

SSDS Fun Business Meeting Minutes

3:00pm, Sunday, June 7th, 2009

Panera Bread Company, 5701 East Circle Drive, Cicero, 13039, (315) 458-9436

Attendance: Mary Ellen, Alice, Isaias, Deb, Judy, Can, Wanda

SSDS board members not present: Stacey White, Greg Boyer, Rosalie Neri.

Minutes recorded by Mary Ellen. Meeting started 3pm, concluded 4:05pm.

1. Old Business

- Thursday dances at St. Clare Theater
 - Since moving to this venue we have seen the highest attendance on April 2nd (70 people), which was the first night/free admission and the lowest attendance April 9th (30 people, Holy week). We are now seeing average attendance between 40-50 people each week. Compared to previous years during the same April/May period, this is about average. We are doing very good considering that we have just recently moved to this venue and still keeping the same numbers of attendees. We have not seen a significant drop in attendance even though the college students are now away for the summer.
 - We always have more dance students/dance instructors attending than regulars. We are asking that everybody sign in now, including volunteers, to help keep an accurate head count.
 - May 21st was very hot [National Weather Service recorded 87°F]. The inner space of the St. Clare Theater was much cooler and people thought that it was air-conditioned. We used the overhead fans. The high ceilings help keep the room cool.
 - On May 28th, the floor became sticky during the last hour, possibly because of the higher number of people and body heat.
- Sound system, Deejay rotation: no problems
- Music inventory: The weekly survey/raffle produced a list of people's favorite songs. We already have many of the songs that were requested. We have purchased six new songs from iTunes. We have been playing some of the requested songs and will continue to do this. Alan Jackson two-step coming soon. The survey/raffle was useful but we really don't need it anymore. It was a good use for the tee shirts.
- We want to continue giving away one tee shirt each week. Before each dance, we will draw a random number and each person that signs in will

receive a number. The tee shirt winner will be identified during announcements.

- Alternate venues: Ukrainian Home unavailable on Thursdays. Other venue suggestions: Pastime club, Tyrol club. Pastime has wood floor.
- Staying at St. Clare, holding dances on all five Thursdays in July versus closing for July.
 - Discussion about keeping the dance going through July. There are five Thursdays in July (July 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th). If we keep dancing through July, we could have a big party on the last day, July 30th, with free admission.
 - If we close for July, it would slow the momentum and enthusiasm for the August 6th picnic.
 - If we continue through July, we do not know what Steve's teaching schedule will be yet. His current class series ends June 24th. Much depends on whether he plans to continue teaching through July 30th.
 - Dance attendance is poor when no lesson is offered before the dance.
 - If Steve decides not to teach through July, we would contact Maria to see if she is interested in using the space for dance classes. If Maria is not interested in this opportunity, we would then contact other local Syracuse instructors.
 - There is some competition from other Thursday events that could reduce attendance. Regional market and some "upscale" party.
 - It would be better to offer a series of lessons that would be some type of swing.
 - Setting up and closing up St. Clare each week requires more help from volunteers. Currently, there is no janitorial service being provided by Franciscan Ministries. Each week, our volunteers replenish the paper products in the bathrooms, remove the trash and recyclables, clean and sweep the floor. We supply our own new trash liners each week. Hanging the SSDS banner outside requires a step ladder and five minutes. Alice and Mary Ellen have shared the responsibility of shopping for water, ice, mints, etc. We leave the cooler there along with a case of toilet paper and paper towels. Pete and Chuck have been coming early to help with set up. They do what ever needs doing and they carry the sound system and are learning the set up. Closing up includes storing the banner, mints, flyers, lamps, candles and tablecloths, emptying the water from the cooler and making sure the door is locked after everyone has left. Last Thursday, we were out by 11:30 with everyone helping (Judy, Chuck, John McNeil, Can, Steve).

- Mary Ellen will contact Sara to let her know that we are doing the janitorial tasks and consider this service part of our rental fee, equivalent to a value of \$50. It will give them motivation to hire a janitor.

2. Publicity

- We all should help with publicity. It is too much work for just one person to be responsible for. There are many ways to help, such as wearing a SSDS tee shirt or just talking about the Thursday night dance. Many people express interest in dancing but don't take action immediately. Summer is an unpredictable period because people are wandering and traveling and SSDS weekly dances are not offered in August. It is good to make the contact anyway, because they can look forward to dancing in September.
- When we moved to the St. Clare venue, we started keeping a record of new people by asking them to fill out registry forms. Mary Ellen compiled and printed a list of these new people.
- Our best selling point is that the dance is a safe place for a single person to go without feeling threatened. This venue offers plenty of free parking.
- The free lesson doesn't seem to draw them in. This venue makes teaching a group lesson very difficult because no one can hear what is said. This venue offers no separate room that could be used for teaching. Another problem with teaching the survival lesson is that we teach ECS but that is not the majority of music played and not what they see people dancing. Maybe we should not teach a group lesson, but take each person as they come in and teach one-to-one. Another idea is to give a free-first-lesson voucher that would be accepted by local dance instructors. It would also provide good publicity for the teacher. The voucher would allow the new student to take the first class free. We would need to contact the local instructors and create a list of those willing to participate. It is unlikely that studios like Arthur Murray and Walt Medicis would be able to honor these vouchers. We will contact the independent instructors in the Syracuse area.
- Verbal announcements during the dance
- SSDS weekly dance flyers: We have about 15 flyers left on the table.
- We have business cards and about 15 refrigerator magnets
- We display the banner outside each week
- SSDS t-shirts: We sold one t-shirt.
- SSDS mailing list: Our mailing permit expired. We may renew it when/if we decide to mail Colacino flyers. We usually have about 600 pieces of mail when we do a mailing. The permit will cost \$185 to renew. The USPS does not allow staples.

