com/PAAchicago
-  Polish American Association

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* Indicates Past Chairman

PAA UPCOMING EVENTS

PAA ICE SKATING DAY!

Join the PAA Board and staff for a day of fun!

With the holidays just around the corner, and the sleighbells jingling all around, get into the holiday spirit by strapping on those skates, and grabbing your friends and family!

Where | Maggie Daley Ice Ribbon!
When | Sunday, Dec 4th
Time | 11 a.m.- 5 p.m.
Price | \$5 per person

Be sure to enter our competitions; relay races, costume contests, and more!

**Proceeds from the Ice Skating Day will go to benefit children and families enrolled in our Social and Supportive Service Programs.

JUNIOR BOARD CORNER



-  @PAAJuniorBoard
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The Junior Board of the Polish American Association was established in 2014 to support the scope of services delivered by the Polish American Association. Serving as a foundation for a new generation of young leaders in Polonia, members of the Junior Board learn the value of public service by providing the financial means by which the PAA supports the most vulnerable in our community.

Since that time, the Polish American Association's Junior Board has organized a whole host of successful events. These functions have not only brought the monetary support that the Polish American Association needs, but they have been an invaluable tool by which our own community members have become more aware of the importance that these services by the PAA have in improving the lives of our neighbors. As the old Polish proverb says, "Polak potrafi" (a Pole will get it done), and the PAA Junior Board team feels proud that no matter the challenge, you can count on these young enterprising folks to "get it done."

PAA PREVIOUS SEASON

This past season was full of fantastic events and fundraisers! Thank you to all of our staff, sponsors, and junior and senior board members who helped make these events possible. And a special thanks to all of our guests and participants! It is because of you that these events were so successful!

JUNIOR BOARD BEACH VBALL BASH!



TASTE OF POLONIA MONEY WHEEL!



**Proceeds from the Money Wheel went to help the Education & Employment Programs at the PAA! This event was made possible thanks to the Copernicus Center. Thank you!

CHAIRMAN'S BRUNCH DANIEL LIBESKIND

Iconic architect, and designer, Daniel Libeskind, was our guest speaker for the annual Chairman's Brunch. The C.B. honors Polish Americans and their contributions to society. Mr. Libeskind, Master Plan Architect of the Freedom Tower over Ground Zero, came to Chicago in support of the work of the Polish American Association's service to the community and shared his designs at a brunch with a lecture format. The Chairman also honored former Board Member Henry Smogolski with the Lifetime Giving Award.



PAA BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRANSITION

For nearly 100 years, the Polish American Association (PAA) has acted as a life-saving resource for countless immigrants looking to adjust to a new land. Its continued existence is due, in no small part, to its ability to evolve and adapt to a constantly changing environment.

Today, that environment is transforming once again. The Illinois State budget crisis has made it paramount that the PAA successfully reassess and reconfigure its operations to ensure continued support to the community it serves. As a result, the PAA has recently made executive leadership changes, naming Eva Prokop, Chair of the Advancement Committee and Magdalena Dolas, Executive Director.

Having previously served as Executive Director of the PAA, Prokop now brings her vision to the Board level. "After a serious year focused on downsizing and managing the organization through the budget crisis, while still serving 85% of its normal client numbers, we need to rebuild and prepare for a new era in Illinois," says Prokop, who holds 30 years of executive leadership experience.

In her new role chairing the Board's Advancement Committee, Prokop will help oversee the organization's efforts to advance its mission, message and purpose of providing social support to its clients. "In full cooperation with the staff, the Advancement Committee will plan and organize the fundraising efforts, events and relationships important to the PAA in keeping its mission relevant and front of mind for corporate, small business and individual donors," explains Prokop.



E. Prokop (left) and M. Dolas (right) over their years of service to the PAA.



Chief among her goals is adapting the PAA to the current financial realities in the state of Illinois by continuing to strengthen its relationships with partners, donors and volunteers. At the same time, Prokop looks to improve and expand the organization's service offerings.

