Do You Know…
… That the Round Dance Movement Could Fade Away?

By Kaye West

Sixty-eight first timers attending the ICBDA convention in St. George in 2026 is a very strong sign that there is considerable interest in our beloved round dance activity. However, we are at a critical time in our history with some of our leaders who have been teaching for decades experiencing health issues and even passing.

Furthermore, there are fewer dance leaders now than forty or fifty years ago, and dance leaders are often extremely busy with their teaching, choreography, improving their own dance skill, and providing leadership to various clubs and organizations in addition to maintaining other aspects of their lives. They cannot be expected to be the only ones working to increase participation. All of us can play a role in growing our movement!

The late Robert Schuller said that finding one's purpose involves "finding a need and filling it." ICBDA and the entire dance community has a need (1) to expand participation and (2) to help the general public know that we exist. All of us can "do something" to help our movement grow.

Folks in their 50s and 60s currently retiring are seeking an enjoyable activity to fill their days. AI advocates suggest that in the future robotics will do the work of many, so forthcoming changes in the workforce (shorter hours, earlier retirement, and fewer workers) will likely provide more discretionary time for many. Teenagers and college students are another target group (many of our top leaders began as teens or children!). What activity could be more worthwhile than partnership dancing which builds community while offering physical exercise, mental stimulation, social interaction, and emotional fulfillment? It is an activity which couples can enjoy together, friends of the same gender can partner each other, and even solo dancers can participate.

Round dancing also provides lifelong learning and self-improvement (what the founders of the United States meant by "the pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence).

So what can folks do?

1. Be involved yourself. Renew ICBDA membership annually or for a block of years. Attend local events, nearby festivals, and the annual convention. Include round dancing in travel/vacation plans.

2. Encourage others to join ICBDA. This is the only international round dance organization for dancers and, in my opinion, even beginners should join to access resources on our website to assist their learning, and new voices can express their needs to strengthen the organization. Print out membership forms and personally invite friends to join. Even submit their membership form; they just need to pony up $15/person.

3. Facilitate new dancers. Be an angel for new round dancers. Show them where to find written information plus checklists and footprints for various figures since many require information in writing which they can review between classes.

4. Entice social dancers. Teach friends and relatives of all ages a couple of figures in Social Foxtrot that folks can do to 85% of music played at a typical social dance event. Dance with them at such an event and meet others who enjoy dancing and tell them about round dancing. (Start with **Walk, Walk, Run, Run** and **Walk, Walk, Side-Close**. Descriptions for them plus other figures using the same 6-count timing are available in Lessons 1-4 at https://home.csulb.edu/~kwest/wido/dance.html.)

5. Help make round dancing more visible. Tell your friends how valuable and enjoyable it is. Post pictures and other information on social media outlets. Volunteer to personally announce lessons or perform a demo at various community events. Submit articles about dancing and/or upcoming lessons to your local newspapers. Wear clothing that advertises round dancing. Distribute flyers, posters, and business cards widely.

6. Collaborate with an Influential friend. Convince a leader outside dancing (a politician, celebrity, church official, educator, etc.) to advocate for round dancing.

7. Partner with other dance groups to promote **National Dance Day** (third Saturday in September) and **International Dance Day** (April 29). Each has a website. Collaborate with dance groups of all kinds to collectively advertise events through free public service announcements on radio, tv, and in newspapers and via posters, flyers, and social media.

Americans are innovative, creative folk. Use these ideas and more to help people be aware that round dancing is a wholesome, beneficial, and relatively inexpensive activity! Let's all work together to help round dancing thrive.