



# IPA Newsletter

January—February, 2021

Official Publication of the International Polka Association, Inc.®

## The How and Why January is National Polka Month

By Keith Stras

(as published on the Polka Jammer Network site)

After the Holiday season, the music business was typically dormant. Once the lounges, social clubs, associations all had hosted their Holiday and Christmas parties, it was especially slow, plus the fact that in Wisconsin, the winter weather could be a bit treacherous and overwhelming.

So back in 1968, the Wisconsin Orchestra leaders decided to get together and proclaim January as "National Polka Month" to stimulate band engagements and get the fans out during the cold winter months.

The newly formed [International Polka Association](#)® (IPA) officers had relationships with a number of the bandleaders in the Wisconsin Polka Community including Dick Rogers, Don Peachy, Verne Meisner, and Alvin Styczynski,

just to name a few. Then IPA President Leon Kozicki contacted them and asked if the IPA could help expand the celebration, to which they agreed. The IPA had thousands of black and hot pink bumper stickers made and had them distributed across the country. These "Do Your Thing, Dance the Polka During January" stickers, complete with the IPA Logo and a silhouette of a dancing couple soon were adorning thousands of concertina & accordion cases and car bumpers across the USA and Canada. The IPA also produced a promotional 33 1/3 recording featuring such personalities as Bobby Vinton, Sig Sakowicz, Bill Cullom, and Lawrence Welk reminding people that January was National Polka Month & Polka Music is Happiness!

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# January was

# National Polka Month

The concept of the January Festival of Bands was borrowed from an event that was held at the famous Club 505 in Chicago's Southeast Polka beltway. Former owners Wally & Josephine Mlynarczyk booked 5 bands every week for years. Club 505 featured music on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and 2 bands on Sunday (which was broadcast over WJOB radio in Hammond, IN., followed by free sausage & sauerkraut for everyone). The bandleaders got together and wanted to do something to show their appreciation for all the work that Wally & Jo did through the years. So, on New Year's Day nearly a half-century ago, the bands donated one hour of their talents for a Parade of Bands every year. The IPA expanded on this idea by presenting the January Festival of Polka Bands on the third Sunday in January. This event has

been held at many historic venues around Chicagoland over the years such as Personality Lodge West on Archer Ave., VFW on 63rd Street in Summit, International Union of Operating Engineers Hall in Countryside, IL, and Glendora Banquets, where the event continues to be held. Back when the IPA had their building on Kedzie Ave, every Saturday evening in January a polka dance was held and when the building was sold the event was moved to Polonia Banquets and renamed the "Warm-up Dance" the Saturday before the Festival of Bands. Please continue to check [www.ipapolkas.com](http://www.ipapolkas.com) for updates on the 2021 National Polka Month event.

Many other states, promoters, and organizations became involved in promoting events for National Polka Month, keeping the music alive!

## **WE NEED YOUR HELP! Preserving our Polka Legacy**

The IPA is embarking on a journey to archive any IPA Hall of Fame induction speeches from the past. These moments are essential to preserving the music history that we love. If anyone has any IPA Hall of Fame induction videos on VCR tapes, we would like to borrow them and convert them to digital format. The IPA will then publicly post the videos on our website. All the VCR tapes will be returned after we completed the process. If you already have the videos in digital format, we would gladly take these as well. For more information, you can contact the IPA at [archives@ipapolkas.com](mailto:archives@ipapolkas.com) or you can mail the VCR tapes to the following address: **International Polka Association, Inc., PO Box 1484, Plainfield, IL 60544.**

## **Subscribe TODAY to IPA's YouTube Channel**

The International Polka Association has a YouTube Channel. There, you can find Interviews with Hall of Fame® members such as Marion Lush, Stas Bulanda, Fred Ziwich, and Johnny Karas just to name a few.

You can also find the entire 3-day IPA Virtual Festival that aired September 2020 and the Festival of Bands that was broadcasted in January, in case you missed it or just want to watch it again.

Brush up on your polka knowledge by playing along with the gameshows hosted by Keith Stras with a variety of polka celebrities as contestants.

Take a virtual walk through the IPA Hall of Fame or better understand how your membership dues and donations are utilized.

Search up performances of your favorite bands or watch those you may not be so familiar with.

Let us know if you may have any polka memories in your archives that could be included in by by contacting us at [archives@ipapolkas.com](mailto:archives@ipapolkas.com). Please see above for more information.

To subscribe, just go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com), search up IPA Videos, and hit subscribe.



February 6, 1936 - January 1, 2021

Park, IL, President of the Let's Polka USA. Club as well as a long-time member of the International Polka Association and our 2018 Joe Jozwiak Award winner.

A US Army Veteran, beloved husband for 60 years to Lorraine, and loving father of Janet (Dan) Johnson and Robert (Tammy) Ciesla. Cherished grandfather of Michael Johnson, David Johnson, Joe Ciesla, Nick Ciesla, Lauren (Ryan) Neiswender and Tommy Ciesla.

Polka music was a passion for Norb. It was not unusual for a dance you attended to be on YouTube that night for your viewing and listening pleasure, and currently he has over 13,000 videos on his YouTube page.

Thank you, Norb, for your contributions to polka music, we appreciate you capturing so many great videos over the years and your promotion of polka music. You will be greatly missed.

A word from Norb Ciesla: *"It has been a great honor to follow the footsteps of founder Mike and continue to share that great polka music with old and new friends across the world. The internet has given me a chance to share the fun we have with family and friends at our*

## Polka Documentarian Norbert E. "Fr. Norb" Ciesla passes at the age of 84

Photo Credit: Les Kapuscinski

*If you were at a polka dance and a guy with a video camera tells you he is a priest – you were probably talking to Norb Ciesla (aka Father Norb) from Orland Park, IL. President of the Let's Polka USA. Club as well as a long-time member of the International Polka Association and our 2018 Joe Jozwiak Award winner.*

*dances while enjoying music from excellent polka musicians that play for our club. I really try to capture the fun and joy that polka music brings to people's lives. It is very hard to be sad when a great polka is playing. You just want to get up and dance. Nothing makes me happier than seeing some of our senior members dancing with some of our younger members and carrying the polka joy forward into the next generation. You know you are at a polka dance because there are no iPhones – instead, the kids are interacting, dancing and having fun. It is a great honor to receive the Joe Jozwiak award. I extend my thank you to the IPA, the great bands we get to listen to, the great friends and families I have met over the years throughout the United States. I also would like to thank "Polka Hall of Famer", Richie Gomulka and his wife for the privilege of being on the Polka Jammer Internet Show as a guest."*

Our deepest sympathies and condolences to the Ciesla family.



