Communities strengthened by dancing, singing, and making music together
As always, when we set out to prepare our Annual Report, we are flooded with gratitude towards members and donors who support us financially and make it possible for us to advance our mission. This year in particular, your financial and moral support were crucial, as was the gift of time and energy from many dedicated volunteers who rolled up their sleeves and put shoulder to wheel to help keep CDSS moving during a year of unprecedented changes and transitions!

In February, Executive Director Rima Dael wrapped up CDSS’s successful Centennial celebration and campaign and moved on to a new job. Staff and Board swiftly launched the search for a new Director, hiring an Interim Director who took the helm to ensure that operations continued.

Education Director Pat MacPherson, heading for retirement after 24+ years at CDSS, shepherded several publications towards completion, notably *On the Banks of Coldbrook*, which she saw through to publication with the help of Ben Williams, who arrived in October.

Ben’s arrival also helped lighten the load for Sales, Services, & Data Specialist Sarah Pilzer, whose energies were stretched thin between insurance & tax exemption services for Group Affiliates, data analysis of the survey for organizers in Canada, book and CD sales transactions, and the operationally critical transition to Salesforce.

To accelerate that transition, incoming Executive Director Katy German directed Sarah to hand off management of the store to Ben, who completed a comprehensive survey of inventory and stocked or restocked 60+ titles (over $8,000 of goods!) for the holiday season. As a result, we saw a sharp decrease in issues with ordering, and double digit increases in store revenue.

Director of Communications Caroline Batson retired in May, handing editorial direction of the *CDSS News* (after 33 years as editor and closing in on 200 issues!) to Webmaster Lynn Nichols. Lynn ably took the reins on that while maintaining a laser focus on rebuilding our online storefront and e-commerce/login system.

In addition to her usual responsibilities, Director of Development Robin Hayden served as the staff representative on the Executive Transition Committee and as assistant/advisor to Interim Director Tom Colligan, who guided CDSS through many of these changes.

And finally, retiring Business Manager Bob Blondin and Board Treasurer Craig Meltzer gave unstintingly of their own time to bring new Business Manager Melissa McMullen up to speed.
Director of Camp Programs Steve Howe and Outreach Manager Linda Henry kept their eyes on the road ahead, continuing CDSS’s community support, education, and camp work.

Steve produced 13 successful week-long camp programs at 4 separate facilities, while training 3 new office assistants at Pinewoods.

Linda offered 22 grants to applicants in 18 states and provinces, awarded 103 scholarships to our camps, and guided 2 groups in their efforts to plan conferences.

...stepped up in more ways than can be related here, but of note in this report, they increased their personal support of CDSS by 66%, collectively giving more than $55,000!

Special commendation must go to Doug Plummer, who largely put his life on hold in order to chair the Executive Transition Committee to its brilliant conclusion, and to David Millstone, who finished six years as Board President on the joyous high note of welcoming new Executive Director Katy German aboard in September.

For many organizations, navigating a leadership change and struggling to retain the institutional knowledge of retiring staff members might well spell disaster. But CDSS has a rare and particular strength that few nonprofits are blessed with, and that is all of you. You are not just our donors, you are our friends, our collaborators, and the fabric of the ever-branching community we are amazed and grateful to be a part of.

Because of you, CDSS has gathered its forces and launched into 2018 from a place of financial strength, bold and visionary new leadership, thoughtful planning, and renewed energy. Let the melody go on!
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
CDSS grants program continues to ignite innovation and sustain traditions

CDSS awarded a grant to the traditional dance and song community in Missoula, MT, to help them create the first ever Missoula Old Time Social. Held April 20-22, the weekend provided an opportunity for musicians and dancers in Western MT to gather, connect, and share, and introduced many newcomers to Old Time music and dance.

The schedule included an old time music jam, a family concert, shape note singing, and workshops in square dance calling, clogging, fiddle, guitar, banjo, and yodeling. Bands came from Helena, Bozeman, and Missoula, with two guest fiddlers from Los Angeles and Toronto. 20+ volunteers pitched in, making it a true community event. That spirit made it possible for this first Missoula Old Time Social to break even.

As the weekend came to a close, attendees expressed great enthusiasm for the event and interest in having more frequent square dances and music workshops in the Missoula area.

Organizer Chelle Karcher reports that the Old Time music and dance community in Western Montana has been somewhat fragmented over the years, and this joyous occasion brought together people of all ages and experience levels. Karcher says the weekend was a huge success, and thanks CDSS for providing support for callers and musicians for the evening Family Dance and Community Square Dance.

Find out more about CDSS’s community outreach program at cdss.org/outreach.

CDSS SPEAKS OUT!

Robin Hayden advances the voice of participatory arts in North America on behalf of CDSS

“In March of 2017 I traveled to Washington to participate in Arts Advocacy Day, with 800 other arts supporters from across the US.

“After a day of training, each state team visited the offices of our US Senators and Representatives to urge them to support — or oppose — specific legislation affecting the arts.

“Years of making the case for supporting CDSS to our donors was in fact excellent preparation for making the case directly to policy makers whose decisions can have a real impact on the arts in the US!

