

# WINNING WAYS

-

## A Collection Of Success Reports



# CALLERLAB

The International Association  
of Square Dance Callers

March 12, 2004

467 Forrest Ave, Suite 118

Cocoa, FL 32922

(321) 639-0039

E-mail - [CALLERLAB@aol.com](mailto:CALLERLAB@aol.com)

On The Web - [www.callerlab.org](http://www.callerlab.org)

© Copyright 2003-2004 CALLERLAB. Permission to reprint, republish, and create derivative works without royalty is hereby granted, provided that this notice appears and that information contained herein is not altered in any derivation or publication.

## Table of Contents

### INTRODUCTION

Northern California	(April 26, 2002)
The Valley Trailers Square Dance Club ( Northridge, CA	(May 2002)
The 49'ers Square Dance Club (South Milwaukee, WI)	(January 1, 2003)
The Sage Swingers (Brunswick, ME)	(January 2, 2003)
The Flushing Roadrunners (Flushing, MI)	(February 27, 2003)
The Gnat Boxers (Wooster, OH)	(February 27, 2003)
Dallas/Ft Worth Texas	(March 13, 2003)
Youth Group Dancing (Hilton, NY)	(March 13, 2003)
The AL e MO Squares (Brooklyn, NY)	(March 23, 2003)
Kittyhawk Squares (Kettering, OH)	(March 23, 2003)
Square Benders (Milwaukee, WI)	(April 24, 2003)
Multi-Cyle Success (Hillsboro NH)	(May 5, 2003)
Town Howlers (Portsmouth, RI)	(May 15, 2003)
Richmond Dancers (Staten Island, NY)	(May 15, 2003)
Akron Area Square & Round Federation (Akron, OH)	(June 8, 2003)
Belles & Beaus (Pomeroy, OH)	(July 7, 2003)
Larkspur Tam Twirlers (Larkspur, CA)	(July 19, 2003)
Dancing In Schools (Cogan Station, PA)	(September 4, 2003)
Broken Wheel Squares (Kirtland, OH)	(October 9, 2003)
Brecksville Squares (Ohio)	(January 25, 2004)
Four Corners Dancers (Colorado)	(February 2004)
Square Dance Video (Minnesota)	(February 2004)
Crosstrailers Square Dance Club (Ohio)	(March 2004)
Boomerangs Square Dance Teaching Council (Washington DC)	(March 2004)

## INTRODUCTION

The CALLERLAB Board of Governors and the Recruit, Promote, and Retain (RPM) Committee have implemented a plan whereby the RPM Committee collects "Winning Ways" success reports from the square dance activity. These reports come from club, associations, dancers, callers, and others. The RPM Committee would like to hear your recruiting success reports, no matter how great or small. The purpose is two fold;

- 1) To share successful ideas that other callers, clubs, and federations can adopt and/or adapt to assist in their recruiting; and
- 2) To recognize clubs, associations, and federations which have been successful and are growing. This is NOT a contest. Everyone is a winner. As more dancers are recruited, we will all have more people to call to and dance with.

We have found that a positive attitude is very helpful in our efforts to recruit new dancers. Some time ago a major metropolitan newspaper, reporting on a "fair demo," said the dancers "tried to make it look like fun" and in an interview one dancer talked about how much time it took to learn and all the steps they had to learn, but now it was fun. If you are uncertain as to how to approach people and answer questions, Mike Seastrom has some positive ideas in the September 2002 issue of American Square Dance Magazine in the CALLERLAB Viewpoints article.

Now, tell us about your recruiting ideas which have worked for you. How many new dancers have you gained? Do you use multi-cycle programs? What has contributed to their success? Does your club offer free nights, free lesson give aways, recognition to club members for their recruiting efforts? Do they use flyers, business cards? Do they use newspaper, radio advertising? There are many clubs, callers, and federations that are having great success. Do you have any other information you believe to would be helpful to others? Include your name and/or club with an address, phone number and an email address for additional follow-up.

In past years a "Promo Pac" with success reports and recruiting ideas has been available. The RPM Committee is looking at ways to continue this project and expand on ways of making it available.

You may send these reports to the CALLERLAB Home Office, 467 Forrest Avenue, Suite 118, Cocoa, FL 32922, E-mail - CALLERLAB@aol.com OR Tom Rudebock, 4551 Grafton Road, Leetonia, OH 44431, or email rudebts@Sky-Access.com. Your "WINNING WAYS" success reports will be distributed printed in *DIRECTION* and other media including the Internet.

**News From  
Northern California  
(Walt Cooley)  
(April 26, 2002)**

One of our members runs a local bed and breakfast which happens to be an old farm (Victorian farmhouse and a big old barn). At his suggestion, we've started having dances on our regular club night over at his barn about once every 6 weeks, and we invite all three of the local clubs. These have turned into a regular affair. It has become traditional that everyone dresses down a little (more jeans, even some of the ladies), and warmer (the barn is unheated), and folks bring more food. Also, in a newly forming tradition, we always have a Virginia Reel and occasionally a contra in addition to our squares. We get lots of visitors and usually have no trouble filling the barn (pretty easy, since it can only hold around 5-6 squares). This is a very old-fashioned thing-- no entry fee, no minimum dance level, no club membership required, just bring something to share and come to visit and dance.

In April 2002 a group of visiting exchange students from France were planning a beach party but the weather turned too cold, so one of our members invited a few of them to come to our club dance and see square dancing. Word spread among the exchange students, and before we knew what had happened we ended up with over 100 visitors, mostly French, and our club night turned into an unplanned new dancer party. We did squares and line dances, hampered by language and needing to do lots of demonstration-- but very successful. Everyone had such a great time we ran late (nobody wanted to leave).

**News From**  
**The Valley Trailers Square Dance Club**  
**Northridge, California**  
(May 14, 2002)

During the early 1990's, the Valley Trailers Square Dance Club of Northridge, California had lost much of its membership from earlier years. The club had also fallen on bad times financially. The then board of directors decided that something new should be tried in order to secure the club's future.

It was decided to try the Multi-Cycle new dancer program to see if this would bring in more revenue and class members. The President approached caller **Vern Weese**, who was familiar with the program, to teach the class and in September of 1994, the Multi-Cycle program was started using a 12 + 12 system through the plus program. For the first couple of years, very little improvement was seen in membership, although starting classes four times each year did increase the overall number of new dancers. In December of 1995, Vern left the area and **Mike Seastrom** took over as the class instructor. At about that same time, the Multi-Cycle program started becoming profitable. However, the level of the dancers graduating at plus after only 24 weeks was not acceptable.

In May of 1996, the program was changed to a 17 + 17 program. Three classes are started each year, always on the second Tuesday of January, May and September. Graduations are held on the first Tuesday of those months. The first 17 weeks the students attend Phase I from 7 PM to 8:30 PM and learn the calls in the basic program and about ½ of the mainstream program. At the end of the 17 weeks, those students (if they are ready) move to the 8:30 PM to 10 PM time slot and enter Phase II which consists of the remainder of the mainstream calls and all of the plus program. On the same evening that the above transition is made, a new Phase I class starts at 7 PM. This means that year around there are two classes simultaneously -- one in Phase I and the other in Phase II. When the program started in 1994, the club had just under 150 members. The current membership is just under 300 members. Financially, the club is now very sound.

The success of this program can be primarily attributed to the club members. They come 51 weeks a year to angel the new dancers. The classes sometimes must be cut back a week or two when Tuesday falls on a major holiday, such as Christmas or New Year's Day. On that 52<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday, the class may just go dark or may have a fun dance night, no instruction. Each of the three graduation nights during the year are also a fun night, with alternating tips at the Phase I level and plus level. That night also has special events such as contra and country western dances, in addition to the graduation exercise.