"We have several concerns to balance—programs, facilities, staff—all to serve clients. Everything from technology advancements to communication strategies; from relationship building to community access; from talent acquisition to client services, is critical to success," says Prokop.

This dedication to preserving and building the PAA is echoed by Dolas who, in her new role as Executive Director, will oversee all aspects of the agency including day to day operations, program direction, fund development, staff management and community relations.

Dolas aims to reduce the PAA's dependence on ever-decreasing government funds by nurturing alternative funding streams. Having worked on both the program and administrative levels during her PAA tenure, which began in 1997, she brings a firm understanding of the organization's needs and how to address them.

"We will continue to grow the unrestricted revenue sources such as fee-for-service and membership programs, private funding and the endowment fund," explains Dolas. "We plan to develop a new strategic plan for the agency to evaluate the community needs and decide where we want to invest our resources."

With the promotion of Prokop and Dolas, the PAA continues to do what it has done for the past century, namely, evolve in order to continue its mission of serving the diverse needs of Polonia.

"We are delighted to have both Eva and Magdalena serve in these important leadership positions," says Adam Kamiński, Chairman of the PAA's Board of Directors. "Through their experienced direction, the PAA will stand ready to meet the challenges of the future."

PAA PROGRAM IN FOCUS

TURNING POINT SHELTER

It's 7 AM at the Polish American Association's North Side outpost. An array of meat, bread, cheese, and eggs is laid out on the kitchen table of the PAA's Turning Point. Across the hall, in the living room, nearly a dozen men gather around coffee and tea. To some, this is a familiar place, a source of respite and support. To others, this space is new but just as warm and welcoming.

Turning Point, established by Mayor Harold Washington in 1986, has served as Chicago's sole Polish/English bilingual day shelter for men. In a speech given at a Polish Constitution Day celebration, Mayor Washington announced the funding granted to what was then called the Polish Welfare Association. In his speech, Mayor Washington noted the important role that Polonia played in the development of Chicago. "Nowhere have you been more of an inspiration than here in Chicago...You are deeply woven into the fabric of this entire city and one would shudder in horror to think that if you were ever unwoven, what would happen to this great city."

In an effort to preserve the community that has played such a crucial role in building and enriching Chicago culture, the PAA, with the help of Mayor Washington, established Turning Point. Turning Point serves the Polish and broader Eastern European community within Chicago. At the day shelter, men have the opportunity to enjoy two or three meals, bathe, do laundry, store personal items, and receive a Ventra card. Maryla Jaworska, one of Turning Point's previous case managers and current counselor, describes it as a unique resource for the community. "This place is unusual. They can find a home, a real Polish meal; it's really special."



The unique resources provided by Turning Point aim to serve a struggling community. "Homelessness is a very complex situation; homeless immigrants do not have an easy solution to their problem." explained Jaworska.

Turning Point incorporated the special quality that is integral of the PAA's programs: an understanding of the clients' situation. The PAA staff not only speaks the clients' language but is equipped with the knowledge necessary to assist clients in navigating immigration bureaucracy. At Turning Point, clients are referred to the many resources offered by the PAA. As explained by Dorota Lewandowska, Director of Supportive Services, "What makes Turning Point unique is that we speak Polish so we

can communicate with our clients and we are able to provide an understanding of what the clients need- we understand what immigrants need." The PAA's ability to serve this community is what draws people to the PAA organization for assistance.

Turning Point is run with passion and grace by people like Mrs. Lewandowska and Mrs. Jaworska. The staff's dedication to this service is not the only thing that sustains Turning Point. Programs like these are maintained and further improved through donations and support from our members and supporters. Turning Point welcomes and encourages not only monetary contributions, but also items such as toiletries, kitchen supplies, over the counter medication, clothing, food, etc. Please contact the PAA at 773-282-8206 for more information on how you can help.

PAA DEPARTMENTS & PROGRAMS

SOCIAL & SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Social Services at the PAA aim to assist those in personal crisis. They promote the health and well-being of individuals by helping them to become more self-sufficient, strengthening family relationships, and restoring individuals, families, or groups, to successful social functioning.

