

## **Traditional Dancers of Santa Cruz 2008 Annual Report**

**Board:** David Drake, Paul Franklin-Treasurer, Andrea Lehrer-President, Andy Wilson-Secretary  
**Talent Programmers:** Leon Bumanglag-Fridays, Janet Dows-Sundays

This past year showed exceptional growth in attendance and revenues after several years of mediocrity and declining participation. With this came a noticeable increase in general enthusiasm and overall hope for continued expansion of affordable partner dance opportunities in Santa Cruz county. Dance attendance was up 39% to an average of 80 dancers per contra event. The amount of donations, 98% of which were admission fees, increased by 35% to \$20,068, and the value of stipends paid out to talent went up 48% averaging \$101/\$320/\$60 for callers/bands/sound engineers. English Country Dances (ECD), however, continued to struggle with attendance and financial viability issues.

**Volunteer Management:** Although all four current board members were re-elected from the previous year, there was a complete turnover of programming staff. For first-Fridays, authority transferred from Susan Petrick to Leon just in time for him to schedule the first dances of 2008. For third-Sunday contra dances, Janet took over for Andy mid year. Andrea accepted responsibility as permanent manager of third-Sundays while Paul handled first-Fridays. A Volunteer manager stipend of \$20 was budgeted for each dance as a strategy to increase participation. While most temporary managers did well, one of them misinterpreted the instructions and miscalculated talent stipends by including seed money as part of door receipts, costing TDSC \$90. One former volunteer exhibited a pattern of behavior over time of attempting to define policy during the dances – Paul wrote a Board-approved letter to her to clarify the boundaries and limits of her current non-volunteer status. The Board met quarterly, in January, April, July and October. In addition, several issues were resolved electronically via e-mail. One board member, Andy, became less available mid-year due to the addition of a baby to his family and another member, Andrea, found her time and energy drawn away by a variety of health and family issues.

**Program:** We planned and successfully executed the typical schedule of 24 standard contra dance events, usually on first-Fridays and third-Sundays, and 22 ECD events on second and fourth Thursdays. Special events included an unintended majority-youth event on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Though Contra Carnival in San Luis Obispo apparently pulled away most of the regular local dancers, the hall was filled with many new-to-us dancers from the early-twenties generation who had attended the non-TDSC queer contra the previous weekend at the Vet's hall. The most popular contra dance was the pre-Foggy Moon (Monterey) dance in early October, which was moved to the Vet's hall in anticipation of attendance exceeding the capacity of the Felton hall. In response to the unavailability of suitable venues in early November, we moved the first-Friday dance to the last Friday of October, which coincided with Halloween. We capitalized on this by announcing it as costume-optional. It was very well attended, with at least half of the dancers coming in costume. For 2009 we have moved January's third-Sunday event to the second Sunday, added a May 29 contra and a costume contra Oct. 30 to the schedule as well as a six-hour dance in February as a step toward bringing back the President's Day 12-hour-dance tradition.

**Talent:** Increasingly attention was paid to insuring that stage talent had drinking water and snacks of their own. As measured by dancer satisfaction, there seemed to be a wide range of skill levels and overall effectiveness of the musical and caller talent. Late in the year Paul proposed institutionalizing the keeping of Board-approved lists of preferred, deferred and never-invite-again talent. In addition to scheduling Lee Anne Welch's fiddle students on February 1, a young guest fiddler in training played the first half of the February 17 dance. Guest callers were allowed by callers to call a dance at two events late in the year. Jim Oakden has initiated weekly gatherings to help local musical talent refine their skills, with the intention of them achieving proficiency sufficient to be scheduled to play regular dances. With the loss of Andy as a sound engineer, we have struggled to find skilled replacements and continue to grapple with how to provide a sufficiently compelling stipend for this role.

**Planning:** In addition to the 2008 budget as a planning document, we instituted event planning checklists and written publicity plans. We also have started using a dance manager's checklist and volunteer door sitter's instruction page.

**Publicity:** Substantially more effort and funds went toward publicizing the contra dance events, both to the wider dance community and the general public locally. Quarterly schedules for the second half of the year were published and distributed to a dozen bay area contra dances and those as far away as Santa Barbara, along with event-specific publicity pages for several events in the fourth quarter and three in Q1 of 2009. Talent programmers have been very accommodating to requests to schedule far enough in advance to allow design and distribution of publicity materials at least one month in advance of the quarter / season. Local media were usually notified of all contra events for posting to their calendars of events and dozens of flyers were posted around town preceding almost every dance. In April the Metro Santa Cruz published a positive, if incomplete, article about TDSC and a particular event the reporter attended. The website was substantially expanded, including the addition of pictures from several TDSC dances. Valerie Neer created a TDSC group on Facebook with event announcements for each dance.

**Attendance:** The average attendance at first-Friday Felton events increased 25% from the previous year to an average of 87 dancers while third-Sunday events in Santa Cruz are up 54% to a 71 average. The Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> event saw a record high of 135 dancers signed in, while the least well attended dance was January 4, with just 23 signed in but 35 counted. Total dancers served at contra events in 2008: at least 1,895, and up to 2,000 when accounting for those who did not sign in.

**Evaluations:** Paul institutionalized an evaluation process for talent, inquiring after each event what they felt we did well and where they saw potential for positive changes. Out-of-area talent have commented on the high energy level of the dancers and the novelty of the large contingent of younger dancers. Multiple performers commented that this has become one of the most rewarding dances to play at in the bay area. Some have also indicated surprise at the large amount of the stipend, which was occasionally facilitated by a caller or musician forgoing receipt of any honorarium or stipend, thus increasing the remaining distributions. We also conducted a general survey of dancers via e-mail, as a follow-on to the written surveys collected the previous year.