The benefits of the Multi-Cycle program are many. Probably the most important is the fact that you start a new program for each phase three times each year. If you have a new dancer who cannot keep up with the class, they can be asked to drop out then start over with the new class -- not "next September" but in just a few weeks. If a new dancer has not fully grasped the Phase I calls after 17 weeks, they are asked to repeat Phase I. Likewise, if a dancer upon completing Phase II is not ready to attend plus dances, they are asked to repeat Phase II. It is surprising how many dancers voluntarily choose to repeat the phases.

Although many types of recruitment have been tried throughout the years, word of mouth is still the most effective. By starting three classes each year, you have three new groups of dancers to recruit for your next class. You are now tapping a new source of potential dancers. We have also obtained some students through the radio advertising program conducted by Open Squares Magazine, 1-800-fun4all.

Another benefit is financial. You have two classes attending and paying simultaneously twelve months each year. In the case of the Valley Trailers, we also have a workshop category of dancers. These are recent graduates or dancers from other local clubs that want more floor time. They pay the same as students and will not be removed from a square to make room for a student unless absolutely necessary. The club's angels dance free and are removed for students.

Since the inception of the Multi-Cycle program in September of 1994, the Valley Trailers have started 24 new classes and graduated 23 classes, one still being in progress as of May 2002. A total of 832 new dancers have attended at least one class (a high of 77 and a low of 13) and have actually graduated 315 new dancers (a high of 34 and a low of 5).

To bring the students into club dances as early as possible, the club dance on the third Saturday of each month has alternating tips -- mainstream and plus. When a student goes into Phase II, they are invited to attend the club dances and dance every other tip. Mike Seastrom contacts the guest callers each month to let them know where in the mainstream program he has reached with the Phase II dancers. This agenda has been particularly beneficial as it allows the new dancers to feel as if they are now part of the "square dance" world and encourages them to continue after graduation.

John Nash - E-mail: [info@valley-trailers.org](mailto:info@valley-trailers.org)

**News from  
The 49'ers Square Dance club  
South Milwaukee, WI  
(January 1, 2003)**

Hard work and perseverance has paid off for the 49'ers Square Dance Club of South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There are 24 new dancers in their 2002-03 class. Their promotional efforts started in 1999 after not having any new dancers in 1997 or 1998.

Their promotional efforts are as follows:

- 1) Events calendar of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Circulation 250,000+). The information was submitted every week so it would run for 5 weeks.
- 2) Events calendar in 23 local newspapers owned by the Journal Sentinel. The calendar covers the seven southern suburbs of Milwaukee. This was submitted every week so it would run for 5 weeks.
- 3) On line Calendars: OnMilwaukee.com and OnWisconsin.com for 5 weeks.
- 4) The information submitted was: Beginner Square Dance Lessons; 7 – 9 PM every Thursday starting September 12; Grobschmidt Center, 2424 15<sup>th</sup> Ave., South Milwaukee; couples and singles of all ages welcome; \$3.00; first lesson free; sponsored by the 49'ers Square Dance Club; for information call (414) xxx-xxxx or (414) xxx-xxxx.
- 5) Flyers, with an envelope of free passes, were posted in all the city halls and public libraries of surrounding communities and several Senior Centers and community Centers. Flyers were also posted in businesses with public bulletin boards.
- 6) Demonstration at the Racine County Fair. Flyers were passed out.
- 7) McDonalds Place Mats; There are 9 McDonalds Restaurants in the area that are locally owned. They have a free service listing local activities. Information was listed on the August and September place mats. Information had to be submitted at least 6 weeks in advance.
- 8) Flyers were distributed door to door on 2 streets.
- 9) New graduates and current members were encouraged to invite friends and co-workers. Approximately 175 flyers and 200 free passes were distributed.

The 49'ers Square Dance Club starts their new dancer program the second week of September and runs through early April, with time off during holidays. Mainstream in the destination program. The club has 85 members.

In January 2003 the club had not surveyed the new dancers to learn where they found out about their new dancer session. In previous years no one activity was prominent.

Congratulations to Rick & Cheryl Wilke, club presidents and Janet Halfmann & Bernie VanDusen, new dancer class co-chairs, for their efforts.

(Thanks to Bernie Coulthurst, editor of the Club Leadership Journal, for the initial contact for this Winning Ways Success Story.)

**News From  
The Sage Swingers  
Brunswick, ME  
(January 2, 2003)**

In the various square dance magazines and web sites you can read how square dance clubs and national organizations have plans for advertising square dancing, for "improving" our public image, for altering the dance program and for growing memberships. For the SAGE Swingers in the process began with a change in philosophy.

What are the club's goals for its dancers? The Club thinks this can determine how you go about gaining and keeping new members. The Clubs goals today are different from what they might have been five and ten years ago. For example, at SAGE Swingers some of our goals are:

- 1) To help the club grow by getting more new members
- 2) To make sure people are having a good time learning to dance.
- 3) Insure that new members return.

Here are some of the "old" goals the club no longer strives for.

- 1) The Club does not feel people need to graduate from a Mainstream program by a certain date.
- 2) Classes do not have to start in September only.
- 3) Learning to dance is not a race to see how quickly you can get to Plus or A-1
- 4) The Club tends to downplay classic square dance clothes and make sure people know it's optional

These ideas express themselves many ways in how the club recruits and how new dancers are treated. The club does start a class in September, but a class also starts in January.

With the help of club caller, Bill Fulton and his wife, Norma, SAGE Swingers try to make dancing as low key and fun as possible. They have recognized in order to keep new dancers interested there have to be many opportunities for them to dance, and that means more Mainstream dances. SAGE Swingers has been scheduling more and more Mainstream dances and we search for Mainstream dances on the schedule for our club to support. If you want to get and keep new dancers, Mainstream is the place to be.

The SAGE Swingers tried all the methods described in a handout they prepared to recruit for the club. No single one of the methods brought in mobs of people but, taken together, they have helped them build classes of two and three squares and graduate 39 dancers over two years. The Fall class of 2002 has witnessed a continuation of the club's success with 28 additional dancers participating in the first two free workshops and 18 remaining through October. The additional regular support of club members has helped us dance with 5 to 8 squares at every workshop this year.

The handout mentioned above describes the methods The SAGE Swingers use for the operation of their club. These methods have worked for them. These handouts are available from the CALLERLAB Foundation via electronic mail as a .PDF file or via regular mail as a paper copy to anyone who requests them, please contact the Foundation: Phone (321) 639-0039; E-mail: [FoundationFL@aol.com](mailto:FoundationFL@aol.com) for more information. A small donation of \$5.00 would be appreciated to help defer postage and handling costs.

**News From The  
FLUSHING ROADRUNNERS  
FLUSHING, MI  
(February 27, 2003)**

The Roadrunners of Flushing, Michigan have partnered with *Lifesteps* to help recruit new dancers. *Lifesteps* is an organization providing health related classes and activities for GM employees and retirees that worked in the Flint, Michigan area. It is a negotiated benefit between GM and the local unions. *Lifesteps* pays for their members that attend the lessons. Wayne Pelmeare, the caller/teacher for the Roadrunners, sites two advantages for working with *Lifesteps*. The first is the people who see the information are looking for health and exercise classes. The second is that the people do not look at them as being free but something they earned by working at GM. *Lifesteps* lists the new dancer schedule in their quarterly calendar and flyers are put in the union halls. They also get new dancers from demo's and advertising, but the majority come from word of mouth.

A couple of years ago the Roadrunners started using a multi-cycle program and started teaching 3 sets of classes a year. All three classes are taught the same night for one hour each. The classes run from 10 to 15 weeks and are divided between basic, mainstream and plus. The dancers are encouraged not to move on to the next level until they feel confident where they are. Pelmeare states they want everyone to enjoy dancing and not think it is too hard.

