

Quarter Notes

Winter 2009

Plank Road's Regular Events



SING-AROUND

Two Way Street Coffee House 1st and 3rd Saturdays - 2:00-4:00 pm

BLUEGRASS JAM

Two Way Street Coffee House 4th Saturday - 2:00-4:00pm

Plank Road All Volunteer String Band Practice Jones Family Music School

630-916-1356 2nd Saturday - 2:00-4:00pm

LAST THURSDAY: "It's Our Turn!"

Two Way Street Coffee House 7:00-9:30pm Last Thursday of every month. A monthly unplugged open mic for high school and college age students only.

Go to www.plankroad.org and/or www.twowaystreet.org for full details!

Upcoming Events



PRFMS Annual Membership Meeting and Jam January 17th, 2009

Doors open at 7:15pm Music starts at 7:30pm See top right for details.

Old Time Barn Dance Party February 7, 2009 April 4, 2009

8:00 pm

See page 2 for details.

Quarter Notes

Vicki Ingle | Editor Jennifer Shilt | Graphic Design We welcome ideas for articles or photos you'd like to share, please send them to vingle@comcast.net

PRFMS Annual Membership Meeting & Jam - January 17

Everyone is gearing up for the PRFMS Annual Membership Meeting and jam session at the log cabin in Lombard on Saturday, January 17th. It'll be a fun evening so don't miss it!

- Bring a dish, dessert or snack to share and your instruments for a night of music and munchies.
- Doors will open at 7:15pm and the music jam will start 7:30pm, with George Mattson as our jam leader.
- You can help by not arriving too early so the board has time to get the cabin ready, the fire roaring, and conduct our board meeting.
- This is the time to renew your annual PRFMS membership. You can "pay your dues" at the meeting, so don't forget to bring your membership renewal form and payment (either cash or check - not credit cards) with you.
- The Annual Membership Meeting is primarily an event for members to celebrate another grand year at PRFMS. If you do bring a guest, we hope they will consider joining our organization while they are at the meeting.



7:30 pm Music Jam Session Please note this change Doors open at 7:15 pm

Lombard Park District's Log Cabin is located in Four Seasons Park on Main Street in Lombard between Roosevelt Road and 22nd St.

http://www.lombardparks.com/facility_list.htm

Please google: usda, potluck safety. Read the brochure if you plan on bringing a dish to the potluck! Help keep us all safe and healthy.



Cheryl Joyal

President's Message

Greetings, PRFMS Members!!!

I hope everyone had a very happy holiday season and is looking forward to celebrating a new year with Plank Road Folk Music Society at our Annual Membership Meeting on January 17th (see details above).

It has been another busy year for PRFMS. One of the areas where we have made a lot of progress is in our e-communications ability. On your membership renewal

form it is now possible for you to sign-up for 1) email notification of when Quarter Notes is published on the website and, 2) monthly (or fewer!) email event announcements. A big thank you goes to Charlie Smart for all his work in this area. You can also sign-up to participate in a special yahoo-groups that allows for two-way communication between Plank Road members and friends about music topics. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/plankroad.

After two years as president, I will be retiring to the position of secretary. I am

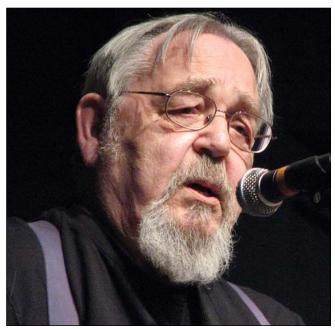


Bob O'Hanlon

grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as your president and am happy to tell you that Bob O'Hanlon is on the slate for president in 2009. Bob joined PRFMS about 18 months ago and immediately accepted a board position for 2008. His experiences in both business and music make him an excellent candidate. We are looking forward to a good year ahead with the new board (come to the annual meeting to find out the entire slate) and hopefully more membership involvement. Please consider volunteering as a board member or coordinator for one specific PRFMS event.

In the meantime, stay warm and keep playing music and singing. - Cheryl

I Ain't Sittin' On It As Long As I Can Sell It By Larry Penn



Photograph by Mark Dvorak

I am flattered every time someone asks me how I went about getting my songs covered by other singers. One might pay them of course, but to my way of thinking that only makes the money flow in the wrong direction. As a good union man, I believe in what the Scriptures have told us, "The Laborer is worthy of his hire".