**Community Building:** We renewed the membership program for a second year and expanded it with a reciprocal agreement with Monterey CDC – 19 people signed up, a 16% increase. On July 4th we sponsored a pre-dance potluck supper at Felton that was reasonably well attended. The Board budgeted \$10 for snacks at each event. A small contingent met regularly at the Santa Cruz Diner after each first-Friday dance. We continued to receive complaints about the body odor of some dancers and eventually resolved to purchase four floor fans to facilitate air circulation and to conduct a narrow-topic survey to determine the extent of the issue.

**Venues:** In the final months of the previous year, Paul conducted extensive research into venue options in the area and eventually requested a quote from Tim Brattan, manager of the Veteran's Memorial Hall, where the contra dances were held for several years after the loss of the Portuguese hall. Whereas Tim quoted \$250 per event, Paul negotiated with him to accept \$175 for dances in the first half of the year. With access to their sound equipment, the cost rose to \$225 in the second half. In January 35 people attended regardless that there was no electricity at the Felton hall, or most of the county, due to stormy weather. We held a full three-hour dance using flashlights, holiday lights powered by fire department's generator next door and pre-recorded music, since the talent was blocked by flooding and the closure of Highway 17. After the February Felton dance we received "final notice" from the Felton hall management that our contract would be permanently canceled if we didn't take much better care of the floor, by insuring that people cleaned their shoes before entering and did not spread any foreign substances in order to make the floor more suitable for dancing. The September Felton dance was challenging due to blocked "broken" doors between the foyer and the main hall, the primary consequence being very limited air flow on one of the hottest days of the year. There were several challenges with the Vet's hall as well, including sticky floors, poor sound, no sound and poor ventilation, however they all seemed to be resolved by September.

**Equipment:** Paul seems to have repaired the electronic piano that had been out of service for several years and agreed to store all of the sound equipment until circumstances changed and he proposed that all equipment be transferred into the care of Steve Rathman.

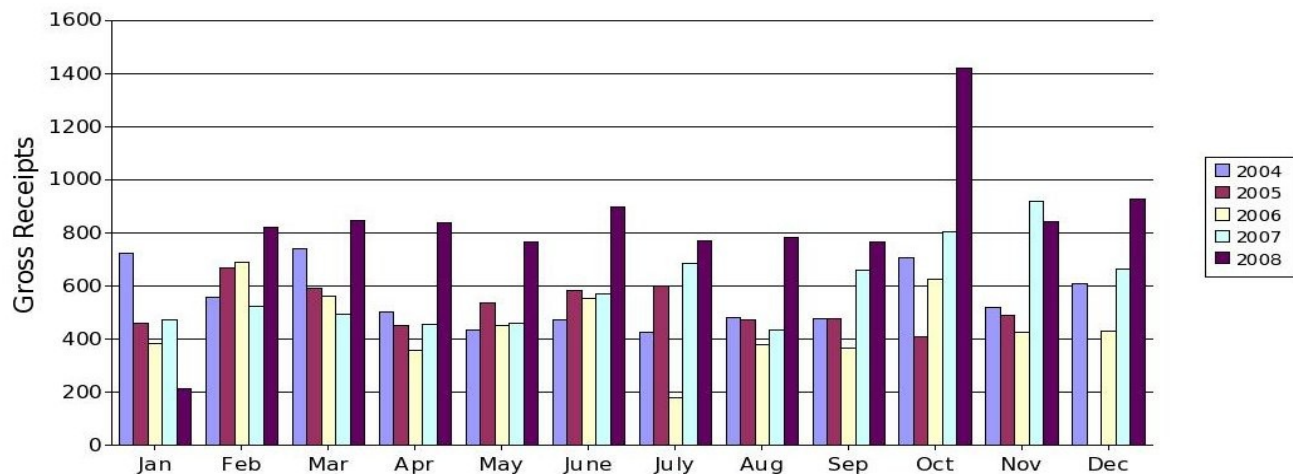
**Safety:** Reports include one older female dancer falling onto her hip and needing an ice pack. Also, an older gentleman reported getting an elbow in his upper lip during the first dance - he requested, and received, a refund as he departed.

**Security:** Dancers have reported losing valuable jewelry and an expensive camera.

**Finances:** Average admission proceeds increased 35%, due in part to a 25% increase in admission rates, effective September of 2007. We asked \$10/9/6 general/member/student at 21 events and \$12/11/8 at three high-profile-talent events. While venue rental costs have increased slightly in Felton in the form of cleaning fees, they went up 75%-125% over the course of 2008 in Santa Cruz after having moved from the Live Oak Grange hall to the Veteran's Memorial Hall downtown. TDSC lost about \$80 on each of three events due to low attendance: Jan. 4, July 20 and Sept. 21. The net surplus donation amount was \$1,315, or 7% of total donations. The resulting net treasury balance was \$5,725, 73% of the current contingency reserve goal of \$7,872.

**Future Focus:** With most economic indicators in the red zone between recession and depression it is difficult to plan either for new events and programs or the expansion of existing ones. While participation might decrease, it seems just as likely to increase as people seek low-cost entertainment and a sense of connection and community. The 2008 budget of projected income and expenses was a first step toward organizational planning. A more formal work plan of over 400 tasks has been drawn up for 2009 with due dates and clear lines of authority and responsibility, as well as two additional dances. Managing the potential risk of volunteer burn-out has risen to the forefront as we continue to solicit new volunteers for event management, publicity and to serve as governing board members as a way to distribute the work load more equitably.

### TDSC First Fridays



### TDSC Third Sundays

