



The Forum

of the Chicago Society, Lodge 1450 PNA
Now in Our Second Century of Service

VOLUME 78

January 2026

NUMBER 1

UPCOMING EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21

**General Meeting:
The Great Escape
9540 W. Irving Park Rd.
Schiller Park, IL**

**Call to Order: 7 p.m.
(Happy Hour: 6 p.m.)**

**Guest Speaker:
Nick Harris will speak
on avoiding being a
victim of financial crime**

**Reservations:
Andy Haszlkiewicz
andyh9946@gmail.com
or call (847) 341-1068**

**Pre-Lenten Sledz
Wednesday, Feb. 11
Lone Tree Manor, Niles**

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**

**SZCZESLIWEGO
NOWEGO ROKU!**

Dear Chicago Society Members and Friends:

I hope that all of you had a wonderful, joy-filled Christmas and a wonderful New Year's celebration also. Welcome to 2026; I hope this will be your best year ever!

We are starting this year with our annual "Evening of Elegance," which of course is one of our major events of the year. This will be held on Saturday, Jan. 31 at the Park Ridge Country Club, which was recently remodeled, and will be a great fit for our special event. Music will be provided by our own member, Anthony Kawalkowski.

Please, please confirm your attendance—and invite as many of your friends and associates as you can, since we need at least 100 people to break even on this event. (We are currently short.)

We have a program book for our event, which allows you to demonstrate your support for the Chicago Society by placing a congratulatory message or advertisement—full-page, half-page and quarter-page options are available. All of this information can be found on our website and invitation.

We have plenty of other events coming that we hope will peak your interest during the year. I am eager and optimistic about what we can accomplish together in 2026.

Looking forward to seeing all of you at our next meeting this Wednesday, Jan. 21 at The Great Escape!

Cheers,

Zenon Kurdziel

President, Chicago Society PNA



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January Forum Highlights

- ◆ Sign Up for Evening of Elegance by Jan. 23
- ◆ Agnieszka Bastrzyk First Woman to Head PRCUA
- ◆ Ticket Deadline for White and Red Ball is Feb. 15
- ◆ St. Stanislaus Kostka Academy Closing Its Doors

Remember the Chicago Society's address:

**Chicago Society PNA, Lodge #1450
333 Busse Highway, #973
Park Ridge, IL 60068-3285**

—Upcoming Events—

—The 2026 Polish Constitution Day Parade (and the Chicago Society PNA Pre-Parade Brunch that precedes it) will be held on Saturday, May 2. The brunch will once again be at the Congress Plaza Hotel on South Michigan Avenue. Details to come!

—Our annual Golf Outing will be held on Friday, July 31, once again at The Bridges of Poplar Creek golf course in Hoffman Estates. More information on this will also be available soon.

Statue of Ralph Modjeski Planned in Davenport, Iowa

Plans have been announced to build a statue of the late Polish-born civil engineer Ralph Modjeski in Davenport, Iowa, in a park near his first bridge, the Arsenal (or Government) Bridge, which crosses the Mississippi River between Davenport and Rock Island, Illinois. This year marks the 130th anniversary of the 1,608-foot bridge, which opened in 1896 and carries both railroad and car/truck traffic across the Mississippi.

'Magic Flute' Concert at PaSO Moved to Feb. 1

The "Magic Flute" Concert at the Academy of Music of the Paderewski Symphony Orchestra (PaSO), originally set for January 18, has been rescheduled for Sunday, Feb. 1 at 4 p.m. at the PaSO building, 5400 N. Lawler Ave., Chicago. Tickets are \$55 each; the event is by invitation only. For more information, contact Marta Almodovar at (773) 968-9713, or email: martaalmodovar@sbcglobal.net

Our Evening of Elegance Is Almost Here! Registration Deadline Is Jan. 23

The Chicago Society PNA's annual "Evening of Elegance," the highlight of our winter social season, is just around the corner! It will be held on Saturday, Jan. 31 in the opulent surroundings of the Park Ridge Country Club, at 636 N. Prospect Ave. in Park Ridge—and if you haven't made your reservation yet, you need to do it right away; the RSVP deadline is this Friday, Jan. 23. Tickets, which are \$200 each, can still be ordered online at our website: EOE2026@chicagosocietypna.org.

