



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.



RESPECTING NEW DANCERS

- by Claudia Littlefair, Editor

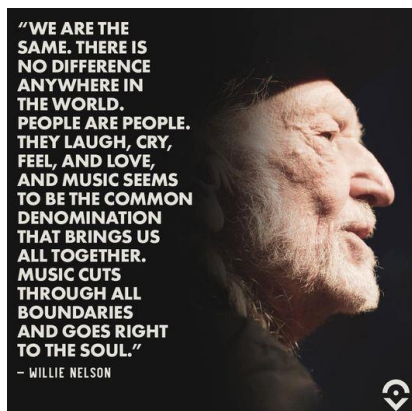
I cringe at the thought of new dancers going to dances outside of their clubs, even those dances that are purposely designed to help new dancers hone their skills. Why? Because there is no control over

what us 'experienced dancers' say or do to these new dancers. I've heard nasty comments like, "You shouldn't be at this dance", or "You can't dance", or "Why are you here?" I've seen new dancers be yanked or dragged by the arm to be put in the correct place, and eyes rolled or looks of disgust directed their way.

If a new dancer hears 25 positive comments and one negative comment or action, they'll likely remember the negative one - forever. And sadder still, is that some new dancers never do come back because of how they were treated at these special dances where they supposedly can hone their skills.

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My husband, Dave and I have been dancing for 30 years, and Dave's been calling for more than half that time. **We recognize that each new dancer is an individual.** Some will take longer to learn the steps, while some catch on right away. Some are more capable of hearing the beat and others have no sense of rhythm. Some need more repetition, others have excellent recall. Some have more self-confidence, and some need extra encouragement and positive feedback. Some can move or hear better, and some have limited hearing or mobility. Some are easily guided, while others stop dancing on the spot when lost in the square. The list of differences is as long as the list of dancers. **But what we've experienced over and over again, is that some of the so-called 'hopeless dancers' turn out to be some of the best dancers, and often become core members of our clubs.**

As experienced dancers, it's our job to respect and support the new dancer regardless of how 'good' they are.

JUST A HUMBLE OPINION

Source: Square Dance News Sheet, Vol 1-No.2, January 1954, Article by Al Berry, Caller

Editor's Note: Even though this article was written 70 years ago its message is still relevant today.

When a person first starts square dancing they are usually very vocal about the fun and enjoyment that they are getting out of square dancing.

However, after dancing for awhile, some of these people begin to add a little more to their remarks with "Gee, that was a good square, but did you notice the way the Drizzabells never even got thru it", or, "My, I had a wonderful evening, except when McGooble got in the same square with us", and so on.

Sometimes it happens the other way around, when some person feels he is being snubbed because of an unconscious action on the part of another dancer. Two partial-squares on the floor need a couple and two from the side, seeing hands raised across the room, head that-away, bypassing the other square without even noticing them. Someone remarks "there they go again – too good for us". You know what I mean.

Before we ever start to say anything about anyone, we should ask ourselves, "Is it going to be detrimental to square dancing?" If it is, then forget it. Because after all, if it's small enough to be forgotten – we should be big enough to forget.

SQUARE DANCE CLUB THRIVES POST-COVID

- by Nancy & Brent Daignault, President, Queens & Jacks, Calgary

Queens & Jacks Square Dance Club in Calgary took the same 'hit' as most clubs did following COVID – we lost about 15% of our Mainstream members. But we have been able to 'grow' back our club by recruiting new dancers.

During COVID we stayed in touch with our club members by continuing to publish a monthly newsletter which instead of featuring square dance events highlighted what club members were doing in their extra free time – their hobbies. During the first summer we met monthly for lunch in a public park, and during the second summer we met for coffee.

As soon as we could – in November 2021 – we started back with lessons to try to get our new dancers from before COVID up to the Mainstream level. We took a hiatus at the beginning of 2022 and then started up again in March. Then we did an unprecedented thing – we held new dancer lessons in May and June of 2022. We had 14 people start those lessons.

In the fall of 2022 we attracted 34 people to try out square dancing during the two free introductory dance evenings that we held – 8 new dancers joined the club. We ran two levels of dancing a night so that we could begin teaching the new dancers the Basic programme and get the dancers who had started in the spring session up to speed with Mainstream.

