When I set out to do a report on all the West Coast Swing Dance Clubs in our regional area of Oregon and Washington, I had one focus in mind, to see how other clubs run, and how they grow WCS in their local communities.

I thought I would see a common thread. What I found instead is what makes WCS a success in any local community varies. It varies as much as the WCS dance itself. Just as we dance on the fly, interpreting the song as we go, so does the local communities and those who run them. Those inspired individuals rise up to take the "lead" on what they consider hits in the musical crescendo of their own home towns and communities.

And in keeping with the PSDC's By Laws in Article 2, that reads, "Joining with other clubs in exchanging ideas...", I hit the road running, interviewing SEVEN regional West Coast Swing Dance Clubs and Communities. What I found was surprising and uplifting.

Come with me now as we turn the pages to learn more about other clubs in our region... Continued on Page 3

This year’s BridgeTown Swing (BTS) is getting geared up to be another year of great social and competitive dancing on a huge floor. The Date: September 13-16. What does this year’s BTS have to offer? Which pros are coming this year? And just what’s this about a new hotel? Don’t worry, all questions will be answered in the order they were received.

**Jason Isbel**, who is serving on the BridgeTown Swing Committee this year, was able to give me an interview on the latest and greatest in our own home town West Coast Swing dance convention.

**What’s special or different about the event this year?**

**Jason**: We moved the event slightly earlier in September, and to the Red Lion on the River in Jantzen Beach. The new hotel has some really great things to offer, so we’re excited to try it out! The ballroom is gigantic, and has a beautiful view of the Columbia river.

(Continued on page 2)
BridgeTown Swing 2012 (Continued)

SEPT 8
PSDC Second Saturday Swing Dance.
Trina Siebert, teaches the intermediate lesson at 7:30, Chris Jones teaches the Beginners Lesson at 7:30pm downstairs. Open dancing from 8:30 to 12:00 midnight.
Location: Sunnyside Grange

Sept 22
NO Dance due to BRIDGE TOWN SWING Dance convention.

Oct 13—Floor Nominations Dance
PSDC Second Saturday Swing Dance. Kathy Carter, teaches the intermediate lesson at 7:30, Beginners Lesson at 7:30pm backstage. Open dancing from 8:30 to 12:00 midnight.
DJ: Robb Bryan
Location: Norse Hall

For other weekly dances, be sure to check out our online calendar.

Competition Calendar
WCS Events on the West Coast

BridgeTown Swing
Portland, Oregon
Sept. 13 - 16, 2012

Boogie By The Bay
San Francisco, California
Oct. 4 - 7, 2012

Halloween Swing Thing
Irvine, CA

How long have you been West Coast Swing dancing?

Well, some friends dragged me lindy hopping while I was attending OSU. I did that for about a year, then decided to mix it up a bit and started taking classes at OSU for ballroom, salsa, and west coast swing. I was dragged out to compete at Monster Mash back in 2005 ... and that sold me on west coast.

How long have you been involved with the PSDC and BTS Committee?

I probably started coming to the PSDC dances with Corvallis-ites 6 or 7 years ago. I became more consistently involved once I moved to Portland, about 6 years ago. I’ve spent 3 years on the board, 2 as events director, and once as vice president.

It’s my job (In BTS Committee) to coordinate the discussion about which pros we want to bring, find out who is available, (negotiations, etc.). I also coordinate the event workshop schedule (again, with a lot of input from the rest of the board).

What are the roles of the main committee members?

We don't have formal titles, but in general (and I know I'm going to leave stuff out, so please guys, don't beat me!):

Chris Jones does all the DJ stuff
Bob Smith does a lot of the hotel interactions, and keeps all the music going equipment-wise, Michelle Dumas basically makes all the contests run, Trina Siebert does all the registration stuff, Kristy Brehm and I do all the staffing, Jenny Beyer coordinates all our volunteers, Carla Titus does money stuff, and is coordinating onsite registration this year, Melena Bronson is new this year, and has kind of been our catch-all doing whatever random stuff the rest of us don't want to do. :D

There's also a bunch of people that don't come to all the organizational meetings, but do a lot of work at or before the event:

Arvella Hietala is our amazing accountant, Nick DeVore does our private lesson desk, Leah Brandis does the competition registration desk, Marcus Sterling does vendor sales, Danielle White does all of our graphic design work (t-shirts and the booklet), Danny & Sarah Braxton are returning as our facilities directors, David Knight is doing our scoring again (yay!), Randy and Rhonda Shotts keep our staff from going hungry. Our four leads on registration desk will be Mackenzie Grover, Emerald Beanland, Tiffany Schmidt and Lauren Wood.

