

The Polish & Slavic Center

Brooklyn, New York



The Polish & Slavic Center (PSC), a non-profit social and cultural services organization founded in 1972 primarily serves the Polish-American community of New York and New Jersey, which is the largest concentration of Polish-Americans in the United States. With about 50,000 members (and growing at the rate of 500 new members every month) the PSC is the largest Polish-American organization on the East Coast. Without engaging itself politically, the PSC serves the entire Polish and Slavic community, uniting rather than dividing, and whenever necessary mobilizing social forces for an effective fight for the rights due our ethnic group.

The idea to establish the Polish & Slavic Center arose from the actual social needs of the Polish-American ethnic group to provide a kind of protection umbrella for immigrants arriving from Slavic countries. It often takes a long time from the very first moment when an idea is born to its realization. For those for whom the dream itself and its rapid implementation carries great importance and prestige, the ground under feet can seem to be on fire. They usually have to overcome many obstacles, prejudices, and legal regulations before this "nesting" turns into a beautiful "bird." Two such ideas originated in the middle of the 1970s in minds of Reverend Longin Tolczyk, who was working at that time among Polish-American immigrants in New York City and a small group of people around him. These ideas and dreams became a reality when in 1972 the Polish & Slavic Center was formed and in 1977 through the Polish & Slavic Center Rev. Longin Tolczyk formed the Polish & Slavic Federal Credit Union and the first group of members received their passbooks and made their first deposits.

The Polish ethnic group had been for years overlooked by City and State administrations. It took many years and hard work for the Polish & Slavic Center to be considered in the city's budget for financial support. Following numerous discussions and even demonstrations and talks with the Presidents of all the boroughs of the City, the Board of Estimate allocated the Center annual funds in the amount of \$87,000. The official resolution was accepted on August 15, 1974. Since that date the Polish & Slavic Center has been officially included on the list of the regularly subsidized ethnic organizations.

During the next few years, managed by consecutive boards of directors, the Center grew and developed. Presently the organization has two buildings in Greenpoint, at 177 Kent Street and at 176 Java Street and has its offices in Clifton, NJ, in Ridgewood, Queens and at St. Marks Place, Manhattan. Currently, the Center receives (annually) approximately \$2,000,000 in sponsorship funds from the City towards programs that provide thousands of services to its members free of charge each year. Additionally, each year, the Center

receives new programs that ultimately benefit our members and are provided to them free of charge.

Our outstanding results would not be possible without our members. Each of you have contributed to our success and reaching new goals. **The Center's existence depends solely on the support of our members and the annual contributions that enable the Center to provide the following programs:**

■ **IMMIGRATION AND LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM.** The main goal of the program is helping newcomers from Poland and other Eastern European countries in family-based immigration proceedings, assisting in adjustment of status petitions, organizing English and American history courses and preparing for citizenship exams. At present, the Program continues to handle various immigrant matters which are changing according to changing law. Nevertheless, the major part of our activity still remains adjustment of status and family sponsorship petitions. Assisting in the naturalization proceedings, including filing petitions and organizing courses is another significant field of our service. Free immigration services are provided to those who qualify for the City funded program for all those who are in an unfortunate financial condition. In the year 2002 about 1,000 immigration related matters were handled by our office.

■ **COLONY FOR NEW IMMIGRANT CHILDREN, AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM.** Colony for New Immigrant Children was founded in 1988 and is designed to care for children of working parents. There are activities for children after school hours, including pick up service from three local schools, hot meals, help with homework, as well as instruction in Polish history and culture.

■ **PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM.** This program provides universal pre-kindergarten services for four year old children. It offers a bilingual Polish/English curriculum and instruction.

■ **THE "KRAKUS" SENIOR CITIZEN'S CLUB.** Krakus Luncheon Club gathers senior citizens daily for joint meals, ensures active recreation programs and offers social care. Through the sub-program "City Meals on Wheels" it takes meals to the homes of the sick, and cooperates with the "John Paul II Friendship Center". All told, 450 meals are served every day.

■ **JOHN PAUL II FRIENDSHIP CENTER.** Polish & Slavic Center became the official sponsor of this Senior Center on September 1, 1996. We are located in the Hall of Saint Stanislaw's Catholic Church in Manhattan. The contract between Polish & Slavic Center and the New York City Department for the Aging provides home-delivered meals for our members daily. Our other daily activities include: domino, English classes, trips, nutrition education and entertainment.

■ **EXTENDED SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM.** This program has been in operation for twenty five years and has given assistance to thousands of low-income, elderly and immigrant families. The main office is located at 176 Java Street, Brooklyn and a branch at 104-A St. Marks Place, New York. The assistance ren-

dered ranges from housing and protective services to health-related and information and referral services.

■ **COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM.** This program lends support to individuals in their daily problems through a network of local agencies and institutional contracts, and through the social organizations addresses of other ethnic groups. It addresses various needs of the poor, the endangered that require immediate intervention and many immigration matters.

■ **FREE ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES.** Various levels of English as a Second Language Courses are provided after working hours to members and the public free of charge.

■ **ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES.** Numerous levels of English Language Courses are available to everyone with multiple classes provided at convenient hours for the working man and woman.

■ **POLISH & SLAVIC CENTER SCHOLARSHIP FUND PROGRAM.** This program awards scholarships to PSC members each year for colleges and graduate schools to encourage the young to continue their studies and supports their endeavors.

■ **POLISH & SLAVIC CENTER FENCING PROGRAM.** This recreational program is offered to members of the Polish & Slavic Center and provides, free of charge, fencing classes for children.

■ **POLISH & SLAVIC CENTER PHOTOGRAPHY LAB.** The lab makes available a black and white photography laboratory and film development courses which are available to members at various hours of the day.

■ **POLISH & SLAVIC CENTER CAFETERIA.** The cafeteria provides sumptuous and inexpensive meals for its members.

Additionally, each year, we provide financial support to as many as 30 various Polish organizations. The center offers and sponsors many activities for all age groups such as art and crafts, ballet classes, annual Christmas parties, as well as fundraising events for ill children and orphanages. The Center sponsors many cultural events presented in a nineteenth century church building, which has been totally renovated. The original, hundred years old, European-made stained glass windows are intact, and form an important part of the decor.

Even though the Polish & Slavic Center offers many programs you have read about, the needs of our community are still greater, and therefore, we will continue to strive for more services to our members.