

GARFIELD

Resident named grand marshal of Pulaski Day Parade

BY KRISTIE CATAFI
Staff Writer

Garfield resident Dr. Donna Koch-Kapturski has been elected the 2016 grand marshal of the Pulaski Day Parade.

The parade will be held on 5th Avenue in New York City on Oct. 2. In the 79-year-history of the parade, Koch-Kapturski said she is only the ninth female to be named grand marshal and the first in 13 years.

Koch-Kapturski is the daughter of Polish immigrants. A proclamation from the city said she is a worthy role model for all citizens of Polish heritage as demonstrated by her graduation from the Adam Mickiewicz Polish Supplementary School in Passaic as valedictorian.

She has participated in all of the Pulaski Day Parades, was designated as Miss Polonia by the Central of Polish Organizations, has taken part in the Polish festivals at the PNC Arts Center and continues to be committed to the General Pulaski Memorial Parade Committee in New York City.

Koch-Kapturski has previously served as a member of the Garfield Board of Education, has been on the Garfield Planning Board and has recently been elected to serve on the board of directors of the Polish Cultural Home in Passaic.

She has a medical practice in Garfield, specializing in family and internal medicine. Koch-Kapturski and her husband, Mariusz, have three children.

President of the Pulaski Association Frank Puzio spoke highly of Koch-Kapturski and said she demonstrated great knowledge of the Polish culture and history.

"She is a woman of integrity and intelligence," he said.

Puzio explained she is the third grand marshal to come from the city, a record that Garfield holds.

The mayor and council praised Koch-Kapturski for her accomplishments and representing the city.

"She's smart, compassionate and dedicated," Councilman Frank Calandriello said.

Councilman Louis Aloia noted that the selection of grand marshal comes from four states, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

"It's really an accomplishment," he said.

Councilman Joseph Delaney said that between all her greatest



PHOTO/KRISTIE CATAFI

Garfield resident Donna Koch-Kapturski with Bergen County Clerk John Hogan at the city council meeting on April 26. Koch-Kapturski was honored for being named Pulaski Day Parade grand marshal.

"Each and every one of you have played a role in who I am and we work together with a common goal."

Donna Koch-Kapturski

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achievements, nothing is more important than being a mother. Delaney also read a letter from Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr., who couldn't be in attendance, but wanted to congratulate her. Pascrell also is a former grand marshal for the parade.

"As the daughter of Polish immigrants in New Jersey, you

experienced first-hand the values of hard work and family commitment," Pascrell said in his letter. "You have been an extremely active member of the Polish American community and taken pride in and shown dedication to your heritage. From receiving the First Women Excellence Award to being elected as one of the board of directors of the Polish Cultural Home in Passaic, you truly are a distinguished individual. As a former grand marshal, I know what an honor it is to serve in this capacity. I am very proud to share this distinction with you."

Deputy Mayor Glenn Mati said Garfield is the "City of Champions" and this is just another accomplishment. Mati said the parades are always a good time and he can't wait to walk with Koch-Kapturski.

"It's difficult being a woman, balancing a career and family,"

Mayor Tana Raymond said. "I salute your husband for his support. The Polish heritage is such an integral part of our community. It's an honor to have you represent us."

Raymond presented Koch-Kapturski with a key to the city a couple of weeks prior to the ceremony. She joked saying her kids keep asking what it opens.

Koch-Kapturski was also honored by District 35 Assemblywoman Shabonda E. Sumter and Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly who were in attendance and presented her with a proclamation. Sumter said Koch-Kapturski is a "model to emulate."

Bergen County Clerk John Hogan also presented Koch-Kapturski with a proclamation and said Garfield is not just a city of champions but becoming a champion of the county. City Manager Tom Duch presented her with a

proclamation from County Executive James Tedesco.

"This came as a surprise to me and I'm honored and humbled by the ceremony," said Koch-Kapturski. "Each and every one of you have played a role in who I am and we work together with a common goal."

Koch-Kapturski also thanked the Polish committee and all her friends and family that were in attendance.

She said she can't wait to have the city "shine on 5th Avenue" and looks forward to leading proudly on Oct. 2.

General Casimir Pulaski is known as the "Father of the American Cavalry" and used his knowledge of warfare to support the colonies in the American Revolution.

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