

Welcome in Piaseczna Górka – the smartest village in Poland.

I am Alicja Jamorska-Kurek, the elected “village Leader” of Piaseczna Górka

Piaseczna Górka is a village located in the commune of Morawica, 11 km south of Kielce. At the end of the 1990s, the village was urbanized. Local authorities transformed much arable land into single-family housing.

In 2000, 156 people lived in Piaseczna Górka. 20 years later, the number of inhabitants has increased almost fourfold. Currently 592 people live here. About three quarters of residents are not from the region. My family belongs to this group.

In 2015 I became the elected “village leader” of Piaseczna Górka. I started my work for the local community by communicating directly with the local residents. In order to get to know people better, their needs, problems, opinions, I set up a closed group "PG Residents" on Facebook. It is used for communication between residents, posting announcements, messages, social consultations etc. The group currently has 271 members or 45% of all residents of the village. This innovative "bulletin board" allows us to quickly and simultaneously reach all residents. It allows interaction and exchange of information between local people. Thanks to this, I quickly receive feedback that allows me to tailor activities to the residents' expectations.

At roughly the same time, local association of Piaseczna Górka Residents "Z Górka" was set up all initiatives that fit into the concept of Smart Villages were implemented by the local association by people working together attracting external funds. Finding financial resources for implementing initiatives that solve local problems requires a lot of time and self-sacrifice. That is why I believe that every town should have its own development strategy based on the diagnosis of needs and resources and the possibility of implementing it in an integrated way with the help of EU and other funds under programs addressed to rural areas.

When I became Mayor in 2015, the only public space was a children's playground and a very large football field. The first problem reported by mothers staying with children in the playground was the lack of shade. We found an imaginative answer to the problem by creating **two shell-shaped pergolas of live willow surrounding the sandpit benches.**

There is no cultural centre in Piaseczna Górka. There is no club, library, school, firehouse or other centre here to get a little culture. So the association came up with the idea of creating **a self-service outdoor library in a telephone booth replica.** The library promotes the idea of bookcrossing. It is open from early spring to late autumn. The book collection consists of books donated by residents. We currently have over 450 copies.

Another innovative initiative in the field of education is **the quest path introducing the inhabitants to the history of the village.** Questing allows you to discover cultural and historical heritage in an unconventional way. Questing path scenarios (maps) are created in the form of a poem or prose. They are filled with puzzles, crosswords and various logical tasks that direct the participant to the "treasure". By solving puzzles, participants gain knowledge about their village.

In 2017, we established a **rain garden** to help deal with local flooding. Rainwater falls onto impermeable surfaces, such as parking lots, streets, roofs of buildings causing the overloading of rainwater receivers and local flooding. Water flowing over the surfaces is not retained and does not regenerate groundwater. The garden now stores and then filters rainwater. This is possible thanks to the permeable layers of sand and gravel. Rain gardens absorb much more water than regular lawns and increase biodiversity and the beauty of the environment, attract birds and useful insects.

It is also worth mentioning our project for installing modern **autonomous solar lamps** that illuminate the sports and recreation infrastructure: streetball field, football field, gazebo and outdoor library.

Over the past five years, local people decided to adapt our very large football pitch to the expectations of different groups of residents. Using the existing space, we created a: **volleyball, streetball, a roofed shed, focal circle, chess table and an outdoor gym.**

We are also planning to run an **information campaign** about the harmfulness of mosquito spraying for birds and to our ecosystem. We have installed information panels and in the coming year we plan to **install feeders and breeding boxes in public spaces** as well as on private properties.

In the longer term, we aim to build a **rural community centre**. From here it will be possible to organize thematic workshops and trainings as well as special events throughout the year. We also need a club room to integrate and develop the interests of various social groups.

We have learned many things over the past few years and we have many more plans for the future!