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**American Council for Polish Culture
Conducts Youth Leadership Conference.**

By Ted Mirecki

Washington, DC, July 3, 2005 – For the eleventh consecutive year, the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) held a Youth Leadership Conference (YLC) in Washington, D.C. The weeklong conference, from June 19 to 25, 2005, gave a group of young people of Polish descent an opportunity to observe leadership qualities in action by meeting and interacting with successful persons in leadership positions.

Nineteen people from all around the country, ranging from high school seniors to university graduates, attended this year's conference. "It was a group of outstanding young people," said Ted Mirecki of Washington, D.C., conference co-chair. "The questions they put to the presenters and speakers showed a wisdom and sophistication far beyond their years."

The weeklong schedule included presentations by the following speakers:

- Attorney Mark Brzezinski, partner in the firm McGuireWoods; formerly of the National Security Council.
- Jane Cowley, Foreign Affairs Officer in the Bureau for International Organization Affairs, Office of Technical Specialized Agencies, United States Department of State – dinner speaker at Front Page Grill, Arlington VA.
- Peter Earnest, former CIA officer and Executive Director of the International Spy Museum in Washington – a visit to the Museum.
- Stanley Glod, V.P. for Eastern Europe of Boeing Corp., who gave the keynote address entitled "The Essence of Leadership" in the opening session at the American Center of Polish Culture.
- Agnieszka Gnoinska, YLC Alumna, is a Professional Development Associate at Chemonics International, a firm which implements and conducts USAID programs around the world. Her presentation addressed the negative aspects of Poland's image in the press.
- Author Francis Kajencki spoke on his new book *The Pulaski Legion* at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland – a buffet reception followed.
- Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, the longest-serving woman in Congress – meeting held in her office. The Congresswoman also arranged for a tour of the U.S. Capitol.
- Gordon S. Kray, sculptor – conducted guided bus tour of DC's Polish art.

- Dr. John Lenczowski, founder and President of the Institute of World Politics, a graduate school whose goal is educating people for leadership positions in government service.
- Dr. Susanne Lotarski, Director of the U.S. Commerce Department's Office of Eastern Europe, Russia and Independent States.
- Paulina Migalska of Ashoka, an organization that funds social entrepreneurs, individuals who create and conduct social benefit programs around the world. She also presented a talk on aspects of Poland's image in the media. Ms. Migalska, YLC alumna, won ACPC's Louis & Nellie Skalny Scholarship for Polish Studies in 2002.
- Roza Pace, Senior Project Manager, Advocacy Center, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Radek Sikorski, Resident Fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, one of America's largest and most respected "think tanks", and Executive Director of the AEI's New Atlantic Initiative, an international organization dedicated to revitalizing and expanding the Atlantic community of democracies; formerly deputy minister of defense and of foreign affairs in Poland.
- Staff members of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland who spoke on Embassy and Consular operations – followed by buffet lunch.
- Mark Thiessen, Deputy Director of Presidential Speechwriting, the White House.
- Dr. Michael Waller, political scientist on the Institute of World Politics faculty.
- Ben Weiser, journalist for the *New York Times* and author of the book *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission, and the Price He Paid to Save His Country*. Autographed copies of the book were provided to each participant by the Council.
- Agnieszka Zieminska, new director of the Recruitment Support Unit at Chemonics International, where in the past she has managed USAID projects in Poland.

Despite the diversity of the speakers, they delivered a consistent message – several common themes wound themselves through many of the presentations: that leadership consists of service to people and country; the need to maintain high moral standards; the utility of creating and maintaining a network of contacts; how advanced writing skills are necessary for getting ahead.

"I was extremely impressed with the prestige of the speakers and the valuable information presented to us," said Mary Szpak, 17, of Boston, one of the participants. The speakers were also impressed with their audience. "It was really enjoyable," said author Ben Weiser. "They are sharp kids, obviously going places."

Another participant, Jessica Hillyard of Ramsey, Minnesota, a student at the University of Minnesota, summed up her conference experience as follows: "...the past week has provided me with a lot of insight not only into what goes on in Washington, but also on how Polish Americans can have an impact on our country. The key lesson I learned throughout the week was that I, too, can offer something to the United States and to the world as a Polish American if I so desire."

ACPC President Deborah Majka, who appeared at the gala closing dinner along with several members of the Polish American Arts Association of Washington DC, expressed deep appreciation for the extremely well-organized and run conference by Irena and Ted Mirecki and their committee, as well as most sincere thanks to the Embassy of the Republic of Poland and the

American Center of Polish Culture for hosting some of the meetings and to the distinguished leaders/speakers for sharing their expertise in guiding the young Polish American students. In speaking individually to the participants, Mrs. Majka heard nothing but rave reviews concerning the entire conference, with some students promising to write articles about their experience and to promote the conference to potential attendees. Several of the students are expected to attend the ACPC's annual convention in Philadelphia this month to talk about their experiences with the delegates.

The Youth Leadership Conference was founded eleven years ago by Dr. Maria Chrypinska of Detroit, who organized and ran it for ten years. This year she could not continue for health reasons, and the Conference was organized and conducted by Co-Chairs Irena and Ted Mirecki of Washington, D.C., with the able assistance of Richard Wiermanski, Conference Treasurer, and Alice and Robert Laning.

Founded in 1948, the American Council for Polish Culture is a non-profit corporation approved for charitable donations through the Combined Federal Campaign. The Council acts as a national federation of Polish cultural organizations in the United States. Individuals residing in cities/states where there is no ACPC affiliated organization may join the Council as individual members. Readers are warmly invited to help ACPC sponsor projects like the Youth Leadership Conference and other Polish American cultural programs by joining the Council. Individual membership is only \$10 annually (2 years @ \$18) and includes a subscription to the quarterly publication, *Polish Heritage*. Please see website: www.polishcultureacpc.org or write to: American Council for Polish Culture, Inc., 35 Fernridge Rd., West Hartford, CT 06107-1425.

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