

## **President Report Country Pride AGM 2023**

32 years... sometimes I just have to shake my head to believe it has been that long since we started Country Pride.... The number of lives we have touched over that time blows me away. I constantly run into people that either have seen us, taken a lesson, or been a member over that time. The positive influence we have had in the community is evident when you talk to people that have been involved with the club. When Kathie and I went to the United Country Western Dance Championships this year and I received my award as a Pioneer of Country Dance for Canada, I was reminded of the journey we have had over that time. Being involved with the club has been such a privilege and wonderful ride. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I was recognized with people that have become life long friends through dance. That shared passion drove us all to share dance with others over all these years. It was amazing to be recognized by an international organization for efforts over the last 30plus years.

Realizing you need a team of good people to do what we do makes me appreciate everyone involved with the club. The dedication and passion our members, and our board of executive has been the only reason the club has had the impact it has. I want to thank everyone who has helped maintain this organization, and do what we do. We are one of the very small handful of dance clubs in all of North America to be operating for that long. It is a real accomplishment, and everyone should be proud..... I am. I look forward to 2023 and realize how vitally important our club is as it provides a social outlet for people in our community. The club plays a very important role in the community on many levels.

When I sit on other community group boards, and focus groups, people know who we are, and want us involved with their community events.

1. Donations – From our Christmas Party 2022 to Christmas Bureau and Food Bank - \$450 matched by donations total \$900
2. Family Dances –We are planning for March 2023 at the YMCA
3. Parades in Red Deer – We were in the Parade for 2022, and plan for it again this year. One of our best high profile events.
4. Alberta Culture Days - For 2022 we hosted at Festival Hall. Participation was good and our team did dance with other groups. The Celebration of Dance we spear headed has become an important part of the weekend events and is an official sub committee of the Red Deer Arts Council. We helped with the production of the Celebration of Dance component. We promoted our club and dance in general.
5. International Westcoast Swing Rally 2022 was a success. After the pandemic and getting back to doing performances was so good. We had approx 16 dancers promoting W/C Swing in the community and representing Red Deer globally.
6. Red Hot Reboot Workshop weekend – Was a big success. We had 5 sets of instructors from out of town and locally share dance knowledge over 2 days. It was a success both financially and with attendance. Hosted 2 dances and lots of workshops.
7. The Canadian Finals Rodeo was back and we were deeply involved with performances and promoting the club.

### **Financial**

We remain in a very healthy financial situation. We were over our 2022 budget by approx \$5,000 and spent some of our reserves. This is first time we have done this in many years. Our income was what we budgeted for, but we had higher expenses for social dances, and our Christmas Party ( \$3,150 ). Income from bingos, and lessons were down due to the pandemic, but are now recovering. Lesson attendance is strong again, and bingo revenue is on the rise. We were successful in a grant application for \$5,000 that was for pandemic recovery for non profits. Revenue from performances is also recovering. We have set a higher budget for 2023 for \$42,949, up from \$35,000 in 2022, and is back to pre pandemic levels. We are maintaining fiscal responsibility while keeping the club involved in the community, and promoting dance. We have been working more on Grant applications. Stuart Old has done an amazing job keeping up to the available opportunities, and more look hopeful; for 2023. Also Andrea Warkentin our fundraising director has done a fantastic job keeping volunteers organized to maintain a steady income from bingos. We are also scheduled for our casino in 2024 which replenishing our reserves every 3 years.

### **Board Level**

It is such a pleasure to be in a leadership position for an organization like Country Pride. After going through the pandemic we decided to have another strategic planning session in 2022 to refocus on our goals. The strategic planning session we did focused on our purpose and goals. Everyone on the board is so good to work with, and is committed to the clubs success. Everyone is positive despite the challenges we faced and have renewed sense of purpose for 2023. The board put together important terms of reference for succession planning. written documents for financial policy, and terms of reference for the social position, membership & bingo, Family Dance, Marketing Plan, budget, and strategic planning. Having these important plans committed to paper lets everyone know what we are doing and how we are doing it. The next project is a policies handbook we can put everything together and share how we operate with our members. This also makes it easier to show new people that are willing to help out how they can contribute. All are on our website. I can not give enough praise to everyone involved for their commitment and work on these projects.