Wayne states another thing about the way he runs his classes and dances is that the most important thing for anyone who walks through the door is for them to laugh, have fun, and enjoy themselves. He teaches the CALLERLAB definitions but does not discourage the extras some dancers put in. Pelmeare states; "I think that some of us have become more concerned that the dancers do it the proper (our) way than that the dancers have FUN. I think that this may be the main problem with square dancing today, people are not having enough FUN."

**News From**  
**The GNAT BOXERS**  
**WOOSTER, OH**  
(February 27, 2003)

The Gnat boxers of Wooster, Ohio have 22 members in their new dancer group for the 2002 –03 dance year. They have 4 singles, 2 men and 2 women, and 9 couples that range in age from their late 30's to early 40's. The destination level is plus with all the calls taught in one continuous season starting in September to mid April.

This past year they had a story in the local paper with a picture of two couples with contact names listed. The club also has a float they use in area parades which gets good audience reaction. The club also does demo's for local activities and passes out flyers, with word of mouth still the best advertisement.

Angel participation is good at their new dancer sessions with several who attend the new dancer group regularly, where they are most comfortable, but very seldom attend club dances. All dancers pay \$3.00 per session for their new dancer group with credits given to angels who attend the regular club dances.

A former club officer stated one of the club's weaknesses is the support and encouragement of the new dancers to attend other new dancer dances sponsored by nearby clubs and the area Federation.

**News From  
Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX  
(Jim & Ann Short)  
Growth Committee Chairman  
(March 13, 2003)**

In May 2002, Jim & Ann asked to chair a "Growth Committee" for the North Texas Square and Round Dance Association. The primary direction was to try to figure out a way to turn around the declining membership in the association. They talked with callers and dancers from all over. They asked what had worked in other parts of the country. They also asked what hadn't worked. They asked for ideas for what might work. They "stole" ideas from everyone they could find. Their conclusion was that there were two basic problems: Recruiting and Lesson format.

Most recruiting had been done by advertising using flyers and placing advertisements or notices in periodicals. Often a club would put on a square dance demonstration in a mall or at a fair. Occasionally someone would ask a friend to take lessons. Whatever they have been doing hasn't worked very well. In the past 20 years the number of square dancers has decreased by about two thirds.

One of the clubs in their area tried recruiting dancers one-on-one, face to face. It worked and it worked and it worked. The conclusion was that square dancers, like eagles, don't flock, you have to find them one at a time. With this in mind they began to ask clubs if they could meet with them and talk about recruiting new dancers. They did not talk about students – they talked about new dancers. They think the new people need to perceive themselves as dancers from the very beginning.

The plan called for the club to start about seven months before lessons are scheduled to be held. They start by appointing a lesson coordinator and setting up a database of prospective new dancers. Two months before the lessons start, the club sends a letter to everyone in the database, introducing the club, describing the non-square dancing activities of the club and suggesting to the prospects that getting to know the club would be fun.

Two months before lessons start, the club sends an invitation to a "party night." A party night takes on the personality of the club and can be a chili supper or salad supper or whatever. It is at this time that the prospects meet club members. The purpose of the party night is to "sell" the club, not square dancing. A month before the party night the recruiter who made the first contact calls to confirm the prospects attendance at the party. Two weeks before the party the club sends another follow-up invitation. Three days before the party the recruiter calls and offers a ride to the party.

At the party the prospects are seated with a club member who is selected because they are upbeat and positive about the club and square dancing. Ideally there are three prospective couples and one club member couple at each table – just the right number for a square. This provides for the newcomers to begin to make new friends. After eating and conversation the caller gets an experienced square up to show square dancing. Then get the new dancers up and teach them the beginning moves. In fifteen minutes they are having fun and square dancing. Sign them up for lessons before they leave.

They found that another of the problems with the way they had been recruiting was getting people to commit to taking lessons for 18 to 20 weeks. To overcome this objection we decided to offer lessons on three consecutive Saturdays.

The sessions began at 9:30 in the morning and ended at 3:30 in the afternoon. They provided lunch and also refreshments all day long. They had a different caller each Saturday and they used the CALLERLAB dance program teaching list. They determined that the callers could teach 55 to 60 Mainstream calls in the three Saturdays. They also found that, contrary to every thing they had been told, it does work and the new dancers can go for six hours. A great majority of new dancers in the Saturday lessons went to new dancer dances after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday. To reinforce the lessons, clubs and callers were asked to hold workshops before their dances.

Clubs were asked to hold New Dancer dances with calls limited to the first 40 CALLERLAB Mainstream calls with a workshop before the dance and no more than one round between tips. The first club to hold a New Dancer dance in October 2002 had 8 squares and 12 new dancers. In February 2003 a New Dancer dance had 27 squares and 44 new dancers. The New Dancer dances focus completely on the new dancer dancing every tip – they are the guest of honor. They should be brought to these dances by the club by whom they were recruited. If new dancers are sent to New Dancer dances on their own, it is a bit like sending your girlfriend to the prom alone, she will probably go home with someone besides you. What does this mean? It means cater to your new dancers, take them to dances because if you don't they are not being stolen, you are giving them to someone who is paying attention to them.

We give the New Dancers a “New Dancer” dangle so they can be identified and invited into squares by experienced dancers. When a New Dancer dangle is spotted, the dancers are asked to introduce themselves and ask if they are having a good time. The experienced dancers are also asked to tell the new dancers they are glad to have them at the dance and ask them to join their square? This helps reinforce the fun and feeling of acceptance for the new dancers. All of these things have helped the clubs to become more energized by the great attendance of new dancers, it is a win-win situation. These new dancers are our future in square dancing

**News About  
YOUTH GROUP DANCING  
Hilton, NY  
(March 13, 2003)**

Mike have been working with a teen group for the past year or so. It started out as a "family dance group" but has evolved into a "young-middle aged" teen group. They are lucky to get about 2 squares. The organizing couple has been frustrated by the fact that the Church Hall that we dance at is not available regularly and our group sometimes is not allowed to use the hall at the last minute. Mike suggested that they contact the local Co-operative Extension Office (4H) to see if they would be interested in sponsoring the teens as a part of 4H. Not only was the Co-operative Extension Office hugely interested, they have offered to give the group a hall every Friday night at no charge! It will also be publicized in the 4H catalogue as a part of their many programs for youth. But this is not the end of the story.

In March 2003 one of the local callers had an ongoing square dance beginners' class. In this class are 4 or 5 "home schooled" youth. Our teen group invited them to come over and "bring a friend." They brought 10 other youth last night. Six of them were from a family of 13 kids who are all home schooled!

This situation resulted in two "winning ways" reports:

1. The Co-operative Extension Program in our area is crying for new ideas and ways to attract youth to their programs. Perhaps those of us who are trying to work with youth square dance programs should look into this.

The "home school" youth market is huge with thousands of kids in this area alone. These are the kids that would be interested in square dancing as they don't have to deal with peer pressure in their public schools. As far as I know, this market is "untapped" as far as youth square dancing is concerned, and these are the type of kid who might enjoy this sort of thing.

Information provided by: Mike Callahan

**News From The  
AL e MO Squares  
Brooklyn, NY  
(March 23, 2003)**

The AL e MO Squares, 150 members strong, will celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in May 2003. They are holding an Anniversary Dance and through personal contact, by club members, they have invited several of the local politicians to be their guests.

They run a 10 + 10 program with 27 new dancers this year. They alternate tips during the evening with those in the first group serving as angels for the newest dancers. They graduate their new dancers at Mainstream. Their new dancer sessions run from 7 to 9 PM, September through April, with a plus workshop from 9 – 10 PM. There is no set time for the plus graduation. AL e MO's have good member participation with the new dancer sessions normally exceeding 8 squares. They charge \$4.00 per session and the angels pay. A good hospitality table is an attractive addition on workshop nights.

