



Polanki, Inc.

The Polish Women's Cultural Club of Milwaukee Newsletter

April (kwiecień) 2022

Polanki Membership Meeting Monday April 18, 2022 6:30 p.m. Polish Center of Wisconsin

Program: Mark Dillon: Celebrating Shared Polish Connections: American Council for Polish Culture and Milwaukee: A look back at ACPC traditions since 1948

Hostesses: Ewa Barczyk-Pease, Judy Chattin, Nadine Flemming, Suzanne Holcomb, Diane Holytz, and Laurie Ufnowski

To join the Zoom meeting:

<https://wisconsin-edu.zoom.us/j/94637263548?pwd=YVVuMzBJL1ZxR0lPVEFyM1B2VjNCQT09>

Meeting ID: 946 3726 3548 Passcode: 927741
Dial by your location
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) and enter
Meeting ID: 946 3726 3548

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From the President's Desk



(Photo courtesy of Laurie Ufnowski)

Happy Easter! I can hardly believe Easter is almost here and hopefully spring and the sun will be here soon.

We had an absolutely beautiful Awards Tea. I cannot thank the Awards Committee and the Awards Tea Committee enough for all the hard work and dedication to make this such a wonderful event. The buffet tables with the fabulous sweet and savory treats and the gorgeous floral centerpieces made the event spectacular. We as an organization can be very proud. The award recipients were very well deserving and thoroughly enjoyed the event, all very fine examples of the terrific youth in our community.

The next few months will be very busy for us as an organization. Please consider giving a few hours of your time to help us out. It will be so very much appreciated. Have your calendars available at our April 18th "in-person" meeting at the Polish Center. I am very excited that we will be meeting "in-person" once again. We will also Zoom the meeting for those who prefer not to attend.

President's Message, continued

There are many things to volunteer for and I really need everyone to participate when they can. I truly believe all of you will answer our plea for help so we can maintain our great organization. I am personally asking that you please help when you can.

Finally, I want to wish everyone a "Blessed Beautiful Easter Season." Enjoy these special moments with family and friends. These memories become treasures as time goes on that cannot be replaced. Thank you all for your commitment to Polanki. We are very fortunate to have you all as members.

Laurie Ufnowski
2022 Polanki President



April Birthdays

4/01 Carol Sobanski Powers
4/09 Barbara Sadowski
4/10 Kathy Wieczorek
4/11 Sue Zblewski
4/21 Elena Shebelski
4/29 Margie Hess

May Birthdays

5/06 Krystyna Matusiak
5/08 Julie Lenkiewicz
5/09 Dorothy Broihier
5/11 Lucille Trebatoski
5/15 Angela Pienkos
5/17 Margaret (Meg) Skwierawski
5/20 Nadine Flemming
5/25 Marcia Korducki
5/25 Barbara Stankiewicz
5/26 Valerie Lukaszewicz
5/27 Claire Anderson
5/28 Lynn Adams
5/28 Jennifer Konecny



This month we have received no other reports of illness from Polanki members during the last month. Please continue to remember Polanki members who are confined to their homes and greet them with a card, an email or a phone call, especially during this Easter season.

If you know of any members who are sick or who would appreciate sunshine greetings, please contact Judy Chattin or Edith Malson:

Edith Malson
(414) 744-9412-home

Judy Chattin
(414) 425-7965-home
(414) 429-2196-cell
j.chattin@sbcglobal.net



A Reminder: 2022 Annual Membership Dues

Please note that your annual active or sustaining membership renewal is due. ***To renew, fill out the membership form (included with this mailing) and send it with your payment to Lynn Adams, Membership Chair, at the Polanki mail box.*** You can also send the form and payment directly to Lynn at her home address. ***Note that members who have not renewed by May 31 will no longer receive the newsletter and will not be included in the 2022 member directory.*** Thank you in advance for your prompt renewals. Your continued support is important for Polanki's future success and planned activities that we hope to resume later in 2022, including Polish Fest.



Easter Bazaar Photo by Ewa Barczyk-Pease

Polanki Stands With Ukraine

By Kathy Murkowski

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, nearly 2.6 million or 60% of the exodus of refugees have crossed the Polish border. Poles have opened their homes, hearts and wallets to the refugees.

