

ACPC meets in Rochester, NY

By: *Jo Louise Winters*, PR Chair



ACPC President Debra Majka, Treasurer Gregory Biestek, Dr. Marek Konarzewski – Minister Counselor - Embassy of the Republic of Poland

The American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) held its Fall Board Meeting in Rochester NY, Oct. 2-3, 2009. Richard Wiermański, aided by ACPC president Deborah Majka, made all the arrangements for the meeting to take advantage of an invitation by President Maria Weldy and Immediate Past President Frederic Skalny of the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester to participate in their Society's 90th Anniversary celebration that weekend. The Council members truly enjoyed the opportunity to become more closely acquainted with the officers and members of the Society, an ACPC Supporting Organization for many years. For many ACPC members it was a most pleasant opportunity to meet Mr. Skalny, a very influential and highly respected activist in the field of Polish culture whose numerous awards include the ACPC's Annual Cultural Achievement Award. They also learned from the Society's Vice President, John Refermat who welcomed the group, that philanthropist Joseph S. Skalny had bequeathed funds to build a Welcome Center at the St. John Fisher College Campus, which includes a room reserved for the Society's use. As a result, the Polish Heritage Society has been able to schedule its activities and meetings at the Welcome Center on the College campus. At the Society's invitation, the ACPC Fall Board meeting was held in this splendid facility.

Reports presented during the business meetings, conducted by President Deborah Majka, included the presentation by Henrietta Nowakowski, Co-Chair of the annual Conference on the Social Studies. The Conference, titled "Dreams & Deeds", will take place this year, Nov. 13-15 in Atlanta, GA. Further information is available at www.polishcultureacpc.org.

ACPC Scholarship Chair Camille Kapielski reported that Christopher Wojdak of Rochester who had been selected by the Committee for the 2009 scholarship grant of \$2,000 spent three weeks studying at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The exciting story of his experiences will be related in a separate news release to the press.

Board members learned from Irene Mirecki, Youth Leadership Conference Chair, that reservations have been initiated in Washington DC for the Conference to be held the last week of June 2010. Information will be submitted shortly to our Affiliate and Supporting Organizations as well to the Polonia press. We will be seeking applications from interested students and looking for parents and local organizations to lend their support.

After a fine "working lunch", the members took off on a fascinating tour of the old Polonia neighborhoods in Rochester and ended up at the inspiring and glorious St. Stanislaus Kostka Church. Some stayed or returned to the Church for the 4:00 P.M. Vigil Mass.

Saturday evening the Council members were privileged to join a sell-out crowd at the Society's 90th Anniversary Banquet and Ball. Two recent university graduates

served as Mistresses of Ceremony, Karolina Kotas and Ilona Frederick. The charming young ladies were very well-prepared and conducted the evening's program in a most efficient fashion. The rich program included remarks by Dr. Marek Konarzewski, Minister Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Poland, who took the opportunity to present the Distinguished Service Award to Elwin Przybylowicz, Dr. Frederic Skalny and Mrs. Sabina Slepcecki, acknowledging their various achievements in the fields of Polish Culture and Heritage. Dr. Donald Bain, President of St. John Fisher College also addressed the audience and expressed the school's appreciation for the community's support, especially the generosity of the Skalny family. Further praise for the outstanding services and contributions of the Polish Heritage Society to the city of Rochester rang loud and clear from the lips of Maggie Brooks, Monroe County Executive, who recited the tireless efforts of the Society that "express pride in Polish heritage and broaden awareness of the contributions made by Polish Americans in the greater Rochester area". Ms. Brooks had issued a proclamation in her official capacity "do hereby proclaim Saturday, October 3, 2009 to be: POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY OF ROCHESTER DAY" in Monroe County. Simultaneously, Rochester's Mayor Robert J. Duffy issued an identical proclamation for the city.

Mrs. Maria Weldy, President Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, welcomed all the guests and reflected on the organization's glorious history. It began with the purchase of a small house by a Polish immigrant to start a Polish People's Library in 1912 for a children's Polish Language School and a meeting place. The dream was fulfilled when the "Rochester Polish People's Home" obtained a certificate of incorporation with the state of New York. The "Dom Ludowy" captured a unity of spirit and interest among various groups and societies, featuring performances by Polish choirs, dancers, theater groups, guest speakers and celebrations of Polish customs and traditions. In 1998, the organization was renamed the Polish Heritage Society of Rochester, expanding its membership and even offering their scholarship winners the chance to study now in Poland with a "Polish Experience Scholarship." Most of all, it takes pride in having its own office in the Skalny Welcome Center on the St. John Fisher College Campus.

American Council for Polish Culture Pres. Debbie Majka expressed the Council's deep appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the momentous 90th Anniversary celebration. She praised the wisdom of the early immigrants to the area for founding a vibrant organization that has greatly impressed our national organization for its outstanding accomplishments over the past nine decades. Mrs. Majka pointed with pride to the close ties the ACPC has had over the years with the Rochester Society, referring as an example, to the artistic graffiti that the ACPC had placed at St. John Fisher College in 1966. She noted also that the ACPC is most appreciative of the grant awarded annually by the Louis Skalny Foundation for the Louis & Nellie Skalny Scholarships, which the Council is privileged to administer.

Council members admired the expert handling of the program throughout the evening by Karolina and Ilona who richly represent the very future of Polonia not only in Rochester, but wherever their influence reaches and their respective careers take them. Karolina is the Society's Recording Secretary and Ilona is the Project Leader for the annual Krakow Szopka Workshop, which enjoys funding by the Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester, the NY State

Council on the Arts, and the NY State Legislature. It is scheduled for Oct. 2009 and will be conducted by Dave Motak of Pittsburgh.

The Council expresses sincere thanks to the Society's President Maria Weldy, the officers and committees for presenting the evening's cultural program in such a positive way. Members of the American Council for Polish Culture quietly interacted with the beauty, dignity and intelligence portrayed in all the functions and presentations at the 90th Anniversary Dinner & Dance. Bóg Zapłać Maria Weldy and all the dedicated members of the Polish Heritage Society for your dedication in promoting Polish culture and heritage! The Council also wishes to express its appreciation for the excellent photos of the event that John Weldy offered to us for use in our public relations activities and, which will become part of the permanent records of our 2009 Fall Board Meeting in Rochester, NY.

For information about ACPC membership, please visit www.polishcultureacpc.org or contact Anna-Mae Maglaty, (860) 521-7621 or annamae11@comcast.net. □

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