



**TAUBE PHILANTHROPIES NAMES TOMASZ KUNCEWICZ, DIRECTOR OF THE  
AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTER FOUNDATION, AS THE 2022  
IRENA SENDLER MEMORIAL AWARD RECIPIENT**



MAY 11, 2022, SAN FRANCISCO — Taube Philanthropies has named Tomasz Kuncewicz, the director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation (AJCF), in Oświęcim, Poland, as the recipient of its 2022 Irena Sendler Memorial Award. Under his visionary leadership since September 2000, the AJCF has made exceptional progress in preserving Jewish memory and material heritage in Oświęcim, the town in closest proximity to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi extermination site where European Jews, other persecuted minority groups, and POWs suffered unspeakable crimes against humanity. Mr. Kuncewicz’s work has strengthened the vital connection between the town, the Nazi killing ground, and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum, where the gruesome history is narrated and preserved for millions of visitors from around the world. After the difficult experience visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau, people are able to come to the Auschwitz Jewish Center for reflection, ritual, education, and commemoration.

The connected sites of Jewish memory in Oświęcim that the AJCF has restored now provide gathering spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds gather for educational workshops, exhibition tours, and cultural events that trace the repercussions of both hatred and resistance to oppression in WWII to contemporary world events.

Mr. Kuncewicz’s directorship has fostered a unique and noteworthy environment of dignity, memory, enlightenment, and respect, where people from around the world are able to learn, pray, and remember the victims of the Holocaust. Of particular note is the 2019 inauguration of the Great Synagogue Memorial Park to commemorate and honor the Jewish heritage of Oshpitzin.

This internationally celebrated architectural achievement, is described by Mr. Kuncewicz as “another initiative to commemorate and honor the Jewish heritage of Oshpitzin, the Jewish community of Oświęcim, which made up almost 60% of the prewar population. We aim to serve as a model of how to preserve the memory of a destroyed Jewish community and to teach about the devastating effects of hate. This simple, minimalist reflection space, which on one hand commemorates the tragic history and on the other is a beautiful park in the center of the town, is part of our campus where we educate thousands on the lessons of the Holocaust to impact the future toward a world without hate.” In February 2022, the park was nominated for the prestigious 2022 European Union Mies van der Rohe Award for Contemporary Architecture.

For Mr. Kuncewicz’s accomplishments, the nomination panel was unanimous in recommending him for the 2022 award

The Taube Philanthropies’ 2022 Irena Sendler Memorial Award, named for the Polish social worker who saved Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation, was announced on Monday, May 9, 2022, marking the fourteenth anniversary of Irena Sendler’s death on May 8, 2008.

“Tomasz Kuncewicz, our 2022 awardee has, with vision, persistence, and innovation, undertaken and achieved an ambitious mission to restore dignity to and understanding of the Jewish community that lived in the town closest to the Nazi extermination camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau before and during WWII. Mr. Kuncewicz and his team of educators, curators, and heritage conservationists have created a seminal educational complex, the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, located in reconstructed physical spaces representing prewar Jewish life — including a synagogue, a home, and a park — and breathed new life into them for contemporary educational programs that teach about the Holocaust and promote understanding and reconciliation,” said Tad Taube, Chairman of Taube Philanthropies and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in San Francisco.

Plans for the annual award ceremony, which is usually held at the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków or at POLIN Museum in Warsaw, will be announced in the near future.

### **About the Irena Sendler Memorial Award**

The Irena Sendler Memorial Award was created in 2008 by Taube Philanthropies in memory of Irena Sendler whom Yad Vashem named a “Righteous Among The Nations.” Each year, the award is presented to those who have been exemplary in preserving and revitalizing Poland’s Jewish heritage. Nominations for the award are reviewed by a panel of Taube Philanthropies advisory board members and Jewish cultural leaders in Poland.

### **About Taube Philanthropies**

For more than 30 years, Taube Philanthropies has been a leader in supporting diverse educational, research, cultural, community, and youth organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, Poland, and Israel. Founded by businessman and philanthropist Tad Taube in 1981, and now led by Tad and his wife Dianne Taube, the organization works to ensure that citizens have the freedom and opportunity for advancement of their goals and dreams.

### **About the Irena Sendler Memorial Awardees, 2008-2021**

2008: Janusz Makuch, director of the Jewish Culture Festival, Kraków; 2009: the late Jan Jagielski, archivist, Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute; 2010: former President of Poland Aleksander Kwaśniewski; 2011: the late Magda Grodzka-Gużkowska, who risked her life to help Irena Sendler rescue Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto; 2012: eminent scholars Prof. dr hab. Maria Janion and dr hab. Jolanta Ambrosewicz-Jacobs, prof. UJ; 2013: Hon. Bogdan Zdrojewski, former Minister of Culture and National Heritage; Hon. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, Mayor of Warsaw; 2014: Małgorzata Niezabitowska, author and journalist; Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, director of the Grodzka Gate—NN Theatre Center; 2015: Krzysztof Czyżewski, director of the Borderland Foundation; the late Dr. Jan Kulczyk, Distinguished Benefactor of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; 2016: Prof. dr hab. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, professor of Jewish and Yiddish literature at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin; the late Maria Piechotkova, renowned architect and scholar of Polish synagogue architecture; 2017: Stefan Wilkanowicz, author, editor, educator, and Catholic activist; Bogdan Białek, founder of the Jan Karski Society and Institute for Culture, Meetings and Dialogue; 2018: Norman Conard, U.S. educator who brought Irena Sendler to world notice;

Ola Bilińska, Yiddish culture researcher and musical artist; 2019: Zuzanna Radzik, scholar and activist in Catholic-Jewish relations; Adam Bartosz, ethnographer and museologist; 2020: Prof. Dariusz Stola, former director of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews; 2021: Prof. Barbara Engelking, founder and director of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences.

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