

# October "Polish American Heritage Month"

A National Celebration of Polish History, Culture and Pride!

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## Pride in Our Heritage

The Polish American Journal proudly joins Polish American organizations, schools, churches, libraries, and cultural groups throughout the United States in celebrating **Polish American Heritage Month**. As Polish Americans, we have so many outstanding accomplishments of which we can be proud. The most influential religious leader on Earth, Pope John Paul II, shares our heritage. Throughout the 1970's and 80's Poles stood alone in their struggle for freedom against communist tyranny; they became the beacon of hope for all other Eastern bloc countries and proved it was possible for small countries to receive their national identity and break away from the U.S.S.R. The contributions which Poles have made to science, technology, music, art and literature are outstanding. Yes, indeed we can be proud of our Polish American heritage.

The concept of designating a special month in which to celebrate our heritage was begun in Pennsylvania in 1981 at the suggestion of Michael Blichasz, a Polish American activist in Philadelphia. At that time, August was designated Polish American Heritage Month and it was only celebrated in Pennsylvania. However, in 1986, Blichasz, president of the Eastern Pennsylvania District of the Polish American Congress and of the Polish American Cultural Center in Philadelphia, made a proposal at a national PAC meeting that Heritage Month be celebrated nation wide. His proposal was adopted, however, the month was changed to October, which coincides with the death of General Casimir Pulaski. The celebration in October is also more practical because it allows school children to participate in activities which would not be possible during the summer month of August. Today, all Polish American communities celebrate Heritage Month.


Because of active participation by Polish Americans across the country, more and more children are learning about the contributions of Poles and Polish Americans. These take the form of guest speakers at schools, exhibits within schools, ceremonies at town and city halls and memorials, exhibits and displays in shopping malls, and social events such as dances and food festivals. Do you volunteer at any such event? If not, you should. You will be doing your part to help spread the good word about Poles, and help to preserve our heritage here in the United States. It is up to us as parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents to instill Polish pride in the younger generation. If we don't do it, no one else will, and that would be a tragedy and the end of a lineage strong in faith, family and community. One of the greatest benefits of Polish American Heritage Month is that it causes us to take time from our daily routine to pay special attention to our heritage.

Regardless of what we do to celebrate this month, make a promise to yourself to do something special because you are special, you are a Polish American!

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