



This newsletter provides promotion and marketing ideas, shines a light on people in our dance community, provides history and general information about our much loved activity, and highlights provincial and national events. If you wish to contribute an article, or see an event, topic, person, or club featured, contact the editor.



## GET CRACKIN'! - by Editor Claudia Littlefair

Take advantage of this downtime – plan your club’s advertising campaign now.

**STEP ONE:** Get a “think tank” going (2, 3 or more members). Share advertising ideas and suggestions. Get some creative juices flowing.

**STEP TWO:** Get informed! There are all kinds of online help, examples and advice - for free!

- Start with **CALLERLAB’s 90-page “Square Dance Marketing Manual”**: (<http://callerlabknowledge.org/callerlab-square-dance-marketing-manual/>). A comprehensive, easy to use guide on putting together an effective campaign. Covers all aspects of advertising.
- Visit **Canadian Society’s Pinterest account**: <https://www.pinterest.ca/canadiansquarea/>. Guaranteed there is something for everyone! Hundreds and hundreds of posters, news releases, brochures, photos, memes, newsletters, history, and general information on all of our dance forms. Get inspired, borrow ideas!
- View the **B.C. Square Dance Federation Youtube channel** for “how-to” videos on promotion: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK7iAGys3NKCbC8YNV1svPQ>. It includes recorded Zoom sessions designed to help us improve our advertising. Sessions on topics like: Image; Using Social Media; Promoting Teamwork as a Benefit; Writing Press Releases.

**STEP THREE:** Get your Game Plan together! Some clubs might have a “soft start” in the fall, with heavy advertising for January, or some might do heavy advertising for the fall. Whatever your timeline, be ready to roll out your advertising plan.

## SOCIABILITY IN A COVID ERA

Excerpts from CALLERLAB March 2021 AGM Keynote Address - by Mike Seastrom

*Editor’s Note: For Mike’s complete 30-minute presentation go to YouTube:*

<https://www.callerlab.org/2021-callerlab-virtual-event-keynote-sociability-in-a-covid-era/>

We’ve all been going through one of the most shocking, unprecedented, incredible times that any one of us has ever experienced. We have heard the cliché, “We’re all in this together”, and the truth is that a great number of us have dealt with this individually or with just a small group of family and friends. Many that live alone have dealt with this entire socially distant pandemic by themselves. The challenges of having most of our social ties reduced to a bare minimum have caused increases in depression for many and an increase in loneliness too.

This year-long, massive shifting of our gears has had a monumental effect on every single one of us. It’s also made those of us in the square and round dance activities realize how rich the social connections inherent in our dance have been for all of us.

Power Point Presentation Slides:

- **Why is it important to have social connections?** Social connection improves physical health and mental and emotional well-being.
- **What’s the biggest health issue in America today?** The effects that come from feeling lonely and disconnected.
- **What are the health benefits of social connectivity?** Strong social connections lead to a 50% increased chance of longevity. -Dr. Vivek Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General.



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- **Dancing is brain food.** People who dance frequently have a 75% lower chance of dementia. – *New England Journal of Medicine*.
- **Dancing is interval training.** Regular dancing cuts chances of dying of heart disease by 46%. – *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, June 2016*.
- **Human Beings are inherently social creatures.** Social groups provide us with an important part of our identity and teach us skills that help us to live our lives.
- **Belonging is a human emotional need.** Belongingness is being an accepted member of a group, a part of something greater than ourselves.
- **Social connections.** Essential to nearly every aspect of health and well-being.
- **Connections go beyond the individual level.** Connectedness has profound benefits for both individuals and for society.
- **What's the most important factor for happiness?** "The best predictor for happiness (and often health), is the quantity and quality of a person's social ties." – *Christine Carter*
- **Can we improve physical and mental health in our communities?** Our dance activity can help foster and build connections with the people all around us. (*End of Power Point*)

Some years ago, one of our distinguished members let us know, in no uncertain terms, that we must change our point of view as callers. He said that the dancers don't always come just to dance just to us. They come to see their friends and socialize. He told his story about being frustrated trying to get the people to square up at a dance. He said that they were just sitting around and talking with each other and it was like "pulling teeth" to get them out of their seats. They came to see and socialize with each other and not to just dance to him. Dancing was not their first priority. Now that's a pretty hard pill for a caller to swallow.

