

A group of people, mostly older adults, are gathered in a rustic wooden hall, playing ukuleles and dancing. They are wearing casual summer clothing like tank tops and shorts. The room has a wooden ceiling with exposed beams, and colorful bunting flags and a striped paper lantern are hanging from it. A sign on the wall reads "DANCING SINGING".

# Country Dance & Song Society ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Photo: Deborah Payne

## *Responding to Present Needs While Building a Strong Future*

As I reflect on another year of growth in both planned and unexpected directions, it's clear that in many ways the second year of the pandemic was more challenging than the first.

As I'm sure many of you also experienced, it was a year of considering, hoping, consulting, planning, and adapting—and then reconsidering, reconsulting, replanning, readjusting... you get the idea.

Yet, throughout the uncertain year there were things that went really well. We conducted a well-planned transition in program leadership, allowing for transfer of knowledge and the launch of year-round programming. We got even better at supporting remote staff, opening the door to exciting new hires in 2022.

We seized a brief window of opportunity and ran three magical and COVID-free camp sessions at Pinewoods, adapting quickly and nimbly as the pandemic shifted, and ultimately ending the season early to prioritize public health.

Perhaps the greatest challenge of 2021 was balancing our attention between responding to the immediate pandemic-related needs of the larger community and the important work of examining and dismantling systemic inequities so that everyone can be a part of these traditions in the future. I believe that the dance, music, and song traditions we love will be here for generations to come because of the work we are doing now to remove barriers and make all our spaces more inclusive. We are learning, and we have a lot still to learn.

One profoundly good outcome of 2021 was the expansion and deepening of our connection to communities across the continent. As CDSS provided guidance, recommendations, and access to professional legal and public health advice, we forged new bonds with organizers and leaders across North America who are stewarding their communities. In a way, the pandemic offered us the opportunity to leap ahead with our long-term goals of building stronger relationships with local and regional organizers. I believe these connections will be the key to a strong post-pandemic era of dance, music, and song.

Thank you to each and every one of our members and donors for your steadfast support of CDSS and the work we are doing to learn, grow, and support the broader community during these strange and important years. Together, we're making a difference!

Katy German, Executive Director

## Thank You!

**We are deeply grateful for your steadfast support throughout these difficult times. In 2021 you, our members and donors, again rose to the occasion, surpassing our fundraising goals for the year.**

**As the year unfolded, we were able not only to maintain ongoing work but to continue developing and sharing new resources and programs. Despite an unavoidable deficit year, your generous support helped us meet our expenses without recourse to our reserves.**



