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from blight to light

an eddytorial

What started out as a way to shed some positive light on a forgotten part of Buffalo, NY has since turned into a beacon of hope. Not only for a neglected neighborhood but for Polish Americans throughout North America, as well as a source of celebratory pride for people all over Western New York and Southern Ontario regardless of their ancestry.

Nearly a quarter of a century ago we began to notice that the far east side of the city was literally decomposing right before our very eyes. This once proud and powerful part of town had been reduced to a decaying shell of its former glory. However some saw past the poverty and blight that had replaced this “city within a city” which was once home to the second largest Polish Colony in the world outside of Warsaw. We saw an infrastructure that withstood the test of time and the devastation of abandonment and realized that what we needed to do was to get people to come into that neighborhood so they could actually see the possibility of reinvention themselves. This was no small task. How do you present something unwanted as wanted? The answer was make it fun! And so in 2007 the Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade and Festival was born. The intention was to gather the few vestiges of Polonia organizations that still observed the ancient ritual of “Smigus Dyngus,” now known as “Dyngus Day” and

marketing them all under one promotional umbrella, while anchoring the collective with a big march through the streets of what is now known as “Historic Polonia”. Not only was it an excuse to get people to venture to the East side but it was a great way to have them actually step inside of one of the friendly taverns, clubs or churches that still stood guard over their abandoned streets. The hope was that once inside, they might come back. Soon even some suburban locations wanted to jump on the bandwagon or should we say parade float, while other cities began trying to mimic Buffalo’s success in becoming the Dyngus Day Capital of the World.

Beginning in the early 1960s what was once a theme for some rather lively parties at a few traditional locations in the Polish community of Buffalo, has blossomed into one of the most unique ethnic celebrations in the world. Garnering attention from the likes of CNN, the Wall Street Journal, ESPN, Polish National Television, national late night talk shows and even an episode of Family Guy. And so, here we are about to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Dyngus Day Buffalo Festival and Parade.

While the event itself has grown and positive signs of the neighborhoods reawakening are now becoming evident, something else has been stirred. And that is the appreciation of cultural and ethnic

pride. A few decades ago some of our Slavic brothers and sisters were not always eager to share their ancestry with others or even to keep their family name. In many ways being “Polish” had a negative connotation, so people changed their names or simply denied their heritage. Age old traditions fell by the wayside as advancing generations embraced “American” lifestyles rather than “old world” customs, which of course is understandable given the fact that they were now in a “new world”. Still, there is a richness and depth to carrying on some of the ancient practices of our forebears. And as such we have witnessed first hand, younger members of our community embracing their heritage and reveling in their familial ties. Researching family genealogy, attempting to learn the language of their grandparents or practicing forgotten traditions are activities that are now commonplace. Dyngus is but one day out of the year however that spark of pussy willow pageantry has grown into a radiant flare, acting as a symbolic beacon for reconnection.

But Dyngus Day is no longer just a day for Polish progeny. This springtime celebration has become as synonymous with Buffalo as chicken wings and lake effect snow. The ongoing international publicity that this post lenten revelry attracts every year has resulted in fun loving tourists traveling to the

southeastern shores of Lake Erie every year to experience the business end of a wet pussy willow branch themselves. The entire region has embraced this quirky affair regardless of their families documentation.

Dyngus Day now attracts people of all ethnicities not just because it’s a fun party, but because it’s about renewal and starting over. Over the past twenty years the entire world has seen tremendous change and upheaval, yet the cycle of God’s creation continues through all the man made conflict, and division. The longer days and warming temperatures offer hope, not only of a new season but a sense of renewal as well. As the energy of the sun reanimates the flora and the fauna, Dyngus gives us a focal point for rebirth. While Catholicism in Poland has utilized the day after Easter as a correlation to the resurrection of Jesus it’s also a metaphor for our own awakening; physically, spiritually and collectively. Perhaps it could serve all of humanity as a symbol of a fresh start for a new world. A world filled with peace, prosperity and unity for all.

So as we begin our third decade of Dyngus Day Buffalo we welcome everyone to our springtime ritual whether from near or far. We wish you all the joy and hope that a new beginning brings and we welcome you to join us in our mission of spreading the unifying power of the pussy willow. No matter if you choose to participate by dancing a polka at one of our parties, catching beads from a parade participant, or playfully spanking someone with a catkin laden branch please know that the future is bright and the best is yet to come.

As always my friends, remember Dyngus is not just a day. It’s a state of mind.

Na Zdrowie
Eddy Dobosiewicz
Dyngus Day Buffalo

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Mission Statement

Dyngus Day LLC, in partnership with public and private organizations, provides marketing and event management support to Dyngus Day celebrations and participating venues throughout the Buffalo Niagara regions and across the United States. Dyngus Day, LLC promotes public awareness and branding of Buffalo N.Y. as the Dyngus Day Capital of the World.

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CELEBRATING



DYNGUS
DAY
PARADE

YEARS

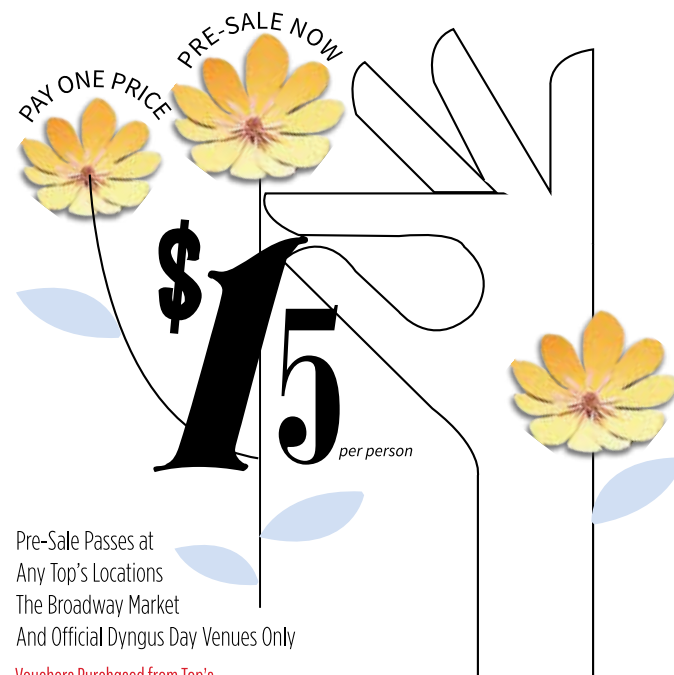
MONDAY APRIL 6TH @ 5:30pm

IN THE HEART OF HISTORIC POLONIA

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VENU MENU

VENUE	ADDRESS	TIME	COST	INFORMATION
PORKY'S LOUNGE	2028 Clinton Street KAISERTOWN 716-238-3461	8:00 AM	FREE	Authentic JukeBox Complimentary Kielbasa Sandwiches
PUBSKI PUB	2437 William Street CHEEKTOWAGA 716-823-3484	10:00 AM	\$15 or Free with PWP	Authentic Live Music w/ Knewz Krew and Lenny Gomulka Authentic Polish Kitchen
WIECHEC'S	1748 Clinton Street KAISERTOWN 716-823-2828	11:00 AM	FREE	Authentic Live Music Dave Gawronski with special guests Accordion Bill and Danny Neaverth Authentic Polish Kitchen/Bar
CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH	199 Clark Street HISTORIC POLONIA 716-896-1050	11:00 AM	All Are Welcome	Easter Monday Mass
BUFFALO AIRPORT HOTEL	4600 Genesee Street CHEEKTOWAGA 716-634-6969	11:00 PM	\$15 or Free with PWP	Live Music Kevin Solecki Dennis Polisky's Maestro's Men Cracovia Polish Folk Ensemble Krakowiacy Polish Dancers Authentic Polish Food & Bar
OFFICIAL RUN DYNGUS DAY DASH	Pussywillow Park HISTORIC POLONIA	NOON	\$35 Presale \$40 after 04/01/26	5K Course After Party @ Main Stage Tent Register at DyngusDay.com
CORPUS CHRISTI A.C.	165 Sears Street HISTORIC POLONIA 716-896-1050	NOON-5 PM [Free] 6-11 PM	\$15 or Free with PWP 6-11PM=	Pre & Post Parade Parties • Authentic Live Music Mon Valley Push & Baltic Boys Traditional Dance • Authentic Food
ST. STAN'S /CHOPIN'S	389 Peckham Street HISTORIC POLONIA 716-854-5510	NOON	\$15 or Free with PWP	Live Authentic Music w/ Piatkowski Brothers John Gora & Polka Country Musicians Krakowiacy Polish Dancers
THE BROADWAY MARKET	999 Broadway HISTORIC POLONIA 716-893-0705	NOON	FREE	Polish Beer & Food 12-5pm Live Music Kaisertown Polka Band
PUSSY WILLOW PARK DYNGUS DAY FESTIVAL MAIN STAGE	185 Memorial Drive HISTORIC POLONIA 716-833-5211	NOON	\$15 or FREE with PWP	Authentic Live Music w/ Jimmy Sturr Orchestra, Baltic Boys and Elena Stenkina Radosc-Joy Folk Dance Troupe Cracovia Polish Folk Ensemble Authentic Polish Food & Beer
POLISH CADETS	927 Grant Street BLACK ROCK 716-875-3211	NOON	\$15 or Free with PWP	Authentic Live Music w/ Elena Stenkina Kielbasa Kings Krakowiacy Polish Dancers Radosc-Joy Folk Dance Troupe Authentic Polish Food, Beer & Spirits
HOFBRAUHAUS	190 Scott Street BUFFALO 716-939-2337	2:00 PM	\$15 or Free with PWP	Live Music w/ Polka Boyz and Nerds Gone Wild Cracovia Polish Folk Ensemble
MORLUSKI'S	10678 Main Street CLARENCE 716-407-3238	3:00 PM	FREE	Live Music w/ John Stevens Polka Band Authentic Polish Cuisine • Polish Bar
BUFFALO BAR & GRIILE	307 Louisiana Street BUFFALO 716-602-9724	4:00 PM	FREE	Authentic Polka Sound System Authentic Polish Food & Bar
MACKY'S SHAMROCK ROOM	1643 Bailey Ave. HISTORIC POLONIA 716-883-7383	4:00 PM	FREE	Live Music w/ Elena Stenkina Traditional Polish Food
20TH ANNUAL DYNGUS DAY PARADE PRODUCED BY DYNGUS DAY, LLC	HISTORIC POLONIA BROADWAY AT MEMORIAL TO FILLMORE	5:30 PM	FREE	AUTHENTIC FUN! Over 100 Floats & Participants All Dressed Up with Polish Pride NOT TO BE MISSED!



