Connecting the Dots with Tools and Support (Director's Report)

by Rima Dael, CDSS Executive Director

I came home one night to find my daughter playing her ukulele and shouting out "Guess what, Mom, I'm doing my reading homework!" "Okay...," I said hesitantly. My daughter went on to explain that out of her classroom's lending library, the source of nightly reading homework, she found music books. These books allowed her to read folk stories with accompanying music (with chords) and lyrics. "So cool, Mom, I get to sing and play my ukulele for reading homework!"

Yes, so very cool indeed! My daughter's second grade teacher has connected the dots for my daughter. Reading is definitely way more exciting when you can combine stories, songs and playing music. We know that using arts as tools in our classrooms enhances learning by boosting creativity, confidence and problem-solving for kids. All three were in play (pun intended) as I watched my daughter read, figure out how to play the new songs, and try to sing and strum at the same time. So my daughter reads more, is more excited to learn in the classroom, and she feels that her teacher really gets her.

I share this story, not just as an example of how arts can be integrated into a classroom, but for the example of connecting the dots. CDSS is hoping to do that more and do it better. What do we mean? Like dropping books with music and lyrics into a lending library, we want to drop our skill-building tools into your midst to help you become better dancers, musicians, singers, callers, organizers and leaders, and to make sure you know about them! To make YOUR learning of traditional dance, music and song more fun and more supported. And to let you know that we get you!

For instance, one place where we promote our tools of skill-building and support is through our

nine CDSS summer camp weeks. The experience and connections gained through these weeks is invaluable.

And do you know that we have matching scholarships for CDSS group affiliates? We match up to half the expenses of coming to camp if an affiliate offers a scholarship to one of their members. This kind of support has helped one hundred twenty-five callers, organizers and musicians attend one of our camp programs since we began matching scholarships in 1998. It's a great way to get up-and-coming talent to camp to have that experience and make those connections, and we love partnering with our affiliates in this way. Details are available here: http://www.cdss.org/priority-matching-scholarships.html#matching.

We also have other scholarship opportunities that help those who might not otherwise be able to make the investment for skill-building at camp. Check out that scholarship information at: http://www.cdss.org/scholarships.html.

Have you seen the refreshed CDSS website? Our goal is to make it easier to find tools and resources. From our homepage you can now easily go to Resources to find information on CDSS publications, online library, how-to guides, and support and outreach funding.

Finally—we'll be "dropping" our tools and skill building opportunities along the road during the CDSS Centennial Tour in 2015 (see page 5 for an update). See you there.

Happy dancing, singing and playing! Thanks for a great 2013!

Warmly, Rima