

## Heartland Chapter Volunteer of the Year – Larry Gogel

*By Anna Kovalyova*

Larry is an integral part of the Heartland Chapter, and he is actively involved in many aspects of the everyday Chapter activities. He is very approachable and he does everything he can to make people feel welcome at the chapter events, and to help newcomers gain confidence in their dancing abilities. Larry has been a Heartland member since 2001 and a Board member since 2005.

To name the most important of his 2013 contributions:



- **Co-organizer of the Heartland Classic.** Larry worked as a Heartland Classic co-organizer in the past. However, the 2013 competition has been especially challenging. The original hotel that had been booked for the 2013 Heartland Classic ended up being double-booked and the organizers had to find an alternative venue less than 1 month prior to the event. Larry remained calm and focused while dealing with this crisis. He had to cancel all his personal plans for the remaining few weeks prior to the competition to ensure that the preparations for the comp and ultimately the comp itself ran smoothly.

- **Co-organizer of the Heartland's 20th anniversary celebration.** The celebration brought together 19 Clubs from different parts of IN totaling almost 220 attendees. Both events (the Heartland Classic and the Heartland Anniversary) were attended by the Mayor of Indianapolis and his wife who are avid dance enthusiasts.

- **Co-organizer of the Chapter's annual Ballroom workshops.** Larry initiated and organized the first annual workshops in 2012, and helped promote the event in 2013. The workshops are designed to bring in the best instructors in the field and to give the Chapter members an opportunity to learn from the masters at a very affordable rate. The workshops serve as a means of bringing together both the Chapter's social dancers and its amateur competitors. The workshops are also open to the general public.

- **Organizes public exhibitions.** In 2013, Larry organized and took an active part in several charity exhibitions, including Franklin county United Way campaign celebration and exhibitions at several nursing homes and retirement communities in Central IN.

- **Organizer of the semi-annual Arts Gardens exhibitions** in Indianapolis Circle Centre Mall. As is often the case, the exhibitions attract disproportionately more female dancers. Larry customarily dances several numbers with single ladies to make sure that all Heartland volunteers have a chance to exhibit their dance skills. He also dances with the people from the audience and answers their questions about the work of the Chapter.

- **Launched Heartland's Facebook.** Initiating a Facebook page helped the Chapter to facilitate contact with the younger audience and to reach out to several nearby universities.

- **Launched Heartland's new website.** The old website required the knowledge of programming skills and had limited space for digital files. The new website allows to store both pictures and video clips from the monthly dance lessons and special events. The Board got many compliments from its members on the ability to watch lesson summaries at their own leisure from the Heartland's webpage. While Larry receives help with website maintenance from other Chapter members, he continues to maintain the web Calendar and photo entries, and uploads newsletters onto the new website.

- **Produces flyers for monthly dances and special events.** Larry has an artistic side to him. He produces and distributes colorful flyers capturing the details of Heartland's monthly dance parties and special events. The flyers are customarily adorned with a dance theme and help capture the eye of the target audience. Larry prints the flyers and distributes them across several dance studios, as well as uses the flyers' electronic versions on the website and in email promotions.

- **Larry is also responsible for mass emails to Heartland members.** The emails include reminders to monthly parties and special events. It goes without saying that Larry is trusted with the safe-keeping of the members' personal information such as names and email addresses.

- **In 2013, Larry renewed tax exemption documentation** which saved the Chapter hundreds of dollars, both at the Heartland Classic and at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. What might seem like an easy task actually took weeks as it required coordination with the National USA Dance Treasurer and the Indiana Department of Revenue.

- **Larry negotiates Heartland's annual rental contracts** with the local dance studios.

The Chapter will recognize Larry's numerous contributions by awarding him a Certificate of Appreciation at its "Volunteer Appreciation" dance party on November 9, 2013.