The event will begin at 6:30 p.m. with a cocktail hour, followed by dinner at 7:30 p.m., and the official program and the swearing-in of the Chicago Society PNA officers for 2026, starting at 8:30 p.m. After the official program, a dance party featuring DJ Kuba will run from 9:30 to 11:30 p.m. During the cocktail hour and dinner, we will also be entertained by the violin music of our own Tony Kowalkowski and his Orchestra.

Highlights of the evening will include Ted Makarewicz receiving this year's Ro Matuszczak Member of the Year Award (to be presented by Ro's daughter, Renee Robinson); presentation of the Friend of Polonia award to Mariyana Spyropoulos, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County; and Michal Fijol, president of LOT Polish Airlines, accepting the Business of the Year Award on behalf of his company.

The dinner menu is a choice of Chicken Florentine, Pan-Roasted Salmon or Vegetarian. A cash bar will also be available. This is a Black Tie Optional affair, meaning either a tuxedo or a business suit is acceptable for men, and appropriately dressy clothing for the ladies.

All checks for this event should be made payable to: Chicago Society PNA. Anyone needing more information may contact event chairperson Iwona Przonak at (773) 537-8515.

Sledz to Be Held at General Meeting on Feb. 11

The Pre-Lenten Sledz (also known as the Polish Mardi Gras), marking one last chance to party before the arrival of Lent, is returning this year as one of the Chicago Society PNA's most popular activities. It will be held as part of our monthly general meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 11, which will start at 7 p.m. at Lone Tree Manor, 7730 Milwaukee Ave., Niles. (In order to accommodate the Sledz, the general meeting had to be moved back from our normal third Wednesday date to the second Wednesday of the month, since Ash Wednesday falls on February 18 this year.) Family members and friends are welcome to attend the event.

As in previous years, the traditional Sledz parade, featuring the giant herring and several costumed characters, will be held. Mardi Gras-style trinkets will also be handed out, and the new "St. Joseph" (the lodge's official "chaplain," who offers the prayer at our monthly general meetings), will also be chosen. (For the past year, this has been Darlene Czaja—our first-ever "St. Josephine.")

Prices have been set at \$45 for Chicago Society members and \$50 for guests. A family-style menu will be served, including Sledzie (herring); a main course of Chicken Kiev and Beef Roll-Ups; main sides of Kluski Slaskie, fresh boiled potatoes, green beans with butter, and cold beets. Kolaczki and pound cake will be served for dessert—and of course, paczki will also be available! (\$2 each.)

Agnieszka Bastrzyk Becomes PRCUA's First Woman President

For the first time in its 152-year history, the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America is headed by a woman. Agnieszka Bastrzyk, who had been secretary/treasurer of the fraternal insurance company, was chosen in December to become the new president, succeeding James Robaczewski. The two other persons who were chosen for high office are also female—Micheline Jaminski, as vice president; and Julie Prado, who succeeds Bastrzyk as secretary/treasurer.

Bastrzyk is a 17-year member of the PRCUA, which is based in Chicago and is licensed to sell life insurance and annuities in 27 states. It also sponsors a wide variety of Polish American cultural activities, including Polish language schools, dances and musical performances, sporting events and many activities for Polish American youth; it also helps to support many Church-related activities. It is focused on driving growth, innovation and the long-term strength of the organization, and continuing to make a meaningful difference in the communities it serves.

St. Stanislaus Kostka Academy Closing Its Doors

The school attached to the first historically Polish American church in Chicago has announced that it will be closing at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. St. Stanislaus Kostka Academy, which first opened in 1874, and in the early part of the 20th Century had at least 4,000 students taught by 76 nuns, making it the largest grammar school in America, fell victim to decades of change in its neighborhood and harsh economic realities.

Father Anthony Bus, the longtime pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, announced the closing on Jan. 15 in a letter sent to staff members and families of students. He cited plummeting enrollment and a loss of government scholarship funds as chief factors in the decision to close the school, which enrolls students in Pre-K through 8th grade. He said the school “has been on life support” for many years, and despite recent fundraising efforts, a deficit of almost \$500,000 is expected by the end of the school year. St. Stanislaus Kostka Church will remain open, he added.