*"Thank you Fr. Norb for the memories!"*



# New Recording Coming 2021

Stephen Kaminski is pleased to announce the third installment of his solo project series to be called "Stephen Kaminski & the Dream Team, Volume 3 - The Chicago Edition".

The first single from the upcoming project is a song entitled "2:15". The song was debuted on Craig Ebel's show "It's Polka Time" and is reminiscent of a '70s song by Red Sovine called "Teddy Bear". It is done as a similar narrative and recounts a heart wrenching story



of a simple request from a little boy named Stuart to a polka DJ. The song is meant to bring back our sense of community and human kindness, and how choosing to go out of your way for someone, even a stranger, can sometimes make a difference. It also brings some new life to an old classic!

The single "2:15" is available now as a digital download exclusively on the IPA Website's Store Page. All proceeds from the sale of the single are being graciously donated to the IPA.

Once the album is released next year, it will also be found here as an exclusive download.

Please visit the IPA's Website Store, download "2:15", get a box of tissues, and enjoy Stephen Kaminski's single "2:15".

## A Note from Seth Drzewicki to the IPA®

Hi, Thanks for all you do in promoting polka music! My name is Seth Drzewicki and I am one of the co-hosts on The WSAM 1400 a.m. polka show. The show has been on the airwaves since Fall of 2004. There is some exciting news. The fellow DJ's and I would appreciate it if you could spread the word. Or possibly put this info on this website. The info below is in regards to the polka show now being heard on 92.3FM. Thank you for any help you can give this. Thanks! The WSAM Sunday morning show can now be heard on 92.3 FM. In addition to the current 1400am. The show can be heard Sunday's, live from 10am-12pm, in all of Mid-Michigan. The show has been on the airwaves since Fall of 2004. Tune into 92.3 FM and hear the team of: Mark Janson, Trent Arbitas, Seth Drzewicki and Jimmy K.

# WE NEED YOUR EMAIL

In an effort to curb postage costs associated with membership renewals and to also make the system more efficient, the IPA will begin sending out Membership Renewal Notices via email beginning in January 2021. Typically, members receive three renewal reminders via postal service. Starting in January, members with email addresses on file will begin receiving their first two reminders via email with a link that takes you directly to the IPA store. The third reminder, which is the final reminder, will be sent through the postal service. Please send your email information to [membership@ipapolkas.com](mailto:membership@ipapolkas.com).

# It's Always Sunny in Florida...

## Witamy członków!

I would like to start off the new year by featuring Florida's 'Most Seasoned' member... Mrs. Valerie Oberaitis, 'matka' to Polka Hall of Famer, Joe Oberaitis!

*Valerie has always supported polka clubs, associations, dances, polka radio shows as well as anything to further the polka cause. Most notably, after World War II, she and her husband Edward were frequently seen polka dancing at Cleveland hot spots: The Metropole, Harmony Ranch and the Ampol Club. It was inevitable that her son Joe, would become involved with polkas as well. In 1955, she bought Joe his first accordion and took him for his weekly lesson at De-Paul Studios. Valerie was always instrumental in trying to further Joe's career. She took him to downtown Cleveland to audition for TV 5's THE GENE CARROL SHOW, which he appeared on and played Eddie Zima's "MEET THE MISSUS" polka. She then wrote to Ray Budzilek and got Joe on Ray's TV show and POLKA VARIETIES. When Joe was fourteen years old, she took him to see his hero Li'l Wally, and Marion Lush at The Aragon ballroom. She even paid for the PA system when Joe started his first polka band back in 1969. Valerie handled Joe's record business while he was in college, and consequently developed friendships with customers like Big Daddy Lackowski, The Polish Kid, Ed Grzyb, Freddie Yarosz, Teresa Zapolska as well as polka fans who would order records.*

*After moving to Florida, Valerie became an active member doing volunteer work for the Orlando chapter of The Polish National Alliance. Currently, Valerie enjoys being a member of The Polish American Pulaski Club of Daytona Beach, Florida. She is also a proud member of the IPA!*



## SNOWBIRD POLKA CALENDAR:

**German American Club of Marion County** is our newest member of the IPA. "Vielen Dank" for joining. Their Winter Dance is February 7<sup>th</sup>, featuring the great sounds of Eva Adams band from 2-6pm. For tickets/info., call Mary (352)-789-6499 or visit website: [www.gacmarioncounty.com](http://www.gacmarioncounty.com)

**Polish American Pulaski Club of Daytona Beach** next dinner/dance is February 7<sup>th</sup> with Northern Sounds. On **February 28<sup>th</sup>**, special guest appearance of the **Frank Moravcik Band** from Cleveland, Ohio in addition to a jam session. You can check out their Facebook page, website or call (386)-258-7059 club for updated information.

**General K. Pulaski Club in Belleview** will be having their St. Patrick's Day dance on March 14<sup>th</sup> from 2-5pm with the Melotones. The next scheduled dance will be on May 9<sup>th</sup> for Mother's Day. Please contact Brad for more information.

**Polish American Social Club of Vero Beach** has currently postponed all of the out of state Polka bands until 2022. Additional information will be posted on their Facebook page and website. Please contact the club at (772)-778-0039 for more details.

**Polish Heritage Club at Sun City Center** has cancelled their annual Fat Tuesday, "Paczki" dance/event on February 20<sup>th</sup>. They are hoping to schedule other events this year.

**SNPJ Lodge #603 in Samsula** was planning on having their annual SNPJ Slovenefest on February 26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup>, unfortunately this event has been cancelled. They are still having their annual Friday night take out Dinner specials. Call Cindy: (386)-689-9454, for dinner information.



By Brad Turk

Continued on following page

# It's Always Sunny in Florida...

Continued from previous page

**The Polish American Society of St. Petersburg** is closed until November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The club's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary events are being re-scheduled for early 2022. Please check their website and Facebook page for the latest updates.

As a reminder, Florida's favorite IJ's are: 2009 Hall of Famer Joe Oberaitis with Polkas 101 and Slovenian Polka Blast Show; Crankin' Polkas with Ray Skorka, and Dick Ozimek with Cousin Ozzie's Basement.