Their recruiting efforts include an open house barn dance twice a year, paid advertising, distribution of flyers in people oriented areas, demo's at local and civic organizations and word of mouth.

Approximately 15% of the new dancers are couples. Some of the single women are urged to learn the leaders part, so they can participate more actively. The club makes an effort to see that all the other singles have the opportunity to dance.

The club has a "Sunshine Committee" that notes Anniversary's, Birthday's and other special occasions. They also contact those who have been absent and encourage their return. They publish a monthly newsletter that goes to all members and area square dance organizations. To aid in dancer retention their new dancers are encouraged to participate in their regular club dances. The club also hosts an occasional bus trip, club luncheons and club visitation, with their new dancers, to other area clubs. The club also sponsors weekend dance activities with their club caller.

While attending the Canadian Square Dance Convention a club song to "I've Been Working On The Railroad" was written. This was a rewarding experience and has brought the club closer together.

Vincent Nunziato, Club President

**News From**  
**The KITTYHAWK SQUARES**  
**Kettering, OH**  
(March 23, 2003)

The Kittyhawk Squares are a social club that square dances and not a square dance club that socializes. We have an excellent home dance location: The Lathrem Senior Center of the Kettering Recreational Center. They help recruit and publicize our events in their bi-monthly news letter.

Our home dances are the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Friday monthly. Our club caller, Jason Raleigh, does 8 to 10 of the dances and our emeritus club caller, Sam Dunn does about 6. The remaining dates are filled by excellent area callers spiced by a couple of National callers. We have line dancing between tips. These are taught by Jeff and Diane Hissong, professional instructors. Caller cost is a secondary consideration.

We are informal. We want people to attend. We don't worry much about dress. We do club visitations 6 – 8 times a month. Raid dress is optional, we just want people there.

We sponsor several special dances a year, including a charity event that raised \$3700.00 last year. We publish a bi-monthly 8+ page newsletter that is distributed free to all members and posted on our web site. Our web site is [http://members.tripod.com/kittyhawk\\_squares/](http://members.tripod.com/kittyhawk_squares/)

Our club officers and trustees are elected for 1-2 years. This avoids leadership entrenchment and formation of cliques. We have 20 or more people involved in a home dance. Those that work a dance get in free as do the elected officers and trustees.

Our new dancer classes are 30 weeks and are taught by our club caller. Angels dance free at our new dancer classes. We are very active – about 30 home dances, 80 raids and 30 new dancer sessions. We give a free home dance pass to each member every time they attend 5 raids. This encourages member participation.

Information furnished by Marvin Stibich

**News From  
Square Benders  
Milwaukee, WI  
(April 24, 2003)**

The Square Benders are currently one of the larger clubs in the Milwaukee, WI area with 22 couples and 13 singles. Their 2002-2003 new dancer group has 5 couples and 5 singles. This group of new dancers came from several sources. The club runs an ad in the local paper, beginning in June, with a number to contact for more information. The names are recorded of all those responding for later follow up. One couple invited members from their Bible Study Group and another invited people from their camping club. They lost some this past year due to health reasons, work schedule conflict and snow birds. Each year approximately 35 invitation letters are mailed.

The prospective dancers are invited to a free evening of dance activities in August featuring line dances, circle dances and basic squares. The idea is to get them dancing and having fun immediately. At the activity they are encouraged to join the clubs new dancer session beginning soon.

The camaraderie of lessons, which develops between the angels and the new dancers, is very important. They usually have at least 15 angels helping each week. Every 6 weeks is a review and treat night. Beginning in February the new dancers are invited to attend one club dance a month free and dance the first 3 tips using only the calls they know. They are then invited to stay for the rest of the dance to visit and enjoy refreshments.

Each month a new dancer newsletter is printed. It covers topics such as; US Square Dance history, dance apparel and it's history, etiquette and styling, the structure of square dancing in the state and an introduction to other clubs in the area.

In December all new dancers in the area are invited to a "New Dancer Dance" which includes a chili supper. The Square Benders new dancers are encouraged to attend other dances, sponsored by other callers, for new dancers. All new dancers are encouraged to return in the fall as angels and bring their friends.

The Square Benders are a Mainstream Club welcoming both couples and singles. Some of the experienced dancer women learn the beau part while they angel. Last summer the club had casual attire with about half still choosing to wear regular square dance clothing. The club feels it is important to be warm, friendly and welcoming.

Eric Tangman is the club caller/ teacher.

Information furnished by Ruth Witt

**News From  
Multi-Cycle Success Story  
Hillsboro, NH  
(May 5, 2003)**

There is some good news for square dance clubs that want to grow. A solid solution is available to help any club willing to be smart and progressive. But the club must have people who are willing to make some fundamental changes in programming and attitudes. The Multi Cycle system offers two or more starts for new dancers each year. Clubs using this system reach more people more often. New dancers are tireless, enthusiastic recruiters and they tap into new networks of friends and associates not just once, but two or more times per year.

I want to tell about a success story using the Multi Cycle system with the addition of some enhancements. I must warn that this is not a quick fix. A solid effort is required initially. Changes in business procedures and a progressive attitude are a must. Club and caller must both give up the old way of thinking and be prepared for a new and interesting experience. It took two or three years for the plan to reach "critical mass" and become self-feeding in my club.

Recruitment is always necessary but a group that recruits more than once a year has a distinct advantage. People who cannot start in September or who must drop out in mid-season can now join or come back in January or May or whenever the club decides to make new starts. Thus we can bring them into square dancing or get them started again before the enthusiasm fades and they find another activity.

Four years ago, I presented the Multi Cycle plan to three clubs that I was working for. Two of them hired another caller. One, the Riverside Squares of Danvers, Massachusetts, had bright, forward thinking people who gave me a raise and decided to put the plan to use. Riverside was then a healthy club with successful dances and road trips but was beginning to feel the pinch at class and workshop night. They saw the writing on the wall. Something had to change because the old system was not working.

(As a side note, NECCA, the New England Callers Council used its annual clinic to host Multi Cycle proponents Mike and Gail Seastrom who presented this concept to all who were interested. Only one other group, the Sage Swingers of Maine, took the bait and are now prospering.)

Strong recruitment efforts and some new advertising efforts yielded a reasonably good group even the first year. For the next few months we prepared ourselves for our first January start and our new evening schedule. The first major change was to start calling new recruits new dancers to reduce the separation between club and class. Teaching was just a walk thru and lessons became sessions. Learning was disguised as fun. From the first night, we are all "square dancers." Badges are given out immediately and inclusion became one of our greatest allies. Additionally, new dancer sessions were held open longer to give more people chances to join us.

Hard work and a lot of fun brought us another group of new dancers for our January start. We treated that as a second season. At least half of the new group was made up of friends of the September starters. Our second season also inaugurated our new schedule:

7:00 to 8:00 PM Phase I New Dancers; 8:00 to 9:00 PM Phase II Dancers; and 9:00 to 9:45 PM Plus Dancers

Phase II dancers picked up right where we had left off the previous week and were encouraged to be there for the Phase I sessions for review and support of the newest dancers. At this point we found ourselves dancing three to five sets on Wednesdays and enthusiasm was beginning to catch on.

Our first two seasons brought about new realizations and other changes. The Wednesday club night became more relaxed and entertaining. I knew, and the club soon realized, that with only one-hour teaching segments, we could not move people through Plus in one year. This allowed me to slow down the entire process. I could teach more slowly, keep the dancing fun, and move away from the previous rush/rush approach. In a Plus club, this was a tough nut for those traditional thinkers used to doing business in the same old way. Several of them suggested that I work in a few Plus calls to get new dancers up to speed. I refused and we moved on.

