

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CELEBRATING POLISH CULTURE AT THE 26TH ANNUAL POLISH FESTIVAL**

**[Portland, OR, September 2019]** Once a year, "Grandpa's Cafe," a tiny Portland basement bistro, fills with the pungent smell of cabbage. Dozens of volunteers young and old crowd around wooden tables to chop sausage and mushrooms, stir vats of sauerkraut, and exchange stories.

Among them is 98-years-old Helena Bujak, who has volunteered to mix the ingredients for bigos, a Polish dish known as hunter's stew, for more than two decades. Though constantly offered a chair, she refuses to sit. When ingredients run out, she grows impatient. "We need to work, not rest," Bujak repeats.

Her work ethic and enthusiasm are contagious and much needed. Massive amounts of the home-made bigos must be made, as it's served to thousands of visitors at the annual Polish Festival every fall, alongside other traditional dishes, home-made desserts, and imported Polish beer.

Portland's Polish Festival, which celebrates Polish culture and tradition, is the oldest Polish festival in the western United States. 26 years ago, Bujak was instrumental in starting the popular annual tradition. At first, volunteers made the pierogis (dumplings with cheese or meat) by hand, but given that some 15,000 pierogis have sold at each festival in recent years, they are now ordered from a supplier in Chicago.

The two-day festival is family-friendly, offering non-stop music both traditional and modern, as well as performances by professional and amateur folk dance troupes. A favorite is the polka contest, as well as a street dance. Organizers say over 15,000 people are expected to attend the festival this fall.

Though Portland's Polish population is small, some 300-400 volunteers run the festival every year, including the bigos preparations. After the stew is cooked and divided up into dozens of giant serving dishes, Bujak says she isn't ready to go. She quips: "Working among friends is better than being bored at home."

The Festival takes place between two historic buildings, the Polish Library and St. Stanislaus Church: It will be held on Saturday, Sept. 21, from 11 a.m. - 10 p.m. and on Sunday, Sept. 22, from 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. at 3900 N. Interstate Ave. in Portland. Admission is free.

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