Photo: Jeff Bary

# Programs

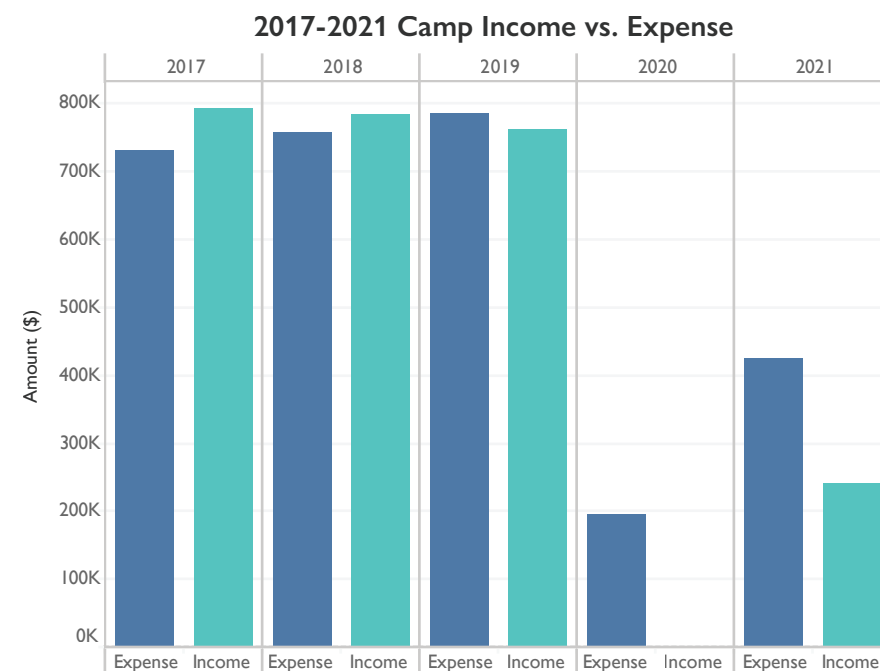
## *An Exciting New Era*

2021 was a year of growth, change, and investment in CDSS Programs. Strong donor support in recent years, including the Bright Futures multi-year gift in 2019, meant that we were in a position to conduct our carefully planned transition in CDSS Programs leadership, despite the temporary loss of camp income.

We invested in a seven-month overlap in Program leadership, which was essential to the smooth transfer of important institutional knowledge from former Director of Camps, Steve Howe, to new Director of Programs, Joanna Reiner Wilkinson.



Photo: Jeff Bary



In this chart you can see the effects the pandemic had on camp income over the past two years, with a 100% loss of income in 2020 and a 70% loss in 2021 compared to pre-pandemic years. Included in the 2021 expenses is the increase to salaries for the overlap of staff for the transition of the Director of Programs and the full contract payment to staff of canceled camp weeks.

We were able to run three joyful weeks of camp before another variant of the COVID virus necessitated the cancellation of the remainder of our season. During the weeks we ran, as the pandemic situation changed, we consulted with public health professionals and collaborated with Pinewoods Camp to quickly develop and implement COVID testing protocols to keep our campers safe. And because we canceled the three remaining weeks so late in the season, CDSS honored in full the contracts of all the program staff scheduled to be there.

The short camp season was a brief but joyous reminder of how soul-nourishing it is for people to sing, dance, and make music together.



Photo: Deborah Payne

## 2021 Online Programs

Winter Family Gathering

Global Terminology & Positional Calling

Celebrate May!

Virtual Kaleidoscope: Online Camp 2021

Early Music Week Online

ECD Choreography

Common Time monthly gathering

The Bright Future gift also made possible a strong 2021 launch into ongoing year-round programming. Like so many organizations, we moved our programming online during the pandemic lockdown in 2020. And then we saw the potential of continuing with year-round online programming, complementing our in-person programs.

In 2021, we offered six new online programs and launched our monthly Common Time gathering. Moving forward, we are excited by the community-building potential of these lower-cost (often free!) and more accessible options! (See pages 6-7 for participation stats!)

Learn more about camp programs at [camp.cdss.org](https://camp.cdss.org)