The Kosciuszko Foundation and Folkowisko, The Folk Society, have created an infrastructure on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border. They have set up tents to distribute food, medicine, supplies and they have given the refugees hope and love. The Foundation is also working with the Recipe for Independence Foundation in Warsaw to prepare daily meals and welcome packages for refugees.

The Kosciuszko Foundation cannot do this work without our help. To date they have received over \$600,000 in donations. The Polanki membership responded to the need and voted to give the foundation \$5,000 for this humanitarian aid. We thank you for your generosity.

Tadeusz Kosciuszko motto
"For Your Freedom and Ours"

STAND WITH UKRAINE



Polanki Book Club via Zoom: *One Star Away* by Imogene Salva

By Ewa Barczyk-Pease

DATE: MAY 5th, 2022 THURSDAY TIME: 7:00 p.m. Central

We will be joined by the author, Imogene Salva, and editor Joanna Pelszynska and hear the inspirational story of Imogene's mother's World War II experiences. The author reconstructs her mother's wartime experiences of being forced as an 8 year old from her home in Poland to Siberia, Persia and India, eventually settling in Chicago. The author frames the story through the eyes of her mother and in spite of the horrendous hardships endured by her mother, along with thousands of Poles, the book provides hope, inspiration, resilience, and love. You can purchase the book from local bookstores such as Boswell or on Amazon. The paperback edition is available for \$14.99 or \$4.99 for the Kindle e-book.



If you have any questions, contact Ewa Barczyk-Pease (414-412-6456), who will moderate the discussion via Zoom with the author and editor.

ZOOM LINK

<https://wisconsin-edu.zoom.us/j/99135454412?pwd=ZUV4R0IML0JIN3hHeWJhRUNIR2dMdz09>

Meeting ID: 991 3545 4412 Passcode: 084097

One tap mobile +13126266799, 99135454412# US (Chicago)

Garden Cleanup for Kosciuszko Monument

By Susan Mikoś

Saturday, April 29, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Kosciuszko Park, Lincoln Avenue and 9th Street



Help beautify the gardens around the Kosciuszko Monument. Bring your own tools (rakes, shovels, weeders, trowels, clippers, trimmers) or use ours.

Future dates will be the last Saturday of each month through October. Check Facebook for details and weather cancellations: Kosciuszko Milwaukee Monument.

Questions? Susan Mikoś sgmikos@yahoo.com/414-628-1937

Photo courtesy of Susan Mikoś

Songs of the Polish Soul Concert on May 15

By Susan Mikoś

On Sunday, May 15 at 4 p.m., Polanki will present a special concert of Polish and original music at All Saints Lutheran Church, 9131 S. Howell Ave. in Oak Creek. Entitled “Songs of the Polish Soul,” the concert will be performed by Kinga E. Vnuk and the Modern Minstrels.

The ensemble was founded by Kinga E. Vnuk (vocals, piano, harp) and also includes Tatiana Migliaccio (violin), Ingrid Tihcheva (cello), Marie Venne (flute, backup vocals), and Julia Vnuk (violin, backup vocals).

The program features Polish folk and Renaissance pieces, original songs by Kinga E. Vnuk, and several poems by Polish Renaissance poet Jan Kochanowski set to music composed by Kinga E. Vnuk.

Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584), one of the greatest Polish writers, is also considered the most important Slavic poet before the nineteenth century. A master of lyric poetry, he wrote a variety of meditative “Songs,” numerous light “Trifles,” and nineteen heartbreaking “Laments” about the death of his three-year-old daughter, Urszula. Kochanowski’s famous poem “On the Linden Tree” is especially beloved by Poles everywhere.



Kinga E. Vnuk is a pianist, organist, harpist, vocalist and composer of original music for performance and worship. Born in Poland to a family deeply rooted in music, her formal music education began at the age of four. Following secondary and post-secondary studies centered on her musical ambitions, Kinga graduated with a master’s degree in music education from the Academy of Music in Łódź, Poland.

Since coming to the United States in 2001, Kinga has worked as the music director for a local southeast Wisconsin church, serving as the choir director and primary pianist. In addition to writing contemporary music for piano and harp, Kinga has performed for numerous concerts and events in the region, including the Polish Center of Wisconsin and Polish Fest. In recent years, Kinga has added painting to her repertoire of artistic endeavors. One of her paintings is shown above.