The first year yielded other changes. One was the "no graduation" concept. Since we no longer referred to Basic and Mainstream, "Square Dancing" became the program. Our September and January Phase I dancers do not finish Basic during their first season. Nor do the September and January Phase II dancers finish Mainstream. Instead we have turned the whole process into a continuum, learning a little each week and dancing as much as possible.

The Multi Cycle System also offers new dancers the opportunity to repeat a program quickly if they are having problem.

As the caller/teacher, I can now recommend to a dancer or a couple that they repeat a phase rather than move on. No dancers are left behind this way. We keep more dancers, I have more control over dancing quality and the result is stronger, happier dancers. Going on to Plus becomes a caller decision not a dancer decision unless they want to go elsewhere. Troubled dancers can relax knowing that they will not fall behind or out and that they can choose a comfort level based on ability or need. Several times I have used this discretion and I find that it works.

We have learned that many of our newest dancers have only one night per week to dance. Wednesday is their night to dance and they rarely dance on weekends even when we mention and encourage weekend dances. This once-a-week dancing seems to yield more family involvement. The group now includes children, teenagers, parents and grandparents. This has been absolutely wonderful and just plain fun.

In December of our second year, prior to our fourth season we held a New Years Party/Pot Luck and Dance. New dancers from September and clubbers invited friends and family to join us for an intro-to-dance night with tips for non dancers and dancers alike. Potential January Phase I dancers got an opportunity for some fun. Some joined us a few weeks later and became square dancers.

Seasons three and four (the second year) we were dancing 4 to 7 sets on Wednesday nights. The excitement was great and we were growing and happy. September of 2002 began our fifth season with more new dancers. Eighteen have stayed on for Phase II. January '03 began season six with twenty more dancers for Phase I. We have 6 to 9 sets dancing at the 7 o'clock hour. There is noise, enthusiasm and dancing and we could outgrow our hall in a couple of seasons.

In three years the Multi Cycle Program has taken hold. Riverside Squares is one of the healthiest clubs in North Eastern Massachusetts. We are achieving real continuous growth. The face of dancing is changing within the club and, despite the fact that our goal is still to bring dancers to the Plus level, two more results have emerged: 1. Some dancers do not wish move on for a variety of reasons, and 2. The Plus training has been extended and now takes two or three years.

As a caller, this has been a rewarding, emotional and hardworking experience. I have more control over the process and we are no longer rushing dancers through the programs. I'm more relaxed because I am not trying to hurry dancers along to attend a convention or festival or even to become members of a Plus club. I'm working harder but having more fun. Enthusiasm is rampant. The Multi Cycle plan is like a time machine turning back the clock to when we were all square dancers, not Plus, Advanced or Challenge dancers. We still present a familiar form of dance but I am not preparing dancers to be siphoned off into upper level programs. The bottom line is that we are slowing things down without dumbing down the dance. We are making our activity more available, more often to more people. With a forecast of growth, not decline on the horizon, I'm one happy camper with a hall full of dancers.

Chris Pinkham  
Hillsboro NH.

News From The  
**TOWN HOWLERS SQUARE DANCE CLUB**  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island  
(May 15, 2003)

The Town Howlers have gained a lot of publicity for their club and square dancing through the use of their local cable TV company and the efforts of club member Rick Williams.

All cable TV companies are required to provide FREE PUBLIC ACCESS to community members for training, studio, equipment and air time as a requirement of keeping their license to broadcast. However, a cable TV company may require training before they lend out portable equipment.

In Rhode Island, once you broadcast locally for 3 months, you can request broadcast time on an Interconnect channel that all the cable companies in the state are required to broadcast simultaneously: A: public, B: religious, C: Government. The Town Howlers now broadcast their show I WANNA DANCE state wide on Interconnect A and also on the local cable channels for nearby towns.

Club dances are recorded and then edited down to a half-hour fast-paced production. The show begins with an introduction from hosts Lynda and Rick Williams and moves into alternating square and round dance tips with elements of comedy and closure. Local benefactors are helping underwrite the shows with charitable contributions. They see it as a way for additional advertising with their name, location, and contact number listed in the closing credits. Be sure to check your local cable company regulations on this.

The Town Howlers dance the second and fourth Fridays from 8 – 10:30 PM in Portsmouth, RI. They have 100 members and have recently started a new lesson group on Sunday evenings with 12 new dancers that were a result of the show.

Not only has the show helped promote square dancing area wide, it has also increased their visitor attendance with dancers hoping to get on the TV show. According to Rick, this shows that dancers, callers, and callers are not as shy as some may believe.

For additional information visit the Town Howlers web site at [www.townhowlers.com](http://www.townhowlers.com) or Rick Williams at [williams@wwpdesign.com](mailto:williams@wwpdesign.com)

News From The  
**RICHMOND DANCERS**  
Staten Island, New York  
(May 15, 2003)

The Richmond Dancers opened the club classes to singles this year (2003). We got a number of single women but no men. They paired off, flipped coins and one became, "Leading Lady." The "Leading Ladies" danced with party store leis around their necks to easily identify them. At graduation they received a bar to put under their club badge. It says "Leading Lady" They have already attended a few dances in the NNJSDA area and the badges bring a welcoming smile.

Submitted by:  
Barbara Kanter, Class Coordinator

News From The  
**AKRON AREA SQUARE**  
**and**  
**ROUND DANCE FEDERATION**

Akron, Ohio  
(June 8, 2003)

In March 2003 the Akron Area Square and Round Dance Federation sponsored a Saturday afternoon Leadership Seminar for all member clubs and clubs from the neighboring Federations. All area callers and cuers were extended an invitation. There were 96 in attendance.

Larry Cole, Vice Chairman of CALLERLAB, was the keynote speaker. In his talk Larry challenged everyone to have a dream for our clubs and ourselves and develop ideas to fulfill those dreams. He stressed we must have positive attitudes and search for ways to help our clubs grow. We must look to the future and make the necessary changes. Dance fees, caller/cuer fees, dress code, and program content is a few of the things he suggested need to be revised. Everyone needs to look at the big picture, think out side the box, and then take the necessary steps to make things better. Quoting Winston Churchill he said we must never give up.

Following his talk the group was divided into small discussion groups. Each group was given the same two questions; 1) What can we do more of, better or different to recruit new dancers and 2) What can we do more of, better or different to retain our new and current dancers.

A summary of answers from question one is: Advertise: laundromats, shopping center windows, church bulletins, Y's, car windows, beauty shops, libraries, cash register tapes; Put flyers in grocery bags, Websites; Newspapers, Community Service Announcements on radio and cable TV; Fairs, School class reunions; Demos at fairs, church picnics, service clubs, family reunions, and PTA's; Other: Parades; Adult Education Classes; Offer Free Baby sitting; Use business cards; Community Fair Booths.

Summary from question 2: Contact past members; send reminder notes of upcoming events; Newsletter; Take new dancers to dances; Non dance social events; Greeters before and after dances; Introduce new dancers to all members; Theme dances; avoid cliques.

Other comments were: Use the multi-cycle program; be flexible on raids and retrievals as to number required; Give out more than one banner to raiders; Recruit "empty nesters" and newly weds; hold 50/50 near the end of the dance; Be sure flyers have a location address and phone contact.

The Fred Cornell's, the Gene Henderson's and the Tom Rudebock's were the coordinating committee. Judy LeGlise is the Federation president.

News From The  
**BELLES & BEAUS**  
Pomeroy, OH  
(July 6, 2003)

The Belles and Beaus of Pomeroy, Ohio had a new dancer group of 7 couples and 3 singles in 2002. Their success in recruiting was attributed to two activities. Several weeks prior to the start of their new dancer session a written invitation was sent to former dancers inviting them to a "Come Back to Square Dancing Party". They obtained the membership lists from three area clubs that had folded plus past membership lists of their own. They also placed ads in 3 local newspapers. The papers listed their club activities and new dancer group in their social calendar. The papers also carried a news story a couple of weeks prior to the start of their new dancer session.