Psychological Counseling | Individual and Family Counseling. Marriage and Couples therapy. Crisis intervention.

Substance Abuse | Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment for adults. Individual and Group Therapy. Family Support Groups.

Youth Services | Individual and Group Counseling for Youth, Early Intervention services for adolescents using alcohol/drugs, and support groups for their parents.

Family Crisis Services | Counseling for victims of Domestic Violence and their children. Program for domestic perpetrators. Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange services. Parenting classes and counseling.

To contact Social Services, please call 773.427.6316

Supportive Services of the PAA aim to assist those in times of dire need, facing issues such as hunger and homelessness. Supportive Services offers a number of programs that function to serve those tackling these issues.

Food Pantry | Provides food to people 4 times per month | Served over 600 people in 2016.

Turning Point | PAA's Men's day shelter, provides men with 2-3 meals, transportation, and referrals to other programs within PAA. The shelter is open 7 days per week.

Energy Assistance | Provides assistance in applying for the low income home energy assistance program. PAA was able to help 1,653 clients obtain access to this program.

Homemaker/ Private Pay Home Care Services | Provides physical and environmental assistance to those who are unable to function independently. | Nearly 230 clients have participated in this program.

To contact Supportive Services, please call 773.427.6326

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Immigration Services provide assistance to immigrants who face language and cultural barriers in America. Navigating the immigration bureaucracy is exceedingly difficult; Immigrant Services strive to make the path to naturalization easier by offering a variety of programs:

Immigration Consultation | Provides assistance for processes such as:

- I-90 - Renew/Replace Green card
- I-485 - Petition for a Green Card
- I-130 - Petition for Relative
- I-751- Petition to Remove the Conditions of Residence
- I-765- Application for Employment Authorization
- I-864- Affidavit of Support

The Department also offers Individual appointments for citizenship (N-400 or N-600). If necessary, the Department provides referrals to free legal clinics.

Housing Resource Center | Provides individuals with information and services, helping clients with landlord-tenant conflict resolution, property tax appeals, unlawful lock-outs, evictions, retaliation, discrimination, gaining access to affordable housing, assistance for seniors and people with disabilities, and referrals to needed programs services and training.

Health Outreach Program | Educates the community about available current health care systems, program eligibility and application processing.

To contact Immigrant Services, please call 773-427-6342.

EMPLOYMENT

The Employment Departments' goal is to assist Cook County job-seekers, and provide them with the resources and skills needed to find employment. Programs include:

Job Placement Assistance | Job search assistance and funding for vocational trainings. | Orientations held every Tuesday: 11am – 12 noon in Polish and 1pm – 2 pm in English.

Job Readiness Workshops | For Job seekers who need to prepare/update their resumes and learn/refresh their interviewing skills | Every Tuesday at 12 noon- 1 pm in Polish and 2 pm - 3 pm in English.

For more information about employment services please call 773 481-5418.

Career Center | Counselling for individuals interested in pursuing a new career, considering a career change, who aim to qualify for advancement, or those that are wrestling with their career choices. | The CC also offers informative lectures and presentations. *More info can be found under Upcoming Events, on pg. 3.*

For more information about the Career Center or to schedule an individual session please call 773 282-1122 ext. 414.

Basic Computer Literacy | For individuals who need to familiarize themselves with basic computer operations, the basic features of Microsoft Office Word, and the Internet | Classes held:

Saturdays from 5 pm to 8:15 pm | 09/24/2016 - 12/17/2016

Sundays from 9 am to 12:15 pm | 09/25/2016 - 12/18/2016

Introduction to QuickBooks | For individuals to learn basic features of QuickBooks | Classes held: Saturdays 10 am- 2 pm | 09/24/2016 - 10/29/2016
All classes are conducted in Polish.

For more information about computer classes please call 773 481-5418.

EDUCATION

The Education Department offers courses in various fields to provide the community with a choice to furthering their knowledge and personal skills and abilities. Programs include:

English Second Language | ESL classes are designed for adults, whose native language is not English. The objective of the ESL course is to increase students' proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, listening, life, and work skills.