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6-9PM**



SEE OUR CALENDAR ON PAGES 16 & 17 FOR COMPLETE DETAILS. THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!
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DYNGUS DAY KIDS ACTIVITIES

Face Painting
Balloon Sculpture Artist

what is dyngus day

pussy willow primer

So, how do you explain to someone that has never experienced a true Buffalo Dyngus Day, or felt the saturated sting of a wet furry twig, that every year, on the day after Easter, people of all ages and from every walk of life actually chase one another while brandishing pussy willow branches, trying to swat each other to show their affection, then reciprocating that pursuit by dousing the other person with water? While keeping a straight face that is.

Well, it's really quite simple. Just picture Fat Tuesday on the other end of Lent. It's basically just a party signifying the end of Lent on the day after Easter, as opposed to the day before lent starts on Ash Wednesday. The ancient roots of the post Lenten celebration known as Dyngus Day had their start in pagan sun worship rituals signifying the beginning of the growing season but over the centuries, those rituals have evolved into a whole different experience. Especially in Buffalo, NY.

Historically a Polish-American tradition, Smigus-Dyngus or as we call it, Dyngus Day, celebrates the end of the often restrictive observance of Lent and the joy of Easter. Over the decades, here in Western New York, Dyngus Day has become a wonderful holiday to celebrate Polish-American culture, heritage and traditions.

There are many stories that attempt to explain the origins

of the day. As mentioned, many Polish religious customs date back to pre-Christian, Slavic practices. The custom of pouring water is an ancient spring rite of cleansing, purification, and fertility. Since 966 A.D., Dyngus Day has been associated with the baptism of Prince Mieszko I. Tradition states that Prince Mieszko I along with his court were baptized on Easter Monday when he adopted Christianity as the national religion of Poland. Thus, Dyngus Day and its rites of sprinkling with water have become a folk celebration, in thanksgiving for the fact that the first king of Poland was baptized into Christianity, bringing Catholicism to Poland. In more modern times, the tradition continued when farm boys in Poland wanted to attract notice from the girls of their choice. It was customary to throw water and hit the girls on their legs with twigs or pussy willow branches, cologne was used instead of water by the more gallant lads. The ladies would reciprocate by throwing dishes & crockery and Tuesday was their day of revenge, imitating the same tactics. These days of course they would most likely be arrested for such frivolity.

Where is Dyngus Day Celebrated?

Buffalo, NY is officially the Dyngus Day capital of the World, hosting the largest concentration of festival locations, folk dancers, polka bands and Polish traditions in the nation.

Although the custom of such a quirky post Lenten celebration is based in Polish tradition, this city, situated on the south eastern shores of Lake Erie, has not only embraced this ancient custom we have made it our own. Some smaller events have been exported from Buffalo into other communities where Polish-Americans have settled however there is no dispute that if you truly want to Dyngus properly there is no other place than Buffalo to do so. Ironically, it's not widely observed in Poland. But we're working on it.

Pussy Willows or Water?

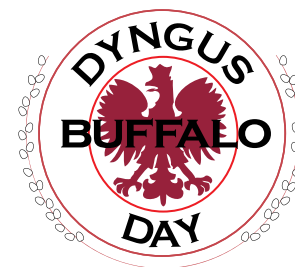
This is a yearly debate among Dyngus Day revelers. The tradition holds that on Easter Monday boys would sprinkle the girls with water and tap them with pussy willows. On Easter Tuesday, the women would return the favor. However at modern Dyngus Day parties it is common practice that both men and women trade water splashing and pussy willow spanking equally.

Why use pussy willows?

Pussy willows play a major part in Buffalo's Dyngus Day celebrations as men and women flirt with playful "taps." Branches of the plant are used, as the pussy willow is one of the first "budding" plants of spring. This like the use of water is directly related to the emerging "life" associated with a new growing season. 20



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DYNGUS DAY**



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April 12, 2026 at 10:15AM

Rev. Jacek Mazur, Celebrant
Joined by the voices of the Chopin Singing Society
Light reception to follow

Sponsored by Polish American Congress

Come together with the WNY Polish Community to celebrate
the Feast Day of our patron, St. Stanislaus,
at the Mother Church of Polonia!

United in faith and tradition, may we be good stewards of the pearl of Polonia.

St. Stanislaus B.M. R.C. Church • 389 Peckham St. • Buffalo, N.Y. 14206



20 polonia on parade two decades of dyngus

Every journey begins with a single step. Every parade begins with a whistle, but not ours. Ours begins with a blessing. Since that first procession through the historic Polonia District twenty years ago, the Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade has turned into more than just a line of marchers and decorated cars. Stroll through the streets surrounding the Broadway market and the historical churches, prior to the annual cavalcade, and you can feel the pride of the former descendants of the neighborhood.

Even their offspring who never knew this part of town when it was a vibrant densely populated neighborhood filled with churches, taverns, social clubs, railroads, industry and commerce feel the energy of reconnection. The emotion surges through the streets as marchers gather into formation and cars and floats get in line ready to blast polka music and unfurl their banners, flags and polish pride.

This annual springtime march is now the reason that so many organizations join together months before, to discuss and plan. What will they do this year? How can we make it bigger, better and bolder than we did last year? Do we need signs? What about music, costumes...should we get a trailer for a float? These are all legitimate concerns for groups that take their involvement in the parade seriously. Every year seems to be a new challenge



for families that use the parade as a reason to instill pride into their children while teaching them about their heritage and history. Or the organizations that just want to share their message with the community and maybe get new people involved in their missions. Still, most do it simply because it's fun. It's hard to be miserable and solemn when you are decorating a truck with balloons and pussy willow branches.

"It really was amazing to watch this event grow" said Nancy McCarthy, Dyngus Day VP and Creative Director, "That first year had maybe two or three dozen entries, about a hundred spectators and only lasted about 20 minutes. It's obviously grown a bit since then".

"It's quite remarkable actually to see people come out year after year to welcome in the new season regardless of weather. Over the last twenty years we've had it all brilliant sunshine, torrential rain, high winds and blinding snow. Mother Nature has thrown it all at us but nothing diminishes the spirit of the people. Even during the Covid lockdowns when we weren't allowed to stage a real parade, more than a thousand people showed up to cheer on the Dyngus Day motorcade", Ms. McCarthy expounded.

Another person that's seen the parades growth first hand is Wendy Higgins the President of Polish Cadets in Black Rock. Acting as the Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade coordinator

est. 1969

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she has personally interacted with every parade participant for many years now. “Being involved with Dyngus Day Buffalo through our events at the club made it an easy decision to jump into the parade coordinator role. It’s so wonderful to see people come back year after year not only to honor tradition but to reconnect with each other and create community”

One of the biggest supporters of our parade was the late Joe Barnashuk, former pension administrator of Ironworkers Local #6. His love for Polish culture and tradition stemmed from his parents Frank and Stella who instilled a love of Polish culture and tradition into Joe at a very early age.

His joy in putting together the massive float representing his ethnic pride and his union local became an annual tradition. Every year he and the Ironworkers Local #6 used the planning, preparation and construction of their massive float entry, as a way of bonding their community together by, gathering what surely must be the largest harvest of pussy willow branches in the world in preparation of their float submission. These Ironworkers are serious about their pussy willow pruning. In fact, they keep the location of their pussy willow orchard a highly guarded secret that even Wiki Leaks would be hard pressed to reveal. The effort seems to bear fruit as evidenced by their multiple “Best Use of Pussy Willow” Awards given out by parade judges year after year. They were even acknowledged by Anderson Cooper of CNN in his personalized greeting during one of our Dyngus Day TV specials a few years ago.

For Joe it was more than just a good time at a fun event he told us once, “We put so much effort in our floats every year because it’s a way to show all the members of Local 6, their families and our community what our Polish heritage is all about. Plus we have a blast while doing it!”



Sadly, Joe passed away suddenly this past summer while visiting Poland, but as per Ron Sokolowski current administrator of Ironworkers Local 6, “the tradition that he started will carry on this year and beyond with the promise of making Joe proud of what he started”.

The same can be said of the Zawistowski family. They take their float design and construction very seriously. They have fun building it and even more so, showing off their finished product and honoring their family as they process through the streets of Historic Polonia.

More families than ever before now gather together from all over the world to take part in the revelry. For many it has become an annual tradition. The Easter holiday gives loved ones an added reason to reunite in WNY and stay the extra day or two to take part in something that, not only draws the clan together, it creates life long memories for them and their progenitors offspring. They do it as a way to share a familial bond. To instill in their children a sense of history, and a connection to a rich cultural heritage, maybe even to show their kids that there are more ways to have fun other than texting each other or video games on their electronic devices. Now, children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends can participate in something that connects them, and their shared lineage. And even if it’s only once a year, it’s a start. These families are obviously proud of their ancestry.

And undoubtedly, so are the crowds that gather to celebrate this annual affair regardless of their ethnic background. Whether you are riding a bike, on roller skates, walking with an organization, or standing on the curb watching and cheering while waving your pussy willow branches, it doesn’t matter if your DNA proves your lineage from somewhere other than Eastern Europe. Because everybody’s Polish on Dyngus day. 20

Classical Music Concert
a Scholarship Fundraising
Concert featuring
Dominika Zamara
a Polish operatic soprano trained in Italy

along with
**the Polish Singers
Alliance of America**

preceded by Noon Mass in Polish
music led by the Chopin Society

**Sunday
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St. Stanislaus Church
389 Peckham St.
free will offering

Polish Arts Club of Buffalo
Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius University
Polish Singers Alliance of America

PARADE EXPRESS & SHUTTLE SYSTEM

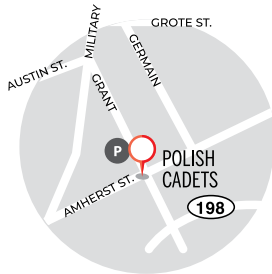
PARADE TIME 5:30PM HISTORIC POLONIA MONDAY, APRIL 6TH 2026



HISTORIC POLONIA 1	HISTORIC POLONIA 2	OUTER POLONIA	BUFFALO AIRPORT HOTEL	BLACK ROCK	DOWNTOWN
<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pussy Willow Park Party Tent Corpus Christi Broadway Market St. Stan's Arty's Grill <p>1 Shuttle Bus looping Historic Polonia Departing From Pussy Willow Park Party Tent 2PM - 10:30PM</p>	<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pussy Willow Park Party Tent Corpus Christi Macky's Broadway Market St. Stan's <p>1 Shuttle Bus looping Historic Polonia Departing From Pussy Willow Park Party Tent 2PM - 10:30PM</p>	<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pubski Pub Porky's Amber Lounge Wiehec's Pussy Willow Park Party Tent <p>1 Shuttle Bus looping Outer Polonia & Historic Polonia Departing From Pubski Pub 2PM - 10:30PM</p>	<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buffalo Airport Hotel Pussy Willow Park Party Tent <p>2 Shuttle Buses looping Buffalo Airport Hotel & Historic Polonia Departing From Buffalo Airport Hotel 2PM - 10:30PM</p>	<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polish Cadets Pussy Willow Park Party Tent <p>1 Shuttle Bus looping Black Rock & Historic Polonia Departing From Polish Cadets 4PM - 10:30PM</p>	<p>Shuttle Stops Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hofbrauhaus Buffalo Bar & Grille Pussy Willow Park Party Tent <p>1 Shuttle Bus looping Downtown 1 & Historic Polonia Departing From Hofbrauhaus 4PM - 10:30PM</p>

