



## John D. "Johnny" Polka

July 23, 1942 - January 27, 2024

John D. "Johnny" Polka, 81, of Algonquin, passed away Jan. 27, 2024, at The Clarendale in Algonquin.

He was born July 23, 1942, in Chicago, the son of George and Susan (Dillon) Polka.

John graduated from Brother Rice, went on to St. Mary's University in Winona Minnesota, and later completed his master's degree at Chicago State University. He joined the faculty at Fenwick High School in 1965, where he eventually rose to chair the science department. He was later inducted into the CCL Coaches Hall of Fame and the Illinois Track and Cross-Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame based on his many years of cross country coaching success at Fenwick. Following retirement, John volunteered at the Shedd Aquarium, where he continued to inspire others with the joy and passion he felt for the wonders of science and the natural world.

He is survived by his nieces, Nancy Polka-Schneiter, and nephew, Richard (Sylwia) Polka, and many extended family and friends.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10 am on Sat. Feb. 10, 2024, at St. Mary Catholic Church, 10307 Dundee Rd. in Huntley. Burial will follow in St. Joseph Cemetery in River Grove.

Visitation will be on Friday, Feb. 9 from 5 to 8 pm at the James A. O'Connor Funeral Home, 11603 E. Main St. in Huntley and will continue Sat. at the church from 9 to 9:45 am.

In lieu of flowers, memorials in John's name may be directed to St. Jude Children's Hospital at [www.stjude.org](http://www.stjude.org)

# Cemetery Details

## St. Joseph Cemetery

Belmont and N Cumberland Ave.  
River Grove, IL

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB **9**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

James A. O'Connor Funeral Home  
11603 E. Main PO Box 74  
Huntley, IL 60142  
(847) 669-5111  
jaoconnorfh@att.net

## Visitation

FEB **10**. 9:00 AM - 9:45 AM (CT)

St. Mary Catholic Church  
10307 Dundee Road  
Huntley, IL 60142

## Mass of Christian Burial

FEB **10**. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Mary Catholic Church  
10307 Dundee Road  
Huntley, IL 60142



# Tribute Wall

DM

“ I recently attended the IHSA State Track and Field meet at Charleston, IL. Before the meet began, the IHSA recognized the passing of John Polka as an important person in the Track and Field community. I knew John as an Advanced Placement consultant, a teacher who taught other AP teachers how to teach an AP Biology course. Besides being a genuinely good person and joy to have a conversation with, John consistently had the highest reviews of any consultant from his class of teachers taking his course at our AP Summer Institute in Plainfield, IL. John was simply the best. Thank you for teaching all of those students and teachers over the years. May God bless you and keep you.

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**Dr. Dan McDonnell** - May 20, 2024 at 02:07 PM

BF

“ Mr. Polka was the model for everything a teacher should be: patient, instructive, caring, and passionate about biology. He took a group of us sophomores to Starved Rock State Park for an overnight camping trip where we collected specimens from the streams. It was a great adventure and a rite of passage for a group of young men. His guidance, protection, and concern on that trip left an impression on me that lingers to this day of how one, regardless of occupation, should treat others. He also pointed out the irony of the pronunciation of the Latin phrase 'Fidem Scit' posted in the cafeteria. Rest in Peace, John.

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**Bob Fittin** - April 21, 2024 at 06:31 PM

BR

“ I was one of John's students (class of 1979). He was a great teacher. He instilled in me a love of Biology and is a major reason why I went into medicine as a career. He is missed!

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**Bob Rozner** - February 22, 2024 at 01:18 PM

EL

“ Erik L. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John D. "Johnny" Polka.

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Erik L. - February 12, 2024 at 09:36 AM



“ Fiery Lily and Rose was purchased for the family of John D. "Johnny" Polka.



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February 06, 2024 at 04:00 PM