The club destination program is the CALLERLAB Plus program with the new dancers starting in September. The sessions last for 1 ½ hours with a 1 hour club workshop following the class session. The club has a good turnout of members to serve as angels who then stay for the workshop. Member spouses dance with the singles and they also have a single lady who can dance the lead part when needed.

New dancers dance the first three weeks free and they pay \$3.00 per person each week thereafter. The club feels they are friendly toward the new dancers and mix with and greet them each week which is a big factor in the regular attendance. They feel this will aid in their retention after graduation.

Information supplied by Betty Knight, club president couple.

News From The  
**LARKSPUR TAM**  
Larkspur, CA  
(July 19, 2003)

The Larkspur Tam Twirlers, which dances during the week, periodically sponsors a Saturday night special when other clubs, are invited. These dances are typically plus level. Occasionally, the dance may be a red light/green light dance where half the tips are new dancer level.

Realizing a marketing opportunity in having the non-dancing public see a large Saturday dance, the club recently advertised their dance to the general public. Non-dancers were invited to attend *at no charge*. A special introductory session was held 30 minutes prior to the dance, during which the caller taught some basics with the club dancers filling the floor. After the half-hour was completed the public was invited to stay and watch the square dancing. Between tips, mixers and easy lines were played with everyone invited to join in. Twenty non-dancers attended and thoroughly enjoyed themselves with several joining a new dancer session that started 3 weeks later.

The Lakespur Tam Twirlers use a multi-cycle new dancer format. The destination level is Plus.

Information furnished by Eric Henerlau.

News From  
**Cogan Station, PA**  
**(Dancing In Schools)**  
(September 4, 2003)  
Square Dancing In School

For the past six years, Hank Lutcher from Cogan Station, PA has been teaching Modern Western Square Dancing six weeks each year at the Jersey Shore School District #6 Jr High School.

Hank was initially approached by one of the teachers, the son of a local square dancer. During his first visit to the school they showed him a notebook of instructions to teach Modern Western Square Dancing and a music tape but they did not know where to begin. The schools in Pennsylvania are required to teach traditional dance every two years.

This past year he taught 638 young people. He had a gym class every day from 8:10 AM to 3:10 PM with half of the students each day. Knowing that age group likes competition, he told them that the best square would be his demo square to teach the next call. At the end of the 6 weeks, they will have learned approximately 75% of the Mainstream list. The teachers are an active part of the class assisting where needed. During the last class of the year, all students are graded with the teachers taking 5 points off their final score for each mistake. Hank is paid for his time and his lunch is furnished.

Hank has offered a new dancer session any night of the week to the students and parents but thus far, he has been unsuccessful in getting any of the students or parents involved in the local square dance program.

For additional information, Hank may be contacted by phone at 570-435-2048 or by email at [hanjan@chilitech.net](mailto:hanjan@chilitech.net)

News From The  
**Broken Wheel Squares**  
Kirtland, OH  
(October 2003))

The 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year of the Broken Wheel Squares came at just the right time. The club was in the doldrums. It had inexperienced leadership, an aging membership and was losing its spark. To many we were just going through the motions. We had good dances, but any excitement was coming from the caller not the membership. We were losing money on about a third of our dances and were surviving by the thinnest of margins.

A 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was proposed at one of the general membership meetings but seemed to fall on deaf ears, but during the next few days many club members came forth and volunteered to help and a committee was formed. It was decided to continue with the regular theme nights (pie night, team night, etc) but also add a separate theme or event to each dance over the next year that had to do with the club's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. A few of the activities included nostalgia night, a night to recognize past presidents, a display of scrap books, and a trophy, badge, dangle night. Different highlights in the clubs history were presented at dances throughout the year. These activities brought new energy to the club. There was better membership attendance and more visitors came because each dance was special and no one really knew what was going to happen.

As a follow up to the Anniversary year a "stir the bucket" committee was formed. We recognized that the pace from the anniversary year could not be maintained. Going forward there will be fewer theme nights but efforts will be made to make each dance a little different using activities separate from the traditional ones each club uses. None of the dances will ever be considered "regular" club dances. We want fun and excitement, so that there is a reason people want to attend Broken Wheel Squares dances.

#### **Strategies for success employed by Broken Wheel Squares.**

**Don't ask for volunteers.** When you need something done, speak to people directly. Ask someone personally to do a job. If you want a moment of silence at a meeting, just ask for a volunteer.

**Communicate.** Use every means of communication that is available. Use email messages, write newsletter articles. Talk on the microphone at dances. Call people on the telephone. Make sure that conversations with individuals include the things you want people to know about. By the time someone hears and reads the message a few times it becomes their information as well as yours. Don't rely on a message being remembered if it is only seen one time. Let everyone know what is going on whenever you can.

**Be positive.** Don't let club members see you being anything but positive, all the time. Even when you wish you had more involvement from the membership, keep mentioning all the good things that are going on. Let everyone think that all the good things they hear are the norm, not the exception. Eventually, perhaps, things will be the way you actually desire them to be.

**Work hard.** Work as hard as everyone else, if not harder. Lead by example. Be involved with everything that is going on. Delegate the work out to others, but show that you are will to help as much as possible.

**Do the right thing.** Make sure to thank the members when they do something. Let them know that their efforts have been noticed and are appreciated.

**Bring pride to the club.** We want to be the club that people think about when they want to go or see square dancing. We want to be the club that others ask for when they have a community festival. We want to be the club that organizers call when they need an activity like ours on their program. We want the public to expect to see us when they are at certain events, and we want to show how much fun we are having and encourage them to have fun as well and join us.

For more information about Broken Wheel Squares contact Mike and Rose Speers at RVROSE @Earthlink.net or 28845 Serenity Lane, Wickliffe, OH 44092.

## Brecksville Squares

Ohio

(January 2004)

What, Makes a Club Successful ??? –  
Good Question.

By: Dennis H. Deluga

A while ago our club was asked by the State Corporation to participate in a group discussion on what makes a club successful or not. Our president, Cheryl Storgaurd, then asked me if I'd like to give the presentation. See, good delegation skills.

Since I'm a relatively new member I first sought out some club history from our officers.

The club was established in January of 1986 with 16 charter members. Well to make a long story very short it has grown some and we currently have approximately 140 members, with a scheduled 2 dances a month and a thriving new student program. Big Thanks to the charter members, my wife and I really enjoy square dancing and it wouldn't have been possible if they didn't do it. This growth was achieved at a time when ALL clubs, of every kind are experiencing hardships.

The next thing I did was suggested we survey our membership to see why they think our club is successful. Why do they choose to belong to Brecksville Squares? This was done at our next general meeting by a short general survey form. We felt there was enough of the membership present to give us good demographics. I also sought out some active members, not present to get their valued opinion.

I then compiled and categorized the survey results. The results are ranked by order of importance the membership placed on each category, with some indication of survey frequency. Major categories are followed by the activities our club participates in.

**LEADERSHIP: 80+ %**

Officers - strong leaders that lead, teach and delegate

Committees - that are chaired by non-officers to help spread the load - many hands make light work

Special Task Assignments - on special occasion task are assigned to membership to take advantage of their vast and diverse experiences and help the club.

Excellent Teachers - in all areas especially in the new student areas – we all can learn something from our fellow members.

**COMMUNICATION: 50 %**

Yearly Membership Packets - of member information so individual members can contact each other directly plus other pertinent information.

Calling Chain - notify membership of some special occurrence that needs to be done quickly- each caller has no more than 6 members to call in their part of the chain.

Email Chain – same purpose as above - if desired, members can be on both the email and call chain if requested.

TipTopics / Linked Squares - club subscribes to both publication to keep our club in front of 2 federation memberships.

Yearly Printed Club Reports- each member who attends the club business meeting has access to a printed club report that accounts for the club finances also the secretaries report that summarizes club involvement for the past 6 months.

Club NewsLetter - produced several times a year it highlights coming events and membership news.

Club Website Page - where pertinent information about our club is posted.

Printed Flyers - on coming events (dances, raids etc.)

Sunshine Committee - let member know that even if they are down their friends are thinking of them. (the membership packet has their phone number and address).

#### OUTREACH: 40 %

Demonstrations - participate in demos (county fair, city home days, IX Center) any place they will let in.

Fundraiser / Charity events – several regularly scheduled events and some on spur of the moment – recently a fund raiser for Frank Gatrell, on a moments notice, was very successful with our memberships help.

Raids and Retrievals – the club has scheduled raids and retrievals and also members take it upon themselves to have an impromptu raids- nice going guys and gals.

Acceptance of Individuals and Clubs – we pride ourselves on making everyone welcome and we have benefited from that attitude.

Hospitality and Greeters – Our Hospitality and Greeters undoubtedly are some of the best in the federation and our visitors and members appreciate it.

Membership Participation – members see what the club does for them and will volunteer their help – members when asked rarely will turn us down.

#### INCLUSION: 30%

Friendliness – members expressed over and over that they felt very good when here – everyone is part our square dance family, if you want to be.

New Idea Expression – our members stated that they felt their comments and ideas were valued by the club and were not afraid to tell the good and the bad news.

Assignment – new members and student are given assignment to greeting and hospitality to include them and let them know that the club wants and needs their participation.

Appreciation – over and over members expressed that they felt their effort to help the club were expressed by membership and leadership. When was the last time you gave a thank you to those who do for you?

#### CRITICAL MASS: 25%

Number of Members – there is no doubt that a larger number of members allow the club to do more – this is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Number of Students– we recruit heavily every chance we get – there is follow up on contact – this has proven itself with a plethora of new members.

Variety and Excellence of Callers and Cuers – the membership has expressed its desire to have a variety of callers and cuers and the result is a large dance attendance.

Number of Angles – we get a good number of angels each year to assist the new students – this helps the student to form friendships and bonds – sometimes we have had 5 and 6 squares at a student lesson – invest in your children oops I mean students they are your lifeblood.

#### SPECIAL EVENTS: 10 – 15 %

New Years Dance

Teddy Bear Dance

Yearly Club Picnic / Meeting – a business and social event outside of the squared circle

Yearly Club Dinner / Meeting – a pleasant night out with a little bit of business thrown in

#### CONCLUSION;

Sorry to say there is no magic bullet to make a club successful. If there was, we would bottle it sell it and our club would have no financial worries. Our clubs are located in diverse areas we have city clubs, suburb clubs and rural clubs. What is important to one area may not matter in another. Have you tried to ask your membership what they are looking for? We have tried to express what our member ship thought was important to them. I hope it will help your club and give you food for thought. Maybe you will see these ideas and come up with some of your own or use some of ours, help yourself. In any event, inaction is NOT a good decision. Try out ideas and see what works for your club. If they don't work try others. In my opinion you can't blame a person for trying but you can blame someone if they don't try something. Doing it the same way it's been done for years may not be the best way, try something new or a new way, what could it hurt?

Sincerely Yours,  
Dennis H. Deluga

**Class in Three Days**  
Four Corners Dancers  
(Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona)  
(February 2004)

The Four Corners Dancers is a small square dance club. Until this year we had been holding 20 week instruction sessions, (basic-mainstream). We tried starting in September which was good. Everyone was gung-ho but then along come the 2 months of hunting seasons. And hunting being a big recreation in our area we would have several couples not attend lessons because they were hunting, or they would attend just intermittently. Through this we would usually loose some of the new dancers altogether. Then along would come the Holidays and again conflict, so we would loose a few more. By the time we finished the 20 week cycle of lessons we were lucky if we had retained 2 or 3 new dancers. Retention has always been a problem for us. A large percent of those finishing lessons were no longer dancing at the end of a year. Then we tried starting in January, with about the same results. People just got tired before the 20 week commitment was up.

So in the fall of 2003 the club decided to try a different approach. We had heard about the accelerated lesson program at the 52<sup>nd</sup> National Square Dance Convention<sup>®</sup> and continued to hear good things about it. We decided to try it in September. We advertised in the local newspapers, but we did not have any new dancers show up so we only did the one day. We felt some of our weaker dancers from the two previous classes really benefited from that one day so it was not a loss.

When we made the decision to try again in January 2004, the club members had made personal contact with people and had several couples lined up to take the lessons. We set the session for Saturday, Sunday, and the following Saturday going for about 6 hours per day. The Club furnished lunch and we took a 30 minute break. At the end of the six hours the new dancers were pretty saturated and we felt it would not be beneficial to continue. We had a different caller for each day. Previously, the caller who did our lessons charged a flat fee for up to one square and then an additional amount for each person over one square. This time the callers charged a flat fee per day and it was no more expensive than the 20 lessons cycle was.

We began the January session with 4 couples and one single. One couple dropped out because one of them couldn't deal with the crowd. One couple didn't come back the second day because of a work conflict and of course they were too far behind to continue. But they had lots of fun that one day and have indicated they will be back in the future. Everyone had a good time with the lessons. It wasn't the drag that 20 week lessons can be and no one got uptight if everything wasn't quite perfect. We finished the 3 day session with two couples and one single. We knew these dancers weren't going to retain everything that was covered in that three days. However, we encouraged them to start coming to our club dances and keep dancing.

We have had two club dances since we finished the lessons and both couples have been at both of those and the single has attended one. One of the guys whom had told us at the beginning of lessons that he didn't ever smile much, was laughing before the second club dance was over. He shared that he felt pretty nervous the first night, but that he was much more comfortable the second night. He indicated that they were going to travel to another club in our area this coming week-end and dance with them.

We feel that the 3 day class was a success for our club and plan to try it again. We are encouraged that the new dancers seem to be having lots of fun , thereby causing us to have more fun. We also feel fairly confident these dancers will still be dancing with us in the years to come. We will have to put forth some effort at each dance to assure they are dancing nearly every tip. Which means that we will probably eliminate our every third tip being a plus tip, for awhile in order to give them more dance time.

**Square Dance Video**  
Minnesota Central Est Region, MN  
(February 2004)

Minnesota Central East Region

The desire for a tape to show at square dance demo's, showing the fun and excitement of Square Dancing, has developed into a 15 minute Square Dancing Infomercial in Minnesota's Central East Region.

In previous years one of the local clubs recorded a tape each year in the studios of a local public access cable TV station. It was shot in a studio with 2 or 3 squares and no scenery. It did net a few couples each year but wasn't really that exciting.

Knowing that a professionally done film, produced by a recording studio would be cost prohibitive they approached the regional cable access company about taping some scenes at local square dances. The company was very receptive and offered to produce a 15-minute infomercial about square dancing for a maximum of \$1500.00. The final cost was \$1300.00.

They filmed footage at several local dances and the Minnesota State Convention. They interviewed callers and dancers at every taping asking dancers why they started, how long they had danced and what they get out of Square Dancing. They ended up with a lot of scenes of dancers in the background with snippets of interviews supporting the physical fitness, mental fitness and friendship aspects of dancing. The dancers ranged in age from 30 to 70. Most of the dancers were in formal Square Dance attire but one of the dances taped was casual with Dee Dee Dougherty calling. The cable TV station had their female news anchor dress in Square Dance attire to conduct the interviews at the state convention. Among those interviewed were Dee Dee Dougherty, Mike Hogan and Lanny Weakland.