BLACK ROCK

Looping To And From Historic Polonia

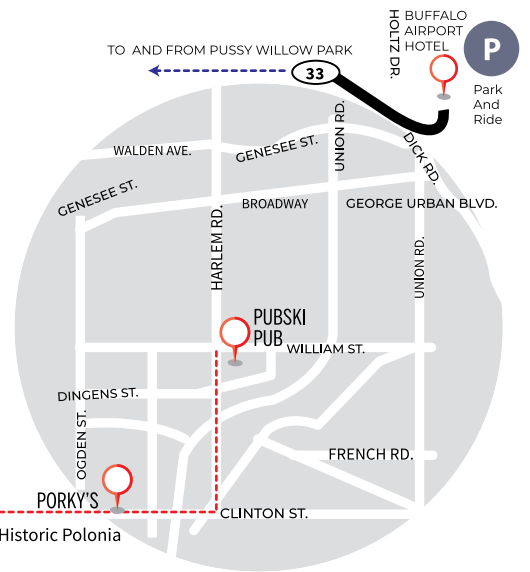


HISTORIC POLONIA (1 & 2)



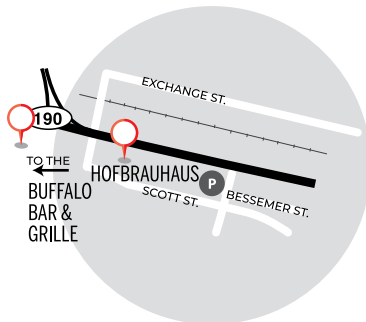
OUTER POLONIA (2 ROUTES)

Looping To And From Historic Polonia



DOWNTOWN

Looping To And From Historic Polonia



KEY HISTORIC POLONIA | BLACK ROCK | OUTER POLONIA | PARADE | DYNGUS DAY DASH

PARADE ROUTE	SHUTTLE BUS ROUTE HISTORIC POLONIA	SHUTTLE BUS ROUTE HISTORIC POLONIA 2	SHUTTLE BUS ROUTE BELO AIRPORT HOTEL	SHUTTLE BUS ROUTE OUTER POLONIA	BUS TRANSFER STATION	VENUE LOCATION	CHECK IN PARADE CHECK-IN PARADE KICK OFF	DYNGUS DAY DASH START (A) & FINISH (B)	DYNGUS DAY DASH 5 MILE ROUTE
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2 faith of our fathers polonias prayer power

If you walk through the area surrounding the intersection of Broadway and Fillmore in Buffalo, NY, you might be surprised to come across a beautiful old, Romanesque style church. If you continue to walk a few blocks in any other direction, you'll find even more churches. While downtown Buffalo's architecture, scrapes the skies with office buildings, standing watch over commerce and trade, this neighborhood, scrapes the skies with copper domes and crosses, standing watch over spiritual strength, and immigrant dreams.

Why so many churches in such a small area? Well simply, there were a lot of Poles that moved to Buffalo. And Poles took their spirituality seriously. The cities census data of 1850 listed only 50 people born in Poland, but by 1940 that number grew to 76,465. When you add in the reproductive factor of all the Poles that had made Buffalo their new home, that's a lot of new Catholics. If you know anything about Polish culture you know Catholicism plays a big role in this Slavic nation. Their diaspora was no different. It quickly became apparent that this new community needed a church to pray in. And one was just the beginning. At the peak of its expansion the community was so densely populated it didn't seem odd at all, that these cathedral like structures stood literally just a few blocks away from each other.

It all started with a local real estate developer named Joseph Bork who owned a large tract of land in that area. He noticed that Polish communities in other cities centered around a church. So he donated a parcel of land to the Diocese of Buffalo with the intention that it be the location of a new Polish parish.

In 1873 the newly ordained Rev. Jan Pitass formed Saint Stanislaus parish and immediately erected a modest church at the corner of Townsend and Peckham Streets. Now with a parish organized, the Poles passing through the city on their way westward to places like Detroit and Chicago finally had a reason to stay. Bork seized this opportunity and immediately began constructing single story homes to house the growing community. Within three months he had built 400 such cottages. By 1879 there were 2,500 residents in this new Polonia. By 1881 they grew to more than 9,500.

With this rapid population explosion the small church could no longer accommodate the blossoming congregation so work began on the Romanesque structure that we know today. By September of 1883. the parishioners began worshipping in the completed basement hall of the current structure known as St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr Church. The upper level of the church was completed (except for the towers) in October of 1886.

However, the growth of the immigrant community was so robust that within a few short years, the massive structure of Buffalo Polonia's Mother church could not accommodate the burgeoning Polish population. This was a problem because the church was an integral part of the rapidly expanding populace. Not only was the church their spiritual center, it also acted as the nucleus of their educational center, social activities, their business and financial hubs as well. For these new European immigrants this was the social media of their day.

The overcrowding, compounded by the authoritative rule of Rev. Pitass, however was not to everyone's liking. Those who had different views or resided further from the church complex sought permission to establish a second Polish parish in Buffalo. This was not to Pitass' approval, nor that of the Bishop. After an ill fated attempt to build another church failed, Vatican intervention was sought and eventually Bishop Ryan relented. In Sept of 1886, Bishop Ryan appointed Rev. Antoni Klawiter, of St. Stanislaus a new parish, named for the Polish Saint, Adalbert, the former bishop of Prague. A rare and special designation bestowed on this parish occurred a few decades later, when the Vatican proclaimed St. Adalbert a basilica, the first in the USA.

However, the community was just hitting their stride. In 1890 the need for a Polish parish a little further east became apparent not only to save souls but to save lives. Until then Poles of the area had to walk to St. Stanislaus or St. Adalberts to attend Mass. The trek itself was not long but it was dangerous as they would have to cross a number of railroad tracks which at that time were still at grade with city streets. As more families moved into the neighborhood, they were reluctant to send their children to the existing parish schools fearing for their safety. So, it was decided that a Polish parish and school would be established on Broadway east of the Belt Line Railway. That house of worship became the central core of the St. John Kanty Parish.

This soon became an asset to the blue collar neighborhood surrounding it and eventually with the construction of their massive lyceum, became a stronghold of youth activities and social hub for families from all across WNY's Polonia.

Meanwhile back closer to the epicenter of the new colony, Transfiguration parish was established in 1893 on Sycamore near Fillmore. Land was purchased and yet another church and school were constructed. As that area became a bit more affluent, prominent members of Buffalo's Polonia became parishioners at Transfiguration.

Now there were four substantial parishes within a mile of each other but those praying Poles still weren't done with their spiritual needs. In 1898 Fr. Hyacinth Fudzinski, a Franciscan Friar, established yet another parish just steps from the historic Broadway Market which ultimately resulted in the construction of one of the most splendid houses of worship in this former Polish colony, Corpus Christi church. The parish was first established in 1898 but the growth of this populace was so robust, that even a fourth spiritual sanctuary could



not keep pace with the surging colony. The original church was an existing frame house that immediately became too small for the ever-increasing congregation. A second church/school building with a seating capacity for 1,000 was built but also was outgrown within 10 years of its construction. The current structure built of Onondaga limestone faced with red Medina sandstone, possesses an awe-inspiring interior, featuring some of the finest ecclesiastical art in the city.

But times have changed. Transfiguration church was deemed unsafe due to structural issues and closed in 1992 a series of social and economic factors resulted in dwindling numbers of parishioners and forced the remaining churches to consolidate to survive. Less than a year ago St. John Kanty's seemed doomed when the diocese decided to close them as well (that decision has since been put on hold by the Vatican and is currently being reviewed). But as the great sage Yogi Berra once said "it ain't over til it's over" and although it's certainly true that today's churches face smaller congregations, demographic shifts and the repercussion of moral mistakes, the need for a spiritual anchor in peoples lives seems more important than ever.

Whether you are religious or not, in this age of constant distraction, we can all agree that pausing regularly for personal reflection can not only be a break from the pressures of daily life but it also allows you to feel God's presence intimately. These churches were designed to not only be artistically beautiful they were created to be useful tools to allow us to feel his presence individually. It's important to our spiritual well being. We think our ancestors would agree. So whether it's for a religious service or just to feel the resonance of God's healing power go spend some time in one of our beautiful old Polish churches. While you still can.



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Serving up

Of course anyone worth their weight in kapusta knows that kielbasa and pierogi are key components in Polish diet. However please don't be in a

hurry to fill your Easter baskets with nothing more than crammed casings and packed pasta pockets. Polish cuisine is diverse and delectable. First of all to fully understand what Poles eat we must look at the cultural influences on the nation as a whole Polish fare has evolved over the centuries due to historical circumstances.

Polish national cuisine shares some similarities with other Central and Eastern European cultures as well as French and Italian similarities. It is rich in meat, especially pork, chicken and beef (depending on the region) and winter vegetables i.e. cabbage in bigos. It is also characteristic in its use of various kinds of noodles the most notable of which are kluski as well as cereals such as kasha (from the Polish word kaza) Generally speaking, Polish cuisine is hearty and uses a lot of cream and eggs. Traditional dishes are often demanding in preparation.