If you would like any additional information about our clubs, polka dances or special events, please email me at [bradturk@cox.net](mailto:bradturk@cox.net) or call: (352) 875-3961. Please continue to support LIVE polka music and all of our clubs when possible... Stay Safe Everyone!



## IPA HALL OF FAME BENEFIT DANCE POSTPONED

to be held in March at the Ludlow PACC in Ludlow MA has been **POSTPONED** due to Covid-19.

Please stay tuned for more details as to when we will be able to reschedule.

Please know that the health and safety of our members and their families are our number one priority



### OF DAYTONA

**3621 West International Speedway Boulevard  
Daytona Beach, FL 32124**

Phone for dinner reservations: (386) 258-7059

[www.polishamericanpulaskiclubdaytona.org](http://www.polishamericanpulaskiclubdaytona.org)

**INVITING ALL SNOWBIRDS TO JOIN US FOR DINNER & DANCING**

*Check website for dates & times*

*Like us on Facebook!*

*Leave the cold & snow and come to Sunny Florida!*



## Chicago Polka Music by Ken Voss promoting IPA's Virtual 52nd Annual Festival of Polka Bands which aired on Sunday, January 17th

Visit full thread on Facebook: [Illinois Rock & Roll Music Archives | Facebook](#)

January is National Polka Month. Chicago is the home for polka music.

Chicago bills itself as the largest Polish city outside of Poland with approximately 1,900,000 people of Polish ethnicity in the Chicago metropolitan area. So it's no wonder that polka music has such a strong foundation in Chicago musical history. So much, in fact, that the International Polka Association (<https://www.ipapolkas.com/>) is based in Chicago with the Polka Hall of Fame and Museum located on Chicago's South Side (4608 S. Archer Avenue).

In describing the Chicago connection, Philip V. Bohlman writes in the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, "Polka music is the common secular music of Chicago's European ethnic communities. Because of its complex ethnic history and the nationwide presence of several Chicago ethnic groups, Chicago's role as a center for polka has been exceptionally significant throughout the 20th century."

The history of polka in Chicago has unfolded in three distinctive phases: the 1880s until [World War I](#); the period between the World Wars; and the post-[World War II](#) era. European immigrants and the confluence of ethnic musical styles in the first phase underwent extensive consolidation during the second, when Chicago became a center for publishing and recording ethnic music and for building large dance halls (e.g., the Trianon and Aragon ballrooms).

"Polish-American musicians dominated the third phase, with the distinctive 'Chicago style' and the growing centralization of national polka institutions in the city. At various points, the music has drawn upon extensive patterns of exchange among musicians from different ethnic groups in Chicago and the Midwest."

What is "Chicago style" polka? Bohlman continues, "it has a distinctive sound and performance practice. Clarinet, trumpet, and the button-box accordion are especially evident in the [Chicago sound](#), and extensive improvisation—playing by ear rather than from arrangements—separates the performance practice of Chicago bands from those of other polka centers. Chicago polka musicians further specify their style by singing in ethnic languages, even with mixed texts."

Polish American musicians shaped the core of Chicago style, notably Eddie Zima, Władziu ("Li'l Wally") Jagiello, Marion Lush, and Eddie Blazonczyk. By moving the International Polka Association to Chicago in 1968 and generating competitions, festivals, and conventions, Chicagoans contributed substantially to the growth and revival of the most widespread ethnic popular music in North America in the 1990s.

This Sunday, January 17, the International Polka Association will be holding their 52nd Annual Festival of Polka Bands. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be a virtual event. The IPA will be streaming over two-and-one-half hours of past video performances featuring bands who have shared their talents with us at the IPA Festival of Bands. Artists included in the presentation are Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones, D Street Band, Freeze Dried, Marion Lush, Jimmy Killian and Honky Chicago, Chicago's Milwaukee Avenue, Music Company, Keith Stras and Polka Confetti, Stas Bulanda's Average Polka Band, Tony Blazonczyk's New Phaze, Polka Generations, Stas Golonka's Chicago Masters, Brighton Park Connection, Tri City Drive, Windy City Brass, Downtown Sound, Gerry Tarka's Midwest Sounds, IPA Tribute Band, & Ampol Aires.



# Let's Explore German Radio - Hank Haller

Written by Marie Spaan - publish date unknown; submitted by Hank Haller

**H**ank Haller's German Radio program can be heard on station WKTX at 830 AM on Tuesdays from 6-9 p.m. Although most of us are very familiar with Hank and his Ensemble entertaining at various functions in and around the Cleveland area, his radio and TV experience has also come a long way.

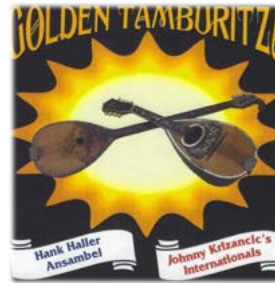
As a young boy, Hank never spoke English until he was in school. His parents were both from Austria-Hungary and from 1935-1940 his family and other relatives lived in a group house on Payne Avenue in Cleveland, and they all spoke German. Once Hank went to school, English became the predominant language in his life but the German love of music was to dominate his busy and colorful future.



Maryanne & Hank

In 1952, he joined the Jacob Haller orchestra, and in 1957 when Jake retired, Hank formed the Hank Haller Band. In 1957, Hank married Maryanne Reinhold from Koln, Germany. She became the band vocalist and over the years they have made 102 recordings with at least 500 German songs.

Also in 1957, Hank started 27 years of appearances on the Polka Varieties Show (TV) on Channel 5 with Paul Wilcox as host. During those years there were a couple of times when Paul couldn't make the show and Hank did the interview, introduced the band, and did the commercials. He hosted his own shows when he took the band on the road, to malls and other cit-



Released 2004

ies. He also taped commercials for TV to promote tours to the Caribbean, Hawaii and Europe - running nationwide in the 1970's and 1980's. During the era of Joe and Betty Bauer on WZAK, he started a Saturday noon European Polka

Show which ran from 1963-1966. It was a great experience in doing all the work involved in broadcasting himself, including lining up his own sponsors. His band was recording on Delta International at the time, and since the strong station also included Pennsylvania, Canada, and Northeast Ohio, it was good exposure for his band recordings.