Any challenges you face this year?
Finding hotel space for an event like ours can be really tricky, so we had to make some changes to both our venue and weekend this year. ... But it's still just a few minutes from down town by car ... so it's still pretty easy to get around. And if anyone from out of town is reading this, there is a free airport shuttle! There's also plenty of food around the hotel.

What's special this year at BTS?
I already talked about our great new hotel... The other great thing is our staff... I'm really excited to see them up here in Portland.

* Ben Morris & Melissa Rutz
* Myles Munroe & Tessa Cunningham
* Michael Kielbasa
* Patty Vo & Barry Jones
* Nick Jay & Joanna Meinl
* Ben McHenry & Stephanie McHenry
* Tara Trafzer & Nick King
* John Kirkconnell & Katie Schneider
* Eric & Tamara Allen

(Continued on page 12)
What Makes A Great Club? (Continued)

Although there were many clubs and communities I could have researched across this great country of ours, I focused mainly on our Northwest Region of the United States, and specifically those in Oregon and Washington. These are Seattle, Eugene, OSU in Corvallis, Salem, Bend Swing Dancers, Southern Oregon Swing in Medford, and Spokane, Washington.

Interview with Jean Brinton, (Pres.) and Chuck Coy (V.P.)

With the Eugene Swing Dance Club (Eugene, Oregon) I come to find out that it's the oldest West Coast Swing Dance Club in the state, starting about 16 years ago, in 1996. But as Jean Brinton, current president of the ESDC, will tell you the idea started 2 years before that.

Jean: "I first saw West Coast Swing (WCS) at the Rock’n Rodeo in Eugene. I went to Seattle Easter Swing in about 1994 when there were only a few people doing WCS. When I came back I made a list of all the people interested in forming a club to bring instructors to the area. We called the club "Sync or Swing". We rented a space and started meeting every Monday evening, moved to the Rock n Rodeo in Eugene for a few years, changed the name to Eugene Swing Dance Club and then moved to Agate Hall. Chuck Coy, myself and Joseph McKinney were the backbone of the club. We brought Jordan and Tatiana to Eugene for their first gig when Tatiana was a teenager."

Chuck Coy, Vice President also remembers the early days.

Chuck: "The club has been in existence for about 16 years, Jean, and I, and Joseph McKinney started the club as a trio. We ran it like that for several years until we felt that we needed to turn it over to a board of directors to give it the longevity past our involvement."

Steve: Where did your monthly dances start? and where do you hold them now?

Chuck: "We started at the Rock n Rodeo in Eugene actually, because that was the main dance venue at the time. Then Jean found us Agate Hall in the University of Oregon's community campus. We were there for 13 years. And the past year we have moved to the upstairs ballroom at the Vet's Club."

Steve: How often are dances held?

Chuck: Dances are held every Monday. We bring in guest instructors, both locally and regionally. Cost is $4 for members, $6 for non members, and membership is only $20 per year. We also have a yearly dance which is our holiday dance, and a FREE Jack n Jill with cash going to the top 3 winning couples. But due to do the venue change we were not able to hold one this year. Our new venue is booked out for the holiday.

Steve: How many members do you have?

Chuck: We started out with only 15 members. Now we are currently at around 120. We usually get about 60 members (on average) coming to our Monday night dances.

Steve: What are some of the positives & successes that you have seen?

Chuck: "Well in talking with other board members from other swing dance clubs, people are pretty envious of Eugene because it's not fractionalized like a lot of other communities, with dance instructors or people that are DJ's that have their own separate dances. I think that tends to cause a lot of the fractionalization." Chuck adds, "We rotate DJ's, who are all volunteers where really no one is getting paid, and we pay our instructors and we have a different instructor every week. And so people get a fresh look. It's not the same person with the same message all the time.

Steve: What do you feel helps communities in dance grow?

Chuck: "I think just keeping the whole community together and really building a very positive feeling about the dance and acceptance of all people. It's not "cliquish" at all really. That to me is part of its success.

Steve: How do you go about eliciting new members?

Chuck: We have a FREE member dance as a membership drive. If you are a member you get in free, but if you are not a member you have to pay, so you might as well join..."

Steve: If you had one piece of advice you would like to impart to other Swing Dance Clubs what would it be?

Chuck: For those established clubs, I don't think I can impart any other information that would change the dynamics of those clubs. But I can speak to new clubs starting out. I think for people starting a club, the main thing I think is to have a variety of lessons, have a variety of instructors, and have a variety of levels, all the way from beginning, beyond basis, to intermediate. So you can bring people through without being frustrated. Hold it on a weeknight. Hold it every week. Because that gets people putting it on their schedule. If you do it every other week or do it once a month, I think people lose interest, and they forget about it. Keeping it weekly and keeping costs low has worked for us.
SOswing—Medford Area, Oregon

Interview with
Dave Kahn and Rebecca Blust

Travelling south on I-5 in Oregon's lush Willamette Valley, and meeting up with an area where the Valley and cascades gives way to clearer landscapes, beautiful hillsides and an opening that welcomes travelers to Northern California, is the home of Southern Oregon Swing (SOswing). This is not a club but more of a WCS Dance Community that encompasses The Medford area and includes Grants Pass and Ashland, as well as surrounding communities.

