

REPORT ON THE
LEA VERONICA APPROACH
TO
RECRUITING AND RETAINING
NEW DANCERS

Presentations on May 29 and 30, 2010
Sponsored by the British Columbia
Region 2 Joint Promotion Committee

Recruiting
First Classes
Angel Care
Fundraising
Social Cohesion

by
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Secretary
Region 2 Promotion Committee

Acknowledgements:

Lea and Jim Veronica from Simi, California, have given a number of presentations in the United States explaining the success they have had recruiting new dancers for their club, the “Boots & Slippers”. They were invited by the Region 2 Promotion Committee to come to British Columbia and explain their approach to recruiting and retaining new dancers.

The free seminars were advertised in the Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley, the Cariboo and Vancouver Island, as well as in Washington state region dance magazines . One seminar was held in Abbotsford, on Saturday, May 29, 2010, from 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM. A mainstream dance was also held in the hall that evening. A repeat presentation was given in Surrey on May 30, 2010, from 1:00 to 4:30 PM.

Approximately 20 clubs were represented at the Saturday seminar including representatives from Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley, Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna, and Salmon Arm clubs. The approximately 88 participants included callers as well as club executives. The Sunday session had approximately 60 attendees from 15 Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley clubs and included representation from Victoria, Nanaimo, Kelowna and Kamloops.

The Promotion Committee gratefully acknowledges the funding for these presentations received from the:

**BC Square and Round Dance Federation,
Canadian Square and Round Dance Society,
Fraser Valley Square and Round Dance Association.**

Background:

After spending many years living aboard their sailboat, Lea and Jim Veronica gave up sailboat racing in 1979, settled in Simi Valley, California, and began square dancing at the “Boots & Slippers” Square Dance Club. They were President Couple three different times and since 2007 are the new dancer program coordinators.

Jim is retired and Lea is owner/publisher of a monthly directory of square dance events called “The Open Squares”. Lea uses the resources of her business to produce the promotional material that will be explained later in this report.

“Boots & Slippers” is a Plus level Club that dances year round monthly every fourth Saturday. Beginning in November, the new dancer level (“Class”) has a “fun” dance the first Saturday of the month. Jim & Lea dance at other clubs during the month. The Club has 192 members including six honorary members. 56 members are single—35 are women. 43 are beginners—13 couples, 30 are singles. The remaining club members are couples.

The Class operates from September to June. The program covers only the “non-italicised moves” of Basic, Mainstream and Plus. Class graduates are encouraged to return the following year as “angels” to reinforce their dancing skills. Workshops covering the moves missed in the beginning year are held in the subsequent years, however, the details were not explained in the presentation. Attendees pay (2010) \$8 per session to cover hall and caller costs. Their target audience is 45-50 year olds.

In 2004, Lea organized an area-wide event to attract new dancers, named “One Night Stand”. Although the event brought out 365 people, it was not repeated as the other 12 clubs decided that they did not benefit sufficiently from this type of event. Subsequently, efforts by Lea have been focused primarily on recruiting for the “Boots & Slippers” Club. Lea and Jim have travelled to various parts of North America giving this presentation without fee, asking only for reimbursement of lodging and travel costs.

Lea’s presentation described a system that has evolved over several years. To be successful, it requires work and dedication. She grouped her material into four categories – Recognition, Recruit, Reward, and Retention. Her presentation described the process of recruiting and retaining, so I have chosen to organize this report around her process, rather than by her classification scheme. The report will attempt to show the interrelationships therefore some of the material has been grouped by situation, and not sequentially.

Key strategies or common aspects are shown in **bold text**. For easy reference, the sections have been grouped as follows:

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Recruiting:

Lea Veronica has a multi-pronged approach to recruiting:

1) Personal contact, 2) Multi-medium advertising (These two are parallel strategies), **3) Invitation Party**

1 RELATIONSHIP SELLING

The core of the recruiting strategy is using **personal relationships**.

LEVERAGE PERSONAL CONTACTS has club members and then new recruits, use their relationships to personally invite potential members to an introductory night. *See sample invitation, page 5.*

RSVP – members are personally responsible for inviting new dancers and a key aspect is that they are to request an RSVP from the invitee. They are expected to follow up.



AN INVITATION PARTY

The venues for handing out the invitations to club members is at a “pool” party (the Veronica’s don’t actually have a pool but use their house for this occasion) **OR** at new dancer Graduation.

