

Notes of NASSPDA's Community Meeting on May 1st, 2011

The Boards of Directors of NASSPDA and BASSDA, organizers of April Follies, invited once again all same-sex partner dancers to a community meeting, the day after this year's competition in Oakland.

The meeting took place at the Allegro Ballroom in Emeryville on Sunday, May 1st, 2011, at 10:00 AM PDT.

Approximately 22, mostly NASSPDA members, including members of both Boards, were present, which represents a better attendance record than last year.

The following agenda for this meeting was presented and distributed by NASSPDA's President prior to the start of the meeting:

1. *What NASSPDA has been doing*
 - a. *Created and published competition rules*
 - b. *NDCA interactions around their new policy, incl. conversations with NCLR*
 - c. *Creation of IFSSDA*
 - d. *Planning Gay Games 2014 in Cleveland*
2. *Social Dancing*
 - a. *What ideas do you have for what NASSPDA can do for social dancers? How are you willing to help?*
 - b. *USA Dance (amateur organization for the mainstream dance community) has both a social dance and a competitive dance department. USA Dance's chapters have 4 social dances a year that rotate around different dance studios by asking studios to donate their studio for a dance event.*
3. *Dance Camps*
 - a. *Are you interested*
 - b. *What would you like to see?*
 - c. *Who would be willing to work on this?*
4. *What else would you like to see NASSPDA do for the same-sex partner dance community?*

Naturally, one of the first topics was the event of the day before, April Follies 2011, which was organized by the Bay Area Same-Sex Dance Association (BASSDA), and which hosted this year's first annual NASSPDA's US Championships. It was explained that BASSDA is like NASSPDA a non-profit organization, but unlike NASSPDA, it is not membership based. One of the unique features of April Follies therefore is that all the people that make this event successful (with the exception of the invited judges) are volunteering their time. This year's event showcased most Championship level categories in the evening as well as some other featured performances, which was a new format and seemed to go over well. It was further mentioned that BASSDA has accomplished making in particular beginner dancers/competitors comfortable and welcomed through the variety of levels offered as well as affordable pricing and excellent organization.

The President of NASSPDA (currently 62 individual members, and several organizational as well as team memberships) then proceeded by highlighting some of the work the Board has done in the most recent past.

to 1.a.:

Competition Rules have been completed and published by the beginning of this year, and will continuously be updated as needed. This was a major project requested by the community for quite some time. Many aspects, including staying in alignment with rules used by the European community, were included and considered.

to 1.b.:

In February, BASSDA encountered a problem with some of the already confirmed judges for this year's event. The NDCA (National Dance Council of America, the governing body of almost all competition events in the US, and an umbrella organization of several professional organizations, such as the ISTD, DEA, and the two main chains of dance studios, "Arthur Murray" and "Fred Astaire," as well as USA Dance) informed their members of a major change in their set of rules, which prohibits now any NDCA registered officials to officiate at any non-sanctioned event. Prior to this rule change, one-day events were one of the noted exceptions to the rule. This prompted 3 judges to withdraw their commitment to April Follies 2011. Since the NDCA also defines a couple exclusively as the leader being male and the follower being female, the NDCA would not sanction any same-sex partner dance competitions. Luckily, one of NASSPDA's Board members, the Treasurer, Lee Fox, is also a representative from another member organization to the NDCA for many years, and has well-established relationships with the leadership of the NDCA. Within a very short time period and after an ad-hoc teleconferencing meeting between the boards of BASSDA and NASSPDA, the issue was resolved through a verbal agreement with the Vice- and President of the NDCA directly, and resulted into 2 of the judges to re-confirm their commitment (the 3rd had already in the meantime accepted another invitation). NASSPDA will though further pursue this issue, in order to not only get a verbal one time confirmation of an exception, but will press to get some kind of written commitment from the NDCA for all NASSPDA sanctioned future events. This issue has also an affect for organizers of other competitions, such as within the College Circuit and one-day events throughout the country, which have never sought sanctioning.

to 1.c.:

In January, NASSPDA, ESSDA (its European counterpart) and IAGLCWDC (International Association of Gay & Lesbian Country Western Dance Clubs), as well as some individual dancers from Australia, have published together the announcement of forming IFSSDA, the International Federation of Same-Sex Dance Associations. The next step will be to formulate a structure for this world organization, which is in the beginning stages. IFSSDA will hopefully be the governing body for the Gay Games 2014 in Cleveland/Akron.

to 1.d.:

Aside from forming IFSSDA to achieve input from all same-sex partner dancers around the world for the upcoming Gay Games, NASSPDA and ESSDA had formed a committee to work over the set of rules that have been governing DanceSport at the Gay Games in the past. Sets of rules are compiled in the FGG's Red Book for all

sports represented at the Gay Games. Based on the work of this joined committee, DanceSport is one of the first 6 sports to have a newly revised set of rules for the upcoming Games in Cleveland, which guarantees NASSPDA's overseeing role as the sanctioning body of the dance competitions. Originally, in the proposal made by Cleveland to host the Gay Games 2014, USA Dance (the mainstream amateur organization) has been listed as the national sanction organization for DanceSport, as well as IAGLCWDC for the Country Western dance portion. Though it might not be a bad idea to work with the local chapter of USA Dance in Cleveland, USA Dance also defines a couple in their rules as the leader being male and the follower being female. A connection might be facilitated by Daphna Locker, dance partner of Meredith Stead, who is an officer of USA Dance and was also the co-chair of USA Dance Nationals.

