



Red Dirt Contradance, a club that practices a lively form of traditional English country dancing, hosts community dances accompanied by live musicians on the the third Friday of each month. The monthly events, held at the Stillwater Community Center, run from 8 to 11p.m. with a class for beginners starting at 7:45p.m. The next dance is January 18. For more information about Red Dirt Contradance events, go to www.facebook.com/groups/acontraaffair. Photo provided

New life for an old dance

By Michelle Charles
Journal Staff Writer

Many people haven't heard of contra dance, also spelled contradance but it has a group of enthusiastic supporters in Stillwater.

"I call it Jane Austen dancing," said contra dance caller Louise Siddons of the style, which is based on English country or partnered folk dances. "In America, a lot of immigrant groups came so it got a lot less formal really quickly. It has a lot more contact and a lot more fooling around."

Contra dance is usually accompanied by a live band featuring fiddles but it isn't square dancing, which it pre-dates.

The bands normally play jigs or reels and the music tends to show a strong Celtic influence with tinges of bluegrass, Appalachian and other southern styles of music.

Siddons said some bands even have a bluesy feel and

use electric guitars.

Contra dance was replaced by square dances or partner dances like waltzes and polkas in the mid-19th century but survived after being carried across the Atlantic where it remained popular in the Canadian Maritime Provinces and New England.

Its popularity can be attributed to long, cold, New England winters, Siddons said.

Because most communities had large gathering halls and there wasn't much else to do, dances were popular forms of entertainment.

Contra dancing eventually made its way back to Europe and is now found world-wide.

In contra dance, partners face each other in long lines called "sets" and interact in groups of two neighboring couples called "minor sets", a "foursome" or "hands four."

Siddons helped found Red Dirt Contradance when she

moved to Stillwater almost four years ago.

As an experienced contra dance caller, she has found
See DANCE, Page S5

Musicians help their own with

By Michelle Charles
Journal Staff Writer

Local supporters of Stillwater's homegrown Red Dirt music, Red Dirt musicians and the Board of Directors of the newly established Red Dirt Relief Fund (RDRF) gathered in December to announce the launch of a non-profit organization to provide financial assistance in times of extreme need for people working in the Red Dirt music scene.

Red Dirt Relief Fund is modeled after the Grammy Foundation's MusiCares program, which provides financial assistance, services and resources for music
See RED, Page S5

Sales tax not i

By Michelle Charles she said.
Journal Staff Writer

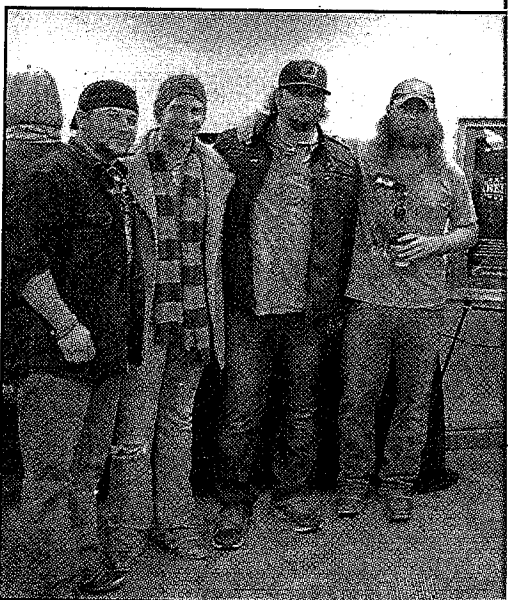
On November 6, 2012 She said she's them OTC hasn't updated cards the county's n because the inc tax won't take April 1, 2013. Everyone new cards bef takes effect but she said.

The alcohol measure took effect immediately while the tax measure didn't.

Commissioner Gloria Hesser said some residents and merchants are confused about when the tax takes effect and have assumed it would be January 1, 2013.

Business owners have been calling her office asking how they much they should collect because they haven't received new rate cards from the Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC),

she said. When the ne effect, the coun 0.75 percent ta increase to 0.81 In an earlier Journal calcula tax should cost County resident annually and eac about \$20.46 per on figures from Census Bureau. Voters overv approved the ne sales tax, with 7



Red Dirt musicians, venue owners and supporters tors Bureau in December to announce the launch of offers emergency assistance to Red Dirt musicians d so named because it developed in Oklahoma and se of influences, is so closely associated with the Stillwa tors Bureau markets Stillwater as "The Original Home donate, visit www.reddirtrelieffund.org. Pictured from l Chad Sullins, Grady Cross, Johnny Cooper, Brad Pic

THE JOURNAL



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organize a local of MusiCares to em take care of n. importance of a safety net clear to all three s of the Red Dirt in 2005 when the vived a helicop- r and band mate 1 were hospital- weeks but third mber Brad Pic- s released from ital earlier. as the one who the Grammy ion's program ed for assistance angers. said most musi- t't have much of al cushion and a

benefits organized by friends kept them afloat. "We could have lost our homes," Piccolo said. Cooper said the illness of their friend, the late Bob Childers, also made it clear how much a local assistance organization was needed. With initial financial support from Red Bull, the Red Dirt Relief Fund was established in November 2011 and received its tax-exempt status last September. Musicians can request hardship assistance and supporters can find more information or make tax-deductible contributions by contacting the organization at www.reddirtrelieffund.org.

Public Library releases computer class schedule

7 p.m. book, Thursday, at 6 p.m. ng Word, Tues- 9 at 6 p.m. hursday, April 25 esday, April 30 ursday, May 4 at tion is online at www.stillwater.org/itn. learners are aged to explore erm, fee-based ered by Merid- ogy Center. To

about library classes, visit the library's web site or contact the library Help Desk at (405) 372-3633, ext. 106 or e-mail askalibrarian@stillwater.org. The Stillwater Public Library is located at 1107 S. Duck St. (the corner of Duck and 12th Ave.). Library hours are Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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the January 17 Business for Breakfast event presented by the Meridian

move from applied to approved." In addition to loan appli-

or call (405) 377-2220. An RSVP is strongly encouraged.

DANCE

Continued from Page S1
contra dancing groups in places like Denmark, Sweden and London. The only place she couldn't find a group was Japan, she said.

Stillwater's monthly contra dance is sponsored by Red Dirt Contradance, which recently received a grant from the Stillwater Arts and Humanities Council to help promote the events as unique, fun, family-friendly activities for the community.

Red Dirt Contradance hosts dances on the third Friday of each month from 8 to 11 p.m. at the Stillwater Community Center, located at Ninth Ave. and Duck St.

An introductory lesson is offered for newcomers at 7:45 but Siddons said the dances are easy to pick up. "Contradancing welcomes all ages and skill levels, and participants don't need to bring partners," Siddons wrote. "Anyone can attend; everything you need to know is taught during the event."

Most community dances are attended by at least 50 people but contra dancing works best with large groups so the Red Dirt Con-

tradance is always trying to attract more dancers.

She said the Stillwater Arts and Humanities Council grant helps keep costs low.

Admission is \$5 per person for general admission and \$4 for students. All Stillwater dances are accompanied by live musicians, she said.

Red Dirt Contradance also works with the OSU student group "A Contra Affair: Traditional American Folk Dance," to orga-

nize high-quality events that attract dancers from across the state and further, Siddons wrote.

"A Contra Affair" is on Facebook and announces all the RDC/ACA events. Group members are also happy to answer questions via the Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/acontraaffair/>.

The next community dance is January 18, at the Stillwater Community Center.

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