Members list whom they know, even casually (i.e. dog walker, hairdresser, etc.) and send them a personalized invitation from the invitee.



**FIRST CLASS—
PARTY NIGHT**
See page 8



2 MULTI-MEDIUM ADVERTISING

Uses a variety of mediums. The goal is to attract interest and awareness about square dancing in general and the club in particular.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING – Primary advertising vehicle, has had little success with small ads. Successful when using larger than ¼ page ads. Runs ads 2-3 times in the two weeks leading up to the introductory party. *See sample ad, page 6.*

BUSINESS CARDS – Club contact info on business size cards to hand out at parades, demos, and to personal contacts. *See sample, page 5.*

PUBLIC DEMOS – Parades, local diner and other venues (Ronald Regan Library function). When their hall is closed on special days, the club dances at a large local eatery. In return for food orders, the restaurant lets them dance on the premises. Good draw for the restaurant and exposure for the club.

Demo Handouts – Ads on a stick – literally. Used as handouts at parades and demos. *See sample page 6.*

Lawn Signs – Used successfully until City Council banned them.

Car Window Placards – *See sample page 6.*

800 Phone Number – Through her business, Lea has an 800 number that is valid in California and some surrounding states.

Radio – Has been very successful in the past, however, far too expensive for a single club. She recommends that the regional or state organizations should be using this to keep square dancing in public awareness.

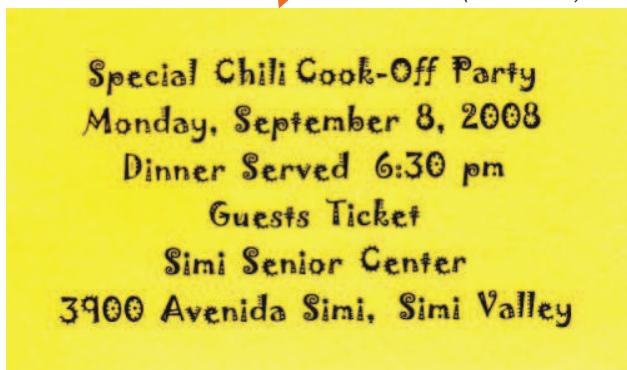
Invitations:



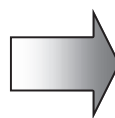
This is the **primary invitation**, personally delivered by a club member in a coloured envelope. RSVP required.
(Shown Reduced. Actual size is 8 1/2" x 11")



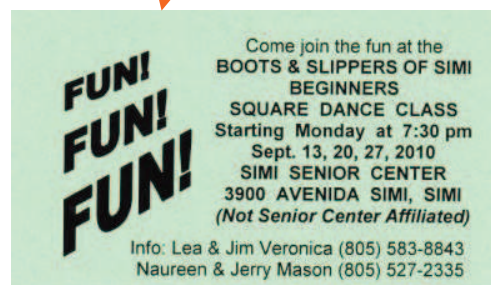
(Actual size)



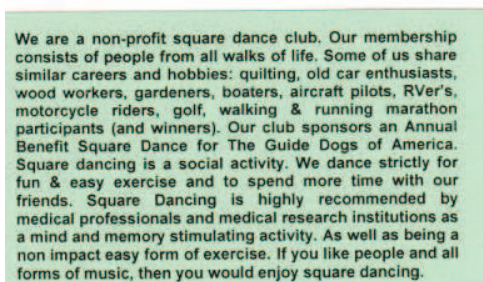
Non-personalized invitation posters placed in supermarkets, Starbucks, and other public venues. Has pocket for business card size invitations. (Shown reduced. Actual size is 8 1/2" x 11")



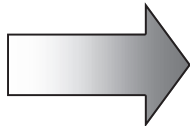
Cards used in bulletin board posters, also used by club members as hand outs.



On the reverse side, a synopsis of club member interests, charity connections and health benefits.
(Shown reduced. Actual size is business card-size)



Advertising:



Local Newspaper AD:

This is local newspaper ad is run 2-3 times a week or two before the class begins.

Notice that they only **advertise ONE night free**. In actuality, they have two more “free” nights. They only give out a “free” coupon to those who attend each session.

The ad also has background information on member interests and club benefit activity, as well as promoting the fun and healthy benefits of square dancing.

The ads are also printed on heavy cardstock and stapled to a tongue depressor stick and handed out at parades.