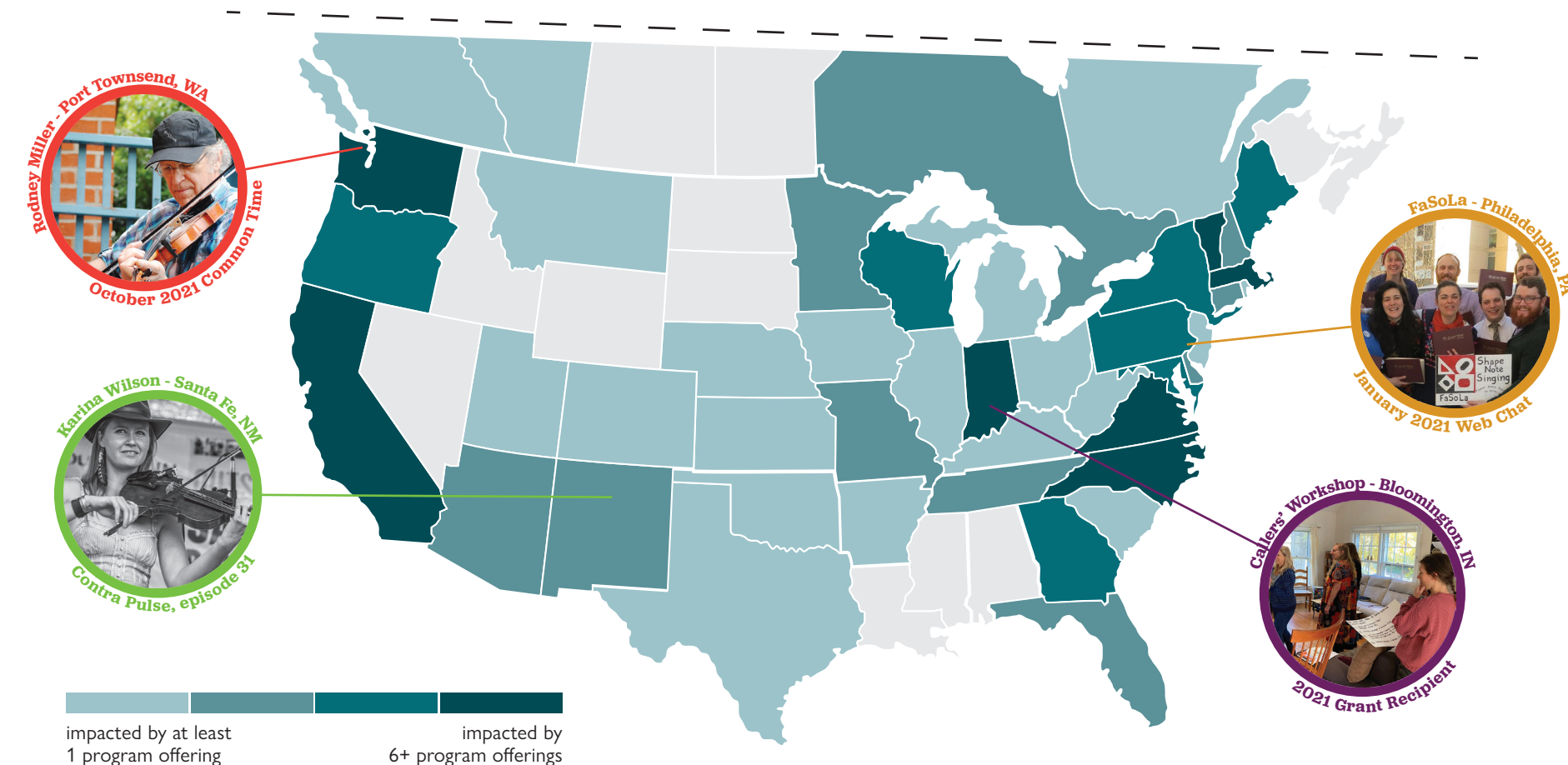
Find out more about online programs by browsing [cdss.org](https://cdss.org)

# Programs Expansion

## Leads to Increased Collaboration

In a year that continued to challenge everyone's capacity for returning to normal, CDSS cast a wide net of connection through various offerings. As the map shows, participants in our programs represented 48 states and provinces in 2021.

The darker colors on the map show the states where individuals and Affiliates engaged even more through programs such as grants, matching scholarships, CDSS Web Chats, Common Time, and podcasts.



**15** grant & matching scholarship donees in **12** states & provinces

**17** podcast guests from **11** states & provinces

**51** online program presenters from **16** states & provinces

**2,095** virtual attendees from **48** states & provinces

While we're proud of these numbers, there's more to the story of our reach. Our *Let's Talk about Reentry!* web chat series is one example. In three web chats focused on this continually changing topic, we discussed vaccines, legal issues, and what we could learn from folks who had already resumed in-person events. These chats drew on the wisdom and expertise of community members as well as legal and public health professionals.

We heard from participants that these chats gave them a sense of community in a time of isolation, greater confidence in making decisions locally, and hope that we would all come through this in time.

"I want to express DEEP gratitude for these sessions, both for the information they share and the chance to be in community when considering issues of such magnitude. It makes a huge difference not to feel so alone."

