

The President's Report *by Diane Silver*



The Old Farmer's Ball is an amazing phenomenon. With 250-300 dancers every week, our dance is famous as one of the most vibrant and energetic contra dances in the country. With this great success comes a variety of challenges.

In January, we held a Board retreat at which Board members brainstormed a list of issues and concerns that need attention. In addition, at our 25th Anniversary reunion weekend in February, we held a community input meeting to gather ideas from the community about issues, concerns and ideas for making our dance even better.

From these two lists, we have our work cut out for us! To manage this long To-Do list, we have formed committees to focus the discussion, research, or whatever work is needed to move forward on these great ideas. There is no way the Board can do all this work alone. Our dance will only be as strong as the people who take an active role. The Board provides the leadership, but the membership must participate to get all these good ideas done.

Please – be an active member of our dance community. Get involved in one (or several) of these committees. Simply contact the chair (or any Board member for that matter) and let him or her know that you are willing to help. We have such a great diversity of talent, skills, knowledge and interests among our dancers. What's easy for one person is long and difficult for another. If each person contributes what he or she does best, we can get so much done without burning anyone out.

I am excited about the interest and energy already growing around many of these initiatives. We are off to a great start for a terrific year.

THE COMMITTEES & Their CHAIRS

Watch here and on the web for more info on what these committees are up to!

Governance Committee..... Joe Karpen
 Policy Committee.....Able Allen
 Volunteer Committee.....Daneo Davila
 Finance Committee.....Jonathan Gilbert
 Membership Committee.....Deborah Swanson
 Sound Committee..... Daneo Davila
 Booking Committee.....Beth Molaro
 Newsletter Committee.....Beth Molaro
 Dance Development Committee.....Suzannah Park
 Community Outreach Program Committee.. David Hayes
 Marketing and PR Committee..... Jonthan Gilbert
 Special Events Guidelines Committee....Suzanne Hosch

Special Events Committees – Committees are formed each year for Reunion, New Year's Eve, and any other official Old Farmers Ball event. These committees plan and carry out the event from start to finish according to the guidelines set forth by the Board.

Reunion 2007 Committee.....John Combs
 New Year's Eve '07-'08 Committee.....NEEDS A CHAIR

Long-Range Vision Committee.....NEEDS A CHAIR
 This committee was originally called the "Dream Dance Hall" Committee, and grew out of discussions about whether sometime in the future we might want to have our own building for holding dances. What is the long-range vision for our organization?

2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONTACT INFORMATION:

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WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED

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 Websitewww.oldfarmersball.com
 List Serve groups.yahoo.com/group/ofb/

Meet Your '07 Board of Directors (continued)

In the Old Farmers Ball News #10 we introduced you to our newly elected Officers 2007. In this issue, we introduce you to four of our board members-at-large, Joe Karpen, Able Allen, David Hayes, and Sara Slaughter. Watch for further introductions in our subsequent issues.

Joe KarpenMember-at-Large

WHY DO YOU SERVE ON THE BOARD? I have been a dancer for a long time, and I want to give something back to the community.

WHAT SKILLS/EXPERIENCES/CONTACTS DO YOU HAVE TO SHARE WITH THE OLD FARMERS BALL? Board skill set - I have served on the Western Carolinas for Criminal Justice (WCCJ) and Our Voice (rape crisis center) boards as a board member and as treasurer. I have also server on Congregation Beth HaTephila's board as a member for over 12 years, and have server as president for 4 years. I am currently on the Jewish Community Center (JCC) board, 11 years total, with the last 2 as President. A major accomplishment at the JCC was to initiate a strategic planning process- we are in the 2nd year of implementing a 5 year plan. I also server on Warren Wilson College Council of Visitors, and am on the steering committee of that group.