### **Membership and Dance Team**

Membership is strong and consistent. The board constantly monitors membership levels and the option to work bingos for credits toward member benefits. We balance being fiscally responsible while giving back to our members as much as we can. We developed new membership levels to involve more people. Our recognition program of pins for lesson completion and more continues to be a

success. Our dance team continues to add new people and grow. The Westcoast Rally was well attended for 2022 and shows for the team such as senior centres for Christmas, and paid performance are increasing again. Our membership with Red Deer Tourism should give us exposure to more conventions and opportunities. Jackets for new team members remains an important recognition program. The team continues to be an integral face for the club in the community and projects our purpose to the public. We have built relationships with other groups and are being asked to participate in high profile events ie. the 2019 Canada Winter Games the CFR.

### **Attendance**

Classes in Sept 2022 thru the fall were well attended and look to be back to pre-pandemic levels. The beginning of 2023 also looks good. The free to attend drop-in Tuesday evening practice time we book at Festival Hall continues as another benefit we offer.

### **Vision Statement**

*Share knowledge and build community relationships through dance as an art form*

### **Mission Statement**

*Promote Country Western Dance in the community through lessons, dances, workshops and performances*

Lots of health reasons to motivate you to dance. Let's have a positive influence on our community and get more people dancing!

### **Providing leadership in the community.**

We continue to be a leading performing artist group in the City. We have the people, the passion, and the talent to influence others. If we are doing a show at the Canada Games, working with and co-ordinating with other groups like we did at Alberta Culture Days, or providing manpower to help with a fundraiser people are looking to us for leadership. We are providing that example to others. I am so proud of our club and what we continue to do in the community. We are impacting more people thru dance in a positive way. This is what continues to inspire me and when I get tired I focus on that and the impact we have. I think.... what if Country Pride didn't exist... I think it is this strong sense of purpose... why we are here. Why Country Pride has endured... What we do, when people "get it" they want to help others experience the joy of dance.

### **Member Benefits**

Continuing the bingo for membership program to include membership, swag, lessons, and all team benefits

Expanded the Festival reimbursement to include workshops

Covering more costs for dance team. Outfits, Boots, Hats and Jacket recognition program.

Offer workshops to bring instructors from out of town to Red Deer.

Tues night practices for free at Festival Hall

Developing Teacher and Training program for succession

Continue to do more dances, & social activities to grow membership

### **Vision for 2023**

1. Continue to work with other community groups, be involved with events such as CFR, carnivals, Festivals & Tourism.
2. Continue to build relationships with other community groups leaders, & businesses to cross promote each other.. ie YMCA
3. Develop new leadership for the board, committees, and teaching to ensure club longevity.
4. Hosting weekly lessons for beginners, and beginner plus, and Tues practices
5. We will host social dances & workshops.
6. We will be looking for a corporate sponsorship to match for the Arts Vest Grant.
7. Book more paid gigs, with the Arts Council and working with Red Deer Tourism for other large events coming to Red Deer.
8. I have built relationships with the Mayor, City manager, Councillors, other President of non profits, and business leaders.
9. We all have things we accomplish as individuals, but I hope everyone buys into how important what we are doing as a club is. It is just dancing; however it enriches us all if we choose to let it.
10. Performances at senior centers for Christmas Shows. The seniors love it and we went to new centres.
11. Canadian Finals Rodeo – Performances at the Rodeo gave us good exposure and look forward to 2023.
12. I sit on the board for Red Deer tourism, and plan to work with them to promote our club to big events coming to Red Deer.

### **Making a difference and touching lives.....**

We continue to rebuild after the pandemic, and we revisited our purpose at our strategic planning session in 2022. The purpose of the club continues to be conduit to connect people in the community. Through dances, lessons, and performances. The friendships and the shared experiences are unique and special. The club is a place where people can learn, grow and challenge themselves while having the support of positive like minded people around them. We know the benefits of dance, and the importance of that social connection now more then ever, and the club provides that in all we do. We don't take that for granted anymore. Giving people the opportunity to experience dance, and do things they didn't think they could do is so special.

My wish for everyone involved with the club is to have the same level of fun, and personal growth through dancing as I have had. Receiving the Pioneer award this year at Worlds was fantastic, but it also reminded me of the journey dance has taken me on. All the people I have met, all the life long friends I have made, and the joy dance gives me. I hope you get to experience that, and touch other people lives on your journey with dance. Country Pride gives everyone that opportunity, and can truly make a difference in peoples lives. It is just dancing, but it is so much more.....