Their proximity and access to California professional dancers and instructors from the San Francisco Bay area has also given them a great "shot-in-the-arm" which boosts their dance skills to new heights.

The WCS Community started around 10 years ago and Dave Kahn and Rebecca Blust have been main organizers of the areas activities for nearly 7 years now. The Southern Oregon Swing area dancers have also been making a mark for themselves in competitions. These competitions are both local and national, with local dancers placing top 5 at many different WCS dance competitions across the country. So what makes their community thrive?

"It's a community that is very welcoming and supportive" Says Rebecca Blust, stating that this is the very same message she gets from traveling professional dance instructors who teach for them in the area. "Everyone dances with everyone else and there doesn't seem to be any egos."

Rebecca Adds, “There is also solidarity within the local instructors, everyone is supportive of other dancer's classes. Dave and I work at it by promoting everyone through newsletters, FB, public announcements, and through our site soswing.org. We also support other types of dancing organizations like USA Dance. Dave serves as a VP. We work together bringing in pros for their Spring Fling event, serve as judges on their panels, and are part of Dancing with the Rogue Valley Stars, which is put on by USA Dance in conjunction with the Sparrows Club."

How large of an area is your dance community? When are your dances held?

Our community of dancers holds the following dances:

Monday - Grants Pass $7 (taught by Don n Karen)
Tuesday - Ashland YMCA (starts in the fall, taught by Dave Kahn)
Wednesday - Central Point $5 (taught by Shawn Fels, changing to Derrick Coghill)
Thursday - Central Point $6 (taught by WCS teaching team)
Saturday - Medford $5 (taught by Rebecca Blust and Dave Kahn)

Dave and I used to host weekend events twice a year, Fall and Spring. In the interim we sometimes hosted one day events. Next year will be our first Registry event. (See SOswing in the May/June issue of PSDC Newsletter for more information about SOswing Dance Convention).

For the challenges the they face with their dance community, both Dave and Rebecca had different views to share. Rebecca states it's all about the growth of the dancer "The biggest challenge we faced was helping the dance level grow.

When we started, not very many of us were attending conventions or taking privates. Our only instruction was from videos. Now we are bringing upwards of 30 people to conventions, we have a registry event, and we enjoy a higher level of dancing."

Dave also saw a need early on and rose to the challenge, "We saw a need to bring in top talent in order to raise our overall level, and went for it. We have always felt truly blessed with the quality and the kindness of the people in our dance community. If it weren't for them, neither of us would still be doing what we do."

When asked about some of the best experiences of the community, it goes back to the support of their local community. Both Rebecca and Dave had to say it was the support of their first WCS Competition event held in May of this year. "The support for SOswing convention was amazing. Many, many dancers offered to help in any way they could and they did. We had some of our instructors donating up to $500 dollars towards the cost. One of our dancers donated all the trophies, and engraved them. A huge group of volunteers helped set up Thursday night. Another dancer donated all of the DJ equipment. Everyone was so supportive."

For their final piece of advice to impart to other clubs, I asked Dave and Rebecca the question I have been asking all the clubs in this issue, and that's what things do you recommend other clubs and dance communities do to thrive in this day and age of WCS Dancing?

(Continued on page 5)
Rebecca: "From the beginning everyone in our community has been supportive of each other. I believe this has helped create the welcoming and supportive community we have."

Dave: "Here in S.O. we somehow get there, we're all basically on the same side. (Team WCS, that is.) In other places, we have seen people sometimes get caught up in unnecessary rivalries, jealousies and/or drama. All that stuff is ultimately counterproductive to both good dancing and happiness. We do our best to avoid those pitfalls, and we revel in the amazing company of our community. We've said this more than once: we have met some of the finest people we know through WCS."

I feel the love that both Rebecca and Dave feel for WCS and their passion for the art and the social aspect of the dance community. I have been down to Medford area a number of times and one time in particular for a workshop where their local area dancers actually put several of us up in their own homes, welcoming us for a weekend. I encourage anyone who is traveling to southern Oregon to plan a trip to one of their "Wine Tasting Dance Workshops" and or their dance convention which has been officially sanctioned by the World Swing Dance Council (WSDC) for 2013.

_____________________________________________________________

Bend Swing Dance Community
Bend, Oregon
Interview with Victoria Tolonen.