*Shown reduced.
Actual size is
51/2' wide x 61/4" deep.*

**BOOTS & SLIPPERS SQUARE DANCE CLUB
OF SIMI VALLEY**


**START THEIR ANNUAL
BEGINNERS SQUARE DANCE CLASSES**

With Instructor/Caller **DICK HODNEFIELD**

Monday - September 8, 2008 – 7:30-9:30 PM

Open Enrollment September 8, 15 & 22 - FIRST NIGHT FREE

Couples and Singles Welcome. \$6.00 per person per evening.



SIMI SENIOR CENTER
3900 AVENIDA SIMI, SIMI VALLEY
(Not Senior Center Affiliated)

For info: Lea & Jim, (805) 583-8843
 Jerry & Naureen, (805) 527-2335 Jim & Kay, (818) 362-9582

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The Boots & Slippers Square Dance Club just celebrated its 49th Anniversary this month. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life. Some of us share similar careers, have children and grandchildren. Several have same hobby interests: old car enthusiasts, quilters, wood workers, book clubs, card clubs, investment groups, gardeners, boaters, aircraft pilots, RVer's, motorcycle riders, walking and running marathon participants (and winners). The Boots & Slippers are annual participants in the Simi Valley Days Parade. (And several times a trophy winner). Our club sponsors an Annual Benefit Square Dance for The Guide Dogs of America. To date our efforts have allowed us to sponsor 10 guide dogs. Square Dancing is a social activity. There is no competition. We dance strictly for fun and easy exercise and to spend more time with our friends. Square Dancing is highly recommended by medical professionals and medical research institutions as a mind and memory stimulating activity. As well as being a non impact fun and easy form of exercise. If you like people you would enjoy square dancing. If you like all forms of music including big band, swing, country, jazz, classical and pop, then you would enjoy square dancing.

COME DANCE AND HAVE FUN WITH THE BOOTS & SLIPPERS!


NOTE: Most of the advertising material used is produced by Lea on her office laser printer. She sources much of the paper from an internet supplier.

**“Ads are the set-ups for
the personal invitations”**

Lea Veronica

Car window card
printed on heavy
cover stock.
*(Shown reduced.
Actual size is 14" wide
x 41/4" wide)*





SQUARE DANCE

(Also known as Team Dancing)

CALL 800-FUN 4 ALL

September & January Classes

Advertising:

Common Interests Strategy—A **key strategy** in the approach is to **make as many personal connections** between the current and future members. Throughout the advertising, Veronica emphasizes hobbies, interests and occupations of current members in the hopes of making another connection with new dancers. The intent is to show that, not only will you have square dancing in common among your new friends, but you will possibly find someone else with similar interests—such as RV'ing, bowling, gardening, etc.—with which you can expand your circle of commonality. It is a theme in much of the advertising. See examples below.

Public poster cards—back.

We are a non-profit square dance club. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life. Some of us share similar careers and hobbies: quilting, old car enthusiasts, wood workers, gardeners, boaters, aircraft pilots, RVers, motorcycle riders, golf, walking & running. Common participants (and winners). Our club sponsors an Annual Benefit Square Dance for The Guide Dogs of America. Square dancing is a social activity. We dance strictly for fun & easy exercise and to spend more time with our friends. Square Dancing is highly recommended by medical professionals and medical research institutions as a mind and memory stimulating activity. As well as being a non impact easy form of exercise. If you like people and all forms of music, then you would enjoy square dancing.

This is part of a glossy 11" x 17" two colour 4-fold brochure produced a few years ago. Its theme is "We are All Square Dancers" and shows pictures of members with a write-up of their occupations and interests.

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**GOOD EXERCISE
GREAT FUN
NEW FRIENDS**

The Boots & Slippers Square Dance Club just celebrated its 25th Anniversary this month. Our membership consists of people from all walks of life. Some of us share similar careers, have children and grandchildren. Several have same hobby interests: old car enthusiasts, quilters, wood workers, book clubs, card clubs, investment groups, gardeners, boaters, aircraft pilots, RVers, motorcycle riders, walking and running marathon participants (and winners). The Boots & Slippers are annual participants in the Simi Valley Days Parade. (And several times a trophy winner). Our club sponsors an Annual Benefit Square Dance for The Guide Dogs of America. To date our efforts have allowed us to sponsor 10 guide dogs. Square Dancing is a social activity. There is no competition. We dance strictly for fun and easy exercise and to spend more time with our friends. Square Dancing is highly recommended by medical professionals and medical research institutions as a mind and memory stimulating activity. As well as being a non impact fun and easy form of exercise. If you like people you would enjoy square dancing. If you like all forms of music including big band, swing, country, jazz, classical and pop, then you would enjoy square dancing.