Following the program there will be an exhibition of paintings by Kinga E. Vnuk and a reception in honor of ***Polanki Life Member Edith Malson***, who generously sponsored the concert.

Tickets are \$10 and will be available at the April membership meeting, at the door on the day or the concert, or by calling 414-332-1728.

Photos courtesy of Kinga Vnuk

Polish Easter Traditions

By Ewa Barczyk-Pease

Easter is the time of Jesus Christ's Resurrection. The Polish tradition that starts this feast is the blessing of food, commonly referred to as "święconką." On Holy Saturday, people bring decorated baskets filled with a lamb (butter, sugar or cake in the lamb shape or a ceramic one) symbolizing the Risen Christ; colored eggs or "pisanki," symbols of new life, resurrection and Christ's victory over death; bread, the symbol of the Body of Christ as the "Bread of Life" as well as the dignity of people who should never lack bread; cold cuts, kielbasa, salt and pepper mixed together as a symbol of purification, water and cakes, which are symbols of prosperity as well as the sacrifice of the Lamb. The basket is decorated with boxwood, flowers and covered with a linen embroidered cloth. After the blessing ceremony, there is a tradition to walk the basket around the house three times to scare off the "evil spirits."

The blessed food "święconka" is eaten for a festive Easter breakfast after prayers are said and then everyone exchanges Easter wishes while sharing the blessed eggs. Some of the foods are used to make the traditional Easter soup "żurek" and also are part of the big Easter meal along with Polish vegetable salad as well as other salads, hard boiled eggs in mayonnaise, horseradish—a reminder of the bitterness of Christ's sacrifice, cold cuts, cheeses and of course a variety of cakes, including "Mazurek." The second day of Easter, i.e., Easter Monday, is called Śmigus Dyngus, a day of sprinkling each other with water—particularly popular among the young people.



Photo courtesy of Ewa Barczyk-Pease

Polish Costumes Available at April Membership Meeting

By Marjorie Piechowski

A number of Polish costumes have been donated to Polanki from a Polish dance group that has disbanded. These will be available for members to purchase at the April membership meeting. Donations from these costumes will be added to Polanki's costume fund to help preserve and display the vintage costumes that Polanki purchased from Ada Dziwanowska, founder of the Syrena Polish Folk Dance Ensemble.



Pricing for various costumes includes:

Synthetic and wool skirts: \$5 to \$20 (\$20 for Polish folk art design wool)

Blouses (tourist type): \$5 to \$25 (\$25 with detailed embroidery, smocking, etc.)

Vests (Polish-American inspired): \$5 to \$45 (depending on the beading and embroidery condition)

Photo courtesy of Ewa Barczyk-Pease

Polanki's Assistance to Laski Has a Far Reach

By Marjorie Piechowski

For many years Polanki has contributed to Laski, a school for blind children near Warsaw. We have featured stories in the newsletter about Laski, its founder and its many services to the children who have attended Laski over the years. Over 174,000 Ukrainian children have already enrolled in Polish schools and kindergartens since the Russian invasion. Laski is among those schools, extending its comprehensive services to provide shelter for blind children and their families from Ukraine. The Laski web page notes: *"Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, we have admitted 15 children with pattern dysfunction and additional disabilities to schools and boarding schools to the Centre in Laski. This brings with it many challenges – the main barrier is language, but also inequality in the educational level. The center's employees have experience in welcoming foreigners, which is why we approach the subject with calmness and openness."*

The Polish Museum of America, which Polanki also supports, sponsored a benefit concert for Laski on April 10 that included an exhibit of art works created by Laski students. We recently received the following letter of thanks from Laski for our recent contribution, which has helped Laski in its outreach to the hard-hit Ukrainians.

Dear Members of POLANKI!

We would like to thank you cordially for supporting the activity of the Institute for the Blind at Laski with your generous donation in the amount of 1800 USD. In this way you help the blind whom our Institute educates and prepares for independent living.