In speaking with Victoria Tolonen in Bend Oregon, I come to find out that Bend, like Medford area, is also more of a WCS dance community and not an official club. You won't find a board of directors, club membership, or bylaws here. What you have is a WCS community that is growing. Yet as you will see in this interview, you come to discover how communities grow with a group of enthusiastic supporters and in a way discover how this is really the essence of their "club" if you will. Their community IS their club.

How long have you been dancing WCS?
10 years. I was a Salsa instructor and judge on staff at New Year’s Swing Dance Classic in Palm Springs and expected the “Swing event across the hall” to involve poodle skirts and bobby socks. I walked into the ballroom at 2am to a scene of jeans, Top 40 music and the sexiest dance I’d ever seen. I was hooked.

How is your group organized? Year founded?
I’m the sole creator, instructor, DJ, and judge on staff at New Year’s Swing Dance Classic in Palm Springs and expected the “Swing event across the hall” to involve poodle skirts and bobby socks. I walked into the ballroom at 2am to a scene of jeans, Top 40 music and the sexiest dance I’d ever seen. I was hooked.

How have you grown the WCS community?
I teach a ton of technique, I tend to play slower, somewhat atypical music, and I make sure everyone’s nice. We end up with a group where everyone likes each other so people want to come to dances to play with their friends.

Do you have any outreach and support other WCS Dance clubs?
We love Medford! They’re our Sister Swing Community and we always support each others’ events. They’re great dancers, but more importantly we like the group as people so we’ll take any excuse to head to the valley to visit our Medford friends. We had 45 Bend Dancers at SoSwing. (This is Medford’s newest WCS Dance Convention)

What are your dances like? Admission prices?
We have 3rd and 5th Friday Dances ($6) and we love visiting dancers!

We have 8 classes per week, each offered as a monthly series and Sunday Practicas. If you want to bring friends to Bend for a play weekend or ski break, let me know and I’ll create an event, including happy hours, dancing and host families!

Why do you feel people keep coming back to your dances in Bend?
In Bend most of our dancers are single and come to dance class to meet people, stretch their comfort zone, redefine themselves after a major life change, and sometimes to learn to dance. I think women want to be alluring – to be beautiful in their own way and to feel free to offer that to the world. Men need to be heroes, and on the dance floor they get to take care of the damsel and take her along for a 4 minute adventure. As men and women we all want to connect.

What’s the most important thing you hope people learn in dance classes and your community?
I want to teach women that following is a strength and shows that I’m ok enough with myself that I’m not losing “me” by letting someone else give me direction. I hope people feel like they have permission to be sexy or sassy or funny and to not be afraid to connect more honestly with each other. Be fully you, enjoy your partner and make sure they’re smiling when they leave the dance floor!

(Continued on page 6)
Clubs Issue, Continued

OSU West Coast Swing Club
Interview with Lauren Wood

Along the way down to Eugene, and nestled in between the cascade and coastal mountain ranges of Oregon, what is known as the Willamette Valley, 45 minutes north of Eugene, (and an hour and half south of Portland) sits the college town of Corvallis, Oregon. And with it comes the Oregon State University's (OSU) West Coast Swing Club (OSU/WCSC)

In a place where people's minds are focused on education, OSU WCS Club has the right mix of motivation, drive, education of WCS fundamentals, and encouragement from students, peers, instructors, and communities.

The club was formed in 2005 (school year of 2005-2006, and founded at that time by Elisha Catts, President, Kara Peszneker (VP), Nihar Goonerante (Treasurer), and Andy Catts (PR) as well as other interested students. Today OSU WCS club is thriving; bringing up top notch talented dancers, a dance team devoted to WCS performances, and a host of weekly, monthly, and quarterly dances and workshops for students as well as the outside community.

And as I have met with Lauren Wood, current President of the OSU WCS Club, I found some surprising items that would help other clubs and communities who strive to provide the excitement, the spark that would ignite and grow their WCS communities.

Steve: How long have you been dancing West Coast Swing?

Lauren: I started dancing in August of 2009. WCS was the first style I ever tried, I had never set foot on a dance floor before that. After just one night I was absolutely hooked. It is by far the most freeing and expressive thing I have ever done in my life and I feel like I found myself in it.

Steve: How long have you been with the OSU West Coast Swing Club?

Lauren: My first year at OSU, they were short on officers for the club and asked if I’d be interested in being the number 4 person to keep us official. I agreed, but hadn’t thought ahead to realize that that made me the only officer who would not graduate that spring. By default that made me president for the next year and I have done my best to live up to the role. The crew of officers I have now is fantastic and do an amazing job of making me look good. In reality, I couldn’t do a thing down here without them.

Steve: What has been the biggest challenge since you have been president?

