

Report to B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation 2018 Board of Directors Meeting  
From Region 1 – Victoria & District Caller Teachers Association:

Well, this has been an interesting year for our Association.

Last year we added new members to our Caller Teachers Association, which was very encouraging. Those new members continue to learn and progress, and are all doing very well. Over the summer season, our Association sponsored four dances (the last Monday in May, June, July and August) to give them some microphone time, and experience in programming a dance.

This year, we have had a few callers with reasonably successful classes for new dancers. I know, the first thing you are asking is “What did we do to attract them?”. I wish I knew the answer to that, but it doesn’t appear to be just one thing that we did, so I don’t have a magic solution to offer. What I can do is tell you what was done, and you can see if there is something in there that you aren’t doing that you might want to try.

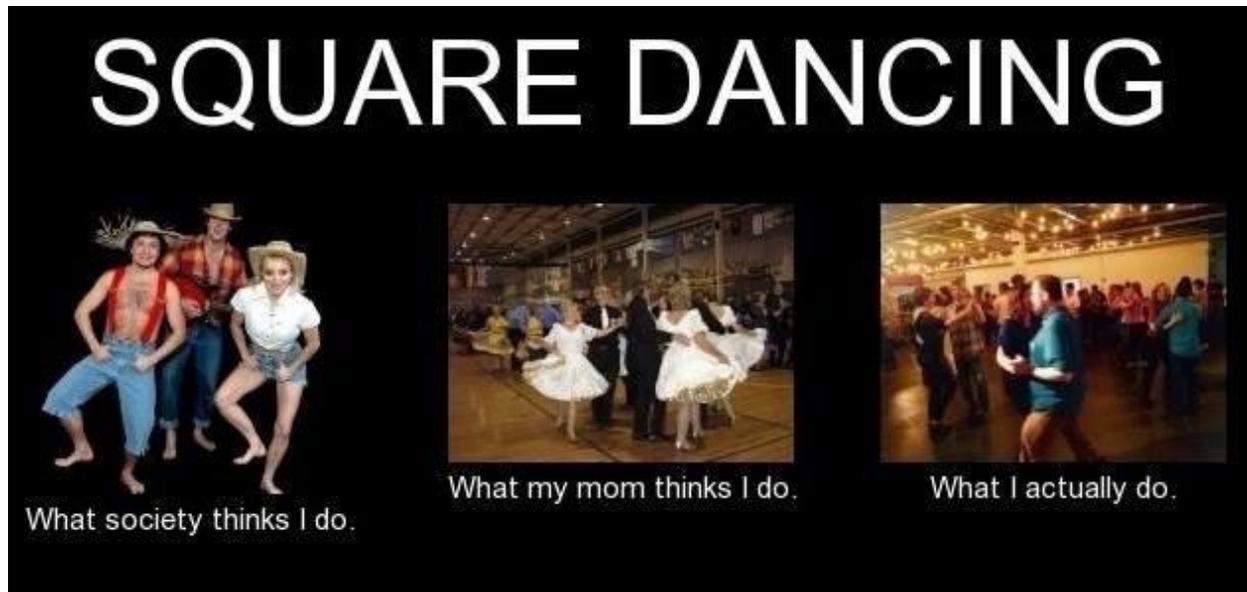
The biggest thing we did as a Caller Teachers Association was to sponsor a promotional campaign, starting in early August with a series of radio ads. The radio ads all pointed to a website, and mentioned a pending Open House. The website was put together by one of our dancers, and focussed on the same message that was in the radio ads. It mentioned the Open House, it listed all of the classes that were scheduled to start in the new dance season in our region, and it talked about how modern western square dancing was not the same as what most of us remember from our youth. It also addressed the issue of dress and appropriate footwear, and the health and social benefits of square dancing. In addition, we sent extra funds to Brian Elmer for the paid social media advertising, along with digital copies of the ads, and asked him to ‘mirror the message’ in the social media ads.

Some groups tried “MeetUp.com” as a promotional tool. Our club (Frontier Twirlers) were fortunate enough to have an article just before their own Open House in the local newspaper, and this one was not the usual hatchet job that we frequently see (copy of article attached to end of report). In addition, our club used a banner out by the road just outside our dance hall (a high traffic artery) to promote the Open House.