There are a number of people and vanity publishing organizations that advertise in various trade magazines, claiming they can get your song recorded. I've never used any of these and I don't think they are such a good idea. It will cost you money in the long run and you will wind up with the unsold copies underneath your bed.

Sing Out! magazine might print your song too (if they like it) or

if they know who you are or if you have one on a topic they are currently interested in. It's all a crap shoot of course but the more you write, the better the odds.

My good friend Banjo Fred Starner (father of the Great River Festival in LaCrosse, WI) grinds them out on subjects topical, philosophical, and fun and sends them out into the world. He never seems to get discouraged and one day I predict he is bound to connect.

But, to the question! The best way, is to have other singers, the ones who do cover tunes, hear one of your songs on some magical night when you bring the house down with it! I will guarantee you they will want to cover it. (and probably think they can do it better than you do too).

From my personal experience this is the basic and best way it can happen. My song, "I'm A Little Cookie", was a classic example of such a folk process. Once a tune gets out there, others will pick it up even if they never hear you sing a note of it. I am truly amazed to have people from as far away as California tell me they know the song, but never knew who wrote it. In a stroke of luck, Pete Seeger covered my tune for some time and the song grew legs of it's own because of that.

So some is luck and some is song, but it does have to be good enough so that another singer will want to sing it.

I have no idea how many songs I have written. 500?? 1000?? Only about thirty-five of those songs have been covered. That means I must have written 965 potboilers. When you think about how many songs are out there in the world, it is something of a miracle that any of them were ever covered.

Also, you might study the singers you run across in your travels and learn which ones are doing cover tunes by contemporary writers. Those would be the souls to pitch a song to. Not to worry about the ubiquitous "singer-songwriter". They are only doing what you are doing.

The real key to another singers heart, however, is that you have to make them wish they had written it.

NOTE: Don't miss Larry Penn when he performs at the Two Way Street Coffee House on Friday, March 27!

For more info visit Larry Penn's website at http://my.execpc.com/~cookeman Email: cookeman@execpc.com or Google Larry Penn - Cookie Man Music Co.

Winter Old Time Barn Dance Party and Downers Grove Annual Ice Sculpture Festival

Saturday, February 7, 2008 at 8:00 pm - \$5.00 admission for everyone 5 years of age and older Doors open at 7:30pm - Musicians arrive at 7:00pm to warm-up

Two Way Street Coffee House, 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL (Across from the Public Library)

Enjoy a fun-filled evening of music and dancing for the entire family. Dance the night away and/or play with the Plank Road All Volunteer String Band. Dances are informal, with no costumes needed. In fact, you don't even need to bring a partner! Refreshments available.



All You Can Eat Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, February 7, 2008 at 8:00am to 11:00am

at the First Congregational Church in Downers Grove | 1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL

The Plank Road All Volunteer String Band will play from 9:00 am to around 10:30 am

After the Pancake Breakfast and before the dance, be sure to check out the amazing ice carvings and fun
events happening at the **Downers Grove Ice Sculpture Festival**.

For more information visit http://visitor.downers.us/festivals.htm

MUSIC INSTRUCTION

The Ups & Downs of Flatpicking: By Joel Mabus

I am known in some circles as a "flatpicker." (I also fingerpick, so don't assume every tune you've heard me play on the guitar is an example of flatpicking.) To fingerpick the guitar is to use a combination of thumb and fingers to pluck the strings in any number of stylized patterns. When one flatpicks, however, the right hand holds a "flat" pick (or "plectrum") between thumb & finger and strikes a string in one of two ways: You can go down. You can go



Lots of famous players have used a flatpick: BB King, Les Paul, Carl Perkins and Charlie Christian to name a few. But if I say "flatpicker" most guitarists will think of Doc Watson, Norman Blake, Dan Crary, Tony Rice and a whole army of pickers who head off to Winfield, Kansas every September to compete in the big flatpicking contest at the Walnut Valley Festival.

That's the style we'll talk about here, with a primer on flatpicking: What are the mechanics? What kind of pick is best? How does one use it?

Let's start with the tool itself. There used to be very limited choices. When I was getting started back in the late Jurassic, picks were made of either tortoiseshell or celluloid and came in three shapes - tiny ("mandolin picks"), teardrop, or big triangle. And there were three thicknesses: thin, medium and heavy.