Lauren: I think the challenges are much the same as any other dance club, though with a few differences being a school-based club. Finding reliable and responsible volunteers who can dedicate the time and energy the club needs to function. Our official officers are required to be full time students at OSU, and along with jobs and other responsibilities, are easily as busy or busier than anyone out in the “real world”. Thankfully we’ve also had a few community volunteers join our team, such as my predecessor Danielle White, (previous OSU WCS Club President), who has continued to advise the club.

We also have the challenge of really limited funds (being students), and we have the challenge of scheduling. OSU not only has other WCS events to consider when planning, but we are severely limited in facilities availability. (Only one room for 6 social clubs, dance teams, etc.)

Steve: What has been the most exciting, fun and energetic experience in the past year as president.

Lauren: I’m not sure if I could pick just one. Some of my favorite moments have been teaching lifts with Jonathan Taylor, watching the Mystery Strictly during our Myles and Tessa Weekend, the critique workshops just recently with Andrew Slac. In my position I have to pay more attention to all the attendees at our dances and workshops, and as a result, I’m far more observant of the progress our dancers are making. I have witnessed some amazing breakthroughs for a number of people.

Steve: You have brought some great events for West Coast Swing to OSU in the past year, and included the Ballroom community as well. What's your goal for OSU West Coast Swing Club and events like this?

Lauren: OSU has been the introduction to dance for a number of competitive and professional dancers, many of which are now or have been PSDC officers and even champion level dancers like Pete Green. My personal long term goal is to see that the (OSU WCS Club) becomes more widely known. Even a large portion of the University itself is unaware what a special social dance community we have here.

All in all we probably have over 500 students who attend events throughout the year. Teachers even require attendance at one or more social club events as part of dance class “homework”. I’d like to see that turn into regular attendance, rather than sporadic for more of them.

Steve: What are your typical admission prices to your events and workshops?

Lauren: We keep our prices exceptionally low in order to be as accessible to students as possible. Since most are living on student loans or their parents support, we don’t believe in making them struggle to attend or have to choose between essentials and us. As long as we possibly can, we will hold to our current system of never charging more than $3-5 for a
workshop or dance for students. Community members are only a few dollars more than student pricing. If a student is particularly struggling financially but shows a real desire to participate, we will find a way for them to volunteer in exchange for entry to events.

Steve: If you could give 1 (or more) suggestions to any other Swing Dance Club in the northwest, what would it be?

Lauren: Communication. The number one biggest problem we are all having is communication, especially surrounding the planning of events. I’d like to see Oregon set an example by creating a network of the various event planners. If we do that, dancers have the benefit of being able to attend more events, rather than choosing between. This means more dancing and interaction for people, and less tension and drama created.

Secondly, would be community support. I’m not sure how many other communities have this, but I am tremendously proud of how supportive the Corvallis dancers are of each other. Corvallis dancers travel more than just about anyone else I know of – routinely driving as much as an hour and a half each way for a regular weekly dance, several times a week. They manage this on dime size budgets by pulling together, sharing, and helping each other wherever they can.

If anyone wants to go to a dance, they find ways to make it happen. They help complete chores or homework on time, they help each other study, they are shoulders to cry on or shoulders to stand on. Truly, these dancers are like family to each other and they welcome each new member like a long lost sibling. Dancing here is not just an activity, it is a way of life.

From listening to Lauren, I get a sense she along with the other OSU board and members, are striving to grow WCS in an area where education is #1. The strong commitment to schedule and building a community. A community where dancers are nurtured with education & inspiration. It’s a great place for any club or community to start. No wonder we see many great things coming out of Corvallis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Name</th>
<th>YEAR Founded</th>
<th>Club or Community</th>
<th>Success Factors</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Dances &amp; Costs</th>
<th>Workshops/Events</th>
<th>Suggestions for Other Clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSDC</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Instructors and DJ’s and board members pull together in times of need.</td>
<td>Planning events ahead of time, which we are improving on.</td>
<td>2 per month $8 members $15 non members</td>
<td>2 Workshops a year &amp; BridgeTown Convention</td>
<td>* at this point we have none, we are taking this opportunity to learn from all of you...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSU</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Support from dedicated students and volunteers. Setting an environment where dancers can grow</td>
<td>Always striving to find Reliable Volunteers. And Financial challenges</td>
<td>Monthly or Bi monthly $3 for members $5 for others</td>
<td>3 to 4 Workshops &amp; events per year</td>
<td>Communications &amp; Community Support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Keeping community together. Non fractionalized</td>
<td>Finding a new venue after 13 years.</td>
<td>Weekly $4 members $6 non members</td>
<td>2 Holiday events with JnJ Comps</td>
<td>Variety of Lessons for all levels. Keep dance times/days consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO swing</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Community Support. Instructor support other dances.</td>
<td>Growing dancers to new levels.</td>
<td>Weekly $5—$7 per person</td>
<td>Varies, but normally 2 to 3 workshops per year &amp; SOswing Convention</td>
<td>Keeping community together. Team WCS!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bend</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Building Dance Communities through group lessons.</td>
<td>Attracting and keeping new dancers.</td>
<td>2 per month $6 per person</td>
<td>Local Community Workshops</td>
<td>Keep things new and entertaining. Don’t try to please everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Persistence and a variety of lessons building a reliable group.</td>
<td>Creating events to keep local dancers supporting local events.</td>
<td>Monthly $7 per person</td>
<td>Dances Vary, Workshops in Salem &amp; Tigard</td>
<td>Attitude. Be friendly ambassadors of WCS. Make dancers feel welcomed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Education. Providing contacts. Listen to members.</td>
<td>Balance &amp; Change. Financial. Always striving to stay current.</td>
<td>2 per month $7 members $11 non members</td>
<td>2 (or more) Workshops per year. &amp; Seattle Easter Swing Convention</td>
<td>Club member involvement, and take ownership of their club. &amp; Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Education / Workshops Communication with Local Dance Studios.</td>
<td>running a dance convention with little volunteers.</td>
<td>2 per month $5 members $8 non members</td>
<td>3 to 4 (or more) Workshops per year</td>
<td>Keep in touch with local dance studios &amp; promote them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do you attribute the success of your WCS dance community?