Our special approach and understanding the needs of the blind is appreciated by the graduates. Zbyszek, who has worked at the telephone exchange in Laski for 26 years, went to Special School here, and also lived in the dormitory, on a certain sunny November day started to day-dream and recalled:

"I always liked Thursdays at school. "Civic Education" was the first class. The teacher explained the news from newspapers and from the television to us. She also talked about medical specializations and to which doctor one should go with a specific problem.

"Natural Environment" was the next class. Those were my favourite lessons! Once a month, the whole class - 7 people in total- went to Warsaw. Once, the teacher took us to her neighbourhood. It was very cool! We went to different shops, and she said, "Can you smell that? It's a grocery shop and it's butcher's it's a pharmacy." She also told us what we could buy in those shops and where to go to pay. In the pharmacy we had an appointment. We could go up to the counter and buy something. We also went to the Central Station. We got to know the escalator there. The teacher taught us how to buy a ticket at the ticket office, what to say.

And in the evenings... we had such absorbing chats about culture in the dormitory. I loved them. The teacher taught us how to brew tea, coffee, how to set the table. To this day I remember - "a spoon at 13.00, and a glass at 12.00..." It is a pity that those years had passed so quickly."

Thank you again for all the help provided in favour of our organisation. We are sending greetings and we always remember you in prayer.

Yours sincerely,

Justyna Grochowska, Senior Fundraising Specialist
Donation Department

2022 College Achievement Awards Tea



Paul Wagner with Marcel Kas
recipient of the Elizabeth Wagner Memorial award



Katherine Thome, Pianist

Photos courtesy of Susan Mikoś

2022 College Achievement Awards Tea



2022 Award Recipients



Joanne Barndt, Awards Committee Chair



Photos above and below courtesy of Susan Mikoś



Photo courtesy of Ewa Barczyk-Pease



Emilia “Milka” C. Brzyski

By Richard Brzyski

Editor’s Note: This biography of his mother was written by Richard Brzyski, who along with his wife, recently made a contribution to support Polanki’s college achievement awards in honor of his mother and father. The awards tea program had very short biographies of both parents. Next month’s newsletter will include the longer biography of his father.

Milka was born in eastern Poland near the town of Stanislawow (this is now in Ukraine), the eldest daughter of the Dziuba family. The family included father Boleslaw, mother Aniela, grandmother Anna, and then four sisters and a brother. Living on the family farm, life was good in Poland. Then World War II started.

In February 1940, the Russians came and after an interrogation, the family was deported to a camp in Siberia. Only a suitcase of clothes for the family, leaving behind their farm, home, furniture, and personal things. They, along with many other “deported” Polish families, were actually considered “prisoners of war.” One family story says that this was the start of Ukraine nationalist genocide against Polish people and the Russian communists “saved” the family by deporting them to Siberia. Living in Siberia was an ordeal, with a harsh climate and an isolated region with meager food rations and no comfort items that we are now used to having. Unfortunately, Milka’s youngest sister died in Siberia. Basically, the family did whatever it took to survive.

Sometime in 1942, the Russians changed their focus to the German attacks on Russia. They transferred control of all the “prisoners of war,” Poles and others in Siberia, to British jurisdiction. The British started moving the “displaced persons” to safer regions. Milka’s father was “drafted” into the Polish army under General Sikorski and later the Polish army organized by General Anders in Africa. The balance of the family along with other Polish families started on a long journey from Siberia through Russia and then through British-held Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and India. Finally, the family arrived in a British camp, “Bwana Mkubwa,” in Rhodesia.

The next seven years in Africa were also challenging but it was better than Siberia. Everyone in the camp tried to have a more normal existence during the war. Pictured is the Dziuba family. Milka is in the last row behind grandma and between her mom and dad.

Bwana Mkubwa was in a vast jungle and also isolated. The climate was extremely hot, dusty, and uncomfortable, with no relief from the heat. Malaria was rampant in the camp. They had a Polish priest who held masses in the camp. Milka claims that she never saw any lions. At night, the jungle came alive and you could hear the roar of lions and lots of other animals. At night, nobody went out of the camp exploring the jungle. Nobody liked snakes !

