1. Discussion: What Is Community?

When people get together with dance and music and fun, exploring options, working together

Belonging to community means taking time to share yourselves -- connecting

Self-identity

Being with people

Beyond entertainment: the need of the whole is greater than the need of the individual - to produce something greater than selves

It’s like the set-up of a village: generative [property?] brings on a new generation

It’s the care for individuals of the community within our shared interest

The dance is not the purpose - it’s an element of a community, whether one of the small dance communities or the greater Dance Community

Trust

2. Discussion: Why is community important?

Human needs.

Social and psychological health

A need to belong. Acceptance

Closeness, empathy, honesty, integrity, contact

Our dance community is based on a basic need for and love of movement

“I was dragged into a dance kicking and screaming. The community is why I stayed.”

“What I like about contra dancing is sweating on people” [i.e., feeling comfortable with other dancers]
Connecting with other people without a sense of threat

Connection. Mutual support

Group movement: my idea is of working with other people for a common purpose

Opportunity to express yourself

Collaborative movement. The success of one is the success of all. Each person has a part to play in the dances.

Everybody gets to matter

3. Discussion: How can we continue this, and extend these opportunities to others?

Help people know that they are missed when they don’t come

Each person has a role

Ask people to have a responsibility

Organizers: Make room for people to help. Share the work.

People need to have a stake in the dance -- it is their dance

As a dance community: go out together after the dance; do other activities together

Isolation is a feature of this day and time: this [dance] activity gives people a chance to escape isolation.

4. Discussion: Caller Techniques to Encourage Community

Let people talk and socialize - don’t be in too much of a hurry to rush people into the next dance. Wait for a natural pause.

Contra callers: Back off calling - let dancers struggle a bit to keep each other going - to work together

One caller prefers English country dancing because there’s more time for dancers to communicate

Remember that the difficulty of the dance affects how hard it is to talk to other dancers.
In your choice of dances, focus on variety without complexity -- variety adds the challenge

Ideas for caller over-the mike comments:

   Between dances: “Mill around! Meet somebody new!”
   “Find somebody you don’t know for the next dance”

   Ask dancers to ask inexperienced dancers to dance - and then go find them their partners for the next dance.

   Announcement at end of evening: “We’re a volunteer community. We welcome your help in cleaning up the room.”
   “It takes everybody to help.”

Notes taken by Kris Litchman
What is community?
Joint ownership of making an outcome, both creation and participation.
Synergy among individuals.
Tribal connection, more than entertainment, members self-identified, greater than self, society, open, inclusive, heritage, layers of community (local, regional, national), trust.

Why is community important?
Social-psychological health, belonging, needs, music and group movement, human relationships, touch, physical contact, person-to-person,

We use the same tools (music and dance) to gather communities.
Not person moving to music, but people moving to music.
We all come from that same issue, but we each represent that in our own unique way.
What is the community that I'm a member of, and say something that describes that, so learn. From each other and learn how to build community.
Same thing works, we each have a part to play for the whole, collaborative activity.
We're each doing the same thing in our own way.
The success of one is the success of all.
Everyone matters.

If community is the most important reason that people come to the dance, then how can we support that and grow that family, to grow the dances and create a stronger, greater community?
If I'm not at the dance, I will be missed.
Each person has a role.
Make room for people to volunteer to help. Organizers need to make space and invite helpers. People will be then engaged in the dance and have a sense of ownership.
Hold other non-dancing events, get us to interact in new ways.
Outside of work, the dance offers an opportunity for social contact, even if only intimately with a few people.
Isolation has negative health effects, and dancing provides us an escape from isolation.
A dance does not need to be only paid entertainment, like a drive-in movie, where people only dance then go home. People are at the dance to socialize, and callers can encourage community:

- When line up, if the dancers are talking with each other, the caller can ask himself a question: why are they talking? To annoy the caller? Let the dancers talk, they want to socialize. There will be a natural lull in the noise, and that's the time to step in.
- Caller can stop prompting a bit early and let the dancers struggle a little, it's fun to find a way to succeed.
- Doc: The level of the dance has the amount of communication between the dancers. If it's a complicated dance, they're concentrating on how to dance it. An easier dance allows more community interaction. A caller does not need to use all the latest figures to make a dance fun, there's lots of other ways to introduce challenge (particularly in square dance, where unexpected sequences can provide surprise and challenge).
Announcements include words: This is a "volunteer community", we welcome your help in cleaning and closing the room to leave it the way we found it. It emphasizes that it takes everyone to make this happen.

Tolerance, by learning to dance with a range of people, ages, types, attitudes. You be an example. Make an effort to dance with beginners.

Ask experienced dancers: "You're such a good dancer. Would you dance one dance with a beginner?" Glen Echo has "new dancer" buttons. Experienced dancers can wear a "dance buddy" button. Help a new dancer find their next partner. Incorporate this into your community norms through announcements, and tell caller to do so.

*** Contact David Wiley about his dance buttons.

Do it and keep doing it.

Some of these ideas will apply for our group.

Notes taken by Erik Erhardt