Persistence. It has taken a lot of years of consistent WCS offerings to build a small, but reliable group.

Any advice for other WCS Dance Clubs and Communities?

To me, the attitude or “feel” of a club/community is the most important component. My advice for club leaders is to be friendly ambassadors of WCS, making everyone (especially beginners) feel welcome and never like an imposition!

Continued on Page 9
Seattle Swing Dance Club
Seattle, Washington
Interview with President Trula Schafer

Going up north to what some call the Emerald City, Seattle, we see a club that has been structured early on. In fact, far earlier than any other club in this newsletter. Seattle Swing Dance Club (SSDC) is one of the oldest and most prestigious dance clubs in our area. They also host the Seattle Easter Swing dance convention. I had the opportunity to catch Trula Schafer, President of the SSDC, for an interview.

How long has the Seattle Swing Dance Club been in existence?

SSDC started in 1965 and was originally called the Seattle Single Swingers. It was a West Coast Swing club and dancing happened in various locations primarily to live music. Back then club members had to be unmarried and even had to audition to be in the club. Of course the name is no longer appropriate for today and auditions are a thing of the past, but SSDC is still very active in our community. We believe SSDC is the longest existing club dedicated to West Coast Swing in the US. We'll be celebrating our 50th anniversary soon, and are excited to plan celebration activities throughout the year and at Seattle's Easter Swing.

How many social dances do you hold? and how often? Costs?

SSDC hosts dances twice a month on the first and third Sundays. Membership in the club is $40 per year. As a member, the club dances cost $7 to enter and $11 for non-members. We honor the memberships of other swing clubs, like PSDC, who would be able to enter our dances at the member price. Members get price breaks on various other activities like classes, and we have a 2 free dances a year, as well as a summer picnic that is free to members.

What's the organization of your group? Do you have a board of directors, etc.

SSDC is a non-profit membership organization run by an elected board of directors. The board organizes itself into committees, each of which oversee a function of the club, such as our dances, education, publicity, etc. We have a great membership who is involved in the club and community.

What are some of the ways you have grown your WCS dance community?

SSDC's primary function is education. In 2011, with educational opportunities at each dance, specialty workshops, curriculum series classes and Seattle's Easter Swing, SSDC offered nearly 200 hours of West Coast Swing education to the community. Education provides a means for interested dancers to access our community, because if they can't do West Coast Swing they can't be involved and it's a tough dance to learn. In addition, we provide contact points for those students and our members to all the other West Coast Swing opportunities in our community. We do this through print, our website, Facebook page and our newsletter. Lastly, we listen. We ask what our members want and what they need, and we try to find a way to make those things happen, so our community stays interested and strong.

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Do you have an outreach program and/or support other WCS Dance clubs?

Recently SSDC coordinated with other entities to sponsor weekend events with national professionals. We also promote all regional events (such as Bridge-Town Swing) at our dances and on our website and invite them to promote their clubs and activities at our larger events such as Seattle's Easter Swing. We also regularly invite members of other clubs in our region to attend our events and competitions.

Does your club hold special holiday and/or workshop type events throughout the year?

Yes. We hold a special winter dance that is free to members as well as a summer picnic and dance, also free to members. We bring national professionals in during the year. We have special intensive workshop weekend for new dancers. There are lots of "special" events we do for our members throughout the year and the board enjoys doing them.

How does the club tie into the Seattle Easter Swing event?

Seattle's Easter Swing is a function of the SSDC. SSDC contracts an event director who manages the event on our behalf. Seattle's Easter Swing and Seattle Swing Dance Club are one entity. Our club members and the Seattle dance community comprise the 100+ volunteers who actually run the event. It's an amazing community effort.

What has been the most exciting, fun & energetic experience for your club?

Seattle's Easter Swing, of course! But otherwise I must say lately our dances have been really great. And our summer picnic is always really fun.

Have you faced any challenges or difficulties lately?

I think SSDC faces the same challenges that any membership organization faces. Balance and Change. We have a very diverse community of membership that sometimes have opposing needs and interests. We are trying to remain current. We have financial challenges. We are a non-profit organization in a community with private businesses offering similar services. Being a West Coast Swing club is not unlike the dance itself. When you have a partner you connect with, your favorite song, your focused state-of-mind, a good foundation in the dance then you are able to find the "sweet spot" and can meet the challenges. There are always moments when you lose connection, but if the elements are in place you can re-connect and move on. You have to listen.

SSDC is overcoming it's challenges. We have a great, enthusiastic and attentive board of directors. The board organizes itself and tries as much as possible to think like any other for profit business. It is open to trying new things while remembering its history. We have a great supportive membership who is communicative with the leadership. Our community is interested in growing and having fun so we work well together to make it all move forward.

One thing you would recommend to other Swing Dance Clubs?

I personally believe that a community's swing club is vital to the education and continual growth and vitality of a West Coast Swing community. I encourage club members to take ownership of their club. If you want to see change, then get involved. Make suggestions, volunteer, donate, consider being on the board of directors. And most importantly, have fun and invite others to have fun and learn the dance with you.

Spokane Swing Dance Club
Interview with President Chet Jahns

Finally we end with our last club on our quest to discover what makes a great swing dance club or community. For this we head over to Eastern Washington and the area of the Spokane Swing Dance Club.

Spokane is thriving as a WCS dance community and dancers are traveling to Seattle for social dancing as well as larger competitions, getting better and better. Just like the other smaller communities in southern and eastern Oregon, Spokane fits into that model of communities, however, they add a bit more structure. Similar to Portland, Seattle, and Corvallis they are an official club, with a board, and following the "Robert's Rules of Order" at their monthly meetings. They formed in 1995 as a non profit organization in the state of Washington.

I interviewed the President of the Spokane Swing Dance Club, Chet Jahns, who is serving his 3rd year as President of the swing club. He feels their club has grown through advertising and by beginning every dance with a 1 hour lesson. When asked what he recommends for other swing clubs, Chet said, "Keep in touch with local dance studios and promote them whenever possible."

That's exactly what their club does. They keep in touch with the local studios and communicate with regional clubs such as Seattle Swing Dance Club. They also invite other clubs to their workshops with well known professional instructors whom they usually pay to come in and teach a one day workshop or an entire weekend workshop. Most recent noted was out-of-town professional instructor Chuck Brown who taught a one day workshop for the club.

The only real notable challenge that Chet pointed out was the clubs dealings with the Monster Mash Swing Dance convention, which they used to hold in October, around Halloween time several years ago. In the end it was lack of volunteers to work and/or run the event. "We used to hold MonsterMash" Chet said, "It got to be too much work for the few workers we could muster to run it."

When asked about dances times and costs, membership, and special annual dance events, Chet said, "We meet 2 times a month on the 1st and 3rd Sundays Cost are $5 for members, $8 for nonmembers, and membership is $30 per year. We also have a Halloween Dance and a Christmas Dance."
Competition from a Judge’s Perspective

This issue's PSDC Member Profile is none other than our own hometown instructor and judge Trudy Thatcher. I thought it would be fitting since this was the issue of our BridgeTown Swing Dance Convention coming up this September, that we would get a feel for what the judges look for in competitions. I also wanted to delve into Trudy’s dance experience in dance and as a person in our dance community, and find out what motivates her in our West Coast Swing dancing world.

How long have you been dancing West Coast Swing? I have been studying WCS since 2003, but have only really 'danced' it for about two years. I'm a slow learner, but very thorough :) 

How long have you been a PSDC member? Many many years!

What excites you in West Coast Swing dance and why did you start WCS dancing? I started out in Lindy and Balboa, but really enjoyed dancing with WCS leaders back in the Viscount Ballroom days, when very popular lindy and WCS dances occurred on the same night in two different rooms. I have always loved the musicality and extemporaneous creativity of the dance, even from the beginning.

What title do you have in judging West Coast Swing events? Is there a title? Not really. Events have judges and chief judges, and their roles are different, but closely aligned. Both are important responsibilities, and I love having my awareness and skills put to the test.

