

Opole, Poland

Looking forward to new liaisons, new partnerships

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We have had a full several months of Polish happenings.

In the summer, Roanoke Valley Sister Cities Opole committee and VTCSoM hosted two lovely medical students from the Medical University of Wroclaw, thus successfully completing our inaugural year of medical exchanges between Roanoke and Poland. We are grateful to the Kościuszko Foundation for contributing stipends, which were used to pay for the Polish students' housing and groceries during their month-long stay in the Roanoke Valley. The medical experience was at the level of a medical intern – which allowed each student to participate in rounds with physicians, examining patients, lectures and discussions with medical and surgical residents and physician assistant students. In April 2019, VTCSoM will send two fourth-year medical students to Wroclaw for a month-long rotation, and we expect to host a new group of students from Wroclaw in the summer of 2019.

Here, Anna Fulek, a 6th-year medical student at the Medical University of Wroclaw, summarizes her Roanoke experience:

"When I found out I had been accepted to this international traineeship I was eager and thrilled! I cannot imagine a better way to gain new medical experience. It was an amazing opportunity to come to the USA and



In the summer, Anna Fulek and Agata Krach, students from the Medical University of Wroclaw, did month-long rotations at the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine with financial assistance from the Kościuszko Foundation.

learn from the doctors there. During the month I had spent there, I had a chance to accompany doctors from ER and Pediatric department in their daily work, observe their actions and finally see patients on my own under their supervision – it is a great way to learn responsibility and independence in hospital. It was very practical and teaching time. What is more, I frequented lectures and workshops with other medical and PA students, which allowed me to meet many other people and made me feel like one of them. Everybody was very nice and ready to help me in every situation. Every day I was excited to go to the Carilion Clinic and see incredible cases that are hardly possible to see in Poland.

"The most interesting for me were my pediatric rotations, the time that I had spent there helped me to make up my mind to choose it as my specialization. It was very interesting to notice differences between approaches and ways of treatment in Poland and the USA.

"Besides improving English skills, time spent in Roanoke resulted in meeting new friends and exploring amazing spots in Virginia. The best thing in Roanoke – so many places to hike and admire beautiful views.

"It definitely broadened my mind and also influenced my technique of examining and interviewing patients. It was all possible thanks to Kościuszko foundation, without their stipend it would not be feasible. It was an extraordinary time which I will always



Piotr Wilczek (center), Polish ambassador to the USA, addresses the crowd at the Kościuszko Day event at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond.

remember and appreciate."

On Oct. 15 Virginia celebrated the first annual Kościuszko Day celebration. An official gathering of Polish and American officials gathered at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond for celebratory messages from the Polish Ambassador to the USA, Piotr Wilczek, Polish senator Maria Anders, honorary Polish consul for the state of Virginia Robert Joskowiak, the Polish deputy minister of health with a 30-person delegation from Poland and Virginia state government officials -- state delegate Nick Freitas among others and members of the Alliance for Innovation, a Polish-American foundation. Dr. Cynda Johnson joined the group at the Medical Society of Virginia meeting to help promote further of partnership between Southwest Virginia and Virginia Tech Carilion and the biotechnical and medical industry in Poland. We look forward to new liaisons and partnerships between Virginia and Poland.

In Roanoke we also celebrated Kościuszko Day with an exhibit of informational materials and archival photographs that were researched and sent to us by the municipal library of Opole. We look forward to further cooperation between our libraries and thank the Roanoke South County library for hosting this exhibit.

Save April 5 on your calendar for Polka dancing and the return of the Chardon Polka Band to the Taubman Museum of Art. Come with your dancing shoes on. Get ready to tap your feet, dance and join in the fun!



In October, Kościuszko Day was celebrated at the Roanoke South County Library with an exhibit of materials that were researched and sent to us by the municipal library of Opole. Here is South County librarian Darlene Smithwick with the exhibit.