—Jennifer Farley Smith,  
Belmont, MA

"My big picture takeaway [from a grant-funded callers workshop] is, we needed more callers to sustain a weekly dance, but we got more than just new callers. We got increased buy-in, engagement, and investment."

—Eric Schedler,  
Bloomington, IN

## Being Ourselves, More Equitably

With the 2021 launch of online programming, CDSS adapted to the demands of the pandemic and improved program accessibility by providing low-cost and free educational opportunities to people from the convenience of their home. To better serve folks who are visually impaired we've added image descriptions to social media posts. And we've expanded transcription for our online programs and publications for folks who are hard of hearing.

Early in 2021 the newly convened cultural Equity Advisory Group began their year-long process of reviewing our programs, operations, and public communications. Under the facilitation of Dr. Dena Jennings of Imani Works Corporation, the group of 10 met throughout the year, got to know the history and work of the organization and interviewed Board and staff leadership, documenting their process and recommendations along the way. Their work and recommendations are already informing our discussions as we begin crafting our next strategic plan.

“CDSS has a strategic plan and organizational structure that has served some well until now—but not everyone. This is exactly where a 100-year-old organization finds itself. This is a time in the life of an organization that questions of identity and how to carry out its mission come to the surface.”

— *Excerpt from the Executive Summary of the Cultural Equity Advisory Group*

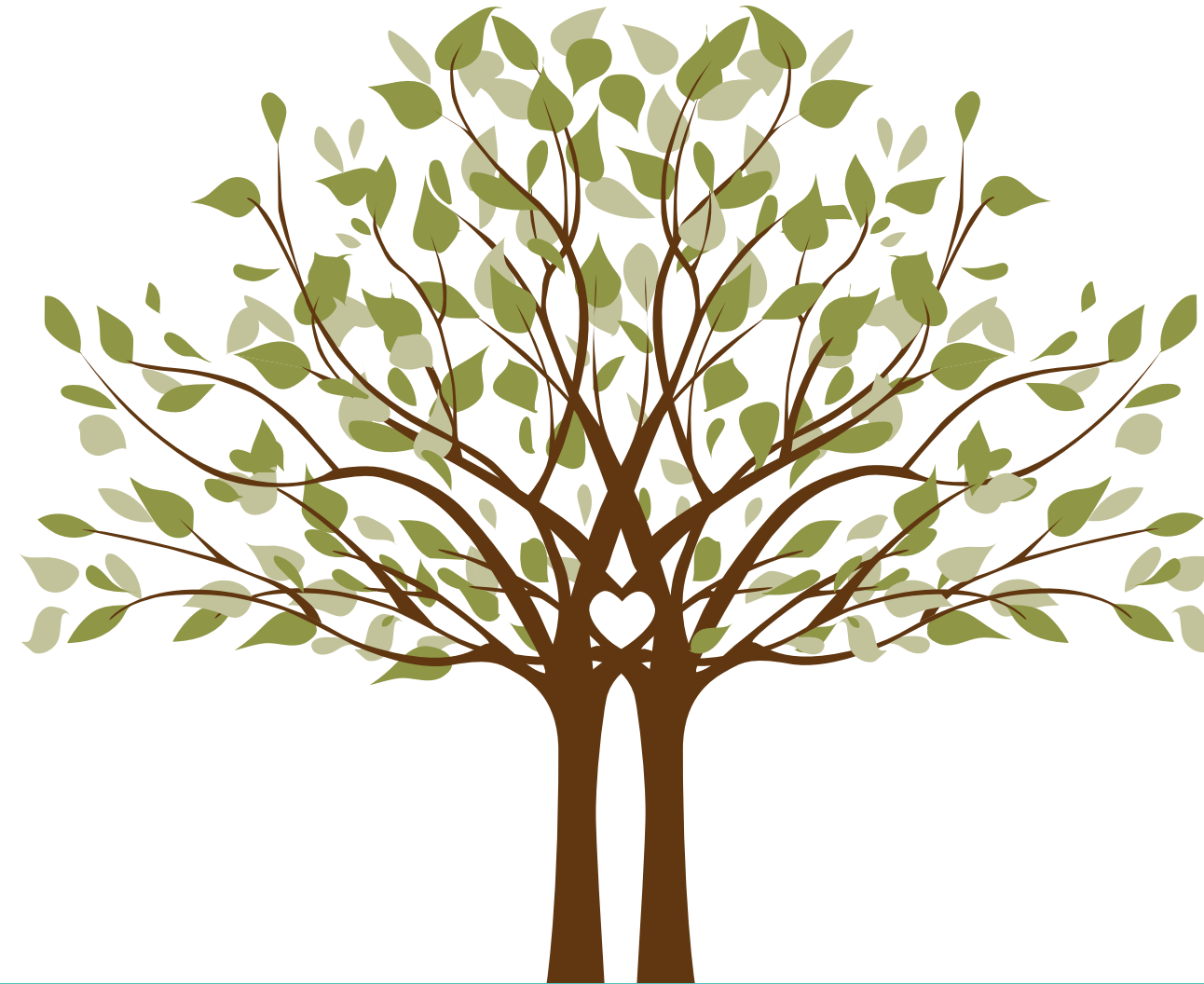
**\$11.210**  
invested in  
cultural equity  
trainings and the  
advisory group in  
2022