**Our mentor further emphasized that we must focus on the sociability in our activity and not only the puzzle of our dance if we want to preserve it for future generations.**

That distinguished member I'm talking about is Jim Mayo. I'd like to read part of an article that Jim wrote that appeared in the CALLERLAB Viewpoints section of *American Square Dance Magazine*. It was written and published in the magazine long before this pandemic. It's titled:

**"OUR GIFT TO SOCIETY"** (by Jim Mayo)

***"We, MWSD (Modern Western Square Dancing), have a wonderful gift for modern society. Over the last couple of years, I have become steadily more aware of our need for social interaction. I hear frequent mention of it in the media and, if you look, you can see signs of it all around you. People want to interact with each other and today the chances for that are shrinking. Our activity could offer one of the best opportunities for that interaction—if we could stop making it more difficult.***

*Club square dancing provided exactly that kind of social contact when it began after WW II, and we thrived because of it. Today society is different but the need for people to do things together is, perhaps, even greater than it was 70 years ago. We could serve that need and in some places we do. Unfortunately, many of today's SD programs make it very difficult to take part. Our choreography is much more challenging, and our social interaction has shrunk. Even the dancing is less comfortable and learnable than it was.*



*We've talked about this and we have even designed experimental programs that we hope will make us more accessible. Unfortunately, we have mostly ignored our most valuable asset. We callers, and the remaining experienced dancers, keep thinking that choreography is our most appealing aspect. It is NOT. Sociability is. People want a place to meet and be involved with other people. The square dance club is nearly perfect for that if we didn't make participation so difficult.*

*Over the last 30 years or more we have made a huge increase in the complexity of MWSD. Only if you can handle constantly changing dance routines are you welcome in our clubs. Even singing call routines don't repeat. The number of parties that clubs run has shrunk, and the club management group has also shrunk. It doesn't take as many board meetings to run a club as it used to. Those meetings weren't necessary. They were social opportunities.*

***We have clubs, even today, that are thriving and growing. In many cases they have made the dancing easier and the social interaction opportunities more available."***

Jim finishes the article with this statement, ***"MWSD could be a huge social interaction center if we would only let it."***

Well Jim, I could not agree more. **We have an activity where participants must work as a team and that physical contact as a team dancer increases our spirit of friendship and community by its very nature. That spirit continues when we're NOT dancing.**

**In the 60 plus years I've been involved in dancing, I've never seen a bigger opportunity to reboot and refocus how we lead this activity going forward.**

**If we, as leaders, learn more ways to develop our social skills and become better social ambassadors, better mentors, and teachers, we have the perfect activity to offer just what we need more of in our communities today.** Let's not miss this golden opportunity to help our activity continue to evolve and get back to focusing on what has kept most of us actively involved for years.

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**About the Author:** Mike Seastrom has been dancing since 1960, and calling since 1963. He started dancing after losing a bet to his mother and calling when he tried to show his 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher what "square dancing was really like". Mike joined CALLERLAB in 1977, was Chairman of the Board, chairman of several committees, and annual presenter at CALLERLAB conventions. He was awarded CALLERLAB's highest award, the Milestone, in 2001 and the prestigious Gold Card (Life Membership) this year.

Mike teaches and calls Basic through C-1, prompts contras, and also enjoys doing dance party events when his schedule allows. He records for Rhythm Records, regularly does Caller Clinics, and helped produce an Introduction to Contra Dancing package. Calling has given Mike the opportunity to travel extensively around the world. As a practicing dentist, calling is an avocation for "Dr. Mike".



## **THE SOCIAL SQUARE DANCE – AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

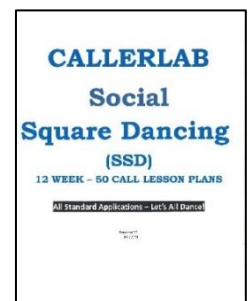
**- By Caller Barry Johnson**

***Editor's Note: This article features some of the power point slides. For the indepth, one-hour power point audio presentation go to: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_cc3u9eSEA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_cc3u9eSEA)***

*This talk was given by Barry Johnson when he was a guest of the Northwest Callers Association in November of 2020. He presents an overview of what the SSD Program (Social Square Dance) is, what its benefits are, how it has been implemented in the Chicago, Illinois area, and how it has started to revitalize the modern square dance activity in his area. This is an excellent introduction to what SSD is and how it works. While it was presented to an audience of square dance callers, it is appropriate for all square dance leaders; callers and dancers alike.*

### **WHAT IS SSD?**

- "Social Square Dancing" is an approach that can dramatically increase club membership over a medium term (a few years).
- More than a list or teaching order, it's a method.
- Key principles:
  - Reduce barriers for beginners to start and to finish.
  - Let people enjoy dancing within 90 days of starting.
  - Harness fresh enthusiasm **immediately**.