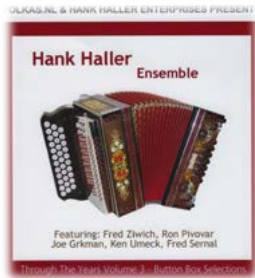
He was a substitute host for the Tony Petkovsek Slovenian Show on WELW/WXEN radio. Hank has been doing the weekly shows on WKTX for about 7-8 years. The first two years he was on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Since then he does the Tuesday show which varies in time slots according to the seasons.

On this show he features 50% imported German music and 50% American bands from the U.S.



Jake Haller Orchestra - circa 1942





There are so many listeners choose from. His personal feeling is that we that are second and third generation Germans and European music is great, [but] in his opinion it must promote the German bands from America. They thank him for mentioning activities that are written here and listeners like to hear the bands that up in the Germania paper they follow and dance to. because they don't receive it.

His mission over the years, has been to promote the German culture through music around the Midwest, at dances, festivals, and on the radio.

His ideas for the future include obtaining a list of the German radio shows and passing this list on to the band followers at playing dates and on the internet.

People who travel want to be able to tune in German programs from other cities.

The internet site could also promote cultural organizations of other German-American communities. It has a great potential.

Hank's WCTX show allows him to play his own recordings and he has a large selection to

Oberkrainer and Austrian Folk Music are his favorites. He feels this style of music [is] light-hearted and brisk, [and] reaches people of various backgrounds.

Like all other German-American programs, he needs the continued support of the German-American community; both business and individual, to keep this vital source of communication alive as well.

[For more information about Hank Haller, please visit [www.polkas.nl/hankhaller~home.html](http://www.polkas.nl/hankhaller~home.html)]

(Hank Haller was inducted into IPA's Hall of Fame® in 2003)



## Jeanette A. Adamczyk, wife of Hall of Fame® Inductee, Steve Adamczyk, Passes

Published in the Chicago Sun-Times on January 27, 2021

Jeannette A. Adamczyk, nee Galas, age 102, beloved wife of the late Steve E. Adamczyk; loving mother of Joyce Fornek, Robert (Elizabeth), James (Catherine), Marian (Allan) Betley, Steven (Elizabeth) and infant Joseph; dear grandmother of Peter (Okkyung), Brian (Amy), Marissa (Derek), Allison, Michelle (Webster), Steven (Mary), Gregory, Kathleen (Ryan) and Caroline. Great grandmother of 11. Preceded in death by her parents John and Catherine Galas and her siblings and their spouses; Joseph (Harriet), Julia (John) Mirecki, Edward (Eleanor) and Anne (Joseph) Malek. Aunt of many nieces and nephews.

Member of the SS. Peter and Paul Altar and Ro-

sary Society.

A visitation will be Saturday, January 30, from 10:30 a.m.-12:00 noon. at Blessed Sacrament Parish, SS. Peter and Paul Church, 3745 South Paulina St., Chicago IL. Mass to follow at 12:00 noon. Private interment Resurrection Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations to Blessed Sacrament Parish Boiler Fund. For more information contact The Sourek Funeral Home at 708-652-6661.



# Congratulations



Hall of Fame® member  
Jimmy Weber with grandson  
Micah James Karschner  
Born January 29, 2021



Hall of Fame® member Ray Jay and  
his wife, Maryann,  
welcome grandson  
Dominic Pfeifer  
Born November 10, 2020



Great-Grandson of Hall of Fame®  
member, Teddy "O" Okrzesik, Sr.,  
and grandson of  
Teddy "O" Okrzesik Jr.  
Wyatt Thaddeus Nickol  
Born 1/22/2021  
(9 weeks early)



IPA member Andrew Kuczmarski  
and wife, Theresa, welcome  
Matthew Andrew Kuczmarski  
Born January 8, 2021







## 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Polka Association Festival & Convention



Make your plans now to attend the 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
IPA Festival and Convention

**September 3 – September 5, 2021  
Labor Day Weekend  
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh-Cranberry**

The IPA has secured discounted room rates which can be reserved through the following link:  
<https://www.ipapolkas.com/go/hotel-reservations/>

Both King rooms and Queen/Queen double bedrooms are currently available at the discounted rate of \$115 per night. You must use the above link to reserve your rooms. Like all festivals, we anticipate selling out of all available rooms, therefore we recommend that all polka fans book as early as possible.

If you prefer to call to make your reservations, you can do so by calling: 1-800-222-8733 and reference the Group Name: International Polka Association.

### **3 Fun-filled days of Polka Entertainment**

**Lenny Gomulka and Chicago Push, Steve Meisner Band, Klancnik & Friends, IPA Tribute Band, Energy, Polka Family, Ray J and the Carousels, Mon Valley Push, The Boys, The Beat, John Gora and Gorale, Polka Country Musicians, and Kosmix**

(Band line up subject to change)

**Welcome Party, Hall of Fame and Music Awards Banquet, Pool Parties, Polka Mass, Election of Officers and Directors, plus much, much more!**

Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ipapolkas](http://www.facebook.com/ipapolkas)

Visit our website: [www.ipapolkas.com](http://www.ipapolkas.com)

For more information: [info@ipapolkas.com](mailto:info@ipapolkas.com)

Be sure to listen to the IPA Radio Shows:

Polka Jammer Network  
Saturday's 4-5 PM (CT)

Chicago WPNA1490 AM or [radiowpna.com](http://radiowpna.com)  
Sunday's from 11 am to Noon (CT)







# HAPPY BIRTHDAY February



**February 1** – Robert Guyette;  
Wanda Guca

**February 2** – Don Hedeker; Jody Maddie;  
Lynn Maynard

**February 4** – Rena Kapka

**February 5** – Don Haderle; Fred Bulinski;  
Gene Mikolajewski; Ken Anderson

**February 6** – Richie Gomulka;  
Tim Quinnell;

**February 7** – Eddie Biegaj

**February 8** – Barbara Haselow;  
Edward Kutas; Hank Kaliszewski

**February 9** – Ron Zywiciel;  
Evelyn Benbenek; Al Jelinek;  
Glen Embree; Janie Holy; Erik Bates

**February 10** – Fredolin Willfahrt;  
Lisa Zapiec; Florian Chmielewski

**February 11** – Jim Stanish

**February 12** – Walter Groller;  
Mario Joseph Kozak; Deanna Hoffman

**February 14** – Fred Kendzierski;  
Lisa Jakubowski

**February 15** – Frank Stetar

**February 16** – Lori Lachner

**February 17** – Richard Thornton;  
Joyce Beilfuss

**February 18** – James Sajkowicz;  
Linda Hurley; Ken Foldenauer; Al Volek;  
Bob Malek

**February 19** – Anna Borowski;  
Tyler Janson; Helen Bobeck

**February 20** – Becky Livermore;  
Terry Popek; Linda Pezo

**February 22** – Steve Rodgers;  
Sandy Mikrut; Cathy Coblisch

**February 23** – Jerry Halkoski;  
Jan Dressler

**February 24** – Eddie Zavaski, Jr;  
John Lesniewski; Frank Proszowski;  
Sandy Bodgon

**February 25** -- Trudie Mergen;  
Tim Jagodzinski; Kathleen Labuda-Zink;  
Linda Swiderski; Gerry Kryk;  
Edward Meyers; Alex Alijewicz;  
Ashley Styczynski

