



CDSS 2021 RECIPIENT

Lifetime Contribution Award

DAVID KAYNOR

The Country Dance & Song Society is proud to announce that David Kaynor of Montague Center, MA, is the 2021 recipient of the CDSS Lifetime Contribution Award. David was selected in recognition of more than 50 years of performing and teaching at camps and festivals across the U.S., humbly mentoring an entire generation of contra dance musicians, tirelessly serving as a leader in dance and music communities of Western Massachusetts,

generously sharing tune compositions and writings about dance calling, and supporting generations of musicians and dancers in creating warm, inviting, and welcoming communities through music and dance. With consideration for both David's health and the unusual times in which we are living, the Board will work with David and friends to determine the best way to celebrate the occasion. More information will be announced via email as plans unfold.

"David Kaynor is truly the master of the dance—caller, fiddler, organizer, mentor, tunesmith, and so much more. His commitment to building community through music and dance has inspired many, with his inclusive style making everyone always feel welcome and special. I am sure that there are many people all over this country whom David has encouraged to become musicians even though they never believed they were. David's harmony fiddle playing is second to no one and simply makes any ensemble sound sublime. He is the only caller I know who can call and play amazing harmony fiddle at the same time, calling without notes or cards, every dance in his head, and never repeating a dance at a whole week of dance camp."

—Mary Cay Brass, Athens, VT (musician, bandmate)

"When, as a new resident in Western Massachusetts some thirty years ago, I cautiously brought my fiddle to the "all-comers band" in Montague, David spotted me amidst the cheerful hubbub and made sure I got to choose one of the tunes. Over the decades since, I've seen him extend the gift of welcome and encouragement over and over again, opening doors for so many people to discover or deepen their love of participatory music and dance."

—Susan Conger, Greenfield, MA (musician, bandmate)

"For over 20 years, David Kaynor has made twice-a-year visits to the Pacific Northwest, staying here for weeks at a time. He quickly became an essential part of our dance communities because of his ability to enter into and work hard for established activities and dances. In addition to performing, he joined sessions and work parties, lugged sound gear, cleaned halls, solved problems—whatever was needed. He amplified everything he participated in not only by virtue of his legendary music and calling expertise but by living out his values of participation, inclusivity, respect, and encouragement."

Some people think of David as the guy who was willing and able to call a contra dance for hundreds of dancers at the Northwest Folklife Festival, dressed in full drag (and fiddling while calling, of course). Many more think of him as the person who showed them the way—the way into the dance

community, the way to be a good community member, the way to become a better musician or caller, and then the way to welcome all others into the fold. All aspects of our dance community, in the Pacific Northwest and across the nation, are richer because David has shown us the way to make it so."

—Sue Songer, Portland, OR (musician, band & teaching-mate)

"I got to know David well around 4 years ago when, at the age of 72, I took the Dance Musicians Week class he has been directing for over 20 years at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. I was awestruck by his ability to inspire, instruct, and connect with classmates that spanned several generations in a positive, non-threatening, upbeat, and collaborative manner. He encouraged us to learn, to love learning, to have fun with music, and to help each other, without ever putting us on the spot to perform. Simply put, it was wonderful!"

—Fred Karsch, Ann Arbor, MI (musician, student)

"David has come back to visit his Ann Arbor family (as we've deemed ourselves) several times, and it always results in a week of music, laughs, stories, and a sense of community that only someone like David Kaynor can cultivate. I'm certain that my past and present interactions with him are key factors in my continued dive in the traditional music and dance world. He is an incredible mentor and one of the most joy-filled and positive people I've ever met. I'm beyond proud to call him my friend and cannot express how much his leadership and musicianship touches the lives of those around him."

—Kim Smallwood, Ann Arbor, MI (musician, mentee)

Photos by Doug Plummer.