**WHAT DO YOU MEAN, A “METHOD”?**

- Quite simply:
  - Teach 50 calls in 12 weeks (90 days).
  - Dance.
  - Rinse and repeat. Right away.

**HOW MUCH SUCCESS?**

- Woodstock: Membership up 60%, still growing, beginning to accelerate after turnover of some club callers.
- Glenview: From 20-some members to 90+ in 3 years.
- North Shore Squares (spinoff of Glenview): 0 to 60 members in 2 years, continued growth from there.
- Arlington Squares: 60% growth in first 2 years, then covid hit.
- McHenry B' n B: Dropped the program. Membership declining.

**WHERE DO WE LOSE DANCERS?**

- Long lesson times discourage some prospects from starting.
- Holidays, vacations, illnesses cause losses.
- Dancers overwhelmed by complexity drop out.
- Lose dancers during transition to club membership.
- Lessons not fully preparing them for pace of dances, then drop out.
- Long breaks (particularly summertime) causes losses in Fall season.
- Long time until next start of class means friends can't start right away.
- Big gap between beginners and graduates means friends can't dance with friends for a year (or more)!

**SSD PROVIDES INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS IN ALL THOSE AREAS****FOCUS IS ON EASY AND FUN, NOT TECHNICAL COMPLETENESS**

- As teachers, we **want** to produce good dancers.
- But look at every sport or hobby with lessons: does **anyone** else attempt to teach “full complexity” to raw beginners?
- Our stated goal of teaching each call from many positions and many arrangements to **beginners** is really just hubris: excessive pride.
- It's perfectly OK for us to leave some nuances to “Continuing Education” that happens later.

**REMEMBER, THIS IS FOR FUN!****SSD SHOULD BE A DESTINATION, NOT A RUNG ON A LADDER**

- The clubs that have shown large growth have been those that embrace SSD as their primary dance level.
- Those that have offered it as a “partway to Mainstream” generally have **not** shown as much growth.
- That doesn't mean SSD should be the final destination for *every* dancer.
- It's okay to offer dancers opportunities for further growth, but pressure for them to move further up is counter-productive.

**BUT IT'S SO CLOSE TO MAINSTREAM!**

- The SSD program is the CALLERLAB Basic program:
  - MINUS: Do Paso, Thars, Walk Around Corner / SeeSaw
  - PLUS: Hinge, Centers In/Cast Off ¾'s, Slide Thru, Folds, Tags, Scoot Back and Recycle.
- Depending on how you count calls, SSD is only missing about 12 calls from full Mainstream.
- That seems so close! Why not just “workshop” those last dozen calls, and get everyone up to Mainstream not long after graduation?

**LOOK AT IT FROM A BEGINNER'S PERSPECTIVE**

- Adding 12 calls to the “SSD Program” increases the program size by 24%.



- BUT calls like Allemande Thars (and Shoot the Star, Slip the Clutch), Spin the Top, Dixie Style, etc. are often considered the harder calls to teach and to learn. Even Walk & Dodge has someone moving to a vacant position in a way that's NOT a circulate they've seen before.
- When you factor in the increase in difficulty, the full Mainstream program is actually 50% to 60% more difficult than all of SSD.

### 50% INCREASE IS A BIG NUMBER

- And even more: SSD is generally "standard position only", where MS should include more formations and arrangements.
- So going from SSD to full Mainstream is nearly as large as Zero to SSD. (CALLERLAB recommended teach time for full MS is 58 hours.)
- That's the true simplification in the program that allows us to teach SSD list in just 24 hours of class time.
- Moving someone up to full Mainstream is fine – but only as a "continuing education" separate class, taken by just those dancers that **choose** to go beyond SSD.
- Even though "it's just 12 calls", it's a LARGE increase in complexity from the beginner's point of view.