**February 26** – Thaddeus Szymanski;  
Keith Werwas; Steve Piatkowski

**February 27** – Robert Fidler;  
Dennis Mikolajewski; Charlotte Tyk;  
Rhonda Lackowski

**February 29** – Joe Dipyatic





# HAPPY BIRTHDAY March



**March 1** – Elaine Veverka;  
Kathy Prochot

**March 2** – Todd Zaganiacz;  
James “Wigs” Weglicki

**March 3** – Tom Mrocza;  
Karen Danielczuk; Tim Verthein;  
Tony Rozek, Jr.; Ron Knapik

**March 4** – Ken Yagelski

**March 5** – Dick Pillar

**March 6** – Joan Pyzik; Rick Rzeszutko

**March 8** – Les Kapuscinski

**March 9** – Joseph Mehorczyk;  
Eddie Siwiec; Thomas McGuire;  
Joseph Pusz; Steve Kantorski;  
Linda Malachin

**March 10** – Fred Ziwich

**March 11** – Fr. Dennis Bogusz;  
Walter Kazmierczak; Chester Pala

**March 12** – Garry Kuchenbecker;  
Josefine Kozak; Angela Piasecki;  
Joseph Warco; Chase Stanczewski;

**March 13** – Frank Waltos

**March 14** – Robert Brozek

**March 15** – Joni Zychowski-Gregg;  
Father Tom Aleksa; Johnny Kovar

**March 16** – Wojtek Kukielka

**March 17** – Larry Walk;  
Patrick Henry Cukierka; Jeff Mleczko;  
Patrick Biniasz

**March 18** – Mary Lou Brock;  
Joseph Dendis; Garrey Prcin

**March 19** – Joseph Oginsky;  
John Mysliwiec

**March 20** – James Kaminski;  
Timothy Kasprzyk

**March 21** – Roman Marsolek;  
Chris Turecek

**March 22** – Ted Lange;  
Debbie Jackinoski; Sue Krysa;  
Theresa Slipek; Jerry Minar

**March 23** – Julie Ann Kurdys;  
Dianne Gora

**March 24** – Mark Kohan;  
Missy Lynn Krejci; Katie Krawisz;  
Jonathan Payne

**March 26** – Tony Winarz;  
Patricia Wojnowski; Steven Fenus

**March 27** – Mike Gryczko; Bob Ochwat

**March 28** – Mike Kochanek;  
Frank Kosman; Antoinette Rozek;  
Zachary Janson; LynnMarie Rodick

**March 29** – Allan Maroszek

**March 30** – Jim Barvainis;  
Mitch Piotrowski; Emily Olszewski;  
Rick Pijanowski

**March 31** – Judy Stringhill;  
Lori Lewandowski



You weren't the only one to miss HTPD 2020,  
don't let it happen again,  
Make Plans to Attend...

# **HOLY TOLEDO** **POLKA DAYS**

- APRIL 15, 16 & 17, 2021 -

Renaissance Toledo Downtown Hotel

100 North Summit Street, Toledo, Ohio

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## IPA Advisor and former IPA President, Jerry Wantroba, passes

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of our IPA® Advisor, Jerome K Wantroba, Jr. Jerry passed away Monday, January 18th, after a long illness.

Jerry's family were residents of the McKinley Park neighborhood in Chicago, where so many Polkas stars lived. Jerry's relationship with polkas began as a sponsor on Chicago polka radio. As his business grew he became increasingly more acquainted with the polka public eventually leading to his involvement with the IPA® when the Hall of Fame® building was on Kedzie Avenue where he spent countless hours donating his time and talents transforming the hall and kitchen area. When the building was sold and the Hall of Fame® was moved on Archer, once again he was responsible for much of the existing work which was completed at the new location

Jerry became an officer of the IPA® in August of 1986 when he was elected as a director from Illinois. In 1995 he was elected as the 1st Vice President and in 1996 he ran for President, a title he held until 1998 and then again from 1999 to 2001. After his term ended in 2001, Jerry ran for Director again and held that title until 2013. When Jerry's term ended as Director he was appointed as the IPA® Advisor, a title that Jerry held until his passing.

In the 1980's he formulated the Chicago Push

fan club and was the treasurer of that club for many years. Additionally, Jerry was heard for several years on the IPA® radio shows, at one point doing weekly shows with the current President, Christy Krawisz. He was a longtime engineer for the Richie Gomulka show on WPNA and he also appeared for three seasons as the announcer and point tabulator for Keith Stras' televised polka video programs.



**July 10, 1958 - January 18, 2021**

Jerry and his wife Wendy, were both responsible for the IPA Tribute boards that displayed the Hall of Fame® Inductees and Music Award winners which adorned every festival since the early 90's during the IPA® festival and conventions.

Jerry had a one-of-a-kind infectious laugh. That, coupled with his kind heart and loving personality and eagerness to lend a helping hand to many aspects

of the polka industry will deeply be missed by all.

Jerry is survived by his wife, Wendy, and their three children, Thomas & wife Judy; Jerome III & wife Amanda; and Lawrence; along with three grandchildren Alex, Rebecca, and Aiden.

Jerry's remains were cremated. A memorial will be held later in the year, as his wife Wendy is recovering from COVID-19.

Please keep the Wantroba family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

By Christy Krawisz

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello IPA Members,  
Happy New Year!

I hope that you are all doing okay, and you were able to enjoy the holiday season.