- Many people that come to our dance every week are not on our e-mail list.
- We might want to mail the picnic flyer. Many people come to the picnic that do not regularly come to the weekly dance.
- We usually mail one sheet with Halloween dance/Holiday dance. Jason Colacino workshop event would be two-sided with the registration form on it. The back side of the picnic flyer would be the address page.
- Discussion about possibly mailing the magnetic SSDS business cards. We would have to securely stick it on the page so it doesn't fall out the side.
- Syracuse Newspapers: We are often listed now. Two new people found are dance because of the listing.
- Internet advertising: One new person found us through the ISDN website.
 - SSDS Website, listserv
 - We are listed in many directories, calendars, classified ads. We are not listed on Wikipedia.
 - Social groups: "All the cool people are on Facebook." SSDS/Facebook "wall" currently has 14 fans and 8 people have confirmed they are going to the picnic.
 - We are listed on StrictlyWestie.com. Westiewire does not confirm request. Netmeeting doesn't look like it's meant for dance groups.
- Syracuse Jazzfest June 26th & 27th advertising opportunity for SSDS: Lowest contribution partner level is \$5000 for small mention in their program. Jazzfest offers many good dance opportunities. We will remind people to wear their SSDS t-shirts. We will ask people to hand out some of our SSDS business cards.
- Publicity photos, video: Isaias has been taking some sample photos. Videotaping in our dance venue is very difficult with the low light situation.
- What would it cost to order window stickers with SSDS logo?

3. Financial Report

4. Upcoming Events

- Arrowhead Lodge picnic, Thursday, August 6th, 2009: Draft copy of picnic flyer needs SSDS website added. Name game is okay. Games with oranges are not. Barn dance is okay. Basic food and table plan we used last year is okay. Enter from the front door, not the back patio. The food tables will be back behind the fireplace again.
- August break

- Halloween Dance, Saturday, October 31st, 2009: We will plan for a pizza & decorating party. We'll have some candy on hand for people to bring their kids there in costume for trick'n'treating.
- Jason Colacino October 31st. We still need a draft flyer and signed contract.
- Holiday 2009 dance: Still need to set a date, venue.

5. New Business, Other Business

- Dance instruction at area schools. Leigh's band will be playing at Schiller Park on Tuesday, free admission for the Neighborhood Watch groups.
- Planning events for 2010: Mary Ellen will check Arrowhead 2010 availability.

Next Meeting date, time, place: Sunday, 3pm, July 19th, 2009, Panera Bread Company, 5701 East Circle Drive, Cicero, NY 13039.

 Addendum: Thursday, June 4th, volunteers helped clean and set up the hall after St. Clare clothing drive. These people were Michael Stafford-Hill, Deb Smith, Dan Hermann, Pete Keller. They arrived 5pm and by 6pm, everything was done. We love our Volunteers.

Arrowhead online booking schedule lists all July 2010 Thursdays available except July 15th. We will try to reserve July 29th for our SSDS picnic.

The Arrowhead lodge is also available December 3rd and December 10th for possible Holiday dance venue.

From: Mary Ellen Datta <happyfeet5678@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2009 12:54:17 PM
Subject: Updates

Hello Everyone,

Sara and I just spoke. Our rent is \$50 until they have janitorial services restored.

Steve will be teaching classes July 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th. Not on July 2nd.

We are NOT sending \$5000 to Jazzfest for advertising.

Picnic 2010 reservation Arrowhead lodge July 29th, 2010, 4pm-10pm, request submitted online, pending approval. If approved, payment \$175 due within seven days.

I think I forgot to mention that Can volunteered to coordinate transport and set up of sound

system for August 6th, 2009 picnic. Thank you, Can.

Colacino October 31st workshops: Let's work on this quickly. It would be a terrible mistake to print and release event flyers if he is not really planning to come teach that day.

Holiday dance date & venue: I can book Ukrainian home for some other day of the week, one of the Saturdays in December? Nickola usually keeps office hours until 2pm. I'll check availability for December 5th, 12th and 19th.

Mailing vs email: Yes, we should crosscheck the people on both lists and ask them to go paperless. Yes, we should urge people to sign up for SSDS email list. We can all help and thank you, Maria, for helping to work on this project.

Still, some people aren't ready to go paperless, so we shouldn't leave these folks out just yet. I'm having the same conflict with our Comstock neighbor's group, when they argue the cost of printing and mailing monthly newsletters. I think we need to mail something about the picnic this year. Let's provide information about the benefit of going paperless with this mailing and possibly not mail anything next year. Maybe Maria can bring us some OCCRA literature for display at the dances.

Putting out a post card for a keepsake reminder is a great idea, similar to the refrigerator magnets. I'll look for the cost of car window decals and report back later. We've talked about a calendar in the past for similar reasons. Let's hold on to this momentum.

The date set for the next meeting is Sunday, July 19th, 3pm, Panera. It was a quick and easy solution at the close of the meeting. If someone has conflict and would like to offer better time & location, please share.

Thanks, Everyone, for your help,
Mary Ellen