### IN SUMMARY

- SSD really isn't about a list of calls – it's a method for growth.
- At it's heart, SSD is a simpler classes offered more often, combined with the "joy of dance".
- Clubs are often resistant, but those that embrace the methodology have generally shown large growth: Doubling and tripling membership (over a few years) is not unusual.

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**About the Author:** **Barry Johnson** has been calling for 16 years and teaching various levels for the past 14 years. He is past president of the Illinois Square Dance Callers Association and a member of CALLERLAB's Board of Governors. He has been successfully using the SSD program for the past several years.



## COVID-19 RECOVERY

- by Calvin Campbell posted on Square Dance Modules Online Forum for Callers

**Let's talk about what Covid-19 is likely to do to modern western square dancing. Any break in dancing experience will cause people to quit square dancing.** This is more prominent in the early years right after lessons. These dancers are not confident of their abilities and will often feel unable to remember the square dance commands.

Becoming a good square dancer is a process of repeating commands from many different positions and combinations so that the reaction time is automatic. Even experienced square dancers will feel insecure about their dancing. Dancers will feel insecure on the dance floor after even taking a short vacation. It is not presently a recreation where dancers can come and leave at their will.

**This means the first several dances after the Covid-19 break will have to be carefully planned by the callers.** In my opinion, nothing should be called past the first 50 Basics on the CALLERLAB list. Another good place to start is the Social Square Dance list of "basics."

The complexity of the material used by callers will have to be dance routines on the Standard Applications list. **The emphasis will have to be on the dancers being successful and not stressed.** The failure rate should be less than 10%.

**The tips should be kept short.** You will be dealing with many people who have sat in isolation for months. They have not exercised much and probably many of them have gained weight. My recommendation is to go back to using recordings of no longer than 4 minutes in length. Keep the length of the sequences short. Get them back home often. Tell them what good dancers they are.

My recommendation for singing calls is to use no more than two figures and one OBC. All the dancers will need the rest time for their busy brains. Don't push them. Maybe even consider a tip with two singing calls.



**If I were the caller for the first night post Covid-19, I would advise the club to advertise the number of “basics” that will be used.** You are trying to draw in the people who are doubting their skills. The second dance would add maybe half of the Mainstream calls and so on until everyone in attendance is comfortable.

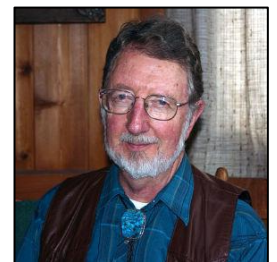
**I would also ask the club if it would be all right to walk through any calls that are causing problems to 20% of the floor.** This applies to the call and the complexity you expect the dancers to know. You are working with cloudy minds. You will need the walk-throughs for some of the dancers.

**How successful this all will be will largely depend on the social structure of the club.** If the majority of the people attending the dance are good friends and if they have remained in contact with their friends through things like Zoom meetings, the response should be good. These dancers have to be the leaders and the hand holders for the dancers that have been isolated and scared to come out.

**It’s my opinion that Covid-19 will force Modern Western Square Dancing to change a great deal.** I expect that if a year goes by, many of the older generation will decide that now is the time to quit square dancing. Some dancers will have found other things to do. **Your job is to entice them back and make it fun to dance again.**

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**About the Author:** Calvin Campbell is a long time and renown square dance caller. He has written numerous articles and several books on the subject and conducted many workshops. The most recent book is “All About Modules”. Cal has been leading Community Dances and Beginner Dance Parties for over 60 years. He is the senior author of the book “Dancing For Busy People” and the author of “Teaching New Dancers”. Cal has been a member of the CALLERLAB Board of Governors for many years and is a Mile Stone Award recipient. This is the highest award CALLERLAB can bestow on any individual. The primary purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding and significant contributions to the field of square dancing.



## **SOCIAL GLUE**

**- by Calvin Campbell posted on Square Dance Modules Online Forum for Callers**

**Square dancing is the bricks of any square dance club, but the mortar that holds the club together is the social bonds.**

**The bonding starts with the first beginner class.** In class, they normally have one leader for several months. The dancers grow to trust the caller to take care of them and to not do dance material that they can’t do. They form a social bond with the caller. They can understand what he or she says. Most dancers prefer to dance to one leader most of the time.