WHAT YEAR DID YOU START CONTRA DANCING? WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO CONTRA DANCING AND WHAT KEEPS YOU COMING BACK? I started contra dancing in 1989. I was at a swing dance at the old JCC, and a friend said I might like to try contra dancing - I've been hooked ever since then .I come for the exercise, the people I meet (I met my wife Jean dancing), and for the zen like state that dancing places the mind into. I also enjoy english country dance, squares, swing, waltzing, Irish set dance, Hambo and schottische.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST CONCERN TO YOU ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE OLD FARMERS BALL? I feel that as an organization we need to decide what we want the Old Farmers Ball to be in five years, and to plan the process to reach that state.

Able AllenMember-at-Large



With a mother as dedicated to the dance gypsy life style as mine was, it was inevitable that I would grow up to consider the contra dance community my own. Because my mom took me all over the eastern dance scene throughout my childhood and into my teens, I was lucky enough to rub elbows with the finest musicians, dancers, and people, anywhere. And then, when I was 16, I found the Old Farmers Ball; a dance that has been a second home to me ever since. This community shaped my whole world.

I have been dancing for longer than I can remember. I learned to dance at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC and as a career home-schooler it was one of few social outlets that was safe, comfortable, and fun. Part of my goal as a Board Member here at the Old Farmers Ball is to ensure that the dance here is as safe and comfortable as possible so that others may be as fortunate as I have been and find a sense of belonging in the dance community.

Many different kinds of dance traditions have filled my life. In my adolescence I joined the Sticks in the Mud, Border Morris Side, which makes its home in Brasstown. I danced with them from the time I was 11 til just after my 19th birthday and joined them on two tours of England. I have also engaged regularly in English country dance, Swing dancing, Square dancing, other kinds of Morris [Rapper and Cotswald (SP)], and have even tried my hand at salsa, tango, Appalachian flatfooting. After a happy youth in Brasstown and at the Folk School, I decided to come here to Swanannoa for school after I fell in love with Warren Wilson College. It was certainly a nice bonus that my favorite dance in the south happens to be right on campus. Another side of the dance that I love, is playing contra music. I am a member of the young up and coming band, The Scallywags. We have found that it is such a great pleasure to play something and have a whole room full of people moving to it. I am happy to be serving my community on the OFB board and I hope that I can be representative of the the youth as the board makes decisions to make the dancing experience here in Swanannoa, the best it can possibly be.

David HayesMember-at-Large

David Hayes spent most of his life with a profound fear of dancing (and asking people to dance) but has become a familiar face on the Bryson Gym dance floor since 2003. A friend pushed, pulled and prodded for 3 years before he finally got up the nerve to take a Contraphobia workshop at the LEAF festival in fall of 2002 led by none other than our own Beth Molaro. The rest, as they say, is history. He has since added waltz to his repertoire and is currently trying to imitate a swing dancer. Music, on the other hand has been a long time passion, recently returned to. But the contra and old time genres he was introduced to as a consequence of dancing are delightful new flavors he has enjoyed adding to his range of musical addictions.



When not dancing or playing, which is rare, he catches babies ("still the most awesome thing I've ever done - each and every time"), grows anything he can get to grow, and is obsessed with propagating his beloved fig tree. He also enjoys sailing, canoeing, hiking, traveling way off the beaten path and is moving slowly toward a low impact, off the grid lifestyle.

He has experience on both corporate and government boards of directors and is politically or professionally active with Medicines Sans Frontiers, 34 Million Friends (in support of the UN Population Fund), the World Social Forum, and Veterans For Peace and in various local, regional, and national women's health causes.

David sees his role on the board as an advocate for the dancers and the community that has evolved from OFB. "While I recognize the need for a strong and well structured organization to keep an operation this large and complex going smoothly, I also see the need to guard against the bureaucracy intruding on the dance itself. I'd like to see the operation of the board remain essentially invisible to the average person who comes to dance, while at the same time be more open, transparent, and accessible to anyone who cares to become involved. I also wanted to be involved with the organization because I appreciate what the dance has done for me on so many levels. I believe contra specifically has the power to draw people out, help them connect, free them from some of their own constraints. I want to explore making contra available within the school system or other areas of the larger community, perhaps targeted to at-risk or special needs children. Anyone who might be interested in being on a community outreach committee with me please get in touch at the dance or send me an email. And of course, if anyone has questions, concerns, ideas, or opposing viewpoints please let me know. Now, let's dance!"

