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Monthly Newsletter

April 2019



From the President

On the Discussion of Changing NASSPDA's Organizational Name

It is exactly 10 years ago; that three members of the Board of Directors (Barbara Zoloth, Citabria Phillips and Winter Held) signed NASSPDA's By-Laws, which define the organization along with its Mission Statement, Governance Policies and Competition Rules and which I certified as the then Secretary of NASSPDA. The following is stated in these By-Laws as to NASSPDA's purpose:

Article 2 'Purposes'

Section 1. 'Objectives and Purposes'

The primary objectives and purposes of this corporation shall be:

- (a) To support and grow the same-sex partner dance community throughout North America
- (b) To support consistent rules and objectives for same-sex partner dance competitions
- (c) To authorize the granting of state, regional, provincial, national, and North American championship titles for same-sex partner dance competitions
- (d) To encourage same-sex social dance opportunities
- (e) To provide a forum for communication within the same-sex partner dance community throughout North America, including dancers, teachers, event organizers, vendors, and other interested parties
- (f) To work towards acceptance and respect of same-sex partner dancing in the larger partner dance communities

And the following is NASSPDA's current Mission Statement, published on its website:

Our Mission

The North American Same-Sex Partner Dance Association (NASSPDA) is a membership organization committed to the promotion and expansion of social and competitive same-sex partner dancing, which includes Ballroom, Latin, Swing, Country Western, and other partner dances, as well as different styles within those terms, such as International and American Style. NASSPDA acknowledges and celebrates its origins in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

NASSPDA's goals are:

- Establish and continue to improve consistent definitions, guidelines and standards for same-sex partner dance competitions in North America, with an initial emphasis on those dances featured at the Gay Games and Outgames.

- Support functions and venues for social same-sex partner dancing.
- Be a resource for same-sex partner dancers.
- Aim to raise the level of same-sex partner dancing.
- Coordinate and liaison with dance organizations and sponsors of dance competitions.
- Encourage the inclusion of dancers from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, [dis]ability, gender identity and/or expression.
- Encourage making same-sex dance events accessible and affordable.
- Function with a high degree of operational accountability and transparency.
- Operate according to the rules and principles of a not-for-profit organization.

The primary focus on same-sex dancing, as NASSPDA's organizational name spells out, has been continuously questioned over the years following its inception, primarily as being too limiting and not inclusive enough.

Politically, promoting the look of a same-sex couple was the initial impetus, since it redefined undeniably and with clarity what had been the only acceptable configuration of a couple in the mainstream world. As a matter of fact, the formation of NASSPDA and its European counterpart ESSDA prompted an addition to the rules of most mainstream organizations, defining a couple as a man leading a woman. Since then, some mainstream organizations, such as USA Dance, have though moved to welcoming any configuration of a couple at their events.

Recognizing the limitations to its greater constituency, NASSPDA followed the lead of BASSDA, which organizes the biggest annual event 'April Follies,' and added to its rules the possibility of an 'open' category that allows for any configuration of a couple. This addition renewed the discussion whether NASSPDA should change its name and revise its mission as well to reflect more clearly the inclusion and welcome of all dancers, as stated in the 6th bullet point of NASSPDA's mission statement.

NASSPDA's Board of Directors had a continued discussion about this issue over the years and decided this year to actively seek its constituency's opinion on a name change as well as what that would be by posting a survey on its website, on its Facebook page and distributing it at NASSPDA sanctioned events. In previous years, the consensus had been that the distinction of 'same-sex' in the organization's name was politically still relevant and important to maintain (along the lines, for example, with 'same-sex marriage'). This is still, in my opinion, a valid reason, if not only for the historical context, to keep the name untouched. It also aligns us instantly recognizable with other partner organizations, such as ESSDA, BASSDA, UKSSDC, etc., and our world umbrella organization IFSSDA.

Suggested changes of NASSPDA's organizational name have so far included substituting 'same-sex' with 'queer' or 'equality,' which, I think, are good solutions and address the issue adequately. Considering though the implications of changing NASSPDA's name on a broader scale, I also just recently asked myself what it would mean, having to rebrand and loosing, at least for a time, brand recognition, and whether there might be an alternative. This will have a financial impact, having to get a new domain name for our website, redoing all printed material, designing a new logo, getting new banners, etc. So it occurred to me that one way to circumvent this, yet still addressing the issue at hand, would be by adding a subline to our name and revise our Mission Statement reflecting even greater inclusion. For example, the organizations name could remain being 'North American Same-Sex Partner Dance Association' with the byline 'promoting gender equality in partner dancing' and substitute 'same-sex' with 'equality' or add the term to 'same-sex' in the Mission Statement.

Undeniably, times and with it definitions and sensibilities are changing, which is why we, as an organization, have the responsibility to look at the relevance of our mission and its implications in a changing world and from time to time reexamine those documents and regulations that define us. But it is also important to reflect upon and not deny the historical context that created our movement in the first place, which still defines our legitimacy.

