

RSCDS John Muir Branch (Wisconsin, USA)

Number of years established as a branch: 13

Annual Report (June 2015 - May 2016)

Respectfully submitted by M. J. Wiseman, Secretary

The John Muir Branch of the RSCDS has had an event-filled year. Beginning with the Annual General Meeting in July, we danced and socialized our way on through the past months. We are a co-sponsor of the Midwest Scottish Weekend Dance Workshop held at Beloit College in June which always draws a number of our members. In the midst of a hot August, we relaxed with pool party and potluck dinner as well as an ice cream social. We performed twice in public in the early fall, once at the Dane County Farmers' Market, the other in a beautifully refurbished barn in a city park. In early December, trying to avoid the winter snow storms, we held a dance party with live music from O'er the Border followed by a potluck dinner. Early in 2016 we joined the Gaelic Fusion Dance Company for a demonstration at a local international festival. January also included a demo and ceilidh dancing at a Burns Night Social that was the kickoff event for the Madison Youth Choir's concert tour of Scotland.

A major, though sad, event was held in November as we hosted a Celebration of the Life of Norma Briggs, teacher emerita who died in the spring of 2015. There was a photo board, poems, remembrances, dancing, of course, ending with Auld Lang Syne. A potluck dinner was held so folks could continue to share around the table. We made a generous donation in Norma's name to the Pinewoods dance camp. It was earmarked for landscaping, one of her special talents.

Our teachers are working hard to plan our evening dances, including technique practice. Each evening ends with the opportunity to request dances. Two of our teachers held a class for children and they joined us for the first set at the dance party and the ball. One of our teachers held a class for children at an elementary school in the spring. Two other teachers led an adult class through the Madison School and Community Recreation program and were delighted that all of the regular attendees came to a party celebrating their graduation. Two parents from our children class were inspired to take the adult sessions; they and other graduates are now dancing with us on our regular dance night.

Our big event every year is our ball. This year's theme was *Around the World in 18 Dances*. We again brought in outside musicians with the goal of continuing to attract a strong regional attendance and we succeeded in having the highest attendance of any ball in the Upper Midwest. The ball was preceded by a tasty served dinner and Grand March. After an evening of delightful dancing an after-ball party was held at the home of Nancy McClements and Ian Gaylor. Sunday morning Mike Briggs hosted a brunch at Capitol Lakes Retirement Center.

We are averaging 16 dancers each evening and have several new members. A special treat has been dancers from around the US and foreign countries who walk through the door for a night or more.