

Katherine St. John

Katherine first became involved with the NFO in the late 1990s. She served as Secretary from 2001-2005, moving up to Vice President for 2007-2009 and then President 2009-2011.

Born in St. Paul Minnesota, she developed an interest in other cultures, their language, music and dance in grammar school. She started going to the Minnesota Festival of Nations in grade school, always appearing in the dance troupe.

Katherine attended the University of Minnesota studying Spanish and Arabic. When she moved to Las Vegas in the 1980s, she performed Middle Eastern dance and traveled around the country to continue her studies, eventually doing some of her own research. An elegant performer, she prefers researching and educating. Moving to Utah, she expanded her passion to include studying the Persian language and literature, eventually earning a Masters from the University of Utah, followed by a Masters in Folk dance and Dance pedagogy from Brigham Young University.

Her connections with Persian and Afghan communities in North America has provided opportunities for her to learn and eventually teach some of the traditional dances from these areas in classrooms and for recreational folk dancers.

She also creates choreographies for Folk Dance Ensembles, theater groups, and was associated with Character Dance Ensemble at the University of Utah for many years. She, along with her partner, Dr. Lloyd Clifton Miller, organize a group called Eastern Arts, focusing on the traditional arts of the ancient Persian Empire. They have published a book on Afghan Music and Dance, produced a DVD and also presented various celebrations over the years, including last March's "Norooz" celebration, funded in part by an NFO Folk Art grant.

Every summer Katherine is the artistic director of the Summerfest International Folk and Art Festival in Bountiful Utah. She coordinates the local performing groups, schedules the stage times, and then is the calm "Voice of Summerfest" announcer for all the dance performances.

Katherine steadfastly continues to follow her passions no matter what life throws at her. We know her for her work with folk arts of course, but in the end, for Katherine I think it all boils down to compassion for all beings and a search for justice.