Please let us know, what you think! Your opinion counts!

HAPPY DANCING!

Benjamin Soencksen

Announcements

NASSPDA Community meeting

Sunday April 28th, 2019
JOIN US AT WOODEN TABLE CAFE!!
2300 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612
10am-noon

The North American Same-Sex Partner Dance Association is committed to the promotion and expansion of social and competitive same-sex partner dancing, which includes Ballroom, Latin, Argentine Tango, Swing, Country Western, and other partner dances, as well as different styles within those terms, such as International and American Style. Questions and open discussion.
All are welcome to attend this meeting!

NASSPDA Scholarship Program

NASSPDA's scholarship program has been expanded since 2018 to include all its sanctioned competitions. Anyone planning to compete at a 2019 NASSPDA sanctioned competition may now apply for financial aid.
Out of the 5 (five!) Scholarships available to be awarded for the year of 2019 (in the amount of \$400 each plus dues for one year of membership) there are still two scholarships left for NASSPDA's upcoming 2019 USA Championships participants at New England Open in Boston area.
Please apply by August 2 1st, 2019 if you are planning to participate in this particular event at NASSPDA's website [here](#)



NASSPDA Survey

The NASSPDA Board has heard from some community members that a name change is necessary to expand its mission and become more inclusive. In particular, the "same sex" in the name may not be welcoming to the non-binary community. The Board would like to engage the community (NASSPDA members and non-members) for feedback and direction on the potential name change and expansion of mission.

Thank you in advance as we value and appreciate your opinions that will help steer our organization. Please [click on this link](#).

NASSPDA Membership Directory

Have you checked out the NASSPDA Membership Directory? This is a resource to allow NASSPDA members to connect with others in the community. Please contact Horace Luong (hluong@nasspda.org) if you'd like to be added to [the directory](#) (this is available to NASSPDA members only).

Board of Directors Election

Election Committee

Board Member Elections

NASSPDA's Board Elections are coming up!

Two members of the Board are up for re-election this year: Benjamin Soencksen and Erik Jaeger. Barbara Zoloth's term is also up, and she is not running for re-election!

The deadline for nominations was April 1st, 2019

Elections take place in May, and every NASSPDA member will be sent an electronic link to the ballot. (People who have registered to vote via snail- mail will be sent a paper

ballot).
Voting will close on May 15th.
Results will be announced by May 31, and be posted on NASSPDA's website The Election Committee is in charge of reviewing candidates, supervising and running the election. No one on the Election Committee will be a candidate for election on the Board. If you have questions, please email: info@nasspda.org

Competition Calendar

Competition Committee

NASSPDA Sanctioned:

April Follies - <https://www.aprilfollies.com>

April 27th, 2019/ Oakland, CA/ 2019 California Same-Sex Championship



*New England Open - <http://www.BostonOpenDanceSport.com>

September 21st, 2019, Boston MA

* Partly sanctioned event. Independent competition, hosting the NASSPDA's sanctioned **2019 USA Same-Sex Championships.**



Not NASSPDA Sanctioned:

Gateway DanceSport Festival
May 25-26, 2019 / Newark, NJ
<https://www.facebook.com/gatewaydancesport>

DanceSport Montreal
Montreal, Canada
June 20-22, 2019
<http://www.dansesportmontreal.com>

Membership Information

Membership Committee

Join NASSPDA TODAY!

If you have problems or want to help us improve the website, please write to Horace Luong, our website administrator, at hlung@nasspda.org.



Outreach and Media

Promotions Committee

ACTIVITY GRANT FUNDING PROGRAM

NASSPDA would like to encourage its members and our community at large to engage in various fun activities that promote same-sex dancing. We recognize that many of our members may have a creative idea and NASSPDA would like to contribute in a small financial way.

Up to 4 grants of \$250 each will be awarded per calendar year on a first-come first-served basis to applicants who can demonstrate that the proposed activity will advance NASSPDA's mission of promoting and expanding social and competitive same-sex partner dancing.

The proposed event should also be in alignment with NASSPDA's following goals:

- * Support functions and venues for social same-sex partner dancing.
- * Provide a resource for same-sex partner dancers.
- * Aim to raise the level of same-sex partner dancing
- * Encourage the inclusion of dancers from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, age, [dis]ability, gender identity and/or expression.



Some ideas for events and organizers to receive grant support:

- Same-sex dance classes
- A social dance mixer with actively inviting and encouraging same-sex dancing or "alternative lead and follow"
- An excursion to a local competition, introducing dancers to the concept
- A welcome party before one of NASSPDA's sanctioned competition
- Setting up a booth at a local street fair promoting same-sex dancing
- A neighborhood or community event promoting partner dancing and the inclusion of same-sex dancing
- Involving studios to promote same-sex dancing
- An event in conjunction with a city's Pride activities

These are just a few suggestions. To apply for financial support from NASSPDA's \$250 Grant Program, please visit our [website](#). You can also email us at promotions@NASSPDA.org with any questions.