Much has changed. Real tortoiseshell is illegal and only available on the black market, as the hawksbill turtle it is made from is nearly extinct. I have one old tortoise pick someone gave me years ago. Despite the hype, I really don't think it is significantly better than man-made materials. When it comes to picks, do the right thing and let the turtles be.

There are many different pick materials today and each delivers a slightly different tone and feel. Celluloid (my personal preference) was invented back in 1870 and is made from plant fibers and camphor. Once ubiquitous, nowadays it is only used for pingpong balls and guitar picks. The stuff is in limited supply now, but it is still cheap to buy a celluloid pick - either fake tortoise or a variety of colors. Cheaper V-resin plastic picks are everywhere - these tend to be highly colored or translucent. Some picks are molded from nylon and will often have a "tread" (as Doc Watson calls it) built in to the holding side - nylon seldom cracks, but it does wear quickly. Other tougher polymers are offered as well, under trade names such as delrin, delrex or tortex. Exotic natural materials are used in some designer picks - onyx, camel bone, buffalo horn, etc.

Shape is as important as material. One of the earliest makers of celluloid picks was the D'Andrea company (still in business). They

use numbers for each of their designs and two of them are hugely popular, mostly because they made picks for the Fender guitar company in these two shapes: 351 - the standard "teardrop," and 346 - the "rounded triangle." These two shapes dominate the market today.

The 351 teardrop was meant for the two rounded edges to be gripped between the thumb and forefinger, and the pointed tip used to pluck the strings. That works. But somewhere along the line, pickers found that using one of the back edges as a playing point offered a warmer, mellower tone. Likewise, players using the 346 triangle pick found that after a few weeks, the tips were worn down quite a bit and also made a more mellow sound.

Some of us took to modifying picks as soon as we bought them, trimming and polishing the tips to a more rounded shape, or modifying a triangle pick to have three different points - sharp, rounded and extra-round - so that there is tone control just by rotating the pick. If you want to try that yourself, get a manicure stick from the drug store, with various surfaces that shape, polish and shine fingernails, and use it to shape and finish your own pick.

Some picks now come pre-rounded. David Grisman markets his "dawg" pick which is nearly circular (there are generic knock-offs of course). I am fond of a celluloid "studio" pick designed by the late John Pearse that has three different lobes on it - kind of a lop-sided teardrop. It is the medium-round edge I use most often, but turn to the very round edge for a mellower sound or the pointy side for cutting-edge tone.

Joel Mabus

Michigan singer-songwriter Joel Mabus has had a career in folk music for 35 years, touring widely and making his living by playing both traditional and original songs. Joel has taught at Augusta Heritage and the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop (among many others), and, has fiddled at countless dance camps. Subsequent to his instrumental guitar release in 2005, "Parlor Guitar," Joel was asked by Hal Leonard Publishing to write transcriptions from that CD for publication. The book. Parlor Guitar, is now available worldwide for guitarists to learn Joel's arrangements of these early 20th century classics. The Folk Alliance Midwest Region gave Joel the annual "Lantern Bearer's Award" in 2006 for a career of performing excellence.

email to: joel.mabus@pobox.com website: http://joelmabus.com

NEW: myspace music:

http://www.myspace.com/joelmabus
And for opinions and whimsy go to:
http://joelmabus.com/joel_speaks.htm

Thickness is an important factor too. Thin picks are very flexible and slap over the strings, generating lots of "pick noise" - the "ticking" sound of the pick itself - and less volume from the string. Most serious flatpickers I know use heavy gauge for increased volume and deeper tone, though a few prefer medium. There are picks now that are very heavy - 1.5 mm or more. These have no flexibility whatsoever and are sometimes marketed as "jazz picks." Some of them feature a contoured edge for slick "down-up" picking. I find these extra-heavy gauges are good for soloing but are a

Band Behavior By Colby Maddox

For many of us, music is a group activity. Whether we are making music or listening to it, we are drawn to the unspoken dialog between musicians as they work together to communicate with an audience. Where there is a group there are always group dynamics, and, issues like differing ability levels and time and money constraints. These factors help shape the final product, the music, and determine the life of any musical project. Playing in a band is one of life's greatest pleasures and if you are looking for ways to keep the buzz alive, it is worth a quick look at the some of the classic group dynamics that are at play when we strike up the band.