COME DANCE AND HAVE FUN WITH THE BOOTS & SLIPPERS!

Newspaper advertisement with the occupations and interests connection.

**Do You Know
What These People
Have In Common??**

In addition to practicing dentistry, Mike likes to bungee jump with 2 sons, Mark and Jim, Mike and Carl. His wife and assistant, just celebrated their 27th wedding anniversary with a trip to Jamaica.

Jim likes the action sports. From sailing to soaring to ultra-lite plane flying. Lea likes to keep busy. So, besides working, she sews her own specialty clothing and does quilt making.

Lea & Judy are self-employed estate planners and financial advisors. Frequent travel keeps them busy with vacation interests of snow skiing and white water rafting.

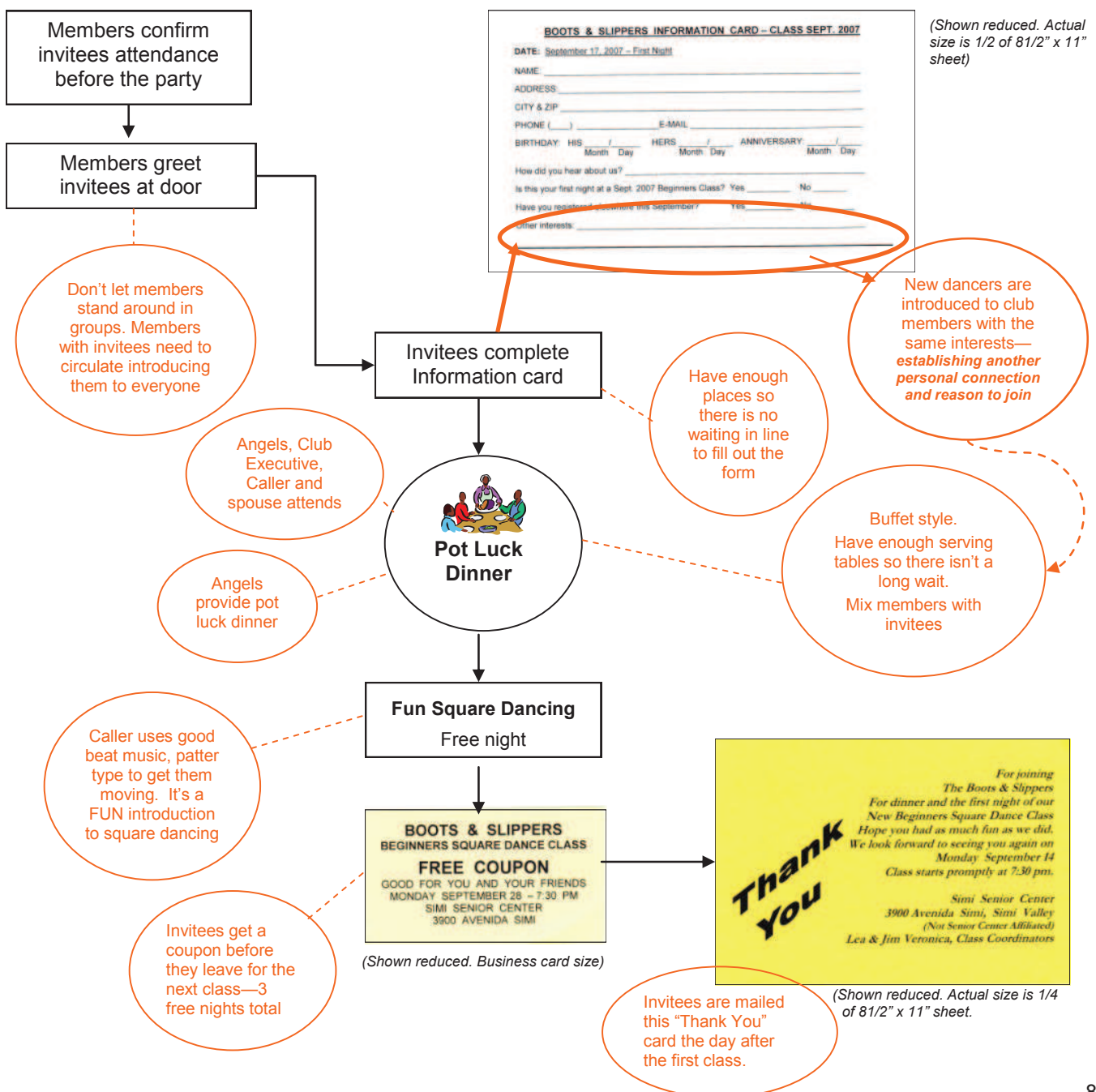
Jim is a retail entrepreneur and as you can see, enjoys water sports!

