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Lincoln Irish Dancers celebrate 25th and final year

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The Board of Directors of Lincoln Irish Dancers, a local nonprofit dance and cultural interest group, have announced a celebration of 25 years in the community as well as plans to disband effective summer of 2022.

“We are so very proud of all we’ve accomplished since 1996, but it’s also been a lot of work for many people. We feel now is a good time to step down,” said Edie Skelton, charter member and vice president of the current board.

A start through Lincoln Parks & Recreation

The group grew out of a Lincoln Parks and Recreation class in October 1996 under the teaching and direction of LuAnne Anderson. The original intent was merely for students to learn and appreciate ceili dancing, which is a style of Irish social dance with similarities to contra dance and square dance.

Members who demonstrated these dances to small audiences soon asked for more opportunities to perform, and by spring of 1997, a small troupe had formed. Status as a nonprofit was established, and for the next two-and-a-half decades, Lincoln Irish Dancers have been a fixture at St. Patrick's Day celebrations, ethnic festivals, and Irish-themed weddings and reunions, schools, lodges, Scouting activities, daycares, parties and countless other events – with locations ranging from a grocery store to Kimball Hall.

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Branching out

By 2004, the dance team had received gold medals in the Cornhusker State Games Talent Show; in 2005, they were honored with the Mayor's Cultural Celebration Award by the Lincoln Arts Council. Twice, members have toured Ireland in celebration of the group's 10th and 20th year anniversaries.

Public service has included answering phones for Nebraska Public Television, organizing a "green" food drive for the Lincoln Food Bank, and participating in the annual Alzheimer's Walk in honor of founder LuAnne Anderson, who passed away in 2017. Members have presented pre-talks at the Lied Center prior to Irish-themed performances. Their reputation as a cultural interest group resulted in many non-performing members, as well as television and radio interviews. All functions except teaching have been handled by volunteers within the group.

Business as usual

In spite of plans to close their doors next year, the group will be running the 2021-22 season the same as prior years. Classes are taking place, and performances may be booked through the spring of 2022. Several commemorative events are being planned for both members and non-members. This spring, the group will host its annual ceili, a public dance that anyone can join in with no previous experience.

“We may be getting ready to power down, but we plan to go out with a bang,” said board president Robin McClanahan. “We hope the community will come party with us!”

Information about Lincoln Irish Dancers is available at www.lincolnirishdancers.org and on social media.

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