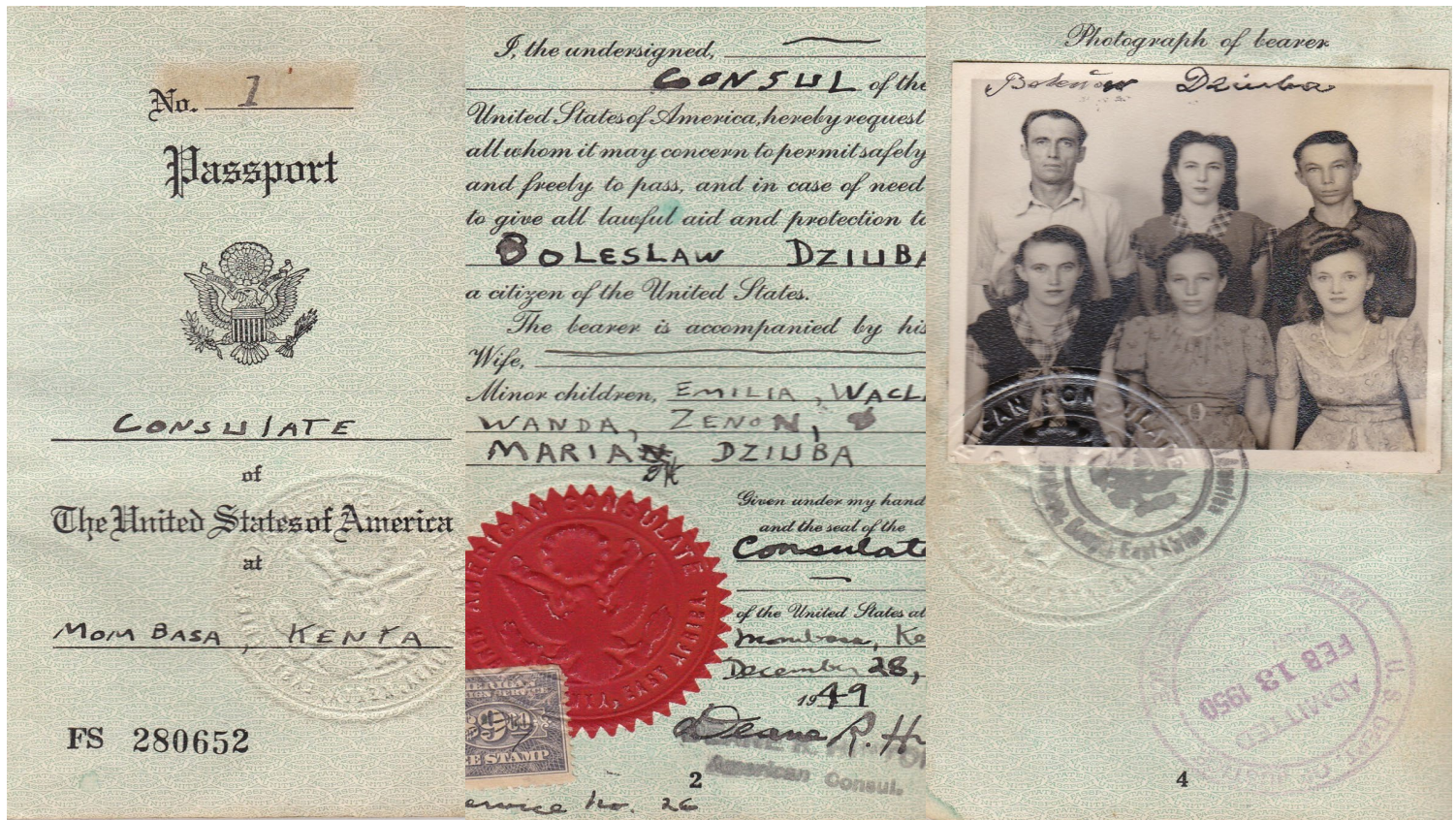
Anna and Aniela worked as cooks for the camp. That left Milka in charge of her younger siblings. According to stories told by her youngest sister, she was strict and demanding. There were no luxuries at Bwana MKubwa. What was important was the family was together and thriving. Eventually there was a school and education was important to Milka. She always said that math “matematyki” was her favorite subject.