Adult Basic Education | ABE classes are for adults who have tested out of the ESL program, but wish to improve their basic reading, writing and math skills.

Citizenship | The PAA offers Intensive Citizenship Classes for beginners. The goal of this class is to help legal residents become citizens by preparing them for the naturalization exam and by teaching them the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Our classes are especially designed for limited-English speaking Poles, and combine intensive English as a Second Language instruction with teaching civics.

Certified Nurse Assistant Training Program | Vocational training for future Certified Nurse Assistants (CNA). The program is approved by the Illinois Department of Public Health's Training and Technical Direction Unit for Long Term Care Field Operations.

Health Care Resource Training Program (PRA & CPR) | Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and Physical Rehabilitation Aide (PRA) trainings, with instructors who are Physical Therapists and BLS.

Introduction to Office Skills | Vocational training for future General Office Information Support Assistants (GOISA). The objective of the program is to familiarize future office assistants with the most popular features of the MS Office suite and the Intuit QuickBooks software, and to increase students' office skills.

For more information about classes, please call 773.481.5407

PAA CLIENT STORIES

ANNA FLORES

It is an unfortunate truth that according to the CDC, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men are victims of violence inflicted by an intimate partner. Anna Flores, a former client of the Polish American Association (PAA), found herself in that statistical category in 2009, shortly after she had immigrated to the US from Poland.

1 in 4 women
1 in 7 men
are victims of violence inflicted
by an intimate partner.

Entering the US with optimism and an innate belief that all people are good-natured, Flores couldn't have dreamt what the next few years would bring her. It wasn't until she hit rock bottom that she realized she needed to fight herself out of the cyclic pattern of abuse in which she was trapped.



In the early 2000's, Flores left Poland for the US with big dreams; intent on chasing them. She quickly made friends and surrounded herself with loving people who would become like a family to her. When she met her daughter's father, she thought she had found what she wanted—a partner to love and with whom to start a family.

Things seemed to be going well for Flores, but over time, she came to find out that this relationship would be anything but that. "I didn't want my daughter to grow up seeing me go through this, so I looked for a way out." This is when she began to seek assistance from PAA.

"I didn't want my daughter to grow up seeing me go through this, so I looked for a way out."

"The counselors [at PAA] made me realize what kind of relationship I was in. I was suffering from anxiety, it was affecting me and it would've affected my daughter in the future." This, her and her daughter's health, was the biggest motivating factor for Flores to seek help. Flores sought safety in a women's shelter and began attending group therapy sessions. Here, she made a close circle of friends who would support her as she found a way out of the relationship.

The PAA provided Flores and many other women with the resources necessary to break through cycles of abuse. While this was not an easy journey for Flores, it was a necessary one. "If I had not had the help of the PAA, it wouldn't have ended well," explained Flores.

With the support of the PAA's Women's Counseling Services, Flores was able to make the changes necessary to lead a healthy life for herself and her daughter. She has since regained the parts of herself that she began to lose while in an abusive relationship.



Today, both Flores and her daughter are happy, healthy, and safe.

Focusing on her physical and mental health, she has channeled her passion into empowering others through a supportive online network called "Anna's Fitness Town". Here, she provides others with workout routines and health advice in an effort to fill others' lives with positivity and good health, just as the PAA did for her.

If you, or someone you know, is suffering from domestic violence, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Supportive Service Center.

773.427.6331
katarzyna.olender@polish.org
dorota.felinski@polish.org

PAA CORPORATE FEATURE

AXENCE

Axence, a Poland-based software company, has lent a helping hand to the PAA in a unique way. Recognizing the great impact that the Polish American Association has on the many lives of Polish immigrants in Chicago, Axence decided in (2015) to donate its IT management software to improve the PAA's operations.

"They [PAA] do a good job at helping the new wave of Polish immigrants adjust into American culture."

nVision, the software donated to the PAA, allows it to easily monitor its network and users, protect its data, and manage its hardware and software inventory. As stated by Jacek Dabrowski, Senior PR and Digital Marketing Specialist at Axence, this software is a useful and essential tool for a nonprofit organization to have at its disposal. nVision allows the PAA to manage its IT infrastructure in such a way that ensures efficiency and minimizes waste.