John, family, camping and theatre dates keep Jeff, Linda, Dick, Gayle, Jim and Pam busy but they all still find time to ride their motorcycles and even enter the "Lease Ride".

First Classes:

The first class is a club provided **pot luck dinner and dance “party” night**. Not a heavy teaching session; the emphasis is on the fun of square dancing. Three objectives:

- 1) **build relationships** between existing members and potential new dancers. Finding a high comfort level with club members increases the likelihood the new dancers will continue with the program.
- 2) **Introduce the “angels”** and again make the connections.
- 3) **Provide an enjoyable experience** that will make new dancers want to return.



First Classes:

- Clothes:** Club members (angels) **do not wear dance clothes**. This hopefully avoids pressure on new dancers to buy clothes.
- Hugs:** They also **do not hug in the first few weeks** of the lessons. Hugging invades people's personal space and many people take awhile to get comfortable enough to permit being hugged.
- Attrition Rate:** The **attrition rate is close to 60%**. Reasons vary: illness, loss of a partner, too busy. Starting with 108 new dancers in 2009, about 40 graduated.
- Singles:** **Singles are the “at risk” category** for attrition. Every year women outnumber men. Out of 192 members, 21 are single men and 35 single women. This past year there were 13 couples and 17 singles.
- A solution is to have **“all lady” squares**. Each novice is paired with a seasoned dancer. Novices do not learn the “man’s part” or left hand position. However, many women, because there are not enough men, do leave. Within a couple of months, all the lady squares are gone and the remaining dancers integrated into mixed squares.
- Their policy is **not to separate couples** for the learning.
- Single men wear white arm band** until they find a regular dance partner.
- Organizing Committee:** The beginners' class is organized by a committee of four couples “and one guy”. One couple is chair, one treasurer, one couple is responsible for photography and one for nightly fundraising—“Pot of Gold” (which will be explained under “fundraising” later on in this report).
- Food:** The organizing committee members and angels bring food for each session. They are reimbursed for the cost. There is **no food formal break**, except a short one for announcements. It was found that after a food break, many dancers left, so now the food is placed on round tables at the back of the hall and dancers can eat when they want.
- Free Lessons:** The Club **does not advertise that the first three weeks are free**. They use the free coupons as an incentive to bring people back the following week. They use **different colour coupons for each week**. The coupons are also for use by the beginners and any friends they might bring up to the 3rd week.
- Badge:** The first week a **temporary club badge** with their name attached on a label is given to each dancer. They are requested to return the following week wearing the badge. This creates an obligation to return the badge. This has proved more effective than using paper “HELLO my name is...” stick-on labels.
- By the fourth week, most of the drop-outs have occurred so all beginners are given their **CLASS badge** (their permanent badge is given out at the graduation). The class badge is a standard club badge with the **dancer's name on a dangle suspended on rings**. On the back, the badge has a contact name and information to return the badge if the recipient drops out at a later date. A card thanking them for continuing participation accompanies the badge. The badge is reused the following year.
- Follow-Up's:** **Drop outs are contacted** to determine why they did not continue. If it is something the club can do to correct or modify, changes are made to the program.

Angel Care:

- Angels:** Any club member can be an angel, however, they must be **serious** about the role.
New dancers who graduated the previous year are encouraged to **return the following year** as an **angel**. This reinforces what they have learned in the past year and gives them another year of practice before they dance at the club level.
For **returning single women**, it is also an opportunity, for those that are comfortable, to learn to dance the “man’s” or left position. This allows them to dance either position in subsequent years, reducing the dependency on having a male partner.
- Integrator:** Angels have a role of **social integrator**, especially on the first sessions. In this role the angels are requested to mingle and speak with everyone. At the first session, based on the interests and occupations of the new comers, they introduce the new comers to club members who share the same hobbies or types of jobs.
- Position:** Angels are placed in the **head positions**. Beginners are in side positions. This allows the caller to call a move with the heads first so that the side people can observe how the move is performed.
- Recognition:** At the first session, angels are formally introduced to the class and given a red “**Angel Ribbon**” that they can attach to their club badge.
Angel **attendance** is tracked throughout the year and at the graduation ceremony, the angels with the highest attendance are formally recognized and given a small gift along with a certificate of appreciation.
Angels are also given recognition at the **graduation ceremony** where they are seated right behind the graduates.