In the fall of 2023 we attracted over 70 people to try out square dancing. We did this by "hanging on the shirttails" of the Calgary & District Square & Round Dancers Association summer promotions campaign and by running our own promotions campaign in August and September.

Our club promotions campaign consisted of MagnetSign boards, our website and online advertizing - where I look for and post to online calendar and events sites. We benefited from the Intro Hours and an Introductory Dance Party that were sponsored by Calgary & District. This is an example of a MagnetSign board.



Twenty-five people signed up for our lessons programme – including a family of 5 – and 20 of those are still coming out in the third quarter of the season. We have 6 squares out on our lessons night.

Q: 'Officer --- did you see my client fleeing the scene?'

A: 'No sir. But I subsequently observed a person matching the description of the offender, running several blocks away.'

Q: 'Officer, who provided the description?' A: 'The officer who responded to the scene.'

Q: 'A fellow officer provided the description of this so-called offender. Do you trust your fellow officers?'

A: 'Yes, sir. With my life.'

Q: 'With your life? Let me ask you this then officer. Do you have a room where you change your clothes in preparation for your daily duties?'

A: 'Yes sir, we do!' Q: 'And do you have a locker in the room?' A: 'Yes, sir. I do.'

Q: 'And do you have a lock on your locker?' A: 'Yes, sir'

Q: 'Now, why is it, officer, if you trust your fellow officers with your life, you find it necessary to lock your locker in a room you share with these same officers?'

A: 'You see, sir, we share the building with the court complex, and sometimes lawyers have been known to walk through that room.' The courtroom EXPLODED with laughter, and a prompt recess was called.

WHAT WE FORGET TO MENTION

Source: President's Corner - Karen Buchheit, Oregon Newsletter, January, 2024

It is hard to believe that it is 2024 already! And that Mid-Winter Festival is just a few weeks away. It is looking to be a good crowd this year – come join the fun.

A couple of things that no one ever seems to remember and always forget to tell new dancers:

1. **Every caller and cuer sounds different.** They also all have different equipment and set up at a hall differently. Every hall sounds different and EVERY HALL has at least one spot where it is very difficult to hear. BEFORE complaining that you can't hear (or that the caller/cuer isn't loud enough/isn't good/isn't clear/or whatever) try dancing in a different spot in the hall. Also try dancing in a different position in a square. Moving around the hall will let you try out the sound in other spots and you just might find out that you can hear great in a certain corner or in the middle of the hall. You might find that you can hear better as a side or as a head. Example: in our hall I find that I have the most difficulty hearing clearly in the right-hand front corner in the head #1 position and I hear the best when I am in the back center square in the head #3 position.
2. **There are several moves with different types of handholds/hand touches.** Not every move is the same and not every dancer thinks to be easy/quick to release hands if they have not been specifically told to do so as they learn each move. Please remember that it is not always the new dancer who forgets to let go – there are angels who also forget. We all need to remember to let go of hands when we need to do so.
3. **The more we talk to each other in a square or as partners in a round, the less we and our fellow dancers can/will hear.**
4. **The louder the conversations at the edges of the dance floor, the harder it is for the dancers to hear a caller/cuer.**



Going further into this year and as we have the opportunity for more special dances and larger Festivals WE ALL need to pay attention to some things.

1. **Be aware of our own dance style.** Do we each need to adjust our personal style to match with others in a square?
2. **Be aware of who is in the square with you.** Are you in with all newer dancers? Are you in with someone who cannot handle being swung or twirled? If they are wearing a DON'T TWIRL ME badge – OBEY IT! Are you in a square where not everyone is able to move at the same speed? Some squares will not be able to handle some styles of fooling around. YOU as an individual dancer need to be able to be aware if the square you are in at any time can handle someone being a little crazy with their fun.
3. There will be squares in your dancing lifetime that can handle any and all wildness/crazy style/goofing around. There will also be squares where you will have to dance completely by definition with no extra frills/flares/swings/twirls added. **Most of the time, the square you are in will be somewhere between the two extremes.**
4. **Round dancers – if you are dancing with someone who is not your regular partner, please try to adjust your stride to match closer with your current partner.** We should also adjust our personal style in rounds to the level of our current partner.

