Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association est.2001
Newsletter for Winter 2025/2026

5038 W. Strong
Chicago, Illinois 60630-0072
773-282-3879
MAIL: jpna@jpna.net

Website Facebook X

Meetings

You are all invited to JPNA meetings at 7pm Congregational Church of Jefferson Park, 5320 W. Giddings.

January 28 —Bob Glaves, Executive Director of the Chicago Bar Foundation since 1999. He will provide information about free and affordable resources; and, how one can get assistance for legal problems residents commonly run across.

February 25 — Fire Department. Speaker TBD

March 15 — TBD

Free parking is available at the Hoyne drive-up Bank, Milwaukee & Giddings. Refreshments will be served.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THE COPERNICUS FOUNDATION !

(Excerpts from the Mission Statement, in abridged form) By Eva M. Skowronski

In 1970, the City of Chicago approached the Polish community with an offer to locate a statue of Nicholas Copernicus at the entrance to the Adler Planetarium. The statue would be erected to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Copernicus' birth, 1473. Copernicus was a world-renowned Polish scientist and the Father of Modern Astronomy. This project raised over $300,000 from individuals, corporations, and other organizations. And, in 1973, the statue was dedicated, at no cost to the City of Chicago. It sits proudly in front of the Adler Planetarium.

In July 1971, the Copernicus Foundation was chartered as a non-profit organization to serve the metropolitan Chicago area as a major civic, cultural, educational, recreational and entertainment resource. In 1977, the Copernicus Foundation began a search for a permanent site to house a Polish cultural center in Chicago. And, with seed money from the excess funds raised for the statue, the Foundation purchased the old Gateway cinema building located near Milwaukee and Lawrence Avenues. The historic portion of the building housed the first movie theater in Chicago, built exclusively for the 'talkies'. The Copernicus Foundation preserved the theater itself while remodeling around it, constructing three floors of office, meeting rooms and classroom space. So, in 1981, COPERNICUS CENTER was born.

The theater has been utilized for a wide variety of programs, not only Polish in nature, but a vast mix of uses by theatrical groups, schools, symphonies, concerts, beauty pageants, fashion shows, body-building tournaments, international music stars, local musicians, and even two presidents. In 1992, former President George H. W. Bush and wife Barbara came to visit the famous 'Taste of Polonia'; and on November 25, 2014, former President Barack Obama gave a speech at the Center regarding immigration. And, of course, must mention the drive-by visit from Pope John Paul in October 1979, being escorted down Lawrence Avenue in front of the Copernicus Center, with hundreds of 'well wishers' greeting him from behind a safety fence set up on the north side of the street.

The following groups are so thankful to the Copernicus Foundation for their commitment to the Jefferson Park community. Back in 2011, the JPNA approached the Copernicus Center with the idea of hoping to use their parking lot to house a bigger Farmers Market, presently being serviced by a few vendors on a small area of Ainslie/Milwaukee, east to Lipps. Well, that summer of 2011 was the beginning of the current Jefferson Park Sunday Market, which then, two years later, moved into the grassy area of the Jefferson Memorial Park. The Copernicus Center expanded by completing the renovation of the 'Annex' featuring a brand new 'loft-type' meeting/event space. The Annex now housed two local chambers of commerce (the Polish Chamber and the Jefferson Park Chamber) and many prominent Polish organizations. Some of these are free adult ESL (English as a second language) classes, citizenship classes, Annual Law Fair, and various seminars/meetings. In 2016, the Jefferson Park Sunday Market used the Annex for their winter home. Also in 2016, the Jefferson Park Chamber of Commerce started a flea market, co- sponsored with Copernicus, in the parking lot, which attracted some 30+ vendors and a large number of local visitors. Then, in 2018, the JPNA joined and has been part of it since. On July 25, 2021, members of the Open House Chicago Architectural Tour came to the Copernicus Center, especially to view the classic Gateway Theater. What an honor for the Copernicus Foundation which took such great care to preserve it.

