

An Astute Practitioner of Serendipity

Malgorzata ‘Gosia’ Bondyra, talented and creative



Gosia Bondyra and Michael Carnahan, Photo by Rich Poremski

Serendipity: “The occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way” ... and this explains exactly what occurred when Malgorzata ‘Gosia’ Bondyra took advantage of an unfortunate situation and developed it into a very fortunate one. Malgorzata, President of PNA Lodge 238 and Vice-President of PNA Council 21, both in Baltimore, Maryland is a graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Erickson School of Aging. She received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Management of Aging Services.

Gosia attended classes both on campus and online as she worked toward her May graduation. Her curriculum included serving as an internship at the Seven Oaks Senior

Center in Baltimore County. She developed an idea of conducting a hands-on Polish cooking class and at the same time she would have made a special meal for the residents.

The scheduled ambitious event had to be cancelled when the pandemic novel coronavirus/COVID-19 burst onto the scene in late-March. The center was abruptly closed, as was almost every other non-essential public venue in Maryland, due to the governor’s declared State of Emergency. The governor then also later declared a strict civil lockdown. And that is when Gosia adroitly pivoted from receiving the very disappointing news to developing some very good news from it.

In a serendipity-inspired moment,

Gosia rose to the occasion after Kathleen Young, the Seven Oak’s director, proposed to Gosia that the Polish cooking classes be broadcast live to the seniors on the center’s Facebook page. Gosia readily accepted the innovative concept and decided that the class, now many classes, would be conducted and broadcast from her own home kitchen.

The Seven Oaks staff and volunteers enthusiastically endorsed and supported the very unique proposal. It was also a very beneficial win-win situation for both Seven Oaks and Gosia since the arrangement would allow her to completely fulfill her accreditation towards graduation in May. Michael Carnahan, officer of Council 21 and Lodge 339, skillfully undertook the recording, editing,



photographing, promoting, and web-casting of the project.

And so, the new Polish cuisine program, “Cooking with Gosia”, took off! The classes averaged 1 hour each, presented twice a week since introduction, and usually with two splendid dishes presented during each program. The 15 classes, and still counting, presented so far include the traditional Polish dishes everyone knows like pierogi and gołabki. But

she has also exhibited other delicious dishes like rosól - Polish chicken soup, sałatka z kurczaka - chicken salad made from the soup's chicken, the ever popular zapiekanki - open-faced toasted sandwiches which is a famous street food throughout Poland, and sałatka 10-cio warstwowa - a fabulous salad made up of 10 layers with each having different ingredients.



The serendipity cascade continued via social media networking. The Seven Oaks Facebook page now has 697 viewers following the cooking classes, skyrocketing up from the originally planned class of just 20 seniors. Gosia's culinary enthusiasts have logged-on from the United States, Poland, and even from down-under Australia. The center's director said that other Baltimore County senior centers have informed her that they are intrigued and inspired by the Seven Oaks extraordinary undertaking.



Gosia noted that she was thankful for the two PNA college scholarships she received because they helped to make it possible for her to attend

the UMBC. Recently, UMBC has recognized her outstanding academic accomplishments and universal community involvements with a congratulatory email from the Dean of the Erickson School, topped off with a long and comprehensive media interview by the university's Communications Manager for the Humanities and Social Sciences that will be published and highlighted on the UMBC website.

The virtual cooking classes will be part of the Baltimore PNA's cultural outreach program. So please do rattle those pots and pans, and get ready to storm the kitchen and cook up a delicious Polish delicacy in your own house. To view the "Cooking with Gosia" hands-on demonstration videos, and the accompanying written recipes, please visit the PNA Council 21 website: **www.PNACouncil21.com**.



SMACZNEGO!!

*Story by Richard Poremski,
President PNA Council 21, Baltimore
Photos by Michael Carnahan*



Thank You Frontline Workers!



Registered Nurse and PNA member Anna Wierzbicka receives a bouquet of flowers from PNA President Frank Spula and PNA National Secretary Alicja Kuklinska. Anna is a nurse in the Intensive Care Unit of Community First Medical Center, a neighborhood hospital on Chicago's northwest side.

The beautiful flowers were presented to Anna, a former Director, as a thank you for her dedication and many hours of hard work on the frontlines during this Covid-19 pandemic. The PNA greatly values all of the front line workers whether they are police, firemen, paramedics, doctors, nurses, utility worker and the many more who work and face the risk of becoming ill. *Bardzo Dziękuję* to Anna and every person who provides essential services every day during this critical health crisis.