
CDSS PIVOTS TO PROVIDE COVID-19 TOOLS

By Kelsey Wells

In the past few weeks, we've been reminded again and again of how impactful having a national dance and song organization is to the greater folk community. We've felt so heartened to see local communities creating online space for interaction, people writing pandemic-inspired dances and songs, organizations creating unique fundraisers to help those in need, and so much more.

We've developed a number of resources to help our communities find information, distribute their own updates, connect with and support each other, and find new, fun activities to do while our normal events are suspended. Many of these resources include substantial crowd-sourced elements; thank you for helping us build these tools!

FOR ORGANIZERS

Our main COVID-19 statement (cdss.org/covid19) was the first thing we published (on March 6) as the virus began to spread in the U.S., and we have continually updated it with links to national and state/provincial health organizations, our recommendations for cancelling and postponing events, and other data-centered info. Many of our staff researched COVID-19 and consulted with medical professionals and epidemiologists to inform this statement.

Our regular events calendar now has an option for listing cancelled events, and a full list of cancelled events (both past and future) is archived in the covid section of our website (cdss.org/cancellations). While a list of cancelled events is less helpful now than it was at the beginning of the pandemic (when everything is cancelled, you don't really need a list!), we're keeping all the listings for historical reference. We expect the cancelled and not-cancelled calendar lists will be more helpful when some events start to take place again.

The events calendar also has a new section for online events (cdss.org/onlineevents). With so many local groups and individuals hosting online workshops, concerts, and get-togethers, we created this user-populated list to help congregate the many online offerings in one place.

After our April Web Chat, "Yes We CAN Keep in Touch!: Connecting Our Communities During the Pandemic," we created a collection of ideas (cdss.org/distance-resources) from community organizers for engaging participants in the absence of in-person events. This new resource is packed with submissions from all sorts of communities—song, contra and English dance, ritual dance, family dance, music—and includes helpful details like equipment needed, online platforms used, and so on. The resource will continue to be open for submissions for the foreseeable future. If you missed the Web Chat but have an idea from your community to share, we'd love to include it.

FOR FREELANCE ARTISTS

Immediately after we first recommended that events be cancelled, we created two resources for musicians, callers, and other folks who lost lots of work very quickly. The first is a list of sources of funding (cdss.org/freelance-resources), including some location-specific options and grants for creative projects. The second is a directory of freelance artists (cdss.org/sendlove), populated by the artists themselves, with info on private lessons, buying recordings, and how to donate directly. As of May 1, the list included more than 70 callers, musicians, and sound engineers. The directory is open for submissions! (And for business!) Artists, we invite you to create an entry so that we can help people help you. And everyone else, please check out the directory and lift these folks up as best you can. These listings are a great way to send support directly to artists in the ways that work best for them.

FOR FAMILIES

Our online Resource Portal (cdss.org/portal), recently revamped and relaunched earlier this year, includes sections for musicians, dancers, singers, organizers, educators, and now, for families! The families section is a collection of videos, articles, discussions, and repertoire of songs and dances for children and their families. As with the whole Portal, suggestions for new resources to include are always welcome. Email portal@cdss.com with any additions or updates.

As a staff, CDSS continues to work full steam ahead, albeit completely remotely. While many of our stalwart programs are paused for the time being, we are focusing on supporting our community and Affiliates, putting more energy into online projects, creating new web events in place of some 2020 camp weeks, and planning for 2021 and beyond, with a vision of our shared traditions not only surviving, but thriving, through these challenging times.