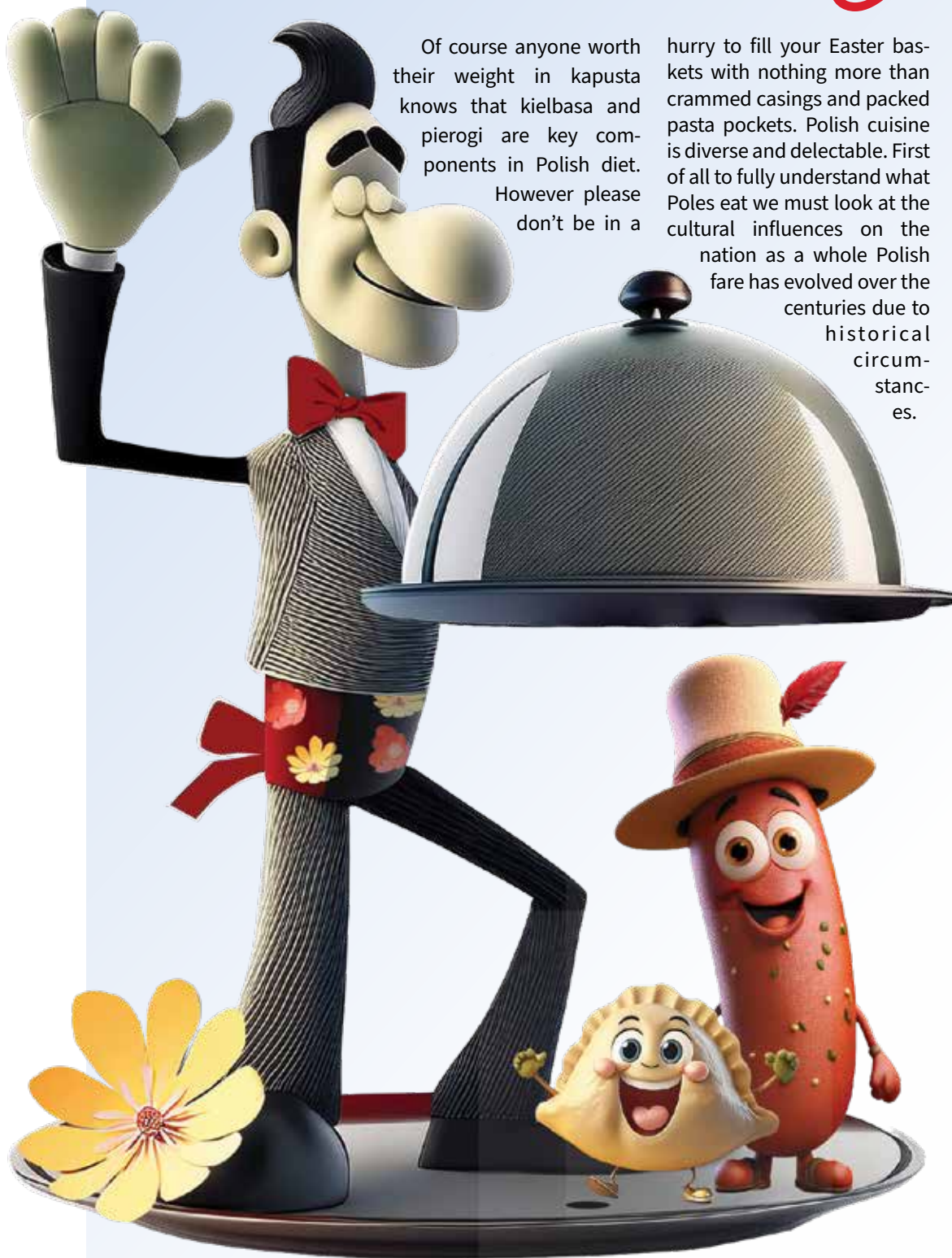
Many Poles allow themselves a generous amount of time to serve and enjoy their festive meals, especially Christmas Eve dinner (Wigilia) or Baster breakfast (Święconka) which could take a number of days to prepare in their entirety. Polish cuisine is a mix of Slavic culinary traditions. The country has a number of unique regional cuisines with regional variations in preparations and ingredients. In the north the favorite dish is freshwater fish. The Mazurian kitchen is a combination of German, Russian and Polish influences. Western Poland, is known for duck dishes. There are many local dishes as well.

The national cuisine shows strong influences of Austrian dishes especially from Vienna. Popular dessert include cheesecake, topped

with vanilla crème or chocolate. It is known as Viennese cheesecake ("sernik wiedeński") The central and eastern part of Poland is famous for pierogi. The eastern cuisine originated in Lwow. A typical dish is "kulebiak" made from yeast dough stuffed with cabbage, boiled rice, eggs and fish. It is served with Ukrainian-style borscht with plenty of vegetables and thickened with sour cream. In southern Podhale at the foot of the Tatra Mountains, "oscypek" a hard sheep's milk cheese is very popular. We can assume that the food, which the first Poles had, was limited to the plants, which were available to them. These no doubt consisted of native species that could withstand the climate as well as the animals that were living in Poland at that time. In addition to the outside influence of occupying cultures over the centuries, the more humans were able to control and manipulate nature through cultivation and the storage and preservation of food and the more that merchants traveled around the world, the national cuisine became enriched with a wider variety of food products and dishes.

All over the nation, Poland is known for its delicious breads: white, brown, whole grain, with raisins, prunes, sunflower, sesame seeds, and poppy seed. Understandably the first cultivated plants included rye and wheat, millet and barley. Poles made kasha (groats) from millet, lentils, barley, and oats. These grains were suitable to grow in the sometimes severe Polish climate and they certainly make good bread.

It is presumed that Slavs learned bread baking from the Goths. The word bread in Polish chleb (hleb) has old



indo-European origins and its pronunciation is similar in all indo-European languages. In Poland bread is treated almost with religious reverence since the early days. Many people even now mark a freshly baked bread with the sign of the cross. newly wed couples are welcomed at the entrance of their home with bread and salt, bread is blessed during Christmas and Easter and always included in the traditional Easter breakfast basket known as swięconka.

Now, as long as we have this heavenly bread, how about some scrumptious soup? Poles love soups, this may be due to the climate, with long, cold winters and a deficiency of vegetables and fruits in certain seasons soup makes good food. The oldest polish soups include of course the soups based on kasha - for instance, lentil soup, as well as the soups made of fermented rye (zur). The soup based on kasha, which is very popular in Poland, is called krupnik (not to be confused with the honey based liquor with the same name-that is another story for another day). Poles especially nobility loved eating meat. Poultry, beef, pork and wild game all appear in regional menus. Especially popular was wild boar, venison and all sorts of wild fowl like pheasant and quail which were very popular in old Polish cuisine.

With the ascension of the Italian queen Bona Sforza, the second wife of Sigismund I of Poland, the use of spices, which came to Poland from the Orient, became common

among those who could afford them. Often dishes considered elegant were very spicy. Although Poles also ate many vegetables and fruits, the assortment of vegetables was limited until the Renaissance when countless cooks were brought to Poland from Italy in 1518, by Bona Sforza. Even though native vegetable foods were an ancient and intrinsic part of the cuisine, this began a period in which vegetables such as lettuce, leek celeriac and cabbage were more widely used. Even today vegetables like leeks, carrots and celery are known in Polish as włoszczyzna, which refers to Włochy, the Polish name for Italy. Therefore many Polish vegetables have names that originate from Italian - for instance tomatoes are called in Polish pomidory from the Italian word pomodoro.

The vegetables which were known in early Polish cuisine include fresh and pickled cucumbers (ogorki) and are now popular all around the world. In fact a deli sandwich served without one of the sour spears lying next to it is now considered a naked presentation. Carrots, fresh cabbage, and sauerkraut, turnips, garlic, onions, caraway, and parsley were also known in Poland earlier than in Western Europe.

But as far as we are concerned there is no other vegetable that says the taste of Poland like the beet. The has history of

cultivation stretching back to 2000 years before Christ. The plant was probably domesticated somewhere along the Mediterranean, whence it was later spread to Babylonia by the 8th century BC and as far east as China by 850 AD. Available evidence, suggests that leafy varieties of the beet were grow primarily for their leaves not their roots for most of its history, (think Swiss chard) though these lost much of their popularity following the introduction of spinach. Beets became commercially important in 19th century Europe following the development of the sugar beet in Germany and the discovery that sucrose could be extracted from them thus providing an alternative to tropical sugar cane. It remains a widely cultivated commercial crop for producing table sugar.

What is it about potatoes? Depending on which part of Poland you're in, you either call them ziemniaki or kartofel. Here we call them potatoes and we love them. It is hard to believe but potatoes, that are so prevalent in Polish cuisine now, were not known in Europe before Columbus found the New World and imported them from South America in the early 1500's.

So as we can see "typical" Polish fare is anything but. It is diverse nuanced but most of all it's delicious.

POLONIA



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A Buffalo Tradition

EASTER FESTIVAL HOURS

Sat March 21 8am-5pm • Sun March 22 9am-4pm • Mon-Sat March 23-28 8am-5pm

HOLY WEEK HOURS
Palm Sunday March 29 9am-5pm
Mon-Holy Thurs March 30 - April 2 8am-6pm
Good Friday April 3 6am-7pm
Holy Saturday April 4 7am-5pm • Easter Sunday Closed
EASTER BUNNY ARRIVES Sat March 21 11am

DYNGUS DAY EVENT

Mon April 6 8am-5pm
Music Kaisertown Polka Noon-3pm
Polish beer Noon-4pm

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Ceremony and Weenie Roast
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Radość-Joy Folk
Dance Troupe **3:30PM**
Elena Stenkina
from Philadelphia **5PM-6:30PM**
Cracovia Polish Folk Dance
Ensemble **6:30PM**
Headliner Polka Legend
Jimmy Sturr Orchestra
featuring Chris Caffery of
Trans Siberian Orchestra,
Johnny Karas
and Al Piatkowski **7-10PM**

Authentic Polish Food
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Food Truck Alley
Traditional Folk Dance
Official Dyngus Gear Sold Here
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Official Pussy Willow
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Gates Open **Noon**
Parade Line-up Starts Here
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716-833-5211

St. Stanislaus BM RC Church
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Polka Country Musicians
John Gora and Gorale
Traditional Folk Dance
with Krakowiacy Dancers
from Eugenia Dance Studio
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Authentic Polish Bar
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Doors Open **Noon**
389 Peckham St, Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-854-5510

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21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Live Music
with Elena Stenkina **7-9PM**
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Polish Drink Specials
Admission Free
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Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **8AM**
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Outer Polonia
716-238-3461

Wiechecs
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Dyngus Day Party
Live Music with
Dave Gawronski with special
guests Accordion Bill
and Danny Neaverth
Polka Contest **6PM**
Polish Food Beer and More
Admission Free
Official Pussy Willow
Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **11AM**
1748 Clinton St, Kaisertown
Outer Polonia
716-823-2828

**CHEEKTOWAGA
Pubski Pub**
21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Live Music
Knewz and Krew **Noon-3PM**
Polka DJ **3PM- 5:30PM**
Lenny Gomulka and
Chicago Push **6-10PM**
Authentic Polish Food
\$5 Bloody Mary and Mimosa
Specials **10AM-Noon**
Admission \$15 or Free
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Official Pussy Willow
Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **10AM**
2437 William St, Cheektowaga
Outer Polonia
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Authentic Live Music
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Nominated Kevin Solecki
Noon -2PM
Cracovia Polish Folk Dance
Ensemble **1PM**
Kielbasa Kings
from Dearborn, MI **2PM- 5PM**
Plus Polka Hall of Fame
Inductees Dennis Polisky's
Maestro's Men **6PM**
Authentic Polish Food
Polish Spirits
Polish Beer
Admission \$15 or Free with
Pussy Willow Pass
Official Pussy Willow
Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **11AM**
4600 Genesee St, Cheektowaga
Outer Polonia
716-634-6969