St. Stan's, known as the “Mother Church of Chicago Polonia,” opened in 1867 and survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871; the school opened three years later. In the late 1950s the church and school famously avoided demolition when the nearby Kennedy Expressway had its route slightly altered during construction. It also had a high school for many decades, which closed in 1977. In recent years, the church and school enrollment have been mostly Hispanic, reflecting long-term population change in the Wicker Park/Bucktown neighborhoods.

Thanks to all who supported our Deserving Kids' Christmas Party!

—Polish National Alliance
 —Legion of Young Polish Women and their Debutantes (aka Santa's Elves!)
 —Polish & Slavic Federal Credit Union
 —Polish American Police Association (donated coffee/sweets for parents)
 —Culver's Restaurants
 —Las Palmas Restaurant (donated Mexican hot chocolate)
 —Chris & Kasia Grzadziel (Santa and Mrs. Claus!)

—Frank & Darlene Czaja
 —Walter Pieciewicz
 —Jan Plachta
 —Ray Golenia
 —Terry Przybylski
 —Zenon Kurdziel
 —Andy Haszlakiewicz
 —James Robaczewski
 —Peter, Agnes, Matthew & Isabella Dykas

If you have a story to submit to the Forum,
 please email: terryprzyby@yahoo.com

Get Tickets for White and Red Ball by Feb. 15

The 86th Annual White and Red Ball will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026 at the Hilton Chicago hotel, 720 S. Michigan Ave. The deadline to purchase tickets for the ball is February 15; tickets can be ordered online by going to: www.lypw.org/tickets. Nine young ladies have been chosen as debutantes from the Legion of Young Polish Women, and will compete to become Queen of the Ball, which is the organization's main fundraising event of the year, benefitting various charities and Polish cultural endeavors.

Debutantes for the 2026 Ball are: Klaudia Jakuszewski, a junior at Lane Tech High School in Chicago; Julia Kalinowski, a student at College of DuPage; Paula Kowalczyk, an honors student at New Trier High School; Liliana Moore, a junior at Glenbrook North High School; Kinga Pawlikowska-Tamulis, a junior at Trinity High School in River Forest; Victoria Szymocha, a senior at Glenbrook North High School; Lea Wilhelmsen, a senior at Highland Park High School; Karolina Wojcik, a junior at Loyola Academy in Wilmette; and Emilia Wrona, a senior at Buffalo Grove High School. (Photos and full biographies of all the contestants can be viewed at the website: www.lypw.org/white-and-red-ball/2026debutantes.)

Men are required to wear a black tuxedo or tails; women must wear floor-length gowns or ball gowns, and are asked not to wear anything white or red—since those colors are reserved for the debutantes. Tickets are \$250 for adults, \$200 for teens (age 13-20), and \$100 for children (12 and under). The dinner choice is filet mignon, striped bass or vegetarian (for adults and teens), plus a children's platter. The receiving line starts at 5:30 p.m.; dinner is at 7 p.m. and the contest will follow.

Application for New Member to Join Chicago Society PNA

Applicant: Anthony Witold Nowak-Przygodzki

Address: 6040 Arbor Lane, Northfield, IL

Occupation: National Treasurer,
Polish National Alliance

Business Phone: (773) 286-8500

Cellphone: (714) 292-4349

Email: anthony.nowak@pna-znp.org

Birthdate: November 20, 1969

Birthplace: Orange, CA

U.S. Citizen: Yes

Spouse: Jill M. Nowak-Przygodzki

Education: College graduate,
post-graduate school

Interests: Music, travel, food

Insurance Member: Yes, with Lodge 3193

Sponsors: Peter Dykas, James Robaczewski

Jan. 31 Is Sign-Up Deadline for Poland Summer Tour

There's not much time left to make a reservation for the 12-day tour of Poland this summer sponsored by the well-known musical Blazonczyk family. A deposit must be received, along with a completed form and copies of passports, by Saturday, Jan. 31. The trip, which runs from July 22-Aug. 3, will include tours of Warsaw, Krakow, Wadowice, Czestchowa, Zakopane and Lagiewniki. There will also be a raft ride on the Dunajec River and a Gorale picnic in Zakopane. For more information, call (708) 594-5182, or email: www.belaire7208@aol.com. Deposits and completed forms may be mailed to: Bel-Aire Enterprises, P.O. Box 520, Palos Park, IL 60464.

If you have information to include in the Forum,
please email: terryprzyby@yahoo.com



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