One of the most important things for everyone to remember and adjust for: we are here to have fun. We might need to adjust our style so that we can accommodate others while those same others might need to adjust their style to accommodate us. Be patient with each other – everyone can have an off day or a move that we struggle with (even after all my years dancing, I have one very simple Plus move that it will take me all night to get right). NEVER, NEVER, NEVER tell someone that they aren't getting it – that is the best way to make sure that someone drops out, never comes back and will be very negative about square/round dancing for the rest of their lives.

We do this to have fun. We need to do our part to help make it fun for those around us. This activity is very hard to do all by yourself.

YOUTH & SQUARE DANCING

Source: FaceBook - Donoca Fouts, Oregon, December 6, 2023

Recently I had someone ask me why I thought our Silver City Square Dance club has attracted and sustained so many youth. Here is a bit of back ground on me...I am a homeschooling mom of 4 of these teenagers. They all love to dance at our club. My 2 older kids joined our club in 2021, my other 2 joined in 2022 and have loved every minute of it.

But how did they get involved?

Not far from our grange hall is a church camp. My kids had close friends that they spent all summer with as camp staff, who also happened to be square dancers. Their friends dragged them to square dancing. At that time there was enough youth for about 3 squares in our club.

Prior to the next fall lessons, another homeschooling parent and I decided to post videos and information on the 2 huge homeschool families facebook pages and we had a significant response. Our club is now bursting at the seams.

I am sharing this with ya'll as a way to hopefully have more successful clubs around our lovely state and promote square dancing further.

Here are a few suggestions to get teens to come to your club...

- It might be a great opportunity for local callers to see if there are any church camps near your square dance clubs. Call them in January and ask them if they would ever be interested in having a team building square dance event for their staff. I encourage you to keep it to the staff in their off hours during the summer because campers do not carry the same enthusiasm as camp staff do. Camp Staff love being silly and have fun doing things they don't normally do.
- Find homeschool families that can advertise on their homeschooling facebook pages!

Here are a few things I've learned from my teens...that I believe has kept our club strong and growing.

Some of these might be things you already know...some things I may share might cause you to feel a bit offended. It is not my intent to be offensive, instead I'm trying to communicate through the lens of our youth.

1. **When new youth come to new dancer lessons, try not to split them up.** I know it's customary for an angel to be with a new dancer as a partner, but this breed of teen does not like to spend the night dancing with "old people". They want to dance with their friends. Instead put a couple of energetic adults in the square with them and since we all know that the women are circulated through the square, eventually they will have an angel as a partner. Allowing the teens to start out in the same square and holding hands with the partner of their choice, lowers their inhibitions and prevents a possible reason why they won't want to come back. This might be a great idea for some adult couples too. My husband stopped attending lessons with me 10 years ago because the club we attended insisted that we could NOT start out in a square dancing as partners with each other. He hated having the lessons with someone he didn't want to dance with, quit the lessons and won't return. Our teens are the same.
2. **Let them try and dance with whomever they want to in a square.** Ya, they will screw up. Yes, they will struggle...and in the end they will be much more willing to have a mixed square with angels who are older, because they will learn that they really don't know much and need help. It will take their arrogance down a few notches by their failures.
3. **Don't put pressure on them to have square dance attire at dances.** Kids just want to have fun, some want to wear petticoats and skirts and collared shirts. Some just want to come and not dress up. There is an added stress of



