

Dr. Donna M. Koch-Kapturski, the daughter of Polish immigrants, Jozef and Jozefa Koch was born in Passaic, NJ. Her parents emigrated from southern Poland in the late 1960's. Dr. Koch was raised with the help of her Polish grandmother, while her parents worked tireless hours providing for the family, so that they could live out the American dream; above all, a higher education, which ultimately translates into a successful future. Their values of hard work and commitment to their family, embellished with pride in their Polish roots, have allowed her to stay proudly connected with and to embrace every facet of her Polish heritage.

Dr. Koch lived in Wallington, NJ before moving to Clifton, where she finished elementary, middle school and her freshman year at Clifton High School. She ultimately moved to FairLawn, NJ with her family, where she attended her final 3 years in Fairlawn High School and graduated top honors and as a class scholar in 1989. She attended the **Polish Supplementary School of *Adam Mickiewicz*** in Passaic, NJ, graduating as Valedictorian. She proudly participated in all of the Polish Day Parades and represented the **"Zwiazek Mlodziezy Polskiej**, as its **"MISS ZMP"** in 1988. She participated in the Polish Festivals at the PNC Arts Center in polish folk dancing and where she was presented an academic scholarship, from the Polish University Club in Clark, NJ. Later, she would go on to receive a scholarship from the Polish American Congress for academic excellence. Throughout Polish school, she would attend the yearly festivals at the American Czestochowa in Pennsylvania, participating in the beautiful Polish masses, performing "wierszyki (poems) and folk dancing on stage".

During Polish school, she wrote an article in a yearly publication called "Glos Nauczyciela", published in Chicago, about her experiences as a first generation Polish-American. Among other things, she learned to read fluently, write, speak, dance and sing in Polish, and can proudly say, that she continues to use the Polish language in her day to day activities, not only as a mother to her three children and wife to her Polish born and raised husband, Mariusz, but also as a professional doctor with her patients and colleagues. Being Polish is clearly embroidered into every facet of her daily life, which she is most certainly proud of.

After graduating from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ in 1993, as a Biology Major with a minor in Nutrition in 3 ½ years, she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree. She furthered her education at the University of Medicine and Dentistry - graduating with high honors and went on to finish a Family Medicine Residency at **UMDNJ**. During a summer research opportunity in medical school, she conducted a study and published an article about the *“Psychological Effects on Children of HIV Positive Parents”*. Shortly after finishing her residency, she worked as a City and County Physician for the Hudson County Municipality and Labor Union Workers, taking care of Workman’s Compensation cases for the Jersey City Police, Fire Department, crossing guards, court and other municipal personnel. During this time, she decided to become a self-employed, solo practitioner, moving back to Garfield, allowing her to care for her Polish speaking patients, amongst others. Since then and for the past 15 years, she has been working for her own medical practice, **Comprehensive Family Care, LLC**. She is also fluent in medical Spanish and is proud to serve such a diverse population of patients.

Beginning in 2000, and for over a decade, Dr. Koch served as a Doping Control Officer for the **United States Anti-Doping Agency**. In addition to various sports events, she was the doctor at the finish line of the NYC Marathon for over 7 years as well as the Boston Marathon. She also worked for the **World Anti-Doping Agency**, testing athletes from every sport, giving her the opportunity to interact with Polish Olympians and others throughout the world.

In 2003, she was elected by the **General Pulaski Memorial Parade Committee, Inc.** as its Vice-President and ultimately served as its Executive VP for 5 years. During this time, she was responsible, for corporate sponsors, as well as running the MISS POLONIA and GRAND MARSHAL Polonaise dance and presentation, at the Marriot Marquis for 4 consecutive years at our annual Ball in NYC. Shortly thereafter, she married and began a family of which she is extremely proud. She has three beautiful children, Darren, 6, Daniel, 4 and Audrey 2, who also attend Polish School.

In 2006, she represented the ***Central of Polish Organizations, “Centrala”*** of Passaic/Clifton & Vicinity as it’s **Contingent MARSHAL**, as well as being chosen their **Miss Polonia** in 1992. This was the first time in the history of **Centrala** where any one person held both distinctions.

In 2009, as she was expecting her first child, she ran and won an election for the position of **Board of Education commissioner**, beating out an incumbent. In 2013, she was appointed by the mayor of Garfield, to serve on the **City of Garfield’s Planning Board**.

In 2011, she was the recipient of the **First Women of Excellence Award**, from our State Assemblywoman, Shovanda Sumter; presented to professional women, of high moral character, demonstrating strong community leadership and who are involved in local government & politics.

In April of 2013, in honor of **Women’s History Month**, she was one of the recipients of the prestigious, “trailblazing women” awards, presented on behalf of the honorable State Senator, Nellie Pou, at the National Historic Paterson Museum.

This past year, Dr. Koch was elected as one of the ***board of directors*** of the **POLISH CULTURAL HOME in Passaic, NJ “Monroe”**. Keeping this home alive, has been one of her latest projects as she is passionate about preservation of more than a century old place, so rich in history and unique architecture.

Dr. Koch quotes “My life has been enriched by these and many other experiences and I am looking forward to instilling the values of my Polish culture onto the next generation of Polish Americans...and inspiring the future of Polonia, OUR CHILDREN!!! It is most befitting that the theme of this year’s parade is “Celebrating Polish-American Youth in Honor of World Youth Day, Krakow, Poland”.

Dr. Koch is proud that she has been elected as Grand Marshal of 2016, being the first solo female Grand Marshal in over 13 years, since the election of the late, Dr. Krystyna Wisniewski in 2003.