**100+**  
participants in free  
online Common  
Time program on  
Cultural Equity at  
the Local Level

**150+**  
participants in  
local/regional DEI  
trainings supported  
by CDSS grants

## Legacy Gifts

*Making a Difference in Hard Times*



For the second year in a row, we received significant legacy gifts that kept us not just afloat but buoyant, both in spirits and operations.

A bequest of just over \$30,000 from a departed friend who wishes to remain anonymous and a \$50,000 grant from the James Edward Hudock Trust both arrived in October, just as we were taking stock of the year and looking ahead to 2022.

We are deeply grateful to these friends for their generosity, and to all those whose planned legacy gifts will one day make all the difference, just when they are needed most.

# 2021 Financials

## *Donor Support + Culture of Stewardship = Resiliency*

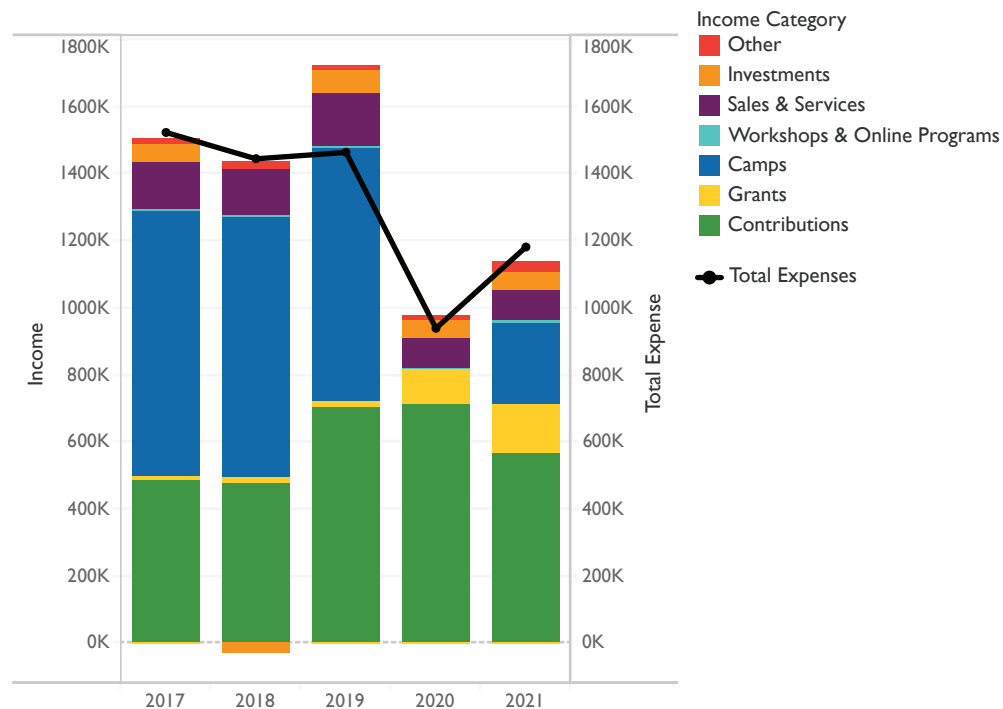
CDSS's business model is based on a mix of contributed income from members and donors like you and earned income from camps, store sales, advertising, and group services.

