

History of Hartford Community Dance **30th Anniversary - August 16, 2008**

For 30 years HCD has provided music, lessons and dance opportunities throughout the Greater Hartford area. We have attracted dancers from neighboring states within New England and beyond. Our events are always alcohol and smoke free.

HCD has succeeded in ensuring a joyous music/dance experience for individuals of diverse ages and abilities. Our emphasis is to create a welcoming and fun experience for all.

April, 1978

Zel Dolinski, Carol White and Jim Gregory, a local Contra caller, organized "Hartford Country Dance" to avoid huge entertainment taxes from offering 20 years of casual Contra dances in the Hartford area without having paid these taxes (Jim hadn't known about the tax). Bylaws were written, and HCD became an Associate Member of the Country Dance and Song Society, with the benefit of their non-profit tax status. This legal change retroactively forgave the back taxes.

Contra Dances were held at various locations, including Saint James's Church in West Hartford and the American Legion Hall (ALH) in Old Wethersfield. The Mountain Laurel Cloggers gave clog dance lessons for several years. Subsequent workshops covered diverse topics, taught by many teachers and various groups.

1985

Cajun Dance was added to HCD as a separate dance style, organized by Mel Willsey. It grew into Cajun/Zydeco, and is held at ALH.

1990

Carol White and others started Swing Dance at the ALH, to DJ'd music. Over time they added some live bands to the ALH venue.

As Swing Dance became more popular, the dance was moved to West Hartford Town Hall, with live music provided. First Friday Swing regularly attracts sell-out crowds.

Sept 1996

Swing Jam was officially added to HCD as a DJ'd Swing dance at the ALH, organized by Jane Dumont. Jane had hosted Swing lessons during the preceding summer to raise money for equipment, and continues to offer lessons in various styles of dance at the ALH.

1996

Zel Dolinski became President of HCD's Board of Directors.

1997

The first DanceFest was held, offering dancers from each of HCD's genres a chance to try out the other styles of dance. Admission is free, with renewal of membership in HCD.

1998

The "Contra Jammers" (a group of volunteer musicians playing Contra & other tunes) was formed, meeting prior to the Contra dances. They now play gigs throughout Greater Hartford, under the leadership of Rob Lindauer.

2003

Hartford Country Dance became Incorporated, and the name was changed to Hartford Community Dance (HCD).

2003

Mostly Waltz was officially added to HCD, organized by Christine Hale, Jeff Friedman, Aimee Kanzler, Phil Carlson & Laurel Swan. First held at the West Hartford Town Hall, it is now held at the East Hartford South End Senior Center.

2008

Sheila Browne took over as President of HCD in April.

HCD now includes five unique dance groups: Contra, Cajun/Zydeco, Swing, SwingJam, and Mostly Waltz. These groups provide free lessons and occasionally offer workshops to ensure that dancers gain experience in these different dance forms. Newcomers have a fun experience as they learn, and beginners of all ages are encouraged to attend our events.