



POLISH ASSISTANCE, INC. — POLSKA BRATNIA POMOC

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For 61 years Polish Assistance has been raising funds to assist those in need in the Polish Community. Some of our actions are quite transparent, some are not.

Currently we are funding and assisting in raising funds to provide for and fly Janina Kokorudz to Poland. Her story appeared in the New York Polish Newspaper and is mentioned below. Last year, we donated and raised funds for the Diamond Street Fire Victims. In both cases, all the funds collected are distributed to the beneficiaries from accounts set up at the Polish Slavic Federal Credit Union. We also donate annually toward “Wigilia” organized by the volunteers of SOS Homeless headed by Eryka Volker.

Polish Assistance’s website states **“Rich in tradition, generous in compassion”**. Our mission is to provide assistance, primarily financial, to persons of Polish origin who are at risk or needy. Our activities focus mostly on the New York metropolitan area.

RICH IN TRADITION

61 years ago, a successful and philanthropic group of Americans of Polish heritage formed an organization to support World War II heroes and political refugees who immigrated to America from Poland to escape communism. Most of them were ex-military, but there were also government officials, educators, writers and artists. The older ones especially found it difficult to adapt to their new circumstances. The passage of time has caused the majority of the current aid recipients to be more recent immigrants.

Today, a new generation Polish Americans is upholding the tradition of providing assistance to individuals who are at risk or in crisis due to poverty, mental or physical illness. Their support enables Polish Assistance to bring stability to these individuals by providing basic needs for housing, food and healthcare.

Polish Assistance was incorporated in 1956 by Count and Countess Jan and Maria Dembinski. Polish Assistance is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit charitable organization that files annual reports with the State of New York as well as the Internal Revenue Service.

The organization’s President is Jadwiga Palade, a member since 1972. She had previously served as a Director, Vice President and became President in 2006. The organization had only two previous presidents – Maria Dembinska and Teresa Sulimirska. There are nine members of Board of Directors and 24 Voting Members of the organization. The organization is supported by many long-time members who through donations want to support our efforts. We are very grateful to them. Not all are first generation Americans, some are second. Some have no connection to our community, they just believe in our cause. Again, we value each one of you.

Polish Assistance’s main fundraiser was the annual *Bal Polonaise*. 57th Annual Bal Polonaise was held in 2016 at the magnificent Grand Ballroom of the Plaza Hotel in New York City. This enchanting evening allowed Polish Assistance to fund their needs. The Plaza has been host to many of the *Bal Polonaise* fundraisers. Polish Assistance’s fundraising efforts today need to adjust to the current philanthropic environment and Polish Assistance is now concentrating on individual contributions and other capital raising campaigns.

GENEROUS IN COMPASSION

The official poverty guideline is at \$11,880 per person and \$16,020 for a family of two. Most of the applicants sadly fall well below these criteria.

How do we choose the recipients and how are the funds distributed?

Each applicant goes through an initial review process by the Grant Committee, including Dr. Nina Thiessen, and is reappraised annually. Once an applicant becomes our beneficiary, we are usually committing to his/her support for their remaining lifetime as most of our recipients have little chance for improvement of quality of life. In most cases, these individuals are seniors with serious health issues that have no means of supporting themselves. We also provide assistance to patients in a "long term acute care hospital", the city's safety-net provider of healthcare services. At times when emergencies happen, or when the condition is temporary, we give temporary assistance for a very short time.

How much assistance do we provide annually?

The simple answer is that the amount and size of our annual budget depends on donations. Aid varies between \$50 to \$300 per individual per month. It is not meant not give full financial support but to assist. Eryka Volker, local community activist as well as Polish Assistance Board Member states most eloquently ***"Funds are much harder to find than those who need our help."***

Who are some of our recent recipients?

Our oldest recipient is 93 years old who has been receiving assistance since 2005. The longest supplemental assistance given, since 1996, is to 81-year-old disabled woman confined to a wheelchair who can't make it on public assistance alone.

We provided financial support for 7 months to a waitress going through breast cancer treatments as she was unable to hold a full-time position. We're happy to report she was well enough to return to Poland this summer.

This summer we mourned passing of Teresa Zak of the Coler Rehabilitation and Nursing Care Center. She was one of our beneficiaries for the past 11 years. Unfortunately, we were not able to locate her next of kin.

What is the most satisfying part of being part of our organization?

Making a difference in someone's life. Last year domestic violence left 3 children without parents. They are under loving care of family members. With the initial help of Polish Assistance and others in the Polish community, the family is on the mend. To quote a family member, "We thank you for your support, now please use your resources to help those who need it more than us".

What is the hardest part of our mission?

Due to budget constraints – we have to prioritize who receives assistance. Most deserve it, but making a priority of one person's misery over another's is heart-wrenching. Another dilemma is being non-judgmental. Let's take the case of 79-year old Janina Kokorudz who was evicted from her apartment where she lived for 20 years and whose companion took advantage of her. Some will say "She should have known better. She was naïve." But the reality is that the individual took advantage of an elderly person, took her rent and other monies because "he lost his job and needed it for himself." She has no money, she has no income, and she does not speak English. She was homeless with no family. She would not survive on the streets. Our goal is to send her back to Poland. There is no time nor resources to untangle the mess her affairs are in.

With the help of donations from supporters such as the local community, we will continue to provide assistance so that our elderly can live out their years with dignity. Together we will make a difference and we thank you in advance for your support.

To make a donation to Polish Assistance and its beneficiaries, please send a check to Polish Assistance, 15 East 65th St., New York, NY 10065 or donate on line at www.polishassistance.org. Applications for assistance are available on the website or by calling 212-570-5560.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Jadwiga Palade (*President*), Nina Thiessen, M.D. (*Vice President*), Christopher Kurczaba, Esq (*Secretary*), Eva Skibicki (*Treasurer*), Eva Meyerhoff, Nina Mlodzinska de Rovira, Lady Blanka Rosenstiel, Eryka Volker, Greg White.

A copy of the most recent annual report is available from the State of New York Department of Law, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, New York, 10271. Returns are posted on the New York State Charities Search website www.bartlett.oag.state.ny.us/Char_Forms/search_charities.jsp Registration with a state agency does not constitute or imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by that state. A copy of the annual report and registration filed may also be obtained by contacting Polish Assistance, Inc. at 15 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10065, (212)570-5560 or office@polishassistance.org.