We took a significant hit in earned income during the pandemic years, as illustrated in the Income and Expense chart to the right. This is no surprise—in 2020 all in-person camps were canceled, and in 2021 we paid program staff for five camp sessions but were only able to run three.

The pandemic impact on the wider community further affected our bottom line. Many Affiliates suspended their membership and insurance, waiting for a return to in-person events. There were few events to advertise in the News, leading to a drop in advertising revenue.

At the same time, we orchestrated a careful Director of Programs transition and launched year-round programming, both of which increased our overhead in 2021.

2017-2021 Income and Expense Comparison

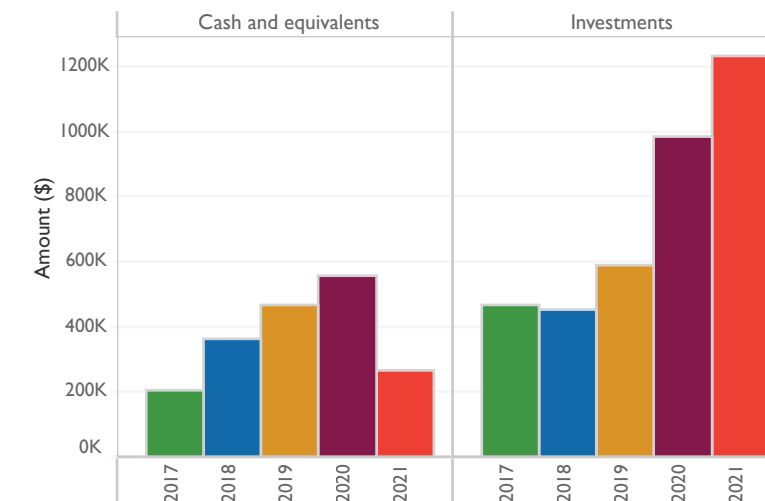


The black line in this chart represents total expenses, compared to the stacked bars that represent income categories. Even with a return to limited camp weeks, the continued effects of the pandemic impacted earned income even as our expenses increased, resulting in a larger deficit than in the previous four years.

Thanks to both government recovery programs and your steadfast, generous support, CDSS had enough cash on hand to cover the 2021 budget deficit without dipping into our Operational Reserves.

During our Centennial Campaign we adopted policies to grow our investments and reach our Robust Reserves goal of \$450K, a goal we reached in 2020. As a result of this intentional stewardship, both our reserves and the value of our investments grew significantly in recent years, as illustrated in the chart to the right.