**Then the dancers may be tossed to the wolves after graduation.** In Modern Western Square Dancing, today, the callers move around from club to club. The new graduates are now expected to dance to many different voices and choreography. **We lose a lot of new dancers in the first few weeks after graduation because the new dancers have not bonded with the club members and can’t face the shock of also losing the caller who taught them to dance.**

**Most square dancers will never dance any place, but in their own club.** Only a small percentage will ever go to a big local dance. An even smaller percentage will ever attend a national convention.

**Some dancers quit because of social pressure.** When we encourage clubs to steal the banner from another club, only a few of the club members will participate and some will quit the club rather than to be pushed or shamed into going.



Some facts to think about. **Most social groups are made up of fewer than 60 people. Any more than that number and the social aspects of the club start to suffer.** Sure it’s fun to go to a large dance once in a while, but most people really prefer to dance with people they know and trust.

**For a lot of dancers, modern Western Square Dancing just requires too much commitment.** They don't have the time or energy to keep up with their friends and the frantic pace.

Most dancers think of dances as strings of calls. They don't mind a few surprises, but don't push them too much. **They would rather laugh with their friends than solve the most intricate puzzle any not-shot caller can devise.**

The average dancers do not think about what "basics" are called during a tip. I have watched callers at conventions use the same strings of calls for a singing call dance routine and, if the music is good, the dancers never complain.

The caller also doesn't have to use all the "Basics" on any list. **Keep them moving and the dancers will be happy.** They don't need practice, they need dancing. They want to leave the floor with their friends and who cares what you called.

**At the beginning of the program, dancers also are hoping to dance routines they already know how to do.** They need to warm up their brains. To do this, they need to have a team of people in the square that they trust.

The other dancers in the square need to move in a predictable manner.



**The caller for the evening should use the first few tips to bond with the dancers.** Before the caller can hope to have any success with anything special, you have to prove to the dancers that they can trust you to know what they can dance. The dancers need to become familiar with your voice and with your delivery.

**Between tips, the caller should be out on the floor trying to bond with the dancers.** This is often hard at a large dance. There is just not enough time for the bonds of trust to build up. In smaller clubs you can learn quickly where the strength and weakness is.

Many square dance clubs have special party or theme dances. It's up to the caller to work out any kinks between what the club has planned and what you have planned. **What they have planned is far more important than what you, the caller, has planned.** They are trying to build up the social glue that makes their club successful.

If the caller is going to present any puzzles, it should be done during the middle part of the program. Start and end your program with material the dancers can easily be successful in dancing. I like to announce any tip where the material may be tougher.

Many square dance clubs have food available. **This provides the dancers that do not want to dance every tip a place to go rather than sit in the hard chairs on the sidelines.** The caller can contribute to the experience by keeping the tips short and start the next tip without begging dancers to get on the floor.

Many clubs have dinners before or after the dance. If you are the caller, it is well worth your time to attend these events. If you do attend, be sure you get around to speak to as many of the dancers as possible.

**The goal is to provide as many places as possible for bonding to occur. It's much more important than the squares you call.**

- Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller wearing a mask and ask for money.
- 2019: Stay away from negative people. 2020: Stay away from positive people.
- The world has turned upside down. Old folks are sneaking out of the house and their kids are yelling at them to stay indoors!
- This morning I saw a neighbor talking to her dog. It was obvious she thought her dog understood her. I came into my house and told my cat. We laughed a lot.
- Every few days try your jeans on just to make sure they fit. Pajamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.
- Does anyone know if we can take showers yet or should we just keep washing our hands?
- This virus has done what no woman has been able to do. Cancel sports, shut down all bars and keep men at home.
- I never thought the comment, "I wouldn't touch him/her with a 6-foot pole" would become a national policy.
- I hope the weather is good tomorrow for my trip to the Backyard. I'm tired of my Living Room.

## THE LIGHTER SIDE OF DARKNESS - by Dee Jackins



*Dee is an avid square and round dancer and enjoys writing. She shares the lighter side of some of her experiences, challenges and near disasters as a sight impaired person. See issue #2015-6 for her complete story under "Chatter Close-up".*

**Some days are diamonds, some days are stone.** Waking up in the middle of the night with the biggest thirst going on, yearning for something cold to drink. It was about 3:00 A. M. I crawled out of bed to find a can of juice in the fridge. Heading towards a nearby cupboard where the glasses were, I 'shook' that can with gusto. As I removed the tab, the can exploded its contents straight up towards the ceiling and out, spraying everything in the area, including myself! What a terrible mess to clean up at this hour. Grabbing what I thought was juice ended up being a nice cold can of beer. What a waste! That mistake has never reoccurred - I never shake cans of any kind anymore.