Eva Prokop, the head of PAA's Advancement Committee, became acquainted with Axence at an event held for members of the Polish community. nVision software was donated to the PAA in an effort to improve internal operations at the organization which, consequently, support its mission.

"We are always looking to support the Polish community," explained Dabrowski.

Axence chose to donate to the PAA because of "Its great reputation for assisting immigrants with their transition into American culture. Through its wide array of services, especially the Education and Employment programs, the PAA is providing immigrants with the resources necessary to establish themselves in Chicago." says Paul Mydlo, Chief Business Development Officer at Axence.

He adds that it is beneficial for both job seeking immigrants and businesses. As the PAA transitions immigrants into the work force by providing clients with necessary skills such as the English language, gaps in the Chicago labor force are being filled. Further, Mydlo encourages businesses to assist the PAA "If you want to help the Polish community and the market grow." Axence continues to donate their software to the PAA in the hopes of furthering this growth.

*Axence, was the first corporate member of the Polish American Association

For more information about Axence nVision Software, please visit :

www.axence.net/en/

**Axence CEO, Greg Oleksy



PAA BUSINESS PROFILE

ADAM KAMIENIAK AND AGENCY

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime"—it's an old proverb emphasizing the value of helping others to help themselves. It's also the guiding principle of the Polish American Association, according to Adam Kamieniak, PAA Board Chairman.

"Many social and charitable organizations focus exclusively on giving to those in need, and that is noble, necessary work," explains Kamieniak. "However, what makes the PAA unique is its dedication to go one step further and give people the tools to improve their own lives."

Kamieniak reveals that this principle first drew him to the organization, and it continues to be a strong motivator. He's a self-reliant man in his own right. After representing AT&T on the PAA's Board of Directors for several years, Kamieniak launched his own marketing business called AND Agency, which currently assists the PAA with its marketing efforts.

With his recent election to the chairmanship, Kamieniak plans to center his agenda on fund-raising efforts to compensate for recent state funding cuts. "The Illinois budget crisis has caused us to lose a great deal of government support," he explains, "which is why I am dedicated to boosting contributions from the private sphere."

The need for fund-raising is simple—without financial resources, the PAA cannot continue providing the tools that help Polish Americans improve their lives. Kamieniak lists three main services the PAA offers that are especially important: Educational programs, such as Certified Nursing Assistant, that provide professional development opportunities; basic needs, such as food and clothing; and domestic violence relief support that helps create a safe and healthy home environment. "Unlike the State budget, the amount of people needing access to our services is not decreasing," says Kamieniak.

"If anything, the number of those in need is increasing, making the PAA's role more important today than ever before."

Although fund-raising is extremely important, it's not the only way to assist the PAA, according to Kamieniak. "For those people wishing to get involved, it's also crucial to help organize and attend our events, such as the Annual Gala and Chairman's Brunch," he suggests.

Another pivotal way to support the PAA is by spreading the word about its mission.

"This idea of helping others help themselves truly resonates with Poles and Polish Americans because they have traditionally been a very self-reliant people"

"Unfortunately, the PAA is not as recognized by young people as it should be. Chicago still has the highest number of Polish people outside of Poland, yet many have never heard about the PAA or its important work."

To boost visibility, Kamieniak envisions the PAA growing to represent not only the Polish American community in Chicago, but in the United States as a whole. "No matter where you go in this country, there are Polish people," he observes. "By leveraging our corporate sponsors' resources and becoming involved in high profile events such as the Chicago International Film Festival, we hope to become the voice of Polonia in the United States."

Ultimately, Kamieniak views the PAA's mission as being in line with the nature of the Polish community. "This idea of helping others help themselves truly resonates with Poles and Polish Americans because they have traditionally been a very self-reliant people," he explains. As Chairman, he remains dedicated to continuing this mission for years to come.



Thank You!

To all of our generous
Corporate & Business
Members!

It is thanks to you that
we are able to continue
doing what we do.

