

CDSS—A National Arts and Education Organization

by Rima Dael, Executive Director

On the cusp of our Centennial year, we are looking forward to the future. For nearly one hundred years we have been spreading joy and building community through dance, music and song. Our founding was as the American chapter of the English Folk Dance Society, where one could come learn how to play music, dance and sing in the English, and later Anglo-American, traditions. In later years, May Gadd, longtime director of CDSS, described headquarters as “organizing a number of activities and services as a bureau of information to any part of the country.” She went on to talk about “providing resources to the field through instruction booklets, records and materials for callers, teachers, musicians and dancers.”

By staying true to that mission, and changing with our communities’ needs, we have sought to become more of that “bureau of information” in the twenty-first century, harnessing the best of our past to lay the groundwork for a vibrant future.

Ongoing series and events are well run by community volunteers at the local level across North America. We support that work with services and grants. In addition, as a national arts organization, we are able to concentrate on big picture needs and trends, such as serving as a centralized hub for resources, support and information services; connecting dance, music and song communities to one another and to CDSS; and advocating for the vitality and sustainability of traditional dance, music and song far into the future. As an education organization, we are able to continue providing skill building opportunities in dance, music and song at our summer camps and to support educational opportunities for dancers, callers, musicians, singers, organizers and teachers.

Our future priorities are the same as our Centennial priorities:

- Raise the visibility of traditional dance, music and song
- Reach and connect people in and outside our community who were not connected before
- Affirm that our participatory arts can change lives

Onward to the Centennial—CDSS 2015! We look forward to celebrating together.

Community100 and CDSS’s Centennial Tour



The Community100 website is being created to showcase and celebrate local community heroes, community histories, and sights and sounds of CDSS Centennial celebrations around the country; to share “This I Believe” essays about dance, music, song and other personal stories, videos, photos; to create a graphic historical timeline illustrating one hundred years of dance, music and song in North America; and to present the inaugural issue of *Country Dance and Song*, the new online journal of CDSS.

After a call for applications to our constituent communities across North America, we have chosen seven communities, five in the United States, and two in Canada, to whom we are bringing skill- and capacity-building opportunities, tailored to the needs expressed in their applications. Artist/teachers will visit each community for between five and eight days of workshops, master classes, outreach and public events. The communities are: Coos Bay, Oregon; Austin, Texas; Lawrence, Kansas; Phoenix, Arizona; Morgantown, West Virginia; Owen Sound, Ontario; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

We sent out a special Save the Date e-communication, with video, in early February. (If you missed it, here’s the link: <http://www.cdss.org/centennial.html>.) Another Centennial e-message will be sent in March and will be posted on the above link. Community100 will keep you abreast of our plans as they unfold, ways we can celebrate together, updates about the Tour, and other events.