4. wondering how they look and the possibility of feeling like they have to spend \$\$ on an outfit – even if it is a gently used item. Or wondering if they will be the only teen there that put on the square dance attire and they would then feel stupid and like an outcast. Give freedom for teens to choose to wear their normal street clothes.
5. **Let kids go bare foot if they want to.** Yes, we know they can have their feet stepped on by boots. But it's their problem not the person who is wearing the boots. I don't know why but there are many kids in our club that just prefer dancing bare footed. We don't care, we are just happy they want to dance.
6. **Don't be offended if teens don't want to dance in a square with older adults.** The teens want to dance with their friends and while it is not the code of conduct for 20 years ago...it may be time to change. I promise eventually teens will warm up to dancing with adults, but most feel they have the most fun with their peers. Why?
 (#1) Their peers love to do all the fancy swings, and twirls and grand square to show off moves. Teens don't know which adults they have to worry if they have bad shoulders. Teens also like to dance FAST! "Circle to the left" our teens practically run/skip while traveling in a circle. They don't want to go slow with older adults.
 (#2) Honestly, they are single kids, with lots of hormones, they are looking to dance with their crush. Lets let them.
7. **It might sound crazy...but for some reason most kids hate "do si do" but they love the "highland fling"....let them.** If you put rules telling them that they can't dance this move in a square dance lesson, it will be one more reason why they probably don't want to come back. They love the fancy moves and "do si do" for some reason has a really negative history for kids, and is the butt of many square dance jokes.

Anyway...those are my few thoughts. I hope it isn't offensive and I hope you find these to be helpful in your clubs to grow more youth.

WHAT ARE THE BEST TIMES TO POST ON FACEBOOK IN 2024?

Excerpt from On-line Article by Werner Geyser, Last Updated: November 14th, 2023

For the complete article click here:

<https://influencermarketinghub.com/best-times-to-post-on-facebook/#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20best%20time,from%209%20am%E2%80%933%20pm.>

Operating a business Facebook account is usually very different from how you run your personal Facebook account. You don't regularly upload pictures of your drunken exploits for a start. Nor do you (usually) share multiple images of your baby or child doing cute things. You have a dedicated Facebook business page (and possibly a group), and you make posts that you believe will be of interest to the people who follow you. Some (but certainly not all, hopefully) of your posts may promote your brand and its product.



But unless you are paying for Facebook advertising, it can be hard work keeping your brand visible on Facebook. The organic reach of Facebook business posts is low, thanks to the current algorithm that favors posts made by friends and family. Since July 2023, Facebook's engagement rate for organic posts plummeted down to 1.52% from 2.58%. Therefore you have to do whatever it takes to make your brand visible on Facebook. **One of the best strategies is to post at the best times on Facebook.** There is little point posting when few of your potential customers are looking at Facebook, and

by the time they do come online, your post will be old news.

One way you can find the best time to post on Facebook to your social audience is to use your Facebook Insights. You will need a Facebook page to have access to these. You can gain access to your insights by clicking on the appropriate link at the top of your page.

You want to see when your Facebook fans are online. You can do this by clicking on Posts in the lefthand menu. This gives you a breakdown of when your fans are online, both by day and time. Look for any spikes in the data, indicating the times when your Facebook audience is most active.

Facebook Insights also shows you data about your most successful posts (further down the same page as your audience data). Take note of the posts that show the most engagement. You will be able to see when they were posted. You could consider posting more often at the same times.

What is the best time to post on Facebook?

Unless you pay for Facebook advertising, it can be hard work keeping your brand visible on Facebook. The organic reach of Facebook business posts is low, thanks to the current algorithm that favors posts made by friends and family. One of the best strategies to combat this is to post at the best times on Facebook.



According to Sprout Social research, the best times to post on Facebook are Wednesday at 11 am and 1 pm.

What is the best time to post on Facebook for maximum exposure?

As we discussed in this article, the best day to post on Facebook is Wednesday. And the best times are 11 am and 1 pm. You will get the most consistent engagement on weekdays from 9 am–3 pm. As we saw, people are more likely to take notice of your Facebook posts mid-week, from mid-morning to mid-afternoon. **This probably reflects that people check their Facebook apps during their morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea breaks.**

When is the worst time to post on Facebook?

We saw in this article that the best time to post on Facebook is during the week, particularly on a Wednesday. Surprisingly you are likely to receive most engagement during traditional working hours and the breaks around them. **Conversely, the worst time to post on Facebook is on a Sunday, when you are likely to receive comparatively low engagement.** Education brands perform better than most at the weekend, however. Indeed, Sprout Social found Saturday 5 pm is a peak time for that sector.

How do I get more Facebook likes?

