

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS IN EVALUATIONS

February 2016

Stockton Folk Dance Camp's evaluations have been anonymous and because of this the Board of Directors has no way to directly respond, answer the questions, or address the issues that are raised in those evaluations. This document is the Board's way of responding. After reading, if you still have questions or concerns, please contact Board Member Loui Tucker at loui@loutucker.com.

Why isn't Nils Fredland back this year?

The response to Nils Fredland on staff in 2015 was overwhelmingly positive as a contra and square dance caller and as a singing teacher. The Board members also wanted Nils to return, and he was asked about it before he left Camp last summer. Unfortunately, his new job, new home, and family obligations have made him unavailable for the near future. We will continue to approach him about returning.

What's the difference between a workshop and a class?

A workshop is an opportunity for SFDC to introduce new style of dance or a potential teacher for a class. It is usually an opportunity for growth as a dancer, or a time to sample an unfamiliar form of dance such as belly dancing, hip-hop, clogging, bhangra, or African. A workshop is offered only four times a week — on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons — and its dances are not reviewed on Wednesday and Saturday.

A class is often the common form of international folk dance that is found in Stockton Folk Dance Camp's curriculum. The teachers are generally well known, have done extensive research and are respected in their field. The material presented in classes is offered twice each day and reviewed on Wednesday and Saturday.

Why doesn't Stockton offer mentors to first-time campers?

We have tried putting "Would you like a mentor?" and "Would you like to be a mentor?" on our registration form, but have had only one or two people each year say Yes. In 2016 we will try something new. Each Board member will be assigned 1-2 newcomers and the plan is that the first-year campers will have someone check in with them within the first 24 hours to find out how they are doing, and offer assistance or answer questions.

Why can't some free time be built into the schedule?

We see this question frequently. However, we also read requests that the schedule be expanded by one more class so that there is an opportunity to see all of the teachers. Many campers want to be sure they get their money's worth, and that means non-stop opportunities to dance or discuss dance or watch dance. Others want fewer choices. It is a tough balancing act. In the end, we have to suggest to anyone needing more free time that he or she consider making the choice of skipping a class or workshop or event. No one is keeping score or checking attendance. Keep in mind that one person's free time is another person's empty slot where the administration should be offering something to do!

Why is Class X opposite Class Y all week?

Creating a schedule is a difficult puzzle requiring balancing non-partner dances against partner dances, making sure the teachers aren't teaching classes back to back, and making sure that teachers are not opposite each other more than once. Certainly if two teachers are opposite each other twice the first week, their schedule for the second week will put them opposite different teachers. In the afternoon, we try to offer options that are different enough that they will attract different groups of dancers and not frustrate too many people who want to take both classes.

Why is there a \$15 credit card fee?

We regret having to charge campers for using a credit card, but we really don't have any other option. The credit card companies and PayPal charge a flat fee for each transaction, plus they assess a fee that is a percentage of each transaction. Our \$15 fee is to offset their fee, and on large purchases we are charged more than \$15 and thus lose money on the transaction. For example, a payment of \$1,000 on a credit card generates a fee of over \$20. A payment of \$2,000 (two people paying for one week or one person paying for two weeks) means a fee of over \$45. The first year that campers were allowed to use credit cards and the \$15 was not added, Stockton lost almost \$1,000 because of credit card fees. That \$1,000 could mean having to raise camp fee's even higher. If you want to avoid the \$15 fee, just remember to bring your checkbook or traveler's checks. We are looking into the possibility that use of a debit card will allow us to waive the \$15 fee.

You should consider other venues that aren't as expensive... don't require floor set-up ... are more centrally located... are closer to airports....

The Stockton Board has looked at other venues and will continue to do so. Each of the optional sites we have researched has its own issues: availability being the largest issue (we use almost three weeks including set-up and take-down), expense, location, foodservice, lodging, etc. If you know of a location we should consider, please pass it on to someone on the Board.

Do we have to purchase the meal plan?

The meal plan is optional. You may choose to pay cash or with a credit card for any meal you eat in the cafeteria. This is a relatively new option for Camp. (2015).

What can I do to get specific food in the cafeteria?

The short answer is, "Just ask nicely." The food service staff is generally very accommodating and understands that people have allergies and food restrictions. The staff will provide just about any food requested, within reason: soy milk, veggie burgers, gluten-free cereal, extra sauce, etc. If they don't have what you request when you request it, they will generally try to have it for you later in the day, or the next day.

Why doesn't the cafeteria serve ice cream?

The cafeteria has had ice cream in the past but it is not currently offered. However, there is a small store in The Grove (the building across the lawn directly south of the cafeteria) that sells ice cream. Also, Stockton's late-night "Hole-In-The-Wall" sells ice cream after Once-Over-Lightly.

Can we have more easy dances? Can we have more hard dances?

Our general philosophy has been to allow the teachers to teach a variety of dances, with a range of difficulty. If they are veteran teachers, they don't need a lot of guidance. Sometimes first-year teachers ask for advice, and we are happy to provide that. We have asked in the past for teachers to include one challenging dance. Keep in mind that, with 100+ dancers attending each week, there will be a wide range of ability, interest and stamina. Further, what is an easy dance to one dancer may be challenging to another. What we plan to do this year, following a suggestion by a camper, is mark (based on input from the teachers) the easier dance(s) from each teacher as well as the most challenging so that campers have more information before deciding to attend a specific class.

My room is too hot/cold, the shower door doesn't close, there isn't enough hot water, the University is wasting water, etc.

Unfortunately, the Folk Dance Camp staff and administration do not have any control over the facilities. If you have problems such as those above, please bring them to the attention of the Camp Staff who will make sure the correct UOP personnel are told, but keep in mind that, after advising UOP, the matter is out of our hands.

Why doesn't SFDC has a half-week option?

Offering a half-week option has been requested and discussed many times over the years. There are advantages and disadvantages as well as fairness, administrative and philosophical issues. Half-time attendance creates administrative and reporting problems both for the Camp administration and the University of the Pacific Conference Services management. Philosophically we hope that we are building a community of dancers — a folk dance family, if you will. Having dancers come and go, or show up halfway through, disrupts the bonding that we hope takes place. The half-timers miss out as well as the campers who attend the entire week.

If the issue is the expense of attending for a full week as the primary reason a shorter option is being requested, we suggest applying for work-exchange scholarships. There are also scholarships available from other organizations, including the Folk Dance Federation of California and the National Folk Organization. Some local dance clubs have their own scholarship funds.