It is a given that in any band there will be different levels of musical ability. If these differences are honored and acknowledged they can become a positive force.

A combination of experience and enthusiasm can motivate people to work together, generate new ideas and establish clear musical benchmarks. Some of the best music is created by musicians who have a collective sense of their strengths and weaknesses and don't forget to "stay good" by working together on basic musical elements like timing, phrasing, song selection and setting the groove. The costs of ignoring or denying different levels of ability are well documented and unpleasant and no one really wants to play with, or listen to, a band that "has it all figured out."

Time is money and everyone has their own version of how that formula works in their life. Band activity is very time consuming, and bands that last are populated by musicians who have made very basic decisions about where music fits into their personal time versus money formula. Folks who have few commitments and plenty of Saturday nights to kill will always find others like themselves to band together with, and, even if they have very little musical skill to bring to the table they will perform confidently and even convincingly because they have put all their eggs in the band basket. The rest of us face a complicated, ever changing formula involving elements like family, work

Colby Maddox

Colby has been teaching for the Old Town School since 1996 where he is currently the dean of the mandolin department, co-chair of the bluegrass ensemble department, and a visiting lecturer for the fiddle



department. He is also a principle member of the bluegrass group Sunnyside Up.

Upcoming Performances:

Friday, January 16th, 6-8 p.m. Happy Hour Liz's Liquid Lounge - 3058 W. Irving Park

Friday, January 30th, 10-Midnight Uncommon Ground - 1401 W. Devon Ave.

and overall sanity. For us, a good performance is the result of careful negotiations between the requirements of the music world and all the other choices we have made in life.

The most musical bands are the ones that respect all the dynamics and are constantly in touch with the struggles that they are working with and the rewards that they are reaping. Sometimes a new band will be formed from experienced members who understand immediately how to be an effective unit. Sometimes a band will find a large audience of their peers early on in their history and circumstances will cause them to snap together and function well for a long period of time. These are both rare cases though, and more often than not, good band behavior and therefore good music, is developed over a long period of time.

Benefit concert for Roscoe Champ (bottom) at the home of Carol and John Sommer, featuring Mark Dvorak and Marianne Mohrhusen (right). Great attendance and a good time was had by all.





Quarter Notes | Plank Road Folk Music Society

Joel Mabus, The Ups & Downs of Flatpicking, Continued from page 3



little clumsy for fluid strumming. I like just a bit of flexibility in my pick, so I have settled on the average "heavy" gauge - stiff but with just a little "give" if you try to bend them.

How do you hold it? And what is the motion? I was once part of a flatpick workshop at the Winfield festival with Dan Crary, Norman Blake and Mark O'Connor. I asked everybody to go around and tell how they used their flatpicks. The upshot is - they all

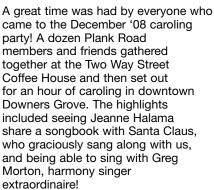
play different and all play great. Dan picks from the wrist, and usually plants the heel of his hand on top of his bridge pins. Norman has a fluid wrist-elbow combination that resembles a cat's tail as he moves. Mark says he plays from the fingertips, keeping his hand mostly still. And watching Doc Watson play, he seems to flatpick straight from the elbow.

I can tell you how I do it in some detail: when strumming my hand swings freely. But when soloing I plant my pinky finger very lightly on the pickguard . Just where I place that little finger is my tone control - nearer the bridge for treble, nearer the fretboard for deeper tones. Most of my down-up action occurs in the wrist, but a bit from the elbow too.

I hold about 3/4 of the pick gripped between my thumb and the side of my forefinger, letting only about a quarter of the pick extend to the strings. My grip on the pick is my volume control. If I hold the pick loosely, letting the pick slightly wobble between my thumb and forefinger, it plays quietly. If I squeeze tightly the pick doesn't wiggle at all, and more energy is driven into the string, giving more volume. The tighter the grip, the louder. When doing solos, I can make any one note stand out just by squeezing my thumb a little tighter. It becomes intuitive after a while.

My best advice for the budding flatpicker is to head to a decent music store and buy a few dollars worth of everyday picks - a variety of shapes, thicknesses and materials. For five bucks you should get a big pocketful of different sounds. Then take a month or two and find out what you like. Once you find a pick you like, practice for a thousand hours and you'll play like a pro!

December Caroling Party



Another highlight was spending time with folks afterwards, lounging around the Two Way, drinking cocoa provided by the coffee house and eating treats that people brought to share. Thanks to Cathy Jones and Dave Humphreys for making this event possible. Keep the caroling party in mind next year and consider joining us!

To view pictures from festivals and Plank Road events, go to **www.plankroad.org** and click on "**Gallery**."







Old time Barn Dance Party at the Two Way Street Coffee House, February, 2008

ON THE RADIO

90.9 FM, WDCB, PUBLIC RADIO from College of DuPage

Online Streaming - www.WDCB.org

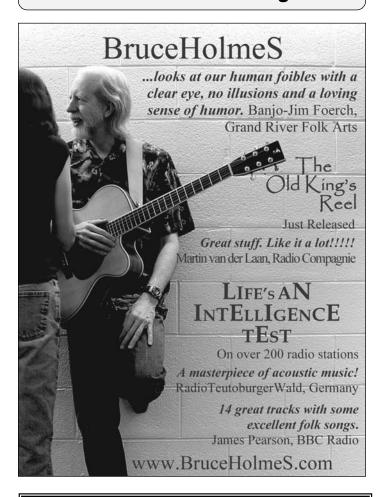
For a program guide, call (630) 942-4200

Folk Festival with Lilli Kuzma, Tuesdays 7 to 9 pm

Strictly Bluegrass with Larry Robinson, Wednesdays 7 to 9 pm



Thank You to our Sustaining Artists



February Sky

Phil Cooper & Susan Urban

Traditional, Modern and Original Folk & Celtic Music with Guitar, Cittern, Mountain Dulcimer, Banjo & Percussion



For details and touring schedule, see:
www.februarysky.com or
www.myspace.com/februaryskyfolk

A Special Thanks to our Membership Contributors!!

Sustaining Artists (\$200 - \$399)

Benefits: Feature article and picture in one newsletter; 1/4 page reserved space in four newsletters for name(s), contact information and upcoming performances; individual membership(s) in PRFMS.

Bruce Holmes

www.bruceholmes.com

■ February Sky

Phil Cooper and Susan Urban www.februarysky.com or www.myspace.com/februaryskyfolk

Supporting Artists (\$50 - \$199)

Benefits: Line listing in four issues with name of group, name(s) of member(s), contact information; individual membership(s) in PRFMS.

- Natural Bob and Micky Holdsworth www.naturalbob.com
- Comfort Food Vicki and Rich Ingle 708-795-0695

Supporting Members (\$50 - \$199)

John J. Allan, Romaine Burelbach, Lauretta (Dolly) Connors, Lilli Kuzma, Troy and Susen LeValley, Andrew Malkewiez, Gregg Morton, Cheryl Joyal

2008 Plank Road Folk Music Society Officers

Cheryl Joyal

President, Quarter Notes ~ cheryl.joyal@bp.com

Vicki Ingle

Vice President, Quarter Notes Editor ~ vingle@comcast.net

Cathy Jones

Treasurer ~ cathy@jonesfamilymusic.com

Bob O'Hanlon

Secretary

2008 Board Members

Jeanne Halama, Dave Humphreys, Chris Kuhn, Dave Reynolds, Jennifer Shilt, Charley Smart, Carol Sommer





See what's happening! Visit www.plankroad.org



Would you like to help?

Already a member?

How about volunteering for the PRFMS Board?

We are already looking ahead to 2009 and will need some support from the membership to fill vacant board positions.

Please contact **Bob O'Hanlon** at **mimioh@hotmail.com** for more information.







From Vicki Ingle-

My beloved father-in-law, who unfortunately is no longer with us, hailed from the hills of Arkansas and loved good music and southern humor. My mother-in-law often recounts to me funny things he used to say:

Dolly: "I just had a good idea!" Orbin: "Well, take good care of it. It's a stranger a long way from home."

Dolly told me a story about how Orbin's mother, Cora, would carve off the "pulley-bone" of the bird with a lot of meat on it as a treat for her dear husband, Henry. "What???"

The "wish bone!"

Did you know? "Hoecakes" were named after how they were first prepared... baked on a hoe!

Have any jokes or short anecdotes you'd like to share? Send them along to Vicki: vingle@comcast.net

Jack Williams and Trout Fishing In America Cruise to Alaska, June 21-28, 2009

Jack Williams has confirmed with Ezra Idlet and Keith Grimwood, of TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA, that they'll co-host a music-cruise to Alaska. The trip will include concert performances and social gatherings, along with regular SONG-CIRCLES with the artists. For all information and reservations, please contact Lynette Miller of Traveling Troubadour Cruises.

www.travelingtroubadour.com/JW-TFIA_2009_Alaska.htm

toll-free: (800)584-6724

e-mail: lynette@travelingtroubadour.com

Transitions:

I'll Fly Away...

ODETTA HOLMES 1930 - 2008

"Odetta" passed away on December 2, 2008 of heart disease at the age of 77. She is probably most well-known for her 1956 album, "Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues" and for her 1957 album "At the Gate of Horn." Odetta received several Grammy Award nominations over her career, most recently in 2007 for her album, "Gonna Let It Shine". In 1999 she was honored with a National Endowment for the Arts, Medal of the Arts; President Bill Clinton remarked that she showed us all that "songs have the power to change the heart and change the world."

ARTIE TRAUM 1943 - 2008

......

Artie Traum - guitarist, singer-songwriter and musical educationalist - passed away on July 20, 2008 of liver cancer at the age of 65. Artie, with brother Happy, had several successful recordings, including Happy and Artie Traum (1969), Double-Back (1971) and maybe the most satisfying, Hard Times in the Country (1975).







PRFMS members at the Annual Membership Meeting & Jam

to renew your membership for 2009. Thanks! To keep receiving the Quarter Notes don't forget

Don't let your membership lapse -

Downers Grove, IL 60515 P.O.Box 176 PRFMS

or meni

to the Annual Membership Meeting or by sending wempership by bringing the form and cash/check your individual (\$10/yr) or family (\$20/yr) renewal form. Please update it and renew Included in this issue is your membership

> corner of your mailing label. Your membership renewal date is in the top All memberships renew annually at this time.

PRFMS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME. IBunnA ədT ei tete - tet YAAUNAL

NOITAMROINI PRFMS Membership **TNATROGMI**

P.O. Box 176, Downers Grove, IL 60515

Email: mimioh@hotmail.com Bop O, Hanlon PRFMS Contact:





Folk Resources Next Door

Plank Road Folk Music Society

PO Box 176, Downers Grove, IL 60515 www.plankroad.org

Two Way Street Coffee House

1047 Curtiss St., Downers Grove, IL 60515 (630) 969-9720 www.twowaystreet.org

Jones Family Music School

Lombard (630) 916-1356 www.jonesfamilymusic.com

Maple Street Chapel

Main & Maple, Lombard, 60148 (630) 627-0171 or (630) 434-4423 maplestreetchris@yahoo.com www.maplestreetchapel.org

Acoustic Renaissance Concerts

Unitarian Church of Hinsdale (708) 802-0236 www.acousticren.com

Fermilab Art series

Kirk Road & Pine Street, Batavia, IL 60510-0500 (630) 840-2787 www.fnal.gov/culture/NewArts/gen_info.shtml Email: audweb@fnal.gov

Folk Lore Center & Acorn Coffee Bar

29W140 Butterfield Rd, POB 762, Warrenville, IL 60555 (630) 393-1247 www.folk-lorecenter.com

Woodstock Folk Music/Festival

(815) 338-4245 www.woodstockfolkmusic.com

Fox Valley Folklore Society

755 N Evanslawn Ave, Aurora, IL 60506 (630) 897-3655 www.FoxValleyFolk.com

Warrenville Folk Music Society

POB 248, Warrenville IL 60555 (630) 717-8495 E-mail: Warrenvillefolk@aol.com

Lake County Folk Club

Box 847, Mundelein, IL 60060 (847) 949-5355 http://thelakecountyfolkclub.org

Northern Illinois Bluegrass Association www.nibaweb.org

HANDS (Hammers & Noters Dulcimer Society)

Box 181, Morris, IL 60450 (708) 331-6875 www.gwdf.org

South Suburban Dulcimer & Folk Music Society

P.O. Box 455, Park Forest, IL 60466 (708) 756-3857

90.9 FM, WDCB, Public Radio

Online Streaming: www.WDCB.org Folk Festival, Tuesdays 7 to 9 pm Strictly Bluegrass, Wednesdays 7 to 9 pm

FARM (Folk Alliance Midwest Region) www.farmfolk.org



Get the latest information at www.plankroad.org