

Doing your own part

AmCham Kraków's Monika Pilarska talks with **Ryszard Kruk**, Senior Advisor at Enterprise Investors, about how concern for the community can be taken to the individual level

Over twenty years ago you launched a private initiative to support the local community and education in Muszyna, a spa town in southern Poland. What was the driving force behind this initiative?

I believe that personal social responsibility complements corporate social responsibility in a natural way. In every company, you can find people who complement the CSR activities of their companies with their own personal actions. I'm just one of those examples. Working for Enterprise Investors, I got involved with a small local group called the Friends of *Muszyna Almanac* Association. I became its chair, and soon the relations developed into a personal social responsibility project for me.

The Friends of *Muszyna Almanac* Association is mostly known for granting scholarships to talented young people from Muszyna. How many scholarships have been awarded so far, and what more could be done to help young people there?

In 2013 we are celebrating the 15th anniversary of our scholarship program. During this time, we have granted over 250 scholarships. We, private individuals, have altogether donated a sum exceeding PLN 300,000. Every year, we award scholarships in several categories, for the best result on the final high school exam, and we support need-based scholarships for scientific pursuits—high school through university—as well as artistic scholarships. In every case, the students' special gifts and talents, as well as their results at school, are of course of primary importance.

I am proud to mention here Agnieszka Zahaczewska from Krynica, who was one of the beneficiaries of our scholarship program and currently studies at the Academy of Music in Kraków. Agnieszka, a talented young pianist, has been accepted into the program of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute for exceptional young talents.

Our scholarship program, apart from being 100% funded from private sources, is run in a completely transparent manner. We have no administration costs and



Photo by Renata Kopacz

100% of the money each of us donates is dedicated to scholarships.

For more than 20 years, the association has been publishing the *Muszyna Almanac*. On your website, you say it is even available at the New York Public Library. What is the goal of the publication?

The *Muszyna Almanac*, coordinated and edited by my wife Bożena, has been in print since 1991. Launched as a small publication, it has grown into a large magazine—one could even call it a book. So far, we have published over 600 articles, written by over 100 people from all walks of life, from university professors to mailmen and shop attendants. In the 22 annual editions, we have collected and documented a vast reservoir of knowl-

edge for visitors and locals alike. We have been telling the story of Muszyna's fascinating history, the culture and the breathtaking beauty of the Muszyna region, on both the Polish and Slovakian sides of the Poprad River. We have prepared a summary of the *Muszyna Almanac* in Polish, English and German on our website, ww.almanachmuszyn.pl.

What made you decide to get involved locally in Muszyna?

My personal ties with Muszyna come from the family roots of my wife, whose grandfather, dr. Seweryn Mściwujewski relocated from Kraków to Muszyna in 1912. In the 1930s, as the resort doctor in Muszyna, he laid the foundations for granting Muszyna the status of a spa town. My wife and I have always felt obliged to continue his mission, and we have been doing so by performing pro bono work for the local community. With time, the association has become the main vehicle for accomplishing our goals.

You live and work in Warsaw. What does Muszyna, in southern Poland, close to the Slovakian border, mean to you?

I was raised in Kraków, right by the Wawel Royal Castle, but then relocated to Warsaw, where I have worked for the last 38 years. But Muszyna is my home by choice. It is now the most important place on Earth for me, a place I return to as often as I can. Even though we have no living relatives or family in Muszyna, our newly renovated family estate Willa Wanda is always full of friends and relatives coming from close by as well as far-away places in Poland and Slovakia. Our friends from AmCham also are frequent visitors.

How would you encourage our readers to visit Muszyna?

Muszyna is beautiful year round. In the wintertime, you can ski on the slopes of Szczawnik, through which you can get to the ski trails of the nearby Wierchomla. Actually, almost every neighboring town both on the Polish side and the Slovakian side offers modern skiing infrastructure. In the summertime, bicycle trails await both locals and tourists. A great hotel base awaits everybody from low-budget travelers to those expecting high-end luxury. In spring you may enjoy hiking trails with spectacular panoramas of the Beskid mountain range. All year, the Muszyna region welcomes those in need of recharging their batteries and has something interesting to offer to all.