**Another time my oven was not baking properly.** Just too many normal recipes were flopping beyond help. After calling a service center, they suggested I bring in the top element to have it tested. A friend of mine volunteered to remove it and have it checked. It seemed to be working just fine so back home to reinstall this element. As my friend is proceeding to do this, I heard this very loud shattering crash! Then all was silent. "Whoa! What was that?" I asked. Then I heard this very low voice, "I leaned on the oven door a bit too much and the stove flipped over on me. Can you help me get it off?" It had fallen forward and pinned one of his arms underneath. Trying to lift it with both hands didn't work in my favor so I braced one arm against the counter and managed to lift it just long enough to release his arm. Thank goodness he was not seriously hurt. It had flatten him onto the floor across to the dishwasher, with not too much room to maneuver. If these things keep happening, I'm not going to have many friends left.

**Now this is a little bizarre and one doesn't have to be blind for this to happen, just a bit of dozing would set this off.** It was a cold stormy evening last winter when I decided to curl up with a book and relax in my rocker-glider chair. Soft music was playing in the background and the fireplace was glowing. I grabbed a cozy blanket and lined up my rocking footstool just perfect to get nice and comfortable for the next couple hours. I must have nodded off while rocking. The chair must have leaned forward too far because it gently tossed me on to my derriere, causing the footstool to go sailing across the room. Shaking myself to reality, the rocker continued on its forward summersault motion and landed upside down on top of me. What a rude awakening, totally astounded! There have been many 'phantoms' present in my home since Zoom dancing started. I wonder if one of them could have nudged that chair. It's a good thing these rocker gliders are constructed with a lighter oak wood or I might have been in a bit of a quandary.

No damage done, all is well except I sure felt a bit foolish. How did this happen? I had to chuckle. It's not every day one can look up under a chair. What else can go awry? **Till next time - Keep Smiling!**

## KELLY'S KORNER - by Kelly Thompson

*Kelly started square dancing in 2016 after being coerced by his sister. He admits that he would have never walked into the club on his own. He has since found a whole new way of looking at life, a community of new friends and personal confidence that didn't exist before.*

### SET APART TO BE TOGETHER

Over the last few years I have had quite a bit of time to think and reflect on a wide variety of things and most recently to ask myself, **why do I square dance?** What is it about square dancing that interests me and why do I bother? I would not doubt that if these questions were asked of any square dancer, you would get just about as many different answers. **We all have our reasons but I would bet that fundamentally everyone could answer with "To be set apart to be together."**



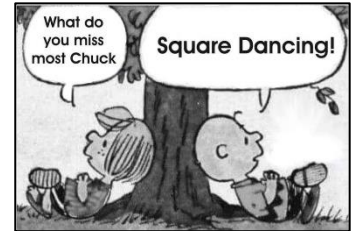
**What does it mean to be set apart to be together?** This is something I saw more than once posted on a sign at a church camp many years ago. I think it means in that setting, to be in a quiet, sanctuary where one can relax and to be with likeminded people. Square dancing of course isn't primarily for relaxation purposes but is with those who share a common interest. It becomes relaxing from a mental perspective but that would likely be considered to be a secondary reason to be set apart. Ultimately I square dance to be included in a group that I can feel comfortable with.



**Square dancing today has some hurdles to overcome if it is to survive. With the pandemic, this could be seen as a time to figure ways over the hurdles.**

**One of the bigger hurdles seems to be that of technology.** It seems the new way of doing things in our society is to immerse ourselves in technology, to the point I would say, we set ourselves apart to be apart. Pandemic restrictions or not, we fell into that situation and probably need to decide to crawl out at some point. Humans need personal contact and with any luck we will see that as a necessity. It may be that with the restrictions, we will see that being pulled apart will ultimately bring us together even better than before.

**Another big hurdle is adjusting the square dance program to meet the needs of more of our dancers.** Some clubs are going to a shortened square dance format called Social Square Dancing. This is a slight change from a beginner program and hopefully more palatable for new dancers and for dancers who enjoy the social aspect of dancing more than the puzzle-solving aspect and complexities of our dance.