Of course, what is one of the most important events held by the Copernicus Foundation as their fundraiser? Yes, 'Taste of Polonia!' We all know of this great 'Festival'. Since 1980, the Copernicus Foundation annually fulfills its mission for education and entertainment by sponsoring this event. During the festival, there is a wide variety of live entertainment, food vendors serving the best of Polish cuisine, over 30 local and international bands, performances by ethnic dancers and musical groups, original arts and crafts, handiwork, imported items, as well as exhibits familiarizing festival goers with many aspects of Polish customs, culture, traditions and language. It is the largest Polish Festival in the country, visited by over 35,000 people annually. And, what a great opportunity it is for the JPNA to reach out to the many volunteers available and anxious to help the Copernicus Center and staff.

Copernicus Foundation, 'thank you very much', 'dziękuję bardzo' 'mucha gracias', 'vielen Dank', 'merci.'

16TH DISTRICT

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CPD VICTIM SERVICES

The Office of Victim Services is dedicated to supporting and assisting victims and survivors of crime with the utmost respect, dignity, and care. We are committed to reducing violence, enhancing departmental policies, and strengthening the Chicago Police Department's response to victims. Our team serves as a vital bridge between the community and law enforcement, providing advocacy, guidance, and information on victims' rights. Through compassionate engagement, we work to empower survivors, minimize trauma, and uphold the highest standards of victim-centered support, ensuring privacy and trust throughout the healing journey. The Chicago Police Department's Office of Victim Services provides citywide supportive services to victims and survivors of the following: non-fatal gun crime, Domestic Violence, and Gender-based violence.

Our Victim Specialists are non-police, civilian specialists who help create a connection between CPD and the community as a whole. All services are trauma-informed to help minimize the widespread impact of trauma and assist those impacted by a violent crime to help toward their path to healing and recovery. All services are FREE, and a police report is NOT required to receive services.

Contact Us

Victim Specialists work in various locations throughout the city, including at several CPD District Stations. To connect with someone from the Office of Victim Services, please reach out to us at: VictimServices@chicagopolice.org Or call us during regular business hours, Monday thru Friday (excluding major holidays), from 8am – 4pm (312) 745-6340.

Neighborhood Activities

Board Game Day. Second Tuesday of the Month. 11am—12:30pm

Location: Eden UCC, 5051 W. Gunnison St. 60630

School Board Elections 2026

(Excerpts from Similar articles)
By William Brian Wardman

Chicago parents and community members will soon have a meaningful opportunity to shape the future of local public education through the upcoming Chicago School Board elections. These elections represent a major shift in how Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is governed and give families a stronger voice in decisions that directly affect their children and neighborhoods.

For many years, Chicago's school board was appointed by the mayor, limiting direct public input. That system is changing as voters move toward a fully elected school board. Elected members represent specific districts across the city and are responsible for setting policies, approving budgets, and overseeing the direction of CPS. For parents and residents, this means increased accountability and leadership that better reflects local concerns.

School board decisions reach into every classroom. Board members influence issues such as class sizes, special education services, school safety, mental health supports, building maintenance, and how limited resources are distributed. These choices can have lasting impacts on students, teachers, and entire communities. When parents and residents participate in school board elections, they help ensure that decisions are informed by real experiences from neighborhood schools.

Candidates in the upcoming election are expected to address key concerns including equitable funding, academic achievement, teacher retention, transparency, and community engagement. Because school board elections often receive less attention than mayoral or state races, voter turnout can be low. That makes each vote even more important.

Parents, caregivers, educators, and community members are encouraged to get involved by learning about candidates in their district, attending candidate forums, and asking questions about how they plan to support students and schools. By voting and staying engaged, Chicago communities can help build a public school system that is responsive, inclusive, and focused on student success.

JPNA Board Members:

Colleen Murphy (President); William "Brian" Wardman (Vice-President/Newsletter Editor); Floyd Rueger (Secretary); Bruce Herr (Treasurer); Gwynne Carlson; Steve Neidenbach; Eva Skowronski; Peter Insley; Alan Insley; Eleanor Maas

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Join JPNA Today

Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association has been in existence since the year 2001.

The JPNA is made up of neighbors, like yourself.

Membership: Family (Same Address): $30 (1 Year); $50 (2 Year); $60 (3 Year)
Regular: $15 (1 Year); $25 (2 Year); $30 (3 Year)
Senior (55+): $10 (1 year); $15.00 (2 Year); $20 (3 Year)
Business: $50 (1 Year); $90 (2 Year)

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