**BLACK ROCK
Polish Cadets**
Family Friendly
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Live Music
with Elena Stenkina **2-4PM**
Traditional Folk Dance
with Krakowiacy Dancers
from Eugenia Dance Studio **1PM**
Kielbasa Kings
from Dearborn MI **6PM**
Traditional Folk Dance
with Radość-Joy
Folk Dance Troupe **8PM**
Kids Activities
Polish Bar
Authentic Polish Food
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Official Pussy Willow
Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **Noon**
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Black Rock
Outer Polonia
716-875-3211

**CLARENCE
Morluski's**
Family Friendly
Dyngus Day Party
Live Authentic Music
John Stevens
Polka Band **6:30PM**
Special Dyngus Day Menu
Polish Beers
Polish Spirits
Free Admission
Outside Patio with Fire Pit

Doors Open **1PM**
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Outer Polonia
716-407-3238

**DOWNTOWN BUFFALO
Buffalo Bar & Grille**
21 And Over
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Authentic Polish
Sound System
Authentic Food
Admission Free
Doors Open **4PM**
307 Louisiana St, Buffalo
716-602-9724

Hofbrauhaus
21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Live Music with
Polka Boyz **Noon -3PM**
Traditional Folk Dance
Cracovia Polish Folk Dance
Ensemble **4PM**
Nerds Gone Wild **6:30PM**
Authentic Polish Food
Admission \$15 or Free with
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Shuttle Stop
Doors Open **11AM**
190 Scott St, Buffalo
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20

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KNEWZ AND KREW
1 - 5PM

LENNY GOMULKA & CHICAGO PUSH
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w/special guest **JOHNNY KARAS**

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dyngus day dash

stay the course

When we began promoting Dyngus Day, it was a modest undertaking. We gathered a few existing parties, added a small parade and hoped it would spark enthusiasm with a younger generation. Twenty years later that spark has turned into a bonfire. But like a roaring campfire you need to throw a new log on regularly to keep it going. We were always thinking of new things to add to the celebration as we continued to celebrate the rich cultural and historical significance of Polonia in our very own quirky way. A foot race was something that we have always wanted to add to the festival but the limited resources we had available to us always seemed to get in the way of making that idea a reality.

The next few years saw the growth of the parade, more venues, the creation of an area wide shuttle system, a new website, the creation of the highly acclaimed Emmy nominated Dyngus Day Diary television specials and hundreds of other details associated with the production and promotion pertaining to an event of this magnitude.

All the while the idea continued to sit on a shelf at Dyngus Day headquarters. A big factor in not being able to implement our little idea was simply the lack of manpower. Between all of the promotion and production issues we already had in play we simply could not find enough people to take on another project that could turn into a logistical labyrinth.



But the idea kept coming up, so this year we have partnered up with RMS Race Management Solutions to present the 2nd Annual Dyngus Day Dash, a 3 mile Fun Run that is open to runners and walkers of all ages.

The race starts off at noon beginning at the traffic circle on Memorial and Paderewski Dr. All registered participants will receive a commemorative t-shirt, numbered racing bib, a pussy willow pass, tickets for food and beverage at the post race party with live music from the Baltic Boys from Boston Mass. and much more.

The inaugural race will immediately be followed by an awards ceremony and good old fashioned weenie roast at the Mainstage Tent near Pussy Willow Park courtesy of our good friends and proud supporters at Redlinski Meats, Tops Friendly Markets and Wright Beverage.

Whether you are a serious runner looking to continue your training, a casual jogger trying to burn off some Easter brunch calories or just a proponent of pussy willow power looking to take a quick walk through the old hood, join us for what will undoubtedly be another fun event.

Visit our website www.dyngusday.com for entry details, or register directly at <https://dyngusdaydash.itsyourrace.com>. But do it soon so you don't run out of time.



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4 eggstra eggstra write all about it

While Dyngus day conjures up imagery of splashing water and pussy willow branches, one of the most recognizable symbols of Polish Easter traditions are the elaborately decorated Easter eggs known as pisanki which comes from the Polish verb pisać and means to write. The beautifully detailed Easter egg is a centuries old tradition that continues to be loved and celebrated to this day.

The earliest decorated pisanki in Poland date back as far as the 10th and 13th centuries, and were made according to a technique called “batik,” which is still used today! It involves the use of a special “pen” to apply liquid wax to “write” or draw a design onto the egg, which is later placed into some type of dye and then heated to remove the wax and reveal the design underneath.

Although egg writing is an ancient practice, Kathy Sacilowski began creating her own pisanki a bit more recently. Her love of tradition and background as an art teacher created a perfect combination when she was introduced to the art form by Michele Kisluk of the Polish Heritage dancers when her children were involved in that cultural organization about twenty years ago. Once Michele showed her the basics Kathy was hooked. “I love creating these beautiful works of art. I find it to be a peaceful, prayerful and meditative Lenten preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Sometimes I enjoy listening to Gorzkie Zale at the same time. It helps me



connect to God while I’m decorating the eggs. Even the smell of the melting wax reminds me of church”.

Traditionally, the dyes used to color the eggs are completely natural. Red Onion peel for a red color for example, White onion for a tan, rye sprouts for green, beetroot for pink, etc. These colors are beautifully vibrant and much healthier than synthetic dyes.

There are literally dozens of different style of regional decoration. Some involve Easter palms, fir branches or crosses while other feature a dual color scheme with lighter colored designs on dark backgrounds. The late Father Czesław Krysa who was a virtual encyclopedia regarding Polish tradition not only compiled his own extensive collection of pisanki reflecting various regional designs but shared his love for the delicate works of art with Kathy and encouraged her abilities to become a master at it and to share her work with others by demonstrating the art at various area events. “It’s really quite easy” according to Kathy, “the designs are endless and its a beautiful way to connect with your heritage. Everyone should try it”

Whether you use old school or modern techniques to decorate, the tradition of creating beautifully crafted Easter eggs is one that continues with artists and families of the Polish diaspora all around the world. We think that’s Eggstraordinary. 20

Mother Church of Polonia ST. STAN'S Dyngus on the East Side

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2 a world of influence

waves of red and white

The extraordinary impact that Polish culture has had on our world is profound. Of course we all know what a considerable culinary gift Poland gave the world when they shared placek and pierogi with all of us, but that's merely scratching the surface of Poland's gifts to all of humanity. Not to diminish the influence that Poland has had on our tastebuds nor our rhythmic sense, Poland's beneficence to society extends far beyond kielbasa or polka music. In fact the story of Poland's contributions to mankind is inspirational, wide ranging and goes back quite awhile.

Obviously the Poles gave us Dyngus Day which many people around here consider to be a significant contribution however, religion, politics, music, science, cinema, literature have all had profound contributions from our Baltic brothers and sisters since the Poles began celebrating the Resurrection and the end of Lenten restrictions in this most unusual way.

Let's start with the origins of Dyngus Day. Although some historians trace the springtime ritual to a German March equinox celebration, it is now widely accepted that the adoption of Christianity as Poland's national religion by Prince Mieszko 1 is the reason for the water sprinkling that occurs on the day after Easter which in Poland is often referred to as "lany Poniedziałek" which

literally means "wet Monday". This is why Poland has embraced this ancient ritual to claim as their own. But the influence of Poles reverberates far beyond some Slavic delicacies or the playful sprinkling of water and amorous swats of pussy willow branches.

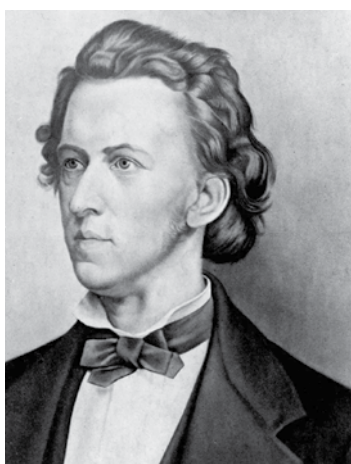
Holy water sprinkling brings to mind Karol Wojtyła, better known as Pope John Paul 2. Undoubtedly the most renowned Pole of the modern age. His monumental role in freeing Poland from the oppression of communism and the subsequent dismantling of the Soviet bloc has forever earned him a major role in mankind's historical narrative not to mention sainthood, which is a pretty big deal in and of itself. But way before Karol Wojtyła was even born let alone become a seminarian, Poles were influencing the world through the studies of scientists like Nicolaus Copernicus, and Kazimierz Siemienowicz, a 17th century deputy of the Polish Royal Artillery. Talk about revolutionary, this guy was way out there. His thinking may be considered a precursor of modern day space flight. He was the first person to conceive the possibility of a multiple stage rocket and of rocket batteries. Then of course there was Maria Skłodowska more famously known by her married name Marie Curie. She was born in Warsaw in 1867 but moved to Paris to study at the age of 24. In 1895 she married

Pierre Curie, with whom she conducted ground breaking research on radioactivity—a term she coined by the way. Madame Curie is famous for discovering radium and her pioneering work on radioactivity paved the way for nuclear physics and cancer therapy. Not only is she the first woman to win a Nobel prize, but she is still the only woman to have won in two fields and is the only person to win in multiple sciences. Curie's efforts, along with her husband Pierre, led to the discovery of radium and polonium (which she named after her native country), and after Pierre's death the development of X-rays, which allowed radiography units to service field hospitals during World War 1.

But science isn't the only field that Poles affected in a big way. The world of music had a pretty good boost from a child prodigy named Fryderyk Franciszek Szopen, better known as Frederic Chopin. He is still considered Poland's greatest composer. Born in Zelazowa Wola, Poland, young Fryderyk grew up in a middle class family. He published his first composition at age 7 and began performing one year later. In 1832 he also moved to Paris and became a darling of high society where he became a popular performer as well as a reputation for being an excellent piano teacher. His compositions were and continue to be highly influential.

There was another piano player that made a mark not only in music but in politics as well by helping Poland regain its sovereignty after being conquered by Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Born in Kurylowka, Poland (now Ukraine), Ignacy Paderewski studied and taught at the Warsaw Conservatory. Paderewski became a world renowned concert pianist and, because of his popularity as a musician was afforded great access to world leaders. He used that access to meet with President Woodrow Wilson and others to obtain the explicit inclusion of independent Poland as Point 13 in Wilson's peace terms, the Fourteen Points. Upon Poland achieving independence, Paderewski became the country's first Prime Minister in 1919. Significant as they are the contributions to the world of music by Poles did not end with Paderewski's passing. Modern day musical luminaries like Pat Benatar, Sting, Madonna, Frankie Valli, Ray Manzarek, Basia and Jack White are just a few performers with Polish blood flowing through their veins.