As a result of the infomercial a group of square dancers have gone to the effort of volunteering at the local public access station, training to be producers, cameramen and sound people. They are now allowed to produce their own programs. They are producing a one-hour tape every two weeks spotlighting a different club in the Central Eastern Region, which has 22 clubs. At this writing they have 4 tapes done. Up to this point all the programs have been done in the studio. The dancers are training on the mobile production facilities so they can begin to film at club dances. Dancers in each city of the region have been enlisted to take a copy of the tape to their local public access station. When all 22 clubs in the Central Eastern Region have been spotlighted, they are going to invite clubs from other parts of the state to participate.

They have found if you have enough material in the can the stations will play them on a regular basis. Also, once regional cable TV sees that the dancers and clubs are serious about continuing the production of tapes, they will take over the distribution. The Central Eastern Region is providing financial support for the callers and cuers and duplication of the tapes.

This is another example of dancers coming up with an idea, carrying forward and donating their time. A big Thank You goes to Al Jenkins from the Westonka Whirlers who spearheaded the infomercial project and to Ken & Dee Scott for organizing the cable TV programs.

Although it is still too early to see how many new dancers will be recruited, they are hearing from non-dancers about seeing the TV shows.

Information provided by Mike & Edie Kirsch

**New Dancers**  
Crosstrailers Square Dance Club  
Warren, Ohio

We have enjoyed thirty-seven new dancers (students) for lessons this year ..... thirty-seven! Our lesson nights have ten to eleven squares, and yes, they are a bit noisy with all the laughter and fellowship.

When we polled our new dancers to see what brought them to our lessons and squares, thirty-seven came because of a personal invite; one couple found our club on the Internet. Sixteen new dancers said they had previously seen a demo; four had seen a flyer at a fair; and four read our article in the local newspaper. However, this did not bring them to our lessons .... it was the personal invitation that brought them to lessons.

Our new dancers receive a welcome handout explaining a little about our club and its officers, the federation, the necessary commitment to classes, square dance clothing, square dancing life after graduation, and other pertinent information. Most of this information is also given in announcements, but as we all know, we are not all good listeners. We also offer our new dancers copies of our club calendar, membership lists, etc., letting them know they are an important part of our club.

Many of our members who brought new dancers have become mentors, so to speak. They angel at all lessons and encourage the new dancers, sharing squares with their new dancers; they pick them up and bring them to lessons often; they encourage them to attend the dances for new dancers and enjoy the dances with them. We have found our "mentored" dancers are more likely to continue lessons, enjoy more dances, be active in club activities, and become accomplished square dancers.

When new dancers miss lessons, we call to inquire if everything is okay, and let them know we miss them. If they need to miss a few lessons for any reason, we get a group of square dancers together in our homes and bring the dancers up to date on the calls they have missed.

We are fortunate to have a summer workshop at our dance location, and we encourage our new dancers to attend this workshop to further their skills. Some of our angels enjoy this workshop as well.

We will loose some new dancers as a few migrate south, life's personal problems change priorities, and various reasons. These new dancers are encouraged to return in the fall for another class, and contact is again made before a new class begins.

The bottom line is the personal invitation is very important in recruiting new dancers; the personal touch is very important in maintaining our new dancers as they become accomplished square dancers.

At our dances and lesson nights we have noticed couples sharing thoughts on a movie they have seen, a few ladies sharing recipes, couples sharing prices of SUVs .... people sharing. We square dancers share a wonderful fellowship in this fun, healthy activity, but do we share our love of square dancing with others? As much as we love square dancing, one would think we would share our love of square dancing with anyone that was willing to listen and end up with packed lesson nights. How can we keep this wonderful activity to ourselves?

We love this wonderful fellowship we share! Let's share it with everyone!

Submitted by: Margie McCummins

## **News From Washington Area Square Dancers Cooperative Association (WASCA)**

Boomerangs Square Dance Teaching Council

(March 2004)

The Boomerangs is a club that is not a club. We are not a dancing club; rather we are a teaching council with multi-tiered classes. We exist for one purpose, to hold square dance classes. Our concept has been a combination of already tried ideas and new ideas. We are always evolving and trying to adjust to changing times.

We started with a small group of dancers and one caller who met almost on a weekly basis during the formative months. The members began with a vision and contributed their time, energy and funds to begin the council. Then we recruited additional callers and dedicated angels to help make this teaching concept a reality. We exist through the support of our local callers, angels and a very dedicated council who are the managers and administrator of our group.

Our program is set up with four new classes beginning per year. We are fortunate to have a hall, Lincolnia Senior Center that divides into thirds with automated folding partition walls. This allows us to hold three classes simultaneously. Our sessions are set up in 12-week series. Every week, for 48 weeks of the year, we hold classes in Basic (Mainstream 1), Mainstream 2 and Plus. To do this we have three callers/instructors on staff for each 12-week session.

Our concept gives people a chance to begin classes four times a year. It also allows students the opportunity to progress at different levels. If a student needs a refresher or needs a stronger foundation in the fundamentals, then they simply move to the class that allows them to work on those fundamentals. Hopefully, this will make them a stronger dancer — and if students become stronger and comfortable with the calls, they are more likely to continue dancing. This also accommodates students that have to miss multiple classes due to health, injuries or travel, etc.

With our present class structure we have four graduations a year for Mainstream and Plus. For the last hour during graduation night we open the walls between the three halls and all the students dance together. We also hold a Halloween Costume Party and a Christmas Party. These special times enable everyone to become better acquainted and become a part of the square dance community. The first Wednesday of the month we hold a 50/50 drawing. The funds collected pay for our parlor at the WASCA Festival in March. The parlor is open to all dancers throughout the festival. On Saturday afternoon after the Class Level Invitational we host a special party celebrating our current students first introduction to the festival. Once a year we hold a reunion dance as a thank you for our angels, current and past students and callers/instructors.

We encourage dancers to assist and angel the classes. We also invite club representatives to visit on graduation night and invite our students to their clubs. The clubs that have active angels and those that extend the personal invitations are the clubs reaping the benefits of new members into their clubs from our classes.

We have tried numerous ways to advertise. We have even take expensive ads in newspapers and magazines. Now we only use the free ads in the newspapers, etc. before beginning a new series. We have a long list of these contacts and are willing to share this information with other clubs. We have a large sign advertising our new class, which we place next to the street at Lincolnia Senior Center prior to the first of a new class.

In addition, we will target a densely populated area and distribute flyers door-to-door. Also, our council members and angels are very active in attending demos and parades in promoting square dancing. However, we have found that the way to recruit students is still the personal touch of one-to-one. A dancer invites a friend, then brings them to class, stays and angels. That student is the one most likely to stay with square dancing.

The management of our club is by what we call the council. At present we are 16 in number. There are still some of the charter members, but many of our current council were once students in our classes. Council members are recruited from active angels in the area who have shown a dedication and commitment to classes in the square dance community.

We do not pay dues, but instead everyone contributes and donates when events dictate. We do not have a President. We have a rotating schedule and each council member takes his or her turn chairing a business meeting. The next meeting that person takes the minutes. We do have one council member who acts as treasurer and others who fill positions in advertising, badges, etc. Each council member takes their turn as a Class Coordinator; these are the administrative and management duties for each class. The Class Coordinator begins with a basic class and stays with that class through the plus graduation.

The Boomerangs could not exist without the support of the square dance community of dancers and callers. We welcome help, constructive ideas and solutions and your support. Come out on Wednesday night and be a part of the fun and fellowship.

Becky & Hoyt Stewart, 4414 South 34th Street, Arlington, VA 22206 Phone; 703-578-0132 E-mail: beckv.hovt@verizon.net