As always, you will get more Facebook likes long-term if you use conventional organic methods – buying likes never does your account any good long-term. Some useful techniques to increase the likes for your Facebook page include:

Plan your Facebook marketing – don't do things ad hoc and random.

- Define your target audience and only actively seek likes from them.
- Create a compelling page that attracts people.
- Promote your page on other channels.
- Post relevant, high-quality content.
- Engage consistently.

How do I know if my Facebook posts are being seen?

You can't know for sure whether individual people see your posts. You can get some general data from your Facebook insights page, however. This will show you page, post, and video data for the mast 28 days. This gives you key metrics for your page and the posts you have made. This will show you which posts had a particularly good (or bad) response. Post Reach shows your basic post reach stats such as impressions, engaged users, consumptions, and video views.

Do hashtags do anything on Facebook?

Although Facebook has never taken to hashtags like some of the newer social platforms, they still have a valuable role to play there. You can search for #-terms in Facebook's search bar, to find posts that highlight that hashtag (although it works imperfectly). Marketers often use the same branded hashtags on their Facebook pages that they do in their other social marketing. It is best only to use one or two hashtags per post, however. Research shows just one hashtag gives optimal engagement.

About the Author: Werner Geyser, Writer: With over 15 years in content marketing, Werner founded Influencer Marketing Hub in 2016. He successfully grew the platform to attract 5 million monthly visitors, making it a key site for brand marketers globally. His efforts led to the company's acquisition in 2020. Additionally, Werner's expertise has been recognized by major marketing and tech publications, including Forbes, TechCrunch, BBC and Wired.

CONTRA DANCE: LINKING THE GENERATIONS

Source: Barbara J. Tuttle, December 7, 2023, New Avenue (www.newavenue.org)

Editor's Note: *There are so many similarities between the contra and square dance communities. Easy to substitute the word, "Square Dancing" wherever "Contra" is written.*

Rooted in early American folk tradition, contra dance has adapted to the times with new tunes and dances, and sometimes, new instruments and gender-free roles.

So many of us live in our silos, divided politically and generationally, communicating through cellphones and social media posts. But in contra dance halls across the country — and in fact, the world — you can find a kaleidoscope of human beings



Contra Dancing in Brooklyn, New York | Credit: John Carroll

of all ages wearing big smiles, moving to live music, twirling, joining hands and changing partners every 40 seconds or so. The whole room moves as one, executing patterns at the direction of a caller.

This is contra dance, rooted in early American folk tradition and revived by young folkies in the 1960s and '70s, many of whom are still dancing. It's a living tradition that has adapted to the times — with new tunes and dances, and sometimes, new instruments and gender-free roles. Contra dance is beginner-friendly, and you don't need to bring a partner.

It's a bit like square dance but starts with long lines down the dance floor, which then move into various patterns. Each dancer starts with a partner, but each person will dance with 30 to 40 people over the course of a 15-minute tune.

Elements of Contra

Many people say that it's the live music that attracts them to contra. But dancing allows you to move to it rather than sit and watch as you would in a concert hall.

"A contra dance can be thought of as a triangle of energy with the three vertices being the musicians, the dancers and the caller," says Beau Farmer, a frequent caller at Tapestry Folkdance Center in Minneapolis. "Magical evenings occur when all three come together, feeding off each other's energy to raise and sustain an atmosphere of fun and joy."

Callers are like the orchestra conductors of contra dance. They're also teachers, walking dancers through the steps before each tune and making beginners feel welcome. And since there are no pre-ordained steps for a contra tune, they call out the steps throughout the music.

A Low Bar to Entry

In the contra world, there's a common saying: "If you can walk, you can dance." All the moves are executed in walking steps, and it's easy to learn the terminology: star, allemande, promenade — like square dance.

"There's a low bar to entry and having fun," says Ted Hodapp, a long-time caller at Tapestry and elsewhere. Unlike learning, say, tango or swing, you can dance almost instantly. Hodapp's advice to first-timers: Come at the beginning, when there's generally a 30-minute lesson that precedes the dance. Commit to the first three or four dances. Then, having learned the steps, "you're home free."

Will Mentor, 65, an artist and professor in northern Vermont and a nationally known caller, advises newbies to attend five or 10 dances. By then, the calls will have become familiar, and you won't have to think so hard. Then you'll know whether it's for you.