Is your judging specific to certain West Coast Swing events? NASDE or WSDC certified events? I was trained and certified by the National Dance Dynamics Certification Board, and as such, am qualified to judge NASDE and WSDC events, both of which I have done. One of my favorite events to judge was the sixth anniversary party jack and jill for WCS UK, in Windsor. I was overseas for my day job, and had the opportunity to judge at their dance, so I guess I can say I'm an international judge!

What kind of regimen did you need to complete in order to be a judge? At least 24 hours of judge-specific training, at least four apprentice judging sessions with different mentors (I did six) and two exams (where I had perfect scores on both!). I am grateful to all of the coaches, and especially to Jim Minty, who has been so generous in sharing his extensive knowledge, and in challenging me and helping me pull it all together.

What kinds of events and divisions have you judged? I can't think of a division I haven't judged - jack and jills, strictlys, and routines. I like them all!! While the standard judging criteria are always essential, we are simultaneously aware of specific elements that come into play within the various divisions and levels. For example, in a strictly swing competition, I like to see couples who look like they are having a great time dancing with their very best friend, and not trying to outshine their partner. If, at the same time, they can draw us in to the fun of their dance, so much the better!

What is the most difficult part of judging? That's an interesting question, and the answer changes as you gain more experience as a judge. At this point in time, I would say it is the ability to focus on (and relatively evaluate) the dancers' unique strengths and weaknesses, especially in a field where everyone is excellent. In those cases, we are looking at the finer points of movement quality, artistry, and performance. Yes - your free arm matters, phrasing matters, teamwork and connection really matter!

What could you recommend to the Novice through Advanced competitor who is trying to dance well in front of a judging panel? How much space do you have in your newsletter?!! Simply put, start with mastering the three T's (timing, technique, teamwork) and as you move up the ranks, add variety and contrast, musical interpretation, and showmanship / performance. We are starting to see all of these judging criteria being demonstrated even at the novice level these days. I encourage everyone interested in competing, as well as in improving their dance skills and getting more enjoyment from the dance, to take advantage of the workshops, critiques, and practice sessions we have in our community. The more you know about WCS, the more fun it is!

Anything else you would like to add, from a judging perspective? I can honestly say there is nothing about the experience of judging that I don't like and there is nothing about the courage and determination of the dancers that I don't respect.
WCS Dance Clubs Issue, Continued...

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With all this, Spokane continues to grow and still thriving and the level of dancers is increasing. As Chet states, “We send members to Seattle Easter Swing Convention and they come home winning Jack & Jill contests.” To Chet that's the one of the exciting experiences he has working with the club.

Clubs Issue, Closing thoughts

Overall I have to say I was impressed by the information gathered from these clubs and communities. The theme for success we see resonating throughout all these clubs and communities is simple to see. Provide a sense of togetherness. Work together and make sure every club, studio, and other dance venues are on the same page. Team WCS as Dave Kahn suggests. Bringing community together and avoiding cliques and fractionalization of the dance community as Chuck Coy suggests.

Community Support and Communication with other clubs as Lauren Wood states. We get the picture that support from the local dance community, working together, keeping something that sparks and ignites the senses keeps the dance growing and alive. The goal of improving dancing skills, by bringing in out of town guests who are professional instructors is also a big part of the mix. There needs of a committed volunteers is pivotal to that which makes a community and/or club thrive. Existing volunteers as well as new volunteers spark new ideas and excitement and prevent burn out from existing volunteers. The more the volunteers, the more fun it becomes...

We also discover that consistent dances, low priced, and with a variety of lessons, is key to getting adoption and participation in the club and community activities. It’s something dancers can look forward to, especially a dance that is reliable and consistent.

The other big thing is the feel of the community and the atmosphere of the dance group, club or organization. Many suggested, it’s all about attitude, especially for the beginning dancer. As Kathy Carter put it, clubs and communities as a whole should feel they are “Ambassadors of West Coast Swing”. Creating and promoting a positive atmosphere, creating happiness, positive feelings, and creating a sense of togetherness where no one is excluded, but feels part of the big family we call our dancing family.

Finally I would like to add that it was a true pleasure interviewing each and every one of you. You inspire me by your passion, commitment, and drive to fulfill our dancing pleasure. By your efforts and work behind the scenes, you provide that family feel, that motivation, that sense of togetherness we find in the West Coast Swing dance community. I’m sure I, as well as those reading this article, express a big Thank You, and keep up the great work you are doing in our communities… — Sincerely, Steve Klein

Goodbye Michael Terry

Unfortunately Michael Terry had to resign from his current position as Membership Director. This was Michael’s 2nd year on the PSDC board, and in that time he did a wonderful job managing our membership and keeping records up to date. We wish Michael a farewell and thank him for all his work volunteering on the board.

The PSDC is covered in the short term, and will be able to handle the workload before next election.