Graduation:

- Ceremony:** The end of year graduation ceremony is designed to be a major club event including the traditional candle lighting circle ceremony for graduates—which will not be described here. The graduation also combines a member recognition program and a recruiting objective.
- Angels—** Angel contributions are recognized:
- They are given **special assigned seating** at the ceremony. In 2007, they were seated next to members they have recruited. In 2008, seating as assigned by time in club. In 2010, singles will be recognized.
 - Angels with the **highest attendance** are given a **gift** and a **note of appreciation**. A wrapped gift of a packet of spices or a coffee mug (just some suggestions) is presented to the recipient formally.
 - Angels, and other club members, who have **recruited new dancers** are asked to stand along with their recruits.
 - Angels are given an **“angel dangle”** with the year. Some angels wear a collection of these dangles suspended from their badges.
- Member Badges:** At the graduation ceremony, grads receive their own club badge, which has the year they joined (graduated) on it. They turn in their “class” badge.
- Recruiting:** Each graduating member is given a small gift and a **blank personalized invitation letter** to use to recruit new dancers. And so the recruiting cycle continues.
- Pot of Gold:** On graduation evening, the winners of the **“pot of gold”** draw are announced. See details in “fundraising” on the next page.

Fundraising:

Purposes:

As the session fees cover operating expenses, fundraising is used:

- Newspaper advertising,
- Other advertising expenses,
- Recognition gifts.

Methods:

Quilt Shows: Some members, including Lea, do quilting as a hobby. Once or twice a year, Lea hosts a sale in her home and charges an entrance fee of \$10 per person.

Card Games: Card nights can have up to 17 tables of participants. The pricing was not explained.

Pot of Gold—is a variation on the 50/50 draw. Each week participants can buy only one ticket for \$1. The winner has to be at the graduation ceremony to qualify. Depending on the participation, the winner can receive \$300 or more. In 2010, four additional draws of \$50 will take place.

Recycle Sale—gently used dancing clothing is sold.

Box Dinner Party—Have a dinner where people buy a box that advertises a type of dinner—can be pizza, or something exotic. The seller brings the food to the dinner for the buyer. Everyone attending has made, and bought, a dinner for and from someone else.

Restaurant Incentive—The club holds their monthly dance at a local restaurant on evenings when their senior center hall is closed.

This arrangement is seen as beneficial for the restaurant as it brings in a large number of people (60-80 dancers) to eat and provides other patrons with entertainment - dancers wear their dancing clothes and dance. Some patrons attend the restaurant because the club is there that night.

The club benefits because the restaurant lets them hand out advertising flyers to the patrons and the restaurant gives the club 15-20% of that night's profit.

Social Cohesion:

Dancing:

For a club that dances only once per month at its club level, a version of Plus, club cohesion presents a challenge. It seems that all clubs, mostly Plus level, in the area dance only **one evening per month**. *[This revelation was a shock to seminar attendees from the Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley clubs who dance weekly from September to April-May at their clubs, AND at special dances sponsored by area clubs].*

“Boots & Slippers” have their **one level dance** on the fourth Saturday of the month, from September to June. Members will dance at other clubs during the month.

The Plus dance is seen as a “**party night**” with “pizza party” being a theme.

Starting with the first Saturday in November, the club holds a **class** (beginners) **level dance**. The intent is to encourage the beginners to practise their moves in a party atmosphere where the emphasis is on having fun rather than learning moves.

Society Support:

The club holds a **yearly benefit dance** for the “Guide Dogs of America” society. They invite the newspaper to cover the event to garner publicity for the club while helping support a worthwhile organization. The club also mentions this support in their advertising.

Social Aspects:

To promote club cohesion outside of dancing, the club holds three **home parties**, the biggest being the Christmas party.

Members are encouraged to **volunteer at other organizations** which can provide new recruits outside of the members normal social circle. Some club members volunteer at an organization called “For the Troops” that provides support packages for overseas military personnel. The club’s Christmas party this past year had a “boot camp” theme and \$5 was collected from attendees to be used towards the organization’s mailing costs.

In March members attend a **dance festival** in Bakersfield. Members do attend other regional and national festivals.