Of course story telling is an important part of the Polish experience. The works of literary leaders like Henryk Sienkiewicz and Adam Mickiewicz still resonate with readers today but it's not just stories printed in ink on paper that have left a mark on our collective consciousness. Given the significance of movie making in Poland, even under communist rule, the world of cinema is rife with Polish contributors including such notables as Samuel Goldwyn, Christine Baranski, Patricia Arquette and Andrzej Wajda. But the love for this type of storytelling goes back to the very early days of filmmaking. Beginning with Kazimierz Proszynski, inventor of one of the first cinema cameras in the world. This oleograph, or apparatus for taking photographs and projecting pictures,



was built before the Lumiere brothers lodged their patent for their cinématographe an early type of motion picture camera and projector. Proszynski also made the first pocket film camera and devised a method of synchronizing sound and film tracks. Other notable figures that share Polish DNA in the world of moving pictures and television include Peter Falk, Scarlett Johansson, Paul Newman, Gloria Swanson, Gwyneth Paltrow, Eli Wallach, Robert Conrad and Liv Tyler.

Finally there is no question that the world is a more beautiful place as a result of Polish influence upon our culture but there is one woman in particular that truly left her mark on the world of beauty. Helena Rubinstein was a Polish entrepreneur and philanthropist born in Krakow Poland. In 1902 she started her business career in Australia distributing a beauty cream that her mother had used. She soon founded a beauty salon and began manufacturing cosmetics working tirelessly to expand her business at every turn. Rubinstein opened salons in London and Paris and when WW 1 began she moved to America. Her beauty business grew into a worldwide cosmetics empire and Rubinstein created the Helena Rubinstein Foundation in 1953 to fund organizations for children's health. One could say it was the ultimate beauty mark.

From Science and religion to literature, politics, and entertainment, the effect that Poland has had on humanity is resonant and impressive. Not only have Poles given us a whole new way to utilize pussy willow branches, they have literally affected every aspect of life on planet Earth and enveloped all of us with innovation, liberation and elegance regardless of our nationality or ancestry. They have covered all of humanity in a warm embracing swath of red and white. 20

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2 dyngus day darlings what to do with the little squirts

We know Dyngus Day parties can get boisterous, and some might think twice about taking members of the younger set to experience first hand the Polonia pageantry that takes place on the day after Easter. But, think again, there are plenty of things to do and see for kids of all ages.

So stick a pussy willow branch in the stroller and teach the children what it is to be Polish and proud! Here's where to go with your lil nuggets.

Historic Polonia

At the corner of Clark and Kent aka Superman corner stand the towering spires of Corpus Christi Church. Starting the day off with a prayer or some self reflection couldn't hurt. A special Dyngus Day Mass begins at 11:00 am. After Mass, stroll over to the brick building directly behind the church. Inside the Corpus Christi Athletic Club there are bowling alleys, plenty of games and coloring contests for your little crumb crunchers as well as plenty of food to fuel all that activity regardless of your age.

At the Broadway Market the old-fashioned concept of selling farm fresh, exotic and unusual products here has remained unchanged since the Market's inception in 1888. If you have only visited this venerable Polonia institution during Holy week to pick up provisions for your Easter Basket, this is great opportunity to check out some of their offerings without having to wait



in long lines. This place might just take you back to when you were a dyngus day darling yourself. Let your little crumb crunchers gaze at all the delicious chocolates and sweet treats displayed. Get the kids some Charlie Chaplin chocolate or sponge candy and don't forget the Broadway Market is open all year long.

The 20th Annual Dyngus Day Parade-5:30pm

Accordions, flags, floats, and thousands of smiling cheering revelers having a grand time celebrating the Polish Pride which has propelled this procession to such powerful proportions that people have been planning their participation with great anticipation. In other words it's grown. The parade kicks off at the corner of Broadway and Memorial Dr. at 5:30pm

Blackrock

The Polish Cadets 927 Grant St. have been providing social activities for Poles of all ages since 1899. One of the oldest social clubs of it's kind in the nation, Great live polka music, fun kid activities and delicious homemade polish food in the heart of Buffalo's secondary Polonia neighborhood. Old school cool.

The memories of celebrating heritage, ethnic pride, community and family will last a lifetime...that's the best part. Well, the food and music are pretty good too, and of course the parade. Everyone loves a parade. **2**

THE COVER STORY

dyngus guide cover art



From cartoon modern to bauhaus and beyond, the official Dyngus Day Buffalo guide cover art has grown in as many ways as the festival itself. Artist, and graphic designer, Dyngus Day, LLC Vice President/Creative Director, Nancy McCarthy, has delighted in creating new imagery year after year to represent this amazing event and the wonderful traditions and heritage of Polonia. Her artistic gifts have helped elevate our culture. Dziekuje Nancy

meet the artist at the **broadway market wednesday april 1 at noon - 2pm**

dyngus day guide cover posters available

2 the polka story

once upon a time there was a little twirl



Not only is Buffalo the Dyngus Day Capital of the World but, based on the amount of musical talent at all the different festival venues, a strong case could be made that the Queen City of the Lakes is the Polka Capital of the universe. (At least on Dyngus Day). But the pressing question remains, what is polka?

Although, many consider Polka to be a Polish creation, the dances' origins are attributed to Bohemia (the westernmost and largest historical region of the Czech Republic). The invention of the dance step is credited to Anna Slazak, a farm servant at Elbstein near Prague. Based on local Slavic folk music, by 1835 the Polka became a dance craze all over the ballrooms of Czechoslovakia before spreading throughout Europe by way of Vienna and Paris.

Within ten years the lively 2/4 step hopped over the "pond" to the United States and it remained a dominantly popular dance in Europe as well as in North America until the 20th century, when it was displaced by ragtime jazz, and the dance crazes of the Roaring Twenties. In fact, the polka music that we know today is really an American creation that combined elements of ragtime and traditional Polish folk melodies. You would be hard pressed to find contemporary polka music anywhere in Poland because it is really as American as the blues.

Polka did, however experience a resurgence in popularity here after WWII, when many Polish refugees moved to the United States, adopting this Bohemian style as a cultural dance.

Although, the origin can be traced back to one source, there are various styles of contemporary polka music, "Chicago Honky" (using the clarinet and one trumpet) and the "Chicago Push" (featuring the accordion, concertinas, bass, drums and almost always two trumpets). North American "Slovenian Style" is fast and features piano accordion, chromatic accordion, and or diatonic button box accordion, North American "Dutchmen-style" features an "oompah" sound often with a tuba and banjo, popular in the Midwest. "Conjunto-style" polkas have roots in northern Texas and Mexico and are also called "Norteno".

The polka is also one of the most popular traditional folk dances in Ireland. Many of the figures of Irish set dances, which developed from Continental quadrilles, are danced to polkas.

But there's another type of polka sound, that is, the big band orchestra. There was a time when a multiple member group containing a dynamic horn section, led by a charismatic band leader was the norm. Although primarily associated with acts like Count Basie, Glen Miller, Benny Good-

man, and others, the full sound of a large musical ensemble lends itself perfectly to polka music. Considering that polka music, as we know it, was spawned from the marriage of folk melodies and ragtime jazz, this should not be surprising. Orchestras once led by the likes of Lawrence Welk, and Eddie Olinski, have been eclipsed by smaller more affordable combos but that doesn't mean that style of polka music has disappeared. In fact, we have the best in the nation as part of Dyngus Day Buffalo once again, the one and only legendary Jimmy Sturr and his Orchestra. With more than a hundred different recordings that have earned him 18 Grammy awards and 5 Gold albums he continues to dazzle audiences throughout the world. He has recorded with the likes of Brenda Lee, Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss, Bela Fleck, Charlie Daniels, Arlo Guthrie and many, many more. If you have never seen Jimmy Sturr live in concert you will be blown away by his versatility, his style and his energy! The Jimmy Sturr Orchestra with special guests, Al Piatkowski plus Johnny Karas, both International Polka Association Inductees plus Chris Caffery from the Trans Siberian Orchestra take the mainstage inside the tent at Pussy Willow Park right after the parade.

If you'd like to experience the genre yourself there are a myriad of official festival ven-



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ues offering a wide variety of polka styling's to suit all of your interests. Our one price Pussy Willow Pass and shuttle service, make it easier than ever to go from place to place. There's so much entertainment to choose from it's hard to know where to start.

A great place to start things off would be at the Buffalo Airport Hotel. It's the official hotel for the festival, and a great place to begin celebrating, which is why we kickoff the festival on Easter Sunday evening at our opening ceremony, starring Pure Polka Power, featuring International Polka Association Hall of Famers Jackie Libera, Rich Bernier and Dennis Polisky along with a whole slew of surprise guests. But that's just a warmup for Monday when the party shifts into high gear with live music all day long from the award winning Maestros Men, Kielbasa Kings, grammy nominated Kevin Solecki and Cracovia Polish Folk Dance Ensemble. Plus, they are a main transport hub for our pussy willow pass shuttle bus system with tons of parking. Which means you can start early, grab breakfast, get into the pussy willow spirit of things, hop on a bus, head over to the parade, catch a little more dyngus delight then head back to the hotel. If you're smart you'll stay overnight and feel refreshed the next day.

But there is much more waiting for you once the pussy willow branches start flying. Solid performers can be found all day long at the Pubski Pub. It is home to one of the coolest vintage barrooms anywhere in the area. The classic ambiance combined with the youthful energy of owner Matt Burdzy and the top polka talents of Lenny Gomulka's Chicago Push, promise to make this one powerful polka party indeed. Pubski will also stage an Easter night pre-Dyngus dance.

Another great vintage bar with a real retro vibe to check



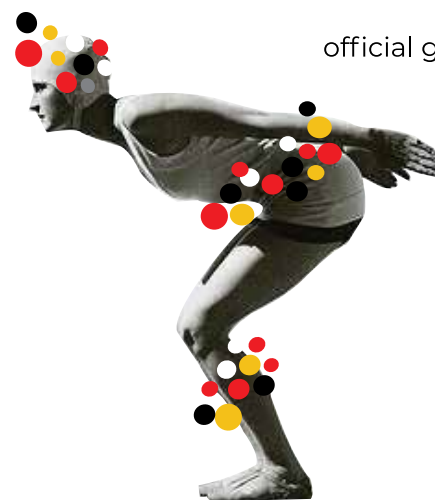
out is a place called Macky's on Bailey Ave. They're featuring accordion virtuoso Elena Stenikina from Philadelphia post parade and she's spectacular! Plus they're also part of our free shuttle system so it's easy to get to.

If you are a fan of old school polka dances then make sure to visit the Polish Cadets Club in the Buffalo Black Rock neighborhood. The club was founded in 1899 has two floors of fun with great live music, homemade food, and they're part of our shuttle system as well. Another great place to park and shuttle into the parade.

Speaking of old school, nothing says authentic louder than a polka party in a big old church hall. If that's what you're looking for, go to St. Stanislaus Hall just a few blocks from the parade and the Pussywillow Park Party tent. They host one of the oldest running Dyngus Day events in town and will offer nonstop music from three different bands. While you're in the neighborhood check out the Corpus Christi Athletic Club just a few blocks away. This historic club is a must see and will be packed with polka lovers of all ages enjoying the vintage vibe with Mon Valley Push and the Baltic Boys. Now if you're a real urbanite and you would rather stay downtown visit our friends at Hofbrauhaus for some real festive beer hall Dyngus delight.