As you know, our “January is National Polka Month” Warmup dance and 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Chicago Festival of Bands was postponed this year due to Covid. I hope you were able to watch our virtual event that was broadcasted on January 17, 2021, on YouTube or on our Facebook page. If not, please visit our YouTube page and search for IPA Videos. It was a great event garnished a lot of positive feedback. I would like to thank all the bands that approved the use of their previously recorded live videos; The Ampol Aires, Eddie Blazonczyk and the Versatones, Tony Blazonczyk's New Phaze, Brighton Park Connection, Stas Bulanda's Average Polka Band, Chicago's Milwaukee Avenue, The D-Street Band, Downtown Sound, FreezeDried, Stas Golonka and the Chicago Masters, I.P.A Tribute Band, Jim Kilian Honky Chicago, Marion Lush and the White Eagles, Music Company, Polka Generations, Keith Stras and Polka Confetti, Gerry Tarka and the Midwest Sounds, Tri-City Drive, and Windy City Brass. It was great seeing so of the old videos from 20-30 years ago. I would also like to thank Chris Bodgon for all his help with putting this event together. He spent several hours and days editing videos! I would also like to thank Rick Rzeszutko for his help with getting some of these videos and approval as well as Johnny Krawisz for sitting with me for hours watching all of them.

As huge thank you to Fred Ziwich for being our special guest at our January general meeting and for sharing all his wonderful stories. If you were not able to join the meeting, his interview is also on our YouTube page, IPA Videos.

I am excited to announce that we are continuing with our IPA Interview Series and hearing all the stories from past IPA Hall of Fame inductees have been a highlight for me during these crazy times. I have been able to watch all of them so far and I encourage you to watch them as well. They are fascinating! We are still working on getting some additional interviews to finish this project and move on to the next one. All the interviews can be found on our YouTube channel, as well as our Facebook page and our website.

We also just added some videos that were recorded several years ago by some deceased Hall of

Famers. We were able to get videos and audio interviews with Frank Wojnarowski, Marion Lush, and Stas Bulanda. A special thank you goes out to Keith Stras and Li'l John Nalevanko for these interviews. It was great hearing all these stories.



Our 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Festival & Convention is scheduled for Labor Day weekend September 3-5, 2021 and will be at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh/Cranberry this year. Our band lineup features Lenny Gomulka and Chicago Push, Steve Meisner Band, Klancnik and Friends, the IPA Tribute Band, Energy, Polka Family, Ray J and the Carousels, Mon Valley Push, The Boys, The Beat, John Gora and Gorale, Polka Country Musicians, and Kosmix. More information to follow, as we are still planning some events. Those interested in booking a room, please go to <https://www.ipapolkas.com/go/hotel-reservations/> or you can call: 1-800-222-8733 and reference the Group Name: **International Polka Association**.

The Hall of Fame® committee is working hard at getting all the documents needed so the Trustees and Electors can vote on the next Hall of Fame® Inductees for the 2021 Class, as well as the music award information. I would like to personally thank the new committee for all their hard work.

Again, I would like to say, to all the nurses, doctors, police, fireman, people who stock shelves at the grocery stores, and all essential workers. Thank you for all that you do on daily basis. You are greatly appreciated.

To all the small business owners, you are in our thoughts and prayers during these extremely rough times.

To the families and Friends of Ron Urbanczyk, Norbert Ciesla and Jerry Wantroba, and anyone else who lost a loved one during this past year, I would like to offer all of you my deepest sympathies and condolences during this difficult time. May they rest in peace.

Please stay safe, be well and keep polka music in your hearts today, and always.

*Christy*

# \$1000 FREDDY K JR

## MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



The **Freddy K Jr. Music Scholarship Committee** is now accepting requests for applications for the 2019 Scholarship award. Applicants must be high school seniors who have been accepted to an accredited college and play a musical instrument. Anyone who is interested in applying for this year's award can download an application on our website at [www.freddykjrmusicscholarship.com](http://www.freddykjrmusicscholarship.com) or contact the Scholarship Committee at the following address:

**The Freddy K Jr. Scholarship Fund**  
**23850 Via Italia Circle, Apt #1104**  
**Bonita Springs, Florida 34134**

**Freddy K Jr.** played trumpet in his father's band, **The Freddy K Band**, when he died in an automobile accident in July of 1997. Music, especially Polka Music, was Fred's life and passion. His personality, sense of humor and love of Polka Music affected all who knew him. The Music Scholarship Fund was set up to carry on where Fred left off by promoting polka music through the gift of a \$1,000 Scholarship to a deserving student every year. Each award will be given at one of the polka Festivals during the summer.

### WINNERS OF \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS

#### **2020 – Lucas Yash, Webster, MA**

2019 - Emma Bogdon, Pittsburgh, PA

2018 - Zachary Piatkowski, Canastota, New York

2017 – Veronica Prytko, Millbury, Massachusetts

Joseph Blackburn, Troy, New York

2016 – Olivia Piatkowski, Canastota, New York

2015 – Adam Winiarz, Norton, Massachusetts

2014 – Jenna Libera, Charlton, Massachusetts

2013 – Eva Snyder, South Hadley, Massachusetts

2012 – Justin Kohan, Orchard Park, New York

2011 – Stephen Piatkowski, Canastota, New York

2010 - Kassandre Dardzinski, Saugus, Massachusetts and

Anita Marie Thomas, Balto, Maryland

2009 – David Raccis, Wilbreham, Massachusetts

2008 – Christopher Wanyo, Shillington, Pennsylvania

2007 – Kevin Martin, Hudson, New Hampshire

2006 – Lanelle Raccis, Wilbreham, Massachusetts

2005 – Nick Koryluk, Hicksville, New York

2004 – Michael D. Riel, II, Chicopee, Massachusetts

2003 – Ryan Ogrodny, White Oak, Pennsylvania

2002 – Brian Romianik, Millville, New Jersey

2001 – Melissa Mocadlo, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

2000 – Andrew Krystopolski, Wilmington, Delaware





## Lifetime member and bandleader, Ronald Urbanczyk Passes June 29, 1951 - December 16, 2020

Ronald K. Urbanczyk, leader of The New Direction Band of West Seneca, NY, died December 16. He was 69.

Born in Lackawanna, NY to the late Bronislaus and Adele (Bodziak) Urbanczyk, he graduated from Lackawanna High School in 1969 and also received his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Industrial Technology from Buffalo State College.

