

MATT DOBEK SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD



JERRY NASIATKA

From an early age, it was apparent that athletics would play an important role in the life of Jerry Nasiatka. Born of Polish-American parents and raised on Detroit's southwest side, Jerry's earliest sports memories include baseball at Clark Park and pick-up games on the sandlots of St. Hedwig's Parish – less than three miles from Brigg's Stadium, where in 1961, one year after the iconic structure had become known as Tiger Stadium, he would be selected to play in the American Legion All Star Game.

Following his graduation from St. Hedwig High School, where he earned an impressive total of eleven varsity letters in football, basketball and baseball, Jerry began his association with the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America (PRCUA). This relationship, which began in 1963 when he became a member of St. Stan's Society #718, has now continued

for more than 50 years. To this day, the national organization remains the driving force behind the Detroit Tigers' annual Polish-American Night, held for 29 consecutive years at Tiger Stadium, and 15 more at Comerica Park. Jerry remains actively involved in the event, and in 2008, was selected to throw out the first pitch. His dedication to PRCUA sports-related causes, combined with his many other athletic and charitable contributions, serve as the springboard for Jerry's selection as the 2014 NPASHF Matt Dobek Special Recognition Award recipient.

To the best of his recollection, Jerry's involvement as a leader, manager and event organizer for both PRCUA and St. Stan's began in the late '70's, and has continued uninterrupted since then. During that time, he has participated in over 150 PRCUA National Tournaments as a player, player/ manager, and event organizer for basketball, bowling, golf and softball. Additionally, Jerry has co-chaired two PRCUA National Bowling Tournaments and one National Golf Tournament. After being elected as president of St. Stan's Society #718 in 2002, Jerry was instrumental in the establishment of a Scholarship Program for students attending a private parochial elementary, high school, college or university. In the past five years the Scholarship Program has awarded in excess of \$27,000.

As president of Society #718, Jerry established committees that were responsible for the revival of the annual Family Picnic and Corporate Communion honoring deceased members, and re-established St. Stan's One-Game Bowling Knockout tournament and Mixed Gold Golf Outing. Under his leadership, St. Stan's was able to provide charitable donations to Special Olympics, fallen police officers, national disasters, special medical needs for members, and Thanksgiving dinners for needy parishioners. He also found time to chair the Holy Cross Knights of Columbus Golf Outing for twenty years, from 1993 until 2012. The event sold out each year, including the final year of Jerry's chairmanship, which was held "In Memory of Matt Dobek," a great supporter of Holy Cross and the PRCUA.

The list goes on and on. Perhaps local high school basketball coaching legend Bob Shoemaker, a member of the NPASHF Board of Directors who has known Jerry since they were team mates at St. Hedwig in the 60's, puts it best: "The guy just gets involved in everything...and he's been that way since I first met him! I don't know where he gets his energy, but all the things he's done for so many people just can't be measured."

Asked how he manages to find energy and time for his tireless contributions to charitable sporting events, Jerry shares the credit with his wife of 48 years. "I'm very fortunate to have my wife, Rita, who has supported the donation of my time for these various functions."

So thank you Rita, and congratulations to Jerry Nasiatka, for all you have given to so many. The Matt Dobek Special Recognition Award, given annually to the individual who demonstrates "extraordinary dedication, devotion and service to sports," is in good hands.