Sara SlaughterMember-at-Large



I enjoy serving on the board because it gives me an opportunity to further involve myself in the dance community, and to be useful in making the Old Farmer's Ball the best it can be.

I started listening to nothing but old time music when I was eleven - about nine years ago. Then I discovered I could hear it live at contra and square dances. What an awesome deal! I took up the fiddle soon after that, about four or five years ago. The best part of it is that I got to play for the Old Farmer's Ball last fall! It was the perfect mix of my two favorite things - dancing and music. What a blast.

I fell in love with contra dancing because it is both aerobic exercise and social interaction. It is the most fun version of exercise I have ever encountered. All of my best friends are dancers, and I am making more friends all the time through dancing. It has also given me a decent excuse to travel long distances.

A fun little fact - I decided to attend Warren Wilson College solely because there is a contra dance every week on campus.

One of my biggest concerns about the Old Farmers Ball is that some of the old timers, the dancers from long ago, do not attend anymore. It has gotten really rowdy, which is a shame for them, but lots of fun for us college kids. I would like to find a way to entice the veterans to come back and be part of our dancing world again, especially since they are some of the best and most experienced dancers. Let's bring 'em back!

The Old Farmers Ball is a Community Dance. It is given life by individuals in this community volunteering their time and efforts. You are encouraged to volunteer where and when you can. Contact any member of the board with comments, suggestions, or offers of help.

Board Meetings will now be held on the 2nd Monday of most Months @ the Grey Eagle... You are welcome to attend. Check Website.

Beginner/Intermediate Music Jam meets on Thursday evenings in Room 25 in Kittredge Music Building at Warren Wilson College before the dance. 6:30-8:00.

Membership Directories are READY! If you are a member and have not received your copy by May 15th, please let us know so we can get one to you!

Join the OFB List-Serve. Send an email message to ofb-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

You'll get a reply from Yahoo asking you to confirm. Reply and you are on... Post on dance related subjects, thoughts, etc. Organize Carpools to dances, etc. Discuss Dance Stuff.

Get your 2007 T-Shirt at the dance on Thursday & Check out the new OFB Stickers!

Next Community Open Band is May 31 and is a FundRaiser for REUNION. Funds raised from this event will support the Scholarship program for the Reunion Dance Weekend. Anyone is welcome to play with the Open Band. In Response to feedback from participants, **we are trying something new.** Musicians are invited to a pre-dance gathering and jam led by Open Band Leader on May 24 in Room 15 in Kittredge Music Building at Warren Wilson College @ 7:00PM. Those who are interested in playing with the open band are encouraged to attend this jam and meeting to be part of making a plan for the dance on MAY 31st, to find and play common tunes, create a tune list and some dance sets and to work out communication signals. You are NOT required to attend this pre-dance jam to play in the band on May 31st. All are welcome!

the Old Farmers Ball News

is published bimonthly by the Old Farmers Ball and includes the Asheville Area Dance Flyer, *Dance Thoughts* column, Project Reports, contact info and much more. Deadline for next *Old Farmers Ball News* is JUNE 8. Please send your submissions: photos, jokes, letters, thoughts, articles, ideas etc to the editor. bmolaro@earthlink.net

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BE A MEMBER

- ◆Be a supporting and voting member of the Old Farmers Ball community.
- ◆Be eligible to serve on the Board of Directors.
- ◆Be listed in the *Old Farmers Ball Membership Directory*.
- ◆List your occupation in the Directory... another way to connect with our community.
- ◆Get a copy of the *Old Farmers Ball Membership Directory*.
- ◆Get our Official Newsletter, *the OLD FARMERS BALL NEWS*.
- ◆Get \$1 off dance admission with your Membership Key Tag.

Join anytime. Renewals due each January. Membership Forms are available online or at the Old Farmers Ball Thursday dance.



LOOK FOR YOUR MAY/JUNE DANCE FLYER INSIDE