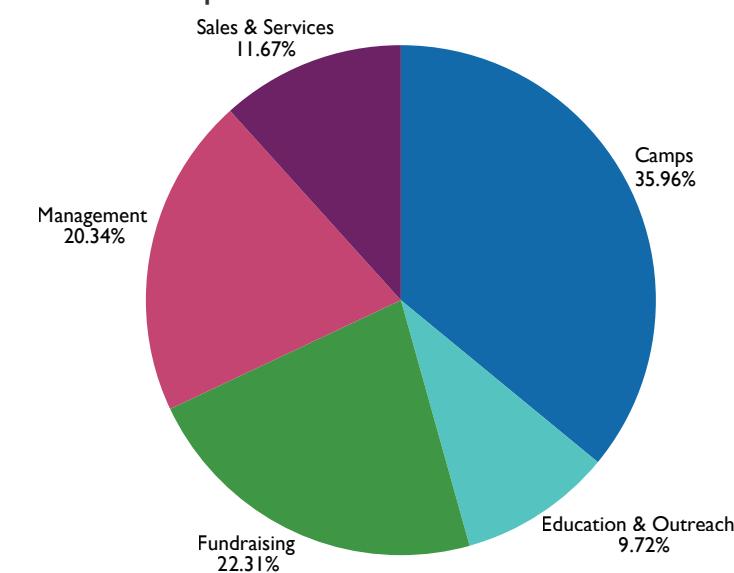
2017-2021 Cash and Investment Growth



In 2021, it was time to update our spending policy again to give CDSS more leeway to put Special Funds to work for the purposes for which they were created. The Finance Committee set the annual spending rate to the average return over the prior five years, allowing CDSS to invest more into the community when the stock market has been strong.

In addition, Executive Director Katy German began working with founding donors to update the terms of named funds to include a modest administrative transfer as part of fund distribution. **This will support the overhead associated with promoting funding opportunities and working with local organizers to develop workshops, trainings, and other skill-building initiatives.**

2021 Total Expenses





**MISSION STATEMENT:** We connect and support people in building and sustaining vibrant communities through participatory dance, music, and song traditions with roots in English and North American culture.

## 2021 GOVERNING BOARD

### Officers:

President: Gaye Fifer, Pittsburgh, PA  
Vice President: Nikki Herbst, Amana, IA  
Secretary: Pam Paulson, Waukesha, WI  
Treasurer: Joel Bluestein, Arlington, VA

### At Large Members:

Peter Baker, Ann Arbor, MI  
Nancy Barbour, Monmouth Junction, NJ  
Jenna Barron, Easthampton, MA  
Margaret Bary, Brooklyn, NY  
Jeremy Carter-Gordon, Marshfield, VT  
Karl Colón, Yellow Springs, OH  
Alice Kenney, Leyden, MA  
Susie Lorand, Ann Arbor, MI  
Robbin Marcus, Lithonia, GA  
Avia Moore, Toronto, ON  
Justin Morrison, Burlington, VT  
Marni Rachmiel, Cambridge, UK  
John Seto, Sacramento, CA  
Diane Silver, Asheville, NC  
Luanne Stiles, Asheville, NC  
Darlene Underwood, Cincinnati, OH  
Juliette Webb, Nashville, TN  
Chris Weiler, South Burlington, VT

## 2021 OFFICE STAFF

Kathryn German, Executive Director, Asheville, NC  
Robin Hayden, Director of Development, Greenfield, MA  
Steve Howe, Director of Camp Programs, Florence, MA  
Joanna Reiner Wilkinson, Director of Programs, Cheltenham, PA  
Julie Brodnitzki, Director of Finance, Barkhamsted, CT  
Sarah Pilzer, Director of Operations, Winooski, VT  
Anna Mach, Accounting Manager, West Springfield, MA  
Linda Henry, Community Resources Manager, Amherst, MA  
Nicki Perez, Membership Coordinator, Northampton, MA  
Crispin Youngberg, Office & Registration Manager, Greenfield, MA  
Ben Williams, Sales & Insurance Manager, Northampton, MA  
Kelsey Wells, Marketing & Communications Manager, Murfreesboro, TN  
Janet Brown, Office Assistant, Easthampton, MA

## 2021 CONTRACTORS

Anne Campbell, Webmaster, Orlando, FL  
Anna Gilbert-Duvenek, Designer, *CDSS News*, Framingham, MA



CDSS is funded in part by a generous grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. [massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org)

In 2021, CDSS also received a generous forgiven Paycheck Protection Program loan from the Small Business Administration.



Photo: Doug Plummer

**CDSS 116 Pleasant St., Suite 345 Easthampton, MA 01027 413-203-5467 [cdss.org](http://cdss.org)**