Ron worked in the printing industry at Moore Business Forms for 28 years, ultimately serving as Director of Productivity and Waste Management. He also worked as a Project Manager for Delphi, HSBC Bank, and PCB Piezotronics before retiring in 2015.

Ron was first and foremost a family man, proud of his children and his Polish heritage, he continued many traditions throughout the year. Ron was also an avid sports fan, being a season ticket holder of both the Buffalo Bills and Buffalo Sabres, Ron enjoyed tailgating and attending games for the past 60 years. He also enjoyed going to NASCAR races across the country, and played golf regularly during retirement. Spearheading fundraising events was another passion of Ron's, as he helped start the annual St. John Vianney church Lawn Fete, running it for several years in the 1990's. With this experience, he authored a book in 2001, The Fundraising Guide for Chairpersons.

Polka music was always a part of Ron's life. He began accordion lessons at Ruda's in Lackawanna at the age of 5 and started his first band, The Jesters, at age 15, playing local parties and weddings. In the 1970's, Ron joined The Pole Cats, playing concertina and bass guitar. The Pole Cats performed across New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Canada and recorded 2 45's on the TAC Record label, featuring the songs All The Girls Want Me & If I Had A Chance on one, with North Shore Polka & Proud to Be Polish on the other. In 1976, the band recorded at Peppermint Studios and released their only LP – Introducing The Pole Cats on the WAM record label. Also during the 1970s, Ron was involved in

promoting polka dances at St. Michael's, his home parish in Lackawanna. These dances featured many of the polka stars of the past including, Li'l Wally Jagiello, Marion Lush and Eddie Blazonczyk, among others. His associations with these musicians helped his musical career as he patterned his musical style and many of his songs after them.

After a brief hiatus, Ron resumed performing on stage with bands such as the Steel City Brass, Honky Hoppers, and Bedrock Boys in the 1980's and 1990's. Ron often participated in concertina jam sessions hosted in the Buffalo area. These jams led to the creation of the Buffalo Concertina Club, later known as the Buffalo Concertina All Stars. In 2001, while a member of the Buffalo Concertina All Stars, Ron helped organize a trip to Poland and Germany to play in Rzeszow, Poland (sister city of Buffalo, NY) and at the Concertina and Bandoneon Festival in Chemnitz, Germany, the birthplace of the inventor of the Chemnitzer concertina, Carl Uhlig. This trip piqued Ron's interest in the history of the concertina, and he enjoyed sharing his knowledge about the history and features of the concertina with others.

A few years later, Ron joined Buffalo's City Side Band, performing mainly in the northeast US. In 2005, Ron wrote the dinner theatre musical, Stas and Stella's Mostly Traditional Polish Wedding, featuring the music and traditions of an old time Polish Wedding ceremony and reception, as celebrated in Western New York in the 1950's, 60's and 70's. Band members and audience members made up the bridal party during the show, followed by the band playing the traditional Ocze-piny (Unveiling) songs, and other polka favorites.



Continued on next page

Over 50 productions of the musical were performed at restaurants and banquet halls across Western New York. This production earned Ron the honor of 2006 Am-Pol Eagle Citizen of the Year in Art/Drama.

In 2009, Ron started The New Direction Polka band, recording 3 CDs – Follow Directions in 2011, Clear Directions in 2014, and Great Directions in 2017, which contain 15 original compositions written by Ron. The New Direction band performed annually at many local church and town festivals. Ron also helped to run dances with out-of-town polka bands, as well as with German, country, and rock bands in the Buffalo area, always trying to share his love of polka music with others. When not performing on stage, Ron could often be seen on the dance floor with wife Kathy at festivals and dances throughout the US and Canada. Ron also enjoyed travelling, and he was able to perform on trips to Aruba, Curacao, Nassau, St. Thomas, Punta Cana, and St. Maarten.

Ron was inducted into the Buffalo Music Hall of Fame in 2011 and the World Concertina Con-



gress Hall of Fame in 2016. Ron also taught several students to play bass guitar and concertina, including his son Brian, and Chase and Logan Stanczewski (great-grandsons of Buffalo concertina legend, Frank "Crazy Fingers" Stanczewski), who have performed at the Pro-Am Jam during the IPA Convention in Buffalo. Ron was the host of The Buffalo Polka Connection show on 24/7 Polka Heaven and helped to get the weekly Polka Buzz television show off the ground in Western New York. Ron also helped to organize and promote the International Polka Association's Buffalo Festival of Bands along with daughter Lori, and deejayed for the IPA Awards Banquet when the IPA Convention was held in Buffalo, NY.

He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Kathy (Dreja); children Lori and son Brian (Kayla) Urbanczyk; brother Daniel (Judy); brother-in-law of the late Ronald (Ellen) Dreja; and also by nephews and nieces.

A Mass of Christian burial was celebrated on December 21 at Queen of Angels in Lackawanna, NY.

## One of Li'l Wally's Concertinas to be on display at The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

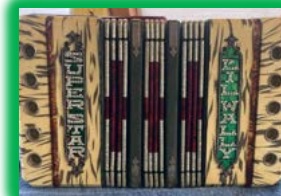
As posted by Danny Jarabek on FaceBook 1/26/2021

This Winter, I was honored to repair and overhaul one of the the great Walter "Li'l Wally" Jagiello's concertinas. Li'l Wally was an American polka musician and songwriter from Chicago, Illinois. A self-taught Chemnitzer concertina and drum player, who sang Polish as well as English in many of his songs.

It was a lot of work, but I am very pleased with how it turned out. Complete tuning, bellow repair, lever straightening, etc., and I even learned a couple new wood working techniques, thanks to my brother in-law. Family members rock. This concertina will be on display at The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in

Springfield, IL beginning in April 2021. Awesome!! Many thanks to Dorothy and all of the family members for including me on this project.

*(Danny Jarabek has been professionally repairing band instruments since 1995 and is a professional member of NAPBIRT. Contact Danny at 920-379-6135 or info@czechupmusicrepair.com for more information)*





# The IPA® makes FRONT PAGE NEWS



## EDUCATION

Schools and career programs expand their use of technology PAGES 7-10

SPORTS — Local volleyball players recognized PAGE 11

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Cranberry Area Hometown Newspaper

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

## International Polka Festival coming to Cranberry

By Cody Nespor, Eagle Staff Writer

It's all about promoting polka music and dance.