As the festival unfolds there are dozens of other polka bands to catch at venues all over town. Check out our calendar in this guide on pages 16-17 or on our website www.dyngusday.com for more detailed information.

Whether you're listening, watching, participating as a seasoned hooper or a new comer to the dance floor, rest assured that this European form of aerobics can be enjoyed without Dramamine by everyone, and one thing is for sure, in this Polka Story, everyone lives happily after!



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profiles in polonia prominent poles ponder the past

“Polonia,” refers to the Diaspora, (people of Polish origin who live outside Poland). However, it is much more. Polonia is a collective sharing of experience, of tradition, of culture, of food and celebration. Just as with most immigrant communities that took hold in the United States after a generation or two we find that many become “Americanized” and old world traditions seem to wane. The native language becomes a distant memory. Customs crumble, and old world styles melt away or blend into the new way of life. It’s logical that in the land known as the great melting pot, different cultures blend and eventually become homogenized. Adopting new ways in a new land are important. It demonstrates solidarity and a willingness to adopt the ways of your newfound home. However it’s equally meaningful to remember where you came from. What our ancestors did in the past, brought us to today.

But the importance of Polish customs and traditions cannot be understated. The ability to hang onto observances that are thousands of years old is what helped our ancestors keep the Motherland alive. When Poland technically did not even exist for over one hundred years. The rituals, the music, the language, the faith, the foods, all kept alive by Poles throughout the world as they fought to regain their sovereignty. That’s how strong our heritage is to the people of Polonia.

GWEN MYSIAK

After her birth at Sisters Hospital Gwen Derkovitz Mysiak grew up a proud member of Polonia in Cheektowaga, NY. Although she was an only child, because her Mom had eight siblings, she has 32 first cousins which meant lots of Polish style gatherings which helped to instill a strong sense of ethnic pride in young Gwen.

After an internship at WK-BW-TV’s AM Buffalo this young woman began her career as director of Corporate Communications and Promotion for WNED Buffalo/Toronto Public Media including several national projects with PBS. After 18 years at Channel 17, when her nephew Andrew was diagnosed with pediatric cancer, her course changed direction. She met former Buffalo Bill, Brian Moorman at Andrew’s memorial service and knew she wanted to give back to the foundation Moorman had started, because he helped Andrew through his organization which he created to help children going through cancer treatments and their families. Brian knew he might be leaving Buffalo, so he wanted to leave the PUNT foundation in good hands. So Gwen took on the role of Executive Director at P.U.N.T. Pediatric Cancer Collaborative.

Recently under her leadership a new facility has opened offering programs for families dealing with childhood cancer and bereavement services. The WNY Compassion Connection is a place of hope and peer sup-

port for children and parents who lost a loved one not just to cancer, but any origin, including trauma, suicide and overdose deaths.

Gwen and her three children make their home in Lancaster, NY. She is a member of the National Alliance for Children’s Grief leadership committee and serves on the national Board of Directors for the Modern Widows Club.

What does it mean to be a part of Polonia?

While my Polish heritage was always a huge part of my upbringing, my first trip to Poland in 1998 to teach English to high school students shattered every stereotype I ever had and ignited unprecedented passion love and pride for this absolutely enchanting, inspirational country and its resilient people. I returned on a mission to light that torch for others and helped create the documentary Polonia: WNY’s Polish American Legacy produced by WNED-TV, which became one of the station’s most embraced broadcasts in its history. Going to Poland and being part of Polonia helped me better understand myself and appreciate how much my heritage shaped me.

Favorite Dyngus Day memories?

Being right up on the stage when “Those Idiots” played outside on a beautiful spring night and seeing the magnitude of Polish pride from that vantage point. Also, I cherish being part of the WNED production crew shooting footage for the Polonia documentary on

Dyngus Day, and capturing the spirit and history of this special day for the television program. You can view Polonia: WNY’s Polish American Legacy on pbs.org!

Favorite Polish Foods?

Kotlety z kurczaka (chicken cutlets) with a side of boiled potatoes with butter & fresh dill.
What would you share with the youth of Polonia?

Try your best to visit Poland at least once in your lifetime. It will stir your soul in ways that will impact you forever.

Pussy Willows or water?

Pussy Willows! They are symbols of renewal and hope.

TOM BRUCZ

Growing up in the shadow of St. Adalberts Basilica on Rother St. had a profound effect on this Polonia pioneer. Not only did the church have an influence on him from a very early age, so did the entire community. As a kid he would accompany his father to choir practice which instilled a love of singing that would manifest later in his life when he joined the choirs at St. Thomas Aquinas in St. Cloud and St. Joseph Church in Orlando and finally becoming a member of the Chopin Singing Society here in WNY.

After graduating from Bishop Turner HS, Tom took a night auditing job at Sattlers Dept. store while attending Bryant and Stratton college. He then went on to earn an accounting degree from TriState University in Indiana which began a career that took him all over North America working with the Defense Department. In his 26 years with Lockheed Martin, Tom has worked and lived in over 42 states and most of the Canadian provinces. But his heart has always remained true to Buffalo and WNY.

He has been a member of Chopins for nearly 26 years as a tenor and now sits on their board of directors. “I’ve loved singing since I was young. Of course being part of this choir allows me to do something I love, but the reactions from the audiences we perform for is

even more heartwarming”. Tom and his wife Marcia are very active with St. Adalberts Basilica to this day.

What does it mean to be a part of Polonia?

Being a part of Polonia means being part of a great tight knit community. Everything was within walking distance. Burczynski bakery, butchers, shoemaker, grocery stores, cleaners, even my first job at Sattlers department store. and later on of course there were plenty of taverns close by. As a little boy I grew up participating in Polish events and celebrating our Polish heritage and culture which will always be a cherished part of me. Today it’s great to see our granddaughter Emily Winiarski now the sixth generation of our family at St. Adalberts follow in our footsteps being active and proud of our Polonia.

Favorite Dyngus Day Memories?

My favorite Dyngus memory is when I met my wife Marcia the love of my life at the old Chopins clubrooms on Kosciuszko on Dyngus day in 1977. Coincidentally my daughter Aimee met her husband Scott at Dyngus Day Buffalo in 2010

Favorite Polish Foods?

Sledzie, Wardynski baloney, Redlinski fresh Holiday kielbasa, kiszka, blood tongue, galar-eta, and pickled mushrooms

What would you share with the youth of Polonia?

Support Polish Churches and return to your polish roots. And never forget Dyngus day. You can meet your honey bunch for life. Dyngus Day parties are the place to be.

Pussy Willows or water?

Pussy Willows. Before I was married one year at Chopins it was so crowded that the ladies were lined up outside the mens bathroom with pussy willows in hand. When they saw a handsome man exit they gave him a whack. I exited black and blue. LOL.

ELAINE PASTERNAK

Born and raised in the Historic Polonia district of Buffalo, NY this gal is without question



Gwen Mysiak

one of the most positive people you'll ever encounter. You can immediately sense her sincerity and authenticity which seem rare in this age of texting and online interaction. She possesses a smile almighty and there is no question she is one hundred percent Polish. She grew up in the heart of Buffalo's Polonia on Sweet Avenue and attended Corpus Christi grammar school next door to the church where her parents Raymond and Theresa Matuszak were married in 1948, just one block away from the Broadway Market.

There is something to be said about blooming where you're planted and Elaine is living proof of that. Just three years after graduating from the old red brick schoolhouse on Clark street she took a job at Max's Poultry stand at the venerable East side marketplace and immediately found a home. When Max retired she found herself behind the counter at one of the markets then new, but now long time anchor businesses, Camellia Meats. From her perch looking over the glass counter she has witnessed first hand generations of families grow while taking on the role of goodwill ambassador after being voted the "Queen" of the Broadway Market in a contest that market management conducted a number of years ago. She has become a staple in the annual Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade with her signature straw hat and egg dress, drawing smiles from young and old as she marches through the streets waving and sharing the joy of the Easter season. Not only an emissary for the market she has become a plenipotentiary for Polonia.

"I love my job" Elaine proclaims. "I'm a creature of habit and enjoy my daily routine of waking up, being grateful for yet another day and the ability to go to work and serve people. Throughout my time at the market the customers have become like family. I've seen

some of them grow from children into parents. After 43 years some have even become grandparents!"

I never thought I'd still be here after all these years. But I love what I do and I love people. So here I am! See you at the parade.

What does it mean to be a part of Polonia?

I'm very honored to be part of this Polonia community. It's rich with history and tradition.

Favorite Dyngus Day memories?

My favorite memories of Dyngus Day are being part of the annual parade. Marching proudly and waving at all the people and participating in all the fun activities afterwards. I love seeing the faces of the children squirting each other or tapping me with their pussywillows. It's just so much fun.

Favorite Polish Foods?

My favorite Polish foods are Pierogi, Kapusta and Polish sausage. Camellia brand of course.

What would you share with the youth of Polonia?

My advice to the younger members of our community is to always embrace your Polish heritage with family and friends. Whether it's on Dyngus day or any day for the rest of your life. It's a part of who you are and you are lucky to be a part of it.

Pussy Willows or water?

I would pick water over pussy willows. Especially when the kids are already squirting everybody at the parade.

AL KANIA

Born in Niagara Falls, NY. to Ted and Julia Kania, Al's ancestral roots trace back to Poland and the villages of Chechty, Zagorzyce, Stobierna, and Gawtuszowice. He grew up as a member of Holy Trinity RC Church, in Niagara Falls and was the last president of their Holy Name Society before the church was closed by the diocese. Growing up in a warm musical environment Al credits his parents for exposing him to a wide variety of music. His Father played the accordion,

organ, mandolin, guitar, his brother played accordion, and his sister played violin.

Since 5th grade Al has played the trumpet along with studying piano / accordion, and music theory, including harmonic, melodic, and contrapuntal techniques, along with contemporary orchestration and arranging techniques. He joined Local 106 American Federation of Musicians at the age of 15 to play with the Niagara Falls Concert Orchestra and then went on to play with many local orchestras and bands.

Al's a versatile musician who's performed in several musical genres throughout his musical career, including Big Band, Swing Revival, Rock Jazz Fusion, Jump Blues, and Polish Polka Bands. He recorded with several groups and can be heard on the G-Notes "Encore", Buffalo Bells Orchestra LPs, and Eddie Olinski's Orchestra Big Band CD recording. He performed as a member of Frank Szucko's Jump Kings and appeared with Jimmy Pachulski's Buffalo Bells Orchestra on Stan "Stas" Jasinski's Polish Christmas Program on WUTV. In the 1970s Mr. Kania performed on Al Wallack's "Jazz in the Nighttime" radio show on WEBR-AM with jazz pianist Don Gais. And in 2001, Al toured Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic as a member of the Buffalo Concertina All-Stars. The group traveled and performed in Chemnitz and Gruna, Germany, as well as Krakow and Rzeszow, Poland.

He was married at Saint Adalbert's Basilica to Eugenia nee Gorski and has been married over 50 years. They are currently parishioners of Saint Casimir church in Buffalo and have five children and two grandchildren.

He was a member of the ECHO Club, Adam Mickiewicz Library, and served over 12 years on the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius College. He has a BS in Engineering Technology and is currently retired after working over

40 combined years in the aerospace, defense, medical device, and pharmaceutical industries. **What does it mean to be a part of Polonia?**

Being a part of Polonia means having a deep love of God, Family, and Country. Being a part of Polonia to me means remembering and practicing the many wonderful Polish customs and traditions that our parents and grandparents gave to us, and honoring their memory by sharing these customs and traditions with our children and youth of today.

Favorite Dyngus Day memories?

I have many happy memories of Dyngus Days celebrations, spanning over many years. Memories of the shared camaraderie, fun, and excitement with the many wonderful people in attendance. Memories of wonderful times playing alongside many marvelous musicians over the years, playing at Dyngus Day celebrations held at the Chopin Club Rooms on Kościuszko, at the Adam Mickiewicz Library, at Corpus Christi SAC, at the SPK (Polish Veterans), at the Randolph Fire Hall, and at the Polish Villa.

What would you share with the youth of Polonia?

Pope John Paul II emphasized the importance of holding fast to one's cultural and spiritual heritage as a foundation for faith. Pope John Paul II encouraged people to honor their roots while building a future in Christ. Therefore I encourage people and families to join and support a church like The Church of Saint Casimer on 160 Cable St. in Buffalo, NY where Polish spirituality, culture, and history are still alive and present in the worship services.

Favorite Polish foods?

Gołąbki with mashed potatoes and tomato gravy,

Pussy Willows or water?

Pussy Willows.



Tom Brucz



Elaine Pasternak



Al Kania

the gift of giving

cheers for volunteers

Everyone knows Dyngus Day Buffalo is an annual spring-time festival celebrating the end of Lent and Western New Yorks Polonia history. But it's much more than just a party with pretty girls and handsome boys proudly wearing red and white, being flirtatious with pussy willow branches and splashing water. The Dyngus Day Buffalo Festival is also a tremendous opportunity for various organizations and groups to generate revenue and awareness for their ongoing efforts and spread the word to a bigger audience about their individual missions. Many of the various festival venues whether they be, churches, clubs, or family owned businesses, rely on Dyngus Day as one of their biggest sources of fund raising for the entire year. Over the the past twenty years our little post Lenten, party has helped churches to generate funding for badly needed repairs, private social clubs to be

able to continue operation in the face of declining membership or family run businesses the ability to stay open. Dyngus Day Buffalo has helped buy sports equipment and classroom needs for various school and youth programs and even supported individuals suffering from serious illness, as well as their families and caregivers. And though it may be true that in this part of the world a good party after a long, cold grey winter will always draw people out to eat, drink and be merry, it's the volunteers who work tirelessly at all the events that make up the festival, which really make these individual parties come to life.

Without doubt, the biggest party of the festival happens in a location that most people would never even think of. That's because one of the liveliest locations of the Dyngus Day Buffalo festival is normally a forgotten street in the shadow of what was once a busy rail-

road shipping center. But because of the efforts from scores of volunteers, every year we are able to transform this nondescript area, into a vibrant, colorful, tented festival grounds, with spectacular entertainment, offering authentic food, drinks and tons of fun for all.

While festival organizers have relied on the help of friends and family members for many years, it takes much more than a few relatives and associates to take on a herculean task such as this. This is not to diminish the contributions of families like the Feldmanns, the Gilman and nearly the entire south towns McCarthy clan who have tirelessly volunteered their time and efforts for many years to make the party at "Pussy Willow Park" become a reality. These Dyngus Angels show up early and stay late to make sure everything is just so and their time and dedication have been crucial in the growth of this ethnic celebration.

Without the help of these families and friends, this element of the festival never would have taken form (yes we know those names don't sound very Polish however the spirit of Dyngus Day transcends ethnic barriers, but that dear friends is a story for another day). This story is about contribution not ancestral ethnicity. So where do you go to find dozens of volunteers to create something of this magnitude?

This year we are very happy to welcome back the dedicated volunteers from the Western New York Law Enforcement Helpline. A partnership that began with two of our most loyal supporters Scott Gilman and Bernie Feldman. Both retired New York State troopers that worked with the the founders of the Helpline in their roles during their time "on the job". The Western New York Law Enforcement Helpline provides 24/7 confidential assistance, information, and referrals by trained law enforcement peers and family member peers to working and retired law enforcement officers, dispatchers, and their families. The helpline assists with any issues that may impact work and family life. Issues like ongoing or critical incident stress, relationship issues, grief and loss, depression, suicide or substance abuse are things that are difficult to deal with regardless of your line of work but when you are part of a profession that is

designed to protect and serve such issues are compounded.

Law enforcement is a difficult profession and has the potential to cause significant stress in an officer's professional and home life. Often the officer and his/her family do not know where help and support services are available to assist in addressing these concerns.

So as we celebrate the beginnings of a brand new season with this pussy willow party lets do so knowing that over the past twenty years our quirky celebration has helped to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for organizations and businesses that keep Polonia alive and this year we will once again will be helping the men and women of our community that have taken on the very difficult and dangerous task of protecting us by helping us to celebrate a new beginning. A portion of all bar sales at the mainstage tent and all of the tips will directly benefit the Western New York Law Enforcement Helpline. So drink responsibly but tip heavily. And most importantly Dziekuje!

For more information about the Western New York Law Enforcement Helpline and how you can get involved please visit their website www.wnylawenforcementhelpline.org



2 pussy willow power

the whole story from beginning to end

From an old world tradition to a modern ethnic festival, Buffalo's Dyngus Day Festival has turned into one of the largest, cultural events anywhere in the world. But it wasn't always that way. Here's how it all unfolded...

Although the post Lenten observance had been noted in traditional Polish neighborhoods dating back to the 1870s when the cities Polish colony began taking root, back then it was a low key observance. It was a chance for kids to play pranks by splashing each other or parents sprinkling their children with water to wake them the morning after Easter Sunday. Modern Dyngus Day in Buffalo had its beginnings much later with the Chopin Singing Society when they had their clubrooms on the East Side of Buffalo in the city's historic Polonia district. Judge Ann Mikoll and her late husband Theodore held a "Smigus Dingus" themed party at the Society's clubrooms on Kosciuszko Street in 1961. The idea was born after a trip to Poland where the Mikolls renewed their love of the colorful obscure customs of the Polish people. The

event, originally meant to boost the declining membership of the society, soon became an annual event in Buffalo. Political and business leaders made their way to the Chopin's Clubrooms every year the day after Easter to begin the day with a ceremonial "swieconka" luncheon. Polka music was played throughout the building's meeting and bar rooms and there was plenty of revelry to be had by all. Because of the quirky nature of the associated traditions i.e. the splashing of water and swatting with pussy willow branches, the party turned into a highly anticipated yearly affair.

But as the neighborhood waned so did Dyngus activity in the city. Chopins left the Eastside in the early 1990s & moved out to new clubrooms in the eastern suburb of Cheektowaga where they tried to attract a whole new generation of Polonia.

But by that time the younger members of Polonia were used to looking at other types of music and recreation. And Polka music was not part of what they were looking for. As the next generations

of Poles became completely assimilated with modern American culture Polka music and old world style customs started to become obsolete and unhip. These were things your "Babcia" did. There was nothing cool about "Dyngus" back then.

That all changed in 2005 when the website DyngusDay.com was born. The following year Dyngus Day Buffalo was founded with the goal of shining a positive light on a forgotten neighborhood and a misunderstood culture. The hope was that by providing marketing and organizational support to a number of combined events across the region, more people would show up to these parties and a younger demographic would be attracted to something that wasn't deemed hip by anyone under the age of fifty. The ultimate goal was to promote the unique ethnic, religious and cultural aspects of Polish culture throughout the world and the influence of Poles nationwide through this quirky celebration that was now known as Dyngus Day. In 2007, the streets of the Historic Polonia

District were once again filled with polkas and pussy willows as the Inaugural Dyngus Day Parade was organized making its way through the streets of Old Polonia.

As time went on, the number of parties in the Historic Polonia District expanded with more events and numerous family owned taverns getting in on the act again. In addition to the "old neighborhood" the suburban venues hosting sizable Dyngus Dances have more than doubled. As well as other city neighborhoods, like Buffalo's Black Rock and Kaisertown neighborhoods. There are now many different festival sites that are officially part of what has turned into one of the most unique ethnic celebrations of its kind on the planet.

Attendance in 2024 was estimated at over 100,000 for Dyngus Day events across Western New York making it one of the largest, one day ethnic festivals in North America. Even when the government banned all public gatherings and would not allow us our parade because of Covid fears, thousands showed up to cheer on our very slow moving motorcade.

A lot of attention was drawn to Buffalo's Dyngus Day by the reaction of CNNs Anderson Cooper a few years ago and may have angered some who thought that his uncontrollable laughter associated with the quirky customary rituals of the observance was insulting. However the resulting awareness and other national media coverage only fueled the growth of the celebration.

All this notoriety has born fruit. In addition to the growth of the festival, more people are now coming in by the busloads from places like Michigan, Ohio, Penn-

sylvania, Massachusetts, S. Ontario etc. It seems that Dyngus Day in Buffalo, NY has now turned into a tourist attraction. Who would've even thought that to be possible nineteen years ago? But as Buffalo continues to reconnect with its history, and more of us realize the potential draw of our areas cultural authenticity we now see the value of old world traditions.

The compelling stories about all the ethnic communities that settled here, working the factories or railroads and raising families while striving to realize their American dream, appeal to a new generation and have revealed themselves to be powerful marketing tools for the city.

As a result of all these efforts, the neighborhood that was once home to this large Polish colony (and in fact the entire Polish American culture of WNY) has been experiencing a re-awakening of sorts. Many people now have a newfound appreciation of the areas potential. Additionally, because of the marketing efforts of dyngusday.com and their promotion of Polish culture throughout the years, an unprecedented swelling of Polish pride has taken place throughout the region.

After all this and more than a half century of polkas and pussy willows, no other city on the planet can claim to celebrate the arrival of spring like we do in the Queen City. That's why Buffalo, NY is the Dyngus Day Capital of the world. It has turned into a point of civic pride not only for Buffalo's Polonia but all of Western New York. Thank you for participating in history as we continue to spread the story about Dyngus Day and the heritage of Buffalo's Polonia. Dziekuje bardzo! 20



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