“CDSS is entering its 2nd century of service to community-based dance, music, and song participants, leaders, and the organizations that continue these traditions across North America.
Advocacy will make CDSS a more effective national organization

“In DC, I learned that we need to demonstrate explicitly the value of our activities, in terms that government agencies and funding organizations will sit up and pay attention to — and that CDSS must be proactive in leading that conversation and collecting the data to support it. Our Canadian organizers’ survey was an excellent first step in gathering such data. A critical next step will be a census of participatory arts in the US, in partnership with Americans for the Arts.”

“When CDSS first began our technology transition in 2017, I was unaware that Salesforce was more than just another database to learn. But then I travelled to the company’s annual conference, Dreamforce, and I discovered that we were now part of a wider community of users, admins, and developers known as the #SalesforceOhana.

“With over 2,700 sessions spread across 4 days, a 10-block radius campus, and nearly 175,000 attendees the magnitude of the event could have easily been overwhelming. Instead, I found it not dissimilar to building connections at large dance festivals. Everyone I spoke to was enthused about their work, eager to hear about mine, and ready to share ideas about how Salesforce could help solve technology challenges we face at CDSS.

“The many stories I heard from “Trailblazers” who had revolutionized their companies’ operations via Salesforce inspired me to attend hands-on workshops so that I could return with my skills honed and ready to go. Best of all, I knew that when I hit snags moving forward, I could reach out to my newfound friends for advice and support.

“My Dreamforce experience reinforced what those of us at CDSS already know: the best that life has to offer comes from working together in community, whether it is to learn about database solutions or to make music and song.”
Transformation Defined: An Update on the Sage Foundation Gift

Transformational gifts are investments in the future of an organization, distinguished by their unique capacity to bring about internal organizational change.

The Sage Foundation gift enabled CDSS to fulfill our Centennial Campaign goals, and made possible an historic step towards a new mode of operating.

In 2017, Sage funding supported a national search for an Executive Director who could offer a fresh vision for the organization and the skills to get us there. The result is CDSS's first remote ED who is building the organization's capacity to serve and employ people all across North America.

An Innovative Approach to Reserves

A major goal of our Centennial Campaign was to build up a $450,000 Robust Reserve fund.

In 2017 the Finance Committee finalized the funding plan and policy for the reserves, proposing that the Robust Reserves be split equally into two funds:

The Operational Reserves will function as a traditional reserve fund, used to maintain general operations in times of need.

The Opportunity Reserves will provide CDSS with seed money to try new things or launch new projects without putting strain on the general operations budget. The reserves will continue to be built up as the remainder of the Sage gift and Centennial Campaign pledges are received.

Centennial Campaign Goals Update

In 2017, work continued on three of the Centennial Campaign Goals:

• launched newly redesigned website; continuing to make upgrades

• designed our new Salesforce database structure and started transferring member and customer data into it

• adopted an innovative and forward-thinking approach to our robust reserves
Thanks to you, CDSS finished 2017 in a strong financial position!

2017 saw increases in support income, due in large part to the energy and work of our Board and a very successful Annual Appeal. We had reduced staff costs due to the Executive transition and staff retirements. And 2017 was a strong year for the stock market, leading to good portfolio performance. All of this positioned us well for the work of 2018.

NOTE: Expenses associated with continuing Centennial Campaign projects are now considered operational costs and are included in the 2017 Expenses graph above. Centennial pledge income was recognized in full in the year that pledges were made, so pledge payments received in 2017 are not included in the 2017 Income graph. Pledge payments received in 2017 more than covered the gap in operations income versus expenses shown here.

For more information, including comparative financial statements, donor lists, and more, visit cdss.org/2017-annual-report
MISSION STATEMENT: We connect and support people in building and sustaining vibrant communities through participatory dance, music, and song traditions with roots in English and North American culture.

2017 GOVERNING BOARD

Officers:
David Millstone, President
Dorcas Hand, Vice President
Brooke Friendly, Secretary
Craig Meltzer, Treasurer

At Large Members:
Peter Baker
Nancy Barbour
Gaye Fifer
Beverly Francis
Mark Galipeau
Katy Heine
Lorraine Lee Hammond
Donald Hughes
Susie Lorand
Frannie Marr
Sharon McKinley
Pam Paulsen
Doug Plummer
David Roodman
John Seto
David Shewmaker
Norm Stewart
Chris Weiler

CDSS OFFICE

Rima Dael, Executive Director (January 2017)
Tom Colligan, Interim Executive Director (January- August 2017)
Katy German, Executive Director (September 2017- present)
Steve Howe, Director of Camp Programs
Pat MacPherson, Director of Education
Caroline Batson, Director of Communications
Linda Henry, Outreach Manager
Sarah Pilzer, Sales, Services, & Data Specialist
Ben Williams, Store Manager (Oct 2017-present)
Robin Hayden, Director of Development
Melissa McMullen, Business Manager
Anna Mach, Accounting Manager
Lynn Nichols, Webmaster
Nicki Perez, Database & Administrative Assistant

PHOTO CREDITS

Jeffrey Bary
Emily O’Brien
Doug Plummer
Ali Solomon
Rachel Winslow
Debbie Jackson

WHAT’S NEXT?

“Over the next 5-10 years, I want CDSS to grow from being a continental organization in name only, to truly having a presence throughout North America. The tools and skills that are needed for a successful remote team are the same tools and skills that are going to enable us to provide even better services, opportunities, and access to resources for our community in the future.”

~ CDSS Executive Director Katy German

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