The International Polka Association has announced that it is bringing its next two annual Polka Festival and Convention to a place with strong roots in the genre: Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The association announced that the 53rd annual festival and

convention in 2021 and the 54th annual convention in 2022 will be held in Cranberry Township at the DoubleTree by Hilton hotel just off of Interstate 79.

The three-day festival this year will be held on Labor Day weekend from Sept. 3 to 5.

The man who helped bring the convention to the Keystone State is 20-year Cranberry resident Chris Bogdon, director of the as-

sociation.

Bogdon said he thought bringing the festival to Cranberry would be a wonderful opportunity for the area.

"As a local person, I just thought this was an awesome opportunity for people to see Cranberry, and more importantly, Western Pennsylvania," Bogdon said.

Bogdon said the festival and

convention routinely draws about 1,000 attendees. He said there will be music, live bands, food and dancing throughout the three-day event as well as a hall-of-fame ceremony to recognize certain individuals who have made contributions to the genre. On Sept. 5, there will also be a Catholic Polka Mass featuring a local band and priest.

While the festival is still

months away, Bogdon said he is hoping to partner with local businesses in the Cranberry and Pittsburgh areas to try and expand the festival beyond just the hotel.

"We're trying to work with Cranberry and Pittsburgh to promote the area," Bogdon said. "We want to make it bigger than just renting the hotel."

See Polka, Page 2



Cranberry Township resident Chris Bogdon performs with his band, Polka Country Musicians. Bogdon said he thought bringing the annual Polka Festival and Convention to Cranberry would be a wonderful opportunity for the area.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Polka

From Page 1

With the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on local businesses, Bogdon said he hopes that bringing this large amount of people into the area for a weekend will give those businesses some sort of boost.

Bringing the festival and convention to Southwestern Pennsylvania is also a way to honor the region's cultural roots, according to Bogdon.

"The majority of what I play is Polish polka, but there's a whole other genre of Slovenian polka," Bogdon said. "Western PA is a melting pot of Polish and Slovenian, really the only other place like that other than Wisconsin."

Originally from the South Hills area of Pittsburgh, Bogdon said his father taught him how to play the accordion in fifth grade, and he's been playing polka ever since.

To this day, Bogdon, 49, travels on the weekends with his band, Polka Country Musicians, to play shows.

"A lot of my co-workers, friends and family (who) don't get to travel will finally get to see it," he said.

While there is a cost of admission to the festival, Bogdon said the association is a nonprofit organization.

"We're not doing this to make money," he said. "This is to recognize, celebrate and promote polka."





Janice Prushinski, FL	Ron Pivovar, PA
Erma Kazmierczak, PA	Paul Romanowski, NC
Andy Citkowicz, NJ	Jerry Minar, MN
Greg Jankowski, IL	Hank Walter, MA
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Claudia Winiarz, PA	Linda Battagliola, NJ
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Marge Ford, AK	Josie Kidd, TN
Kelly Grocholski, MI	Jassen Jack, PA
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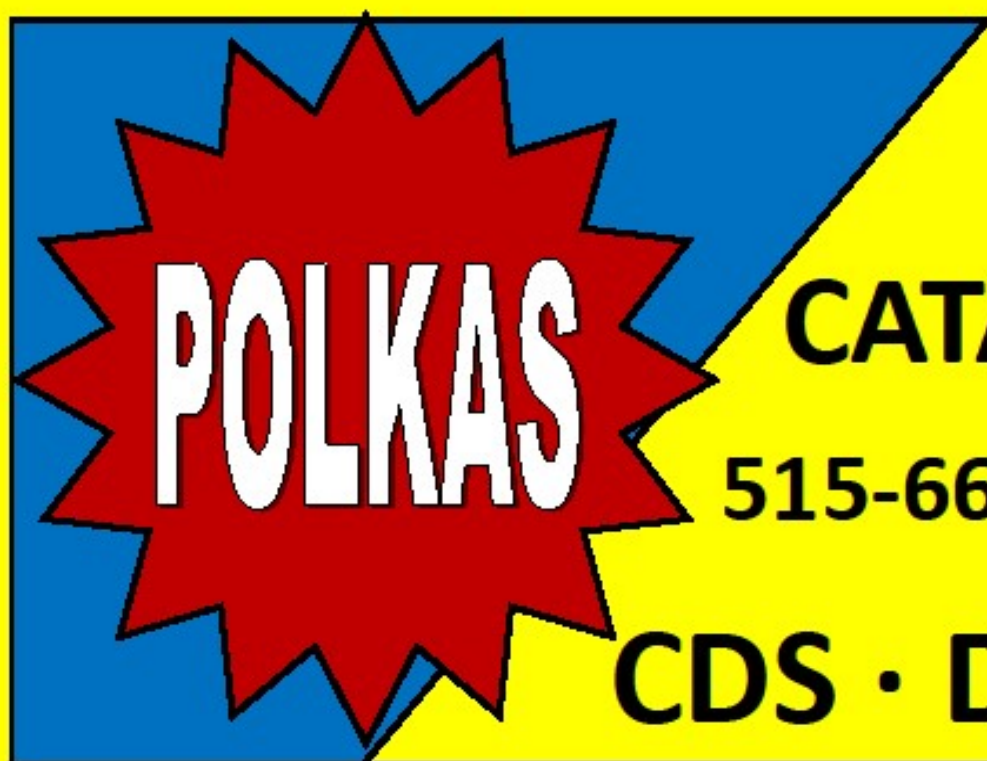
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**Membership**

Dues are \$15.00 per person for all members. You can also purchase a lifetime membership for only \$200.00 per person. If you would like to join the IPA, please send your check or money order to:

Lynn Kaminski, Financial Secretary  
International Polka Association  
PO Box 1484  
Plainfield, IL 60544  
Email: [membership@ipapolkas.com](mailto:membership@ipapolkas.com)

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Please put in the subject line:  
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Each show features IPA officers and directors.

The IPA Radio Show is also broadcast on the  
Polka Jammer Network on  
Saturdays from 4-5 p.m. Central Time and also available in the  
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Please call 1-800-TO-POLKA if you are interesting in advertising  
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Email ad files to Lynn Kaminski: [Lynn\\_IPA50th@comcast.net](mailto:Lynn_IPA50th@comcast.net).

### IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!!

As reminders for membership renewals are mailed out, it would be greatly appreciated if these could be returned **as soon as possible**. Not only are these fees used to allocate printing and mailing expenses, but for various other causes. **So please return your renewals in a timely matter.**

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