

Traveling Exec Goes to Camp CDSS and the Lady of the Lake Forum

by Doug Plummer and Penn Fix

Imagine this. Along the shore of a mountain-ringed lake in northern Idaho, a fire is roaring in the stone fireplace of an 80-year-old cedar lodge, and Mark, the camp manager, is serving a home-cooked meal to 10 traveling Executive Committee members from all over the country. This was the setting for a weekend of meetings—that just so happened to coordinate with the Lady of the Lake Fall Dance and Music Weekend.

The Spokane Folklore Society and the Lady of the Lake Music and Dance Camps, both CDSS affiliates, invited us to hold our biannual board meeting at the N-Sid-Sen Camp & Retreat Center (a United Church of Christ facility). It's a beautiful facility set on the shore of Idaho's second-largest body of water, the 22-mile-long Lake Coeur d'Alene.

This was a novel format for the Traveling Executive Committee, to meet during a dance weekend (though it's happened before—2007 in Arkansas). Usually the committee goes to visit one particular community. In this case, the community came to us. From a broad swath of a region called the Inland Northwest, which encompasses eastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and southern British Columbia, nearly thirty Forum members from 17 communities were able to attend the weekend. With the aid of a CDSS Outreach Grant, many of them were able to make the trip from quite remote locations.

In preparation for our meeting, Penn Fix organized the Lady of the Lake (LOL) Forum, a consortium of regional leaders interested in sharing resources, issues, and concerns facing their dance and music scenes. Over months of on-line sharing, they created an agenda for the Forum sessions at the fall camp.

At a late afternoon reception that kicked off the Forum, the participants met the CDSS board members and shared with them some of the issues they were interested in. Executive Director Katy German and President Gaye Fifer then shared the ways that CDSS could help communities achieve their goals.

After dinner that night, Katy German spoke to the entire weekend camp, about 130 participants, about CDSS and in particular the benefits it could provide individuals. All weekend, CDSS board members ate alongside these campers, sharing informally their enthusiasm for CDSS, and Forum members were encouraged to reach out to board members throughout the weekend.

*“Now I know how ready
CDSS is to make connections.
I feel comfortable asking.”*

—Forum participant





Diane Silver helped lead a Forum lunch table discussion on family dances. Katy and Gaye led a discussion with those interested in introducing English dance to their communities. Joel Bluestein advised about finances.

On Saturday, the CDSS board continued their all-day meeting. The main Forum sessions started mid-afternoon, first in a big circle with Katy, then in breakout sessions with CDSS committee members. Diane Silver and Avia Moore led a Dancer Safety and Etiquette group, JoLaine Jones-Pokorney talked about volunteerism, and Gaye Fifer discussed leadership burnout.

The Forum participant evaluations confirmed that we accomplished what we had set out to do during the weekend, which was for CDSS to do what it does best and share what it's learned from the grass roots up. The

Inland Northwest has some specific issues, particularly the remote geography and the distances. Their issues are not always what big city dances face. But the issues folks brought up in the meeting are common ones anywhere: attendance, burnout, volunteer and dancer recruitment, and dancer safety. CDSS has learned what works for other communities, and what can be adapted as strategies. And CDSS has resources, financial and informational, that can help communities be more resilient when faced with those forces.

The LOL Forum is now an ongoing vehicle for the Inland Northwest dance and music community. The Traveling Executive model coupled with the diverse group of campers found at the Lady of the Lake Fall Dance and Music Weekend allowed CDSS a unique opportunity to meet a vast range of community leaders that could not have happened any other way.

CDSS Grants Available!

Next Application Deadline: February 1, 2020

As mentioned in the article above, CDSS grant funding supported this exciting regional Forum that brought together almost 30 leaders of 17 communities. If you have an idea for an event or project to boost music, dance, or song in your community or region, CDSS funding is available to help YOU!

Our grants support training workshops (for callers, musicians, singers, etc.), events that foster youth involvement, seed money to help initiate a new series, and more. To apply for the next grant application deadline on February 1, visit cdss.org/support-services/outreach/outreach-funds. Questions? Email resources@cdss.org.

For a map and listing of projects and events CDSS has supported since 2008, check out:
cdss.org/support-services/outreach/our-funds-at-work