In order to increase the same-sex DanceSport community, NASSPDA needs to also focus on promoting and supporting same-sex social dancing. To this end, the following discussion and ideas ensued.

to 2.b.:

Not only are USA Dance's chapters asked to hold social dances throughout the year (www.usadance.org), but they also created a "Day of Dance" and participate in the National Dance Week" (end of April). Looking at that example, which perhaps should be NASSPDA's role, to create a national awareness for fostering social dancing in its community. NASSPDA should therefore consider creating a "Chair for Social Dancing."

to 2.a.:

The following lists more thoughts and ideas that have come up during this discussion, which NASSPDA should look into:

- Provide assistance with marketing same-sex dances and classes (see above)
- Provide research/resource listing of same-sex dance organizations/events in particular same-sex dance communities, such as Boston, Bay Area, Los Angeles, etc., and help coordinate in those communities organizations, events, workshops, etc.
- Coordinate also efforts and ideas with IAGLCWDC
- Interface with Queer Youth groups (for example: Queer Tango Festival last year offered ½-price entry to anyone under 18)
*An impromptu committee, the "Queer Youth Outreach Committee," was formed at this meeting to pursue this idea further:
Patti Restaino, Jayne Snook, Winter Held (all from the Bay Area)*
- Provide organizational and financial assistance to send teachers to other communities for workshops
- Provide marketing and networking tools to help up-starting same-sex classes, workshops, dances, competitions, etc.
- Find, for example a high school student, who might want a community service internship, through which the community could be educated about Internet based social networking, such as "Twitter," to stay up-to-date and in touch
- Increase communication from the Board of NASSPDA through frequent e-newsletter; "Facebook" postings, featuring links to press releases (also on

NASSPDA's website; work on enlarging current e-mail list of non-members; enlist members' help to garner contents for e-newsletter and facebook

- Co-ordinate demonstrations of same-sex dancing at events by asking competitive couples, who are members of NASSPDA, to donate their time
- Connect to the "College Dance Competition Circuit" (a list of Dance Departments at colleges and universities had been started by Winter Held and Christopher Kelleher had been started, and Mike Winward volunteered during this meeting to complete this task.) as well as college LGBT organizations

Another idea the Board Directors of NASSPDA were considering is sponsoring a "Dance Camp." Those camps are usually organized over a weekend featuring workshops and other dance events, such as organized by IAGLCWDC or had been organized by the OUTdancing department of Stepping Out Studios from New York City. Typically for these kind of 2-day or 3-day events, organizers choose an off-season period and a location with affordable hotels that have a ballroom, but which is accessible from around the country. The focus is normally on social dancing, but also includes offerings for the more serious dancer.

to 3.a.:

The idea was welcomed by all, and generated much interest. Affordability though and attractiveness (a location named was "Las Vegas") needs to be a focus.

to 3.b.:

In addition to catering foremost to the social dancer, it was also suggested to possibly establish a scholarship fund, which could serve to invite queer youths to such dance camps.

to 3.c.:

The following people volunteered to form the "Dance Camp Committee:"

Winter Held (Bay Area -- observer), Emily Coles (Bay Area), Meredith Stead (NYC), Richard Lamberty (Orlando, FL), Mike Winward (Boston), Linda Smith (Eugene, OR)

Both newly formed committees, the "Queer Youth Outreach Committee" and the "Dance Camp Committee," need to be given a timeline and a liaison to report to by the Board of Directors of NASSPDA.

At this time in the meeting, it was agreed that much has been discussed and suggested to further NASSPDA's involvement in the same-sex partner dance community, and that it isn't necessary to extend the list. However, it was also mentioned that Winter Held is in the process to establish a history and timeline of same-sex dancing, related in particular to the competitive scene and NASSPDA, which will be featured on NASSPDA's website in a "somewhat" interactive design. NASSPDA also formed a "Judges Committee," which will work on defining the necessary qualifications of judges used at NASSPDA sanctioned competitions as well as compiling a list of judges, to which these qualifications apply (current committee members: Lee Fox, Citabria Phillips, Benjamin Soencksen).

This community meeting was the adjourned and ended at approx. 11:40 PM PDT, followed by individual conversations among those in attendance.