Oh, about that Association Open House – we didn’t have a very good turnout, but we are still counting it a success because of what we learned from it. The location definitely had something to do with the poor turnout – due to when we wanted it to happen, we ended up using a facility that didn’t have the greatest parking or access. In terms of set up, the facility was perfect – the room could be divided so that we had a “meet and greet” area, and a separate dance area. We invited all of the clubs in the region to set up a table with photos and promotional material, and to send up to four people to man the table. The Dancers Association had a table with copies of the Cross Trail News, and photo albums on it, and the Callers Association looked after greeting and name tags. We also offered punch and cookies in that area, and a number of the clubs put out candies on their tables. Garry kept those who did come dancing by teaching new moves

for the whole time we had the open house. In addition, we demonstrated round dancing and even had a couple of demonstration squares.

What did we learn from the Association Open House? We learned that what we really need to focus on is getting square dancing back into the mind of the non-dancers who are out there. A number of people we talk to comment that they wish they had known about square dancing, that they thought it had died out a long time ago, and other comments which are telling us that our public profile is in need of a serious makeover.



And about those classes? Only time will tell whether or not they stay dancing of course, but Lorne Clayton (Mavericks) had over 30 new dancers to his class; Garry Dodds (Frontier Twirlers) had more than 30; and John Myers, who is working through a community centre and not affiliated with a club, had 15 to start with. John's class is a little different in that he will accept new members any time during the session; his dancers can come and go as their schedules permit – I still need to figure out how that works, but apparently it does.

One of our members, Elizabeth Hohner, wasn't able to get enough members for a class starting in the fall, but she tried again in January and has enough to keep going. Also, John Myers will be starting a couple of classes in the Fairfield area of Victoria in the late spring – so, as I said, it is looking a little more positive in our area, but we will have to wait to see whether these classes result in club members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Zeeman  
President of Victoria & District Caller Teachers Association (Region 1)

# Square dancing: not your typical hoedown

## Colwood club hosting open house this week

Kendra Wong  
News Gazette staff

For Herb and Linda Fox, there's no better feeling than getting up and going square dancing at the Colwood Community Hall.

It's an activity that allows the couple to socialize, exercise and move to some of their favourite tunes, and completing the perfect square brings a sense of accomplishment that's hard to describe.

"When you complete those series of moves, it's certainly a high ... that's part of the enjoyment of it," said Herb, who along with Linda, are the president couple of the Frontier Twirlers Square Dance Club in Colwood.

A square dance is a dance for four couples (eight dancers) arranged in a square, with one couple on each side, facing the middle of the square. Dancers are prompted or cued through a sequence of steps (square dance choreography) by a caller to the beat of music.

Locally, there are roughly eight square dance clubs that are a part of the Lower Vancouver Island Western Square and

Round Dance Association. The Frontier Twirlers Square Dance Club, which is a mainstream club, has roughly 28 members, and is the only square dance club on the West Shore.

The club hosts weekly classes, as well as dances on the first and third Saturday of every month from September to May.

While there may be the stereotype that square dancing involves older people moving to western music, the club has come a long way from that. It plays a range of music from pop to traditional country, to Broadway music to contemporary country music, even rock, Motown, techno and hip hop from artists such as Elton John, the Village People and the Rat Pack.

Herb and Linda took up square dancing more than 35 years ago, after friends suggested they give it a try, and after their first class they were hooked. Since then, the duo have participated in hundreds of square dance classes and have gone on to teach with the club.

"It's just the social aspect of things. It's our community and it's Herb and my lives. A lot of our friends are in the club," said Linda, adding since square dancing cues are all the same language, they've been able to dance with clubs around the



Herb and Linda Fox show off the swing position in square dancing at the Colwood Community Hall on Sooke Road. The duo are part of the Frontier Twirlers Square Dance Club, which is hosting an open house on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. (KENDRA WONG/NEWS GAZETTE STAFF)

world in places such as Ontario, Hawaii and Arizona.

Even after more than three decades of square dancing, Herb and Linda agreed there's always something new to learn.

"We've danced a number of years and there are still callers who can put us in a formation and I'm saying to myself 'wow, we've never gotten to that formation before' and it's a surprise," said Herb.

Now, the Foxes are encouraging people of all ages to try square dancing during the club's open house on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Colwood Community Hall (2219 Sooke Rd.)

In addition to the open house, the first two lessons on Sept. 21 and 28 are also free. For more information about the club or classes, visit [ft.squaredance.bc.ca](http://ft.squaredance.bc.ca).

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