

Community Outreach Far and Wide

News from CDSS Grant Recipients in Karlsruhe, Germany, and Hindman, Kentucky



Dancers are all smiles at the Karlsruhe Contra Dance Ball, in Karlsruhe, Germany (photo by E. Amling)

The following excerpts are from the grant report submitted by Rebecca Sass:

On November 24, 2017, Karlsruhe Contra Dance offered its second ever Contra Dance Ball.

Located in western Germany close to the French border on the Rhine, Karlsruhe is an average-size city with about 300,000 residents. Our group's primary goal is to promote live traditional dance music and the lively, inclusive spirit of contra dance that is so prevalent in active contra communities in the US and UK. Our secondary goal is to appeal to students and children. Inspired by a dancer's homesickness for contras in the eastern US, our group first started promoting contra dance in this area in November 2016. Since then we've offered small workshops and family barn dances about once a month, and two balls with live music.

In the course of one year our planning group has grown from one to three people—Eberhard Müller, Jennifer Kübel, and myself. This past Spring, the opportunity arose to have renowned Boston musicians Audrey Knuth and Larry Unger play for our November ball. The caller for the event was Carol David-Blackman who lives in

Aachen (northwestern) Germany. It was a chance we didn't want to pass up!

Thanks to support from CDSS, we were not only able to put on the dance, but also to keep our entry fee within a reasonable range to attract people who had barely or never heard of contra dance. We introduced these dancers to an incredible level of musical talent they wouldn't have been able to experience otherwise. In an area where contra dance is all but unknown, we managed to attract 68 adults and 8 children for a five-hour long workshop and dance. About 10% of those in attendance were students, and we encouraged our young dancers to the dance floor by calling one "silly" barn dance, which the adults enjoyed as well. A good percentage of attendees had come to our previous ball, plus we had a lot of first-timers. Return customers are always a positive sign! We had lots of locals, as well as some folks who traveled many hours to come dance with us because they knew we had something good to offer.

While we did not cover our expenses with ticket sales alone, we did achieve our goal for this dance: promoting quality music, the community spirit of contra dance, getting students and kids to dance, and having dancers go home happy! There are of course things we hope to do

differently next time, but our organizing team was very satisfied with the outcome.

Looking to the future, we feel it's a reasonable goal to aim for one or two large dances per year and we're currently looking into bringing a US caller here for a dance in June 2018. We think our German dancers are finally ready for a non-German speaker! Overall, it was a great experience to be able to bring contra dancing and its contagious spirit to the dance floor in Karlsruhe. Having Larry and Audrey play for our dance was a dream come true and Carol called and taught the perfect dances for the crowd we had. The quality of musicianship was obvious to all on the dance floor and it made an enormous impression. We are extremely thankful to CDSS for helping make this dance happen. We are going to keep dancing!



Workshop during Dumplin's and Dancin' in Hindman, Kentucky
(photo by Brett Ratcliff)

and traditional mountain music and dance offered by Sunrise Ridge.

Dumplings' and Dancin' 2017 was an experience truly worth remembering, a coming together of friends old and new, who together welcomed ancestral knowledge and cultural passions into our shared space at Hindman Settlement School. We had around 50 paying participants for the full weekend which included workshops, meals, lodging, and nightly dances. In the end, we were able to just cover our direct expenses, which was the goal, but hope eventually to be able to cover many of our indirect expenses as well. Overall, throughout the weekend some 200+ people passed through the Settlement's doors. The Saturday night feast definitely saw an influx of community members topping out at around 130 folks for that alone, many of whom who stuck around afterward for the dance.

Through cultural summits like Dumplings' and Dancin', Hindman Settlement School continues to tell a more authentic story of Appalachian people.

The following excerpts are from the grant report submitted by Brett Ratcliff:

On an unseasonably mild winter weekend, in this the early part of December, the bare, damp hills of Hindman, Kentucky, came to life with Hindman Settlement School's Appalachian food and dance weekend, Dumplings' and Dancin'. The May Stone Building on the Settlement's main campus, where all the events took place, was decorated for the holidays adding a feeling of warmth and of home. Some came here to cook, some came here to dance, and some just came to mix and mingle.

Dumplin's and Dancin' was made possible by our generous community of neighbors and donors, sponsors and friends. CDSS's support provided scholarship funds for a local youth to attend this year's event and become immersed in a weekend of traditional mountain dance calling workshops. The lucky recipient of this scholarship was local teen, Tinsley Wetmore. After the event, we asked Tinsley what she thought about her experience, to which she replied, "I had fun and learned more about calling square dancing. I hope to practice what I learned more often and master calling square dances."

The event featured a groundswell of stories; the joining of hands to circle up left; recipes swapped and improvised upon; offerings of local beef and chickens, fresh greens and produce; dances that came from here and yon (or came from here and went yon and came back), a potluck;

10 Years of Outreach Grants

2018 marks the 10th Anniversary of the CDSS Outreach Grants program. In honor of this milestone, we will be awarding \$10,000 in grants this year!

Our next grant deadline is **June 1st**. To apply, visit cdss.org/outreach. See **Our Funds at Work** in the Outreach section of the website to read more about the grants offered in 2017 and February 2018.