With the end of the war, the situation was changing again. This time the British started relocating the “displaced persons.” If they didn’t want to return to Poland (and not many did), the British were making arrangements in

other commonwealth countries. Australia and Canada were popular among the camp residents and those countries were willing to accept the refugees. Milka had friends that went to both countries. She corresponded with the Australians but never did have a chance to travel and visit. She visited her friends in Canada and likewise they visited the family in Milwaukee.

Of course, the younger siblings wanted to stay in Africa. This was the best “home” they knew. Since Boleslaw was a US citizen, he started working with US consulate people to get passports and travel arrangements to return to Milwaukee, WI for the entire family. This took more years than anticipated. Getting birth records and documentation via mail from Milwaukee was slow. The British camp staff also started advising any remaining refugees to get out of Rhodesia. There were roaming gangs of nationalists that were attempting to force the British out of their colonized country. The family moved from Rhodesia to Kenya. The efforts were successful and one family treasure is the passport the family used to return to Milwaukee. Passport #1 was issued by the US Consulate at Mombasa, Kenya.



Boleslaw and his children were all US citizens and were issued this “family” passport only for returning to the United States. Milka’s mother and grandmother had to wait in Africa until Boleslaw established himself and could arrange for them to come and rejoin the family. All the travel was at the expense of the Dziuba family.

In February 1950, ten years after the family was forced to leave Poland, they sailed into New York harbor and saw the beautiful sight of the Statue of Liberty – so meaningful to the family who had been through so much. They continued until they arrived and settled in Milwaukee, WI. Milka’s mother and grandmother arrived in November of 1950.

The family is together, their epic journey is over, and they’re looking forward to the American dream ... life is better for all of them.

No stranger to work, Milka's first job was as a short order cook. She married Tomasz Brzyski in 1951 and then had a son. She continued working at various jobs until her retirement. A notable job was at the Robert A Johnston cookie factory. I remember the broken cookies that mom occasionally brought home. They were always a treat.

Mom loved hunting, fishing, and of course mushroom picking. Mom's crowning fishing experience was the hour long battle with a muskie that ended up as a trophy in our family room. Mom and dad caught a lot of fish over the years – dad was in charge of cleaning the catches. When it came to mushrooms, mom could spot them in the woods while in a moving car. Mushrooms didn't have a chance when mom was out in the woods. The best day was when the freezer was full of mushrooms. The worst day was when the last bag of mushrooms was used. Then we all looked forward to the next picking season.

Cleaning, cooking, and freezing of the picked mushrooms was done by both mom and dad. That's teamwork! Mom's cooking and baking was legendary among family and friends. Most of the holidays, and especially Christmas, New Years, and Easter were feasts. Both mom and dad really enjoyed hosting parties for family and friends and this kept the extended family connected and together. For mom, I guess the responsibility was hers as the eldest of her sisters and brother. Every weekend mom would bake a yeast sweet egg bread (I believe her own recipe). The large batch of dough made a bread and then rolls with poppy seed or prune filling. Pączki before Lent were a family favorite.



Mom and dad were able to travel to Poland twice, visiting dad's hometown and his brothers and their families. On one of the trips, grandpa went with my parents. Their spoken Polish really improved after spending some time with family in Poland.

Mom and dad moved from Milwaukee to Sugar Camp, Wisconsin for a couple of years. They enjoyed the north woods, doing lots of fishing, hunting, and mushroom picking. They made friends among the Polish community around Sugar Camp – the Polish church there was St. Kunegunda. Here is mom with her hand painted mailbox with mushrooms and Krasnoludki. Eventually they moved to Plover, Wisconsin, always keeping Polish spirit and traditions in their lives and living the Polish dream in the USA.

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Polanki information and the Polanki link to Amazon Smile is on the Website at www.polanki.org

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A Note from the Editor

Thank you to all Polanki members who generously provided ideas, pictures and stories for this issue.

Please note that birthdays now will be listed for the upcoming month because of the change in our meeting date. Several members have requested this change to allow cards to be sent on time. If you have ideas for future stories or potential meeting programs, please submit them to me at 414-963-9055 or marjorie.piechowsk@sbcglobal.net

Marjorie Piechowski
2022 Polanki Newsletter Editor



(Photo courtesy of Marjorie Piechowski)

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