Beginning dancers are always given this advice to help them avoid dizziness during spinning: Look into the eyes of your partner. Mentor says, in what could well serve as wisdom for our modern world at large, "In chaos, in a spinning world, stability is in the eyes of the other. They are the constant."

Families, Generations and Communities

The Massachusetts-based Country Dance and Song Society is an umbrella organization connecting folk dance, music and song societies around the world. Their website is a trove of information and resources and includes a listing of the camps they sponsor.

Carl Levine, 62, of Brooklyn, New York, a long-time caller, says, "I think there is nothing more important that CDSS does than the family camp," reflecting contra dance's intergenerational nature. His daughter, Chloe, grew up attending contra camp, and today, at 23, writes songs and performs, backed by musicians with whom she grew up. The Levines were featured together in a StoryCorps interview, "A Family Built on the Dance Floor."

Gaye Fifer, of Pittsburgh, a retired elementary school teacher and well known caller, says, "I took my daughter to her first dance before she could walk, and she grew up going to CDSS family camp every summer. I attribute much of her self-assurance and poise to the dance community and her interacting with people of all ages. She found community at dance camps and continues to create community wherever she goes."

An Inclusive and Safe Environment

Dancers say that a big part of contra's appeal is the safety of the environment. Celia Swanson, 59, an English professor who dances at Tapestry, attended her first dance after a breakup. She said, "It's a place where a single person can experience safe touch."

No alcohol is served at contra dances, making it nothing like a bar scene. Some people have met their mates there, but it is not a singles' market.

It's customary to start each dance with a new partner, women can ask men to dance, and you can dance with a partner of the same gender. It's also perfectly fine to refuse a dance.

These days, as younger dancers take leadership roles, some of the boundaries are stretching. To be sure, there are many traditionalists who prefer "ladies and gents." But some contra communities have moved to non-gendered terms, terms like "larks and robins." It's also LGBTQ+-friendly. Lavender Country and Folk Dancers is a nationwide-network of gender-free community dances and dance camps.

Mentor observes that contra dance is one way to organize social interaction with rules, boundaries and consent. As such, contra dance is a boon for the introverted. It's an opportunity for social connection without pressure to chit-chat any more than you want to.



A Living Tradition: Community for Today

Contra dance may be rooted in early America, but it evolves. As Fifer puts it, "We are not re-enactors."

Celia Swanson, St. Paul, Minn., has made lasting friendships at contra dance. (Photo Credit: Barbara Tuttle). She points out that dance keeps us healthy: physically, of course, and mentally, because you're socializing and learning and remembering steps.



*Matthew and Peggy Strong, from Maine, who visit contra dances when they are traveling, at a dance in Minnesota.
Credit: Barbara Tuttle*

"Where else do you find anything like this?" dancers ask. Unlike so many other group activities, it's not competitive and isn't a spectator sport. "And where else would you see a 20-year-old dance with a 90-year-old?"

Life Impacts

Dancers have no trouble describing how contra dance has impacted their lives. People spoke of finding community and safe touch after a divorce or breakup and finding joy again.

Levine said, "If not for contra dance, I wouldn't have gone to law school." He started dancing at a low point during his twenties. There he found warmth and a comfortable social base, which gave him the confidence to switch careers from special education teacher to labor lawyer.

Linking the Generations

As for the lifelong dance bond with his daughter, Chloe, Levine says, "How totally lovely that I was able to share something with my daughter that is still meaningful to her, and that at the age of 23 she still wants to dance with her 62-year-old father."

Fifer recalls a time when several twentysomethings attended a contra dance weekend. "They did not know each other previously, but connected quickly. After the evening dance, they organized a late-night swing dance. After that, they came and joined a group of adults, hanging out on the porch, visiting and snacking. This in itself was gratifying, since it seemed they actually wanted to be with us!," she says. "After the adults went off to bed, the young folks stayed up for another two hours, singing together," Fifer adds. "Their connections to each other, and to these traditions, made me feel that there was hope for the future!"



Barbara J. Tuttle is a freelance writer in Minneapolis. Her features have appeared in Star Tribