

Catalyst and Confluence

by Rima Dael, CDSS Executive Director

*Catalyst, a person or thing that precipitates an event or change.
Confluence, a coming together of people or things; a flowing together.*

As I near the end of my first year as Executive Director I want to frame the work of CDSS with two special words.

We believe in the joy that participatory dance, music and song bring to individuals and communities. We spread that joy by being a *catalyst* and encouraging *confluence*. This is how I've come to see CDSS and how I would like us to be best used.

As I visited each of our programs last summer, I saw firsthand our role as a catalyst, from the teacher training courses taught by Dr. Jane Miller at Ogontz, to how my own daughter's passion for dancing was further ignited at Pinewoods, to conversations with homeschoolers in Huntsville who credit their start in dancing at a local dance supported by CDSS. In subsequent meetings with individuals and communities I saw how our work fosters confluence, where our work informs other communities and how that work strengthens CDSS in return. I've seen this happen in Huntsville, Sacramento, Tokyo, Washington, DC, and in my home community of Amherst. We have seen it happen in our conferences across the country but most recently in Cincinnati at our Midwest Leadership Conference. CDSS provides an opportunity for communities to come together for meaningful discourse. It gives individuals and communities a chance to discuss issues of importance to them and to engage with CDSS in how best to use our resources to assist their community.

Members or not, at CDSS-sponsored events or not, within the US or Canada, we educate, support and connect participants in our living traditions of dance, music and song. One of the visible ways we do this are CDSS Outreach Funds which have been supporting projects and events throughout the United States and Canada since 2008. Let me review a few of the ones we've done:

Training Events

- Traditional Arts Weekend—instruction for contras, calling and rapper sword during an annual festival (MI)
- Fairbanks Musicians Workshop—weekend training event for English country dance musicians (AK)
- Fresno Callers Workshops—training sessions for beginning contra and English country dance callers (CA)

- Sun Assembly Spring Dance Weekend—caller workshops at an English country and contra dance weekend (NC)
- All Contra, All Day, the Right Way—contra workshop for all levels in building skill and community (BC)
- Contra Callers' Workshops—mentorship workshops for new callers with opportunities to call at local dances (NM)
- Open Contra Dance Band Practice/Workshops—workshops for musicians who played for final dance (RI)
- Impropryety Weekend—English country dance and music workshops in tghree cities in the Bay Area (CA)

Youth and/or Family-Oriented Events

- World on a String—workshops to introduce young classical musicians to traditional music (DC)
- Wallowa Fiddle Tunes Camp—adding contra dance to weeklong music camp for families (OR)
- Youth Traditional Song Weekend—youth-focused participatory singing event including leadership training (MA)
- Dancing at Freedom Middle School—contra dance workshops and final dance with Wild Asparagus (FL)

New Events

- Swan's Island Community Dance—new contra dance to revive dancing on remote island (ME)
- Mountain Dance Trail—revitalizing dances in ten communities (WV) (see article on pp. 22-23)
- Jim Thorpe Country Dance Series—new monthly contra/square dance (PA)

You, our members and donors help us do this work. You pay it forward for these activities to happen. Let us together continue our traditions by linking those, new and experienced, who love them. I look forward to the work we do together this year.

Visit our website for more information on support and funding resources we provide (<http://www.cdss.org/support-funding.html>); for questions on other ways we can help you or your community, email us at office@cdss.org.