

Notes of NASSPDA's Community Meeting on April 25th, 2010

NASSPDA members and the April Follies organizers requested and suggested to have a community meeting with the Board of Directors the day after this year's competition in Oakland. The Board welcomed this suggestion, and decided to try having such community meetings for members and non-members at all NASSPDA sanctioned competitions, as long as some members of the Board are present.

This meeting was scheduled to take place at the Allegro Ballroom in Emeryville on Sunday, April 25th, 2010, at 10:00 AM PDT (actual start approx. at 10:15 AM PDT). 7 members of NASSPDA and 5 members of the Board were present, and each was asked to introduce oneself.

Naturally, one of the first topics was the event of the day before, April Follies 2010, which was organized by the Bay Area Same-Sex Dance Association (BASSDA). It turned out that the competition event during the day as well as the evening's show generated the highest numbers in spectators, in comparison to previous years, which certainly contributed to the success. Some of the attendees of this meeting are Board members of BASSDA, and encouraged feedback. Many liked the mixing of the various styles throughout the day; appreciated the tight organization; applauded the continuous announcement by the MC's of relevant information beyond the competition, such as this meeting, as well as explanations to the spectators of what they are currently watching; and just simply loved the evening's show. But it was also brought up and agreed that it would be better to use all 6 invited judges for the whole event by staggering their engagement throughout the day, so that always 5 judges are employed for a fairer result, and one judge always receives a short rest period in between.

The President of NASSPDA then proceeded by highlighting some of the work the Board has done in the most recent past. Aside from having achieved non-profit status, establishing a renewal process for members, and having had a 2nd election to elect 3 members of the Board for a new term (staggered terms of 2 years), the Board continues to work on creating competition rules. These rules are nearing its completion for a first draft to be presented to NASSPDA members for comments. Some of the issues with establishing these rules focused on being compatible with the European scene as well as to incorporate uniquely North American elements, such as the existence of Pro-Am couples. NASSPDA has also become a member of GLISA (Gay & Lesbian International Sports Association) and the FGG (Federation of Gay Games), with the intent to have more input at any Outgames and Gay Games (in particular the North American Outgames 2011 in Vancouver and the Gay Games 2014 in Cleveland).

At last year's general membership meeting of NASSPDA a strong need for having a unified standard at same-sex competition was expressed, which NASSPDA is still in the process to address (see above). This year's meeting, which is always held a day after NASSPDA's annual championship, was held in Philadelphia, and was focusing on improving communication to its members. Therefore, the Board has established the position of a Communications Director, is working on better procedure of updating its

website and Facebook page, and is hopes to have soon periodical e-newsletters to its members as well as non-members.

After this report all in attendance were asked for their feedback and suggestions. The following issues were brought up and discussed:

1. **“Value Statement” regarding Pro-Am participation in competitions**
2. **“History and Timeline” of same-sex competitions in North America**
3. **Raise membership and participation**

to 1.:

The existence of the Pro-Am system in North America, which is practically non-existent in Europe, creates a difficult situation within the same-sex dance community, because on one hand NASSPDA doesn't want to deny organizers, teachers and students to profit from such an arrangement, but on the other hand it would mean defining the difference between a professional and an amateur dancer, and therefore limit dance partnerships that are based on equal terms. All agreed that the focus for our community should be on participation in and the celebration of same-sex partner dancing. It was therefore suggested, which the Board had also concluded prior to this meeting, to formulate a “value statement” in alignment of the values put forth by the FGG.

to 2.:

For fostering a better understanding of the existence of NASSPDA, its purpose and values, it was suggested to compile a history of same-sex competitions in North America. As a start, since this will take time to research, write, edit, etc., it was proposed to post a timeline on NASSPDA's website. Since to our knowledge same-sex competitions started even earlier in Europe, it was further suggested to instigate ESSDA to do the same.

to 3.:

Since the same-sex community is still very small in numbers, naturally one of the topics was again how to change this. In particular though, the discussion also focused on member participation, which would generate more interest altogether. It was therefore suggested to ask people in the community (members) to always make an effort to invite two or more people to any function, may that be a meeting such as this, a social dance and/or as a spectator to a competition. But it was also suggested to think of addressing more often the benefits of participation, and to make membership more visible (who is a member).

This community meeting ended at approx. 11:35 PM PDT.