**My brief discussions with some have revealed to me that some people are losing hope.** With everything that is going on, many are facing hard situations that likely no one expected. We as square dancers are not immune to those sensations; we likely need to hold onto hope more than others. **Our hope has to be that we will bounce back better than we were before.** The trip from point “A” to point “B” in all likelihood will be a bit rough though.

**We are apart but we need to be together.** Apart doesn’t work. Apart doesn’t work for square dancing, apart doesn’t work for life. We could say together we stand but maybe we should say together we dance!

Just a thought to ponder; if a caller says “square your sets” we all know he messed up but could he be saying we are set in our ways or that we are a bunch of squares? Is that a bad thing? Is being set in an organised program, apart from the problems of the day, together in friendship, perhaps the medicine of hope we need? **Square your sets, not apart but instead to be together!**

## **ARTISTIC EXPRESSION**

**- by Austin Hayward, Thames Valley Dance Club, Woodstock, Ontario**

**We all know that visual art is one way of communicating artistic expression.** Other ways may include photography, videos or using one of the many performing art forms. The arts are an avenue for us to explore our inner desires, our inspirations, and our deepest aspirations.

**Thus dancing, no matter what it’s style, is a form of artistic expression and is widely known as a “natural” form of self-expression.**

Dancing provides the avenue we choose to express ourselves, transcending us into a safe place within ourselves. Here, we can creatively build a sense of belonging, a safe place to let go and truly dance “like nobody is watching”.



Let me try to simplify this art form in reference to our activity.

**When we dance, our bodies movements become the art of expression.** We are trying to tell a story with each step, in essence, trying to express ourselves. Our facial expressions enable us to communicate a message allowing us to vent and express our emotions. **We seldom realize that when we dance, we are expressing an idea or emotion as we release energy and have fun by simply just taking delight in the dance itself.**

In this form of artistic expression, some of us are lured by the impulse to dance more skillfully, becoming intensely expressive. Flowing dance steps and maneuvers, styling and perfecting the timing of our steps to music encourages others who watch to dance themselves. We as dancers are exuding self confidence and self expression. We are releasing physical and mental emotions and communicating them to others by way of our dance forms. **Dancing also allows us to develop new emotions as well as releasing them and thus is greatly beneficial to our mental health.**

Jean-Georges Noverre, a French choreographer of dance argued that “dance is meaningless unless it has some dramatic and expressive content”. He goes on to say that “movement should become more natural and accommodate a wider range of expression”. This should encompass all dance forms.

Due to this pandemic, we have been forced to change and to adapt to a new “normal”. A great philosopher Alan Watts once said, “The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it and join the dance”. What an incredible opportunity we have to learn to think like artists, using the artistic process to dance together and live more productive joyful lives. – See you on the dance floor.

## 52<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL ALBERTA CONVENTION 2021

- Hosted by Edmonton

DEAR DANCERS AND DANCE LEADERS,

### IMPORTANT THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OUR CONVENTION:

1. We want you to get ‘Back to Dance’. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment to do that! All dancers and dance leaders are welcome!
2. If we must cancel due to COVID, you will receive a full refund.
3. If we must cancel due to poor financial viability, you will receive a full refund.
4. Please show your optimism and support by registering NOW, or before June 30, 2021. You will receive our best rates, and we will be able to proceed with planning.
5. Come out and enjoy a free dance Thursday at West Edmonton Mall, attend the Jubilations Dinner Theatre with your friends that evening, try a new dance medium at our intro sessions Saturday, attend a seminar on building our dance programs after COVID, Masquerade Mardi Gras Ball on Saturday, After Party with Live Music on Sunday, and of course, Square, Choreographed Ballroom, Clogging, Contra, and Community Fun Dance.
6. Our webpage: <http://www.communitydance.net/convention2020.html>.



See you across the dance floor,



*Gary & Eileen Smith*

**Chair couple of the 2021 Alberta Convention Committee**

Email: [eileensmith778@gmail.com](mailto:eileensmith778@gmail.com)

Webpage: <http://www.communitydance.net/convention2020.html>

**52<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION 2021**

**ALBERTA SQUARE & ROUND DANCE FEDERATION**



Central Lions Seniors  
Recreation Centre

11113 - 113 St NW,  
Edmonton, Alberta

**SEPTEMBER 3 - 6, 2021**

Information & Registration:  
[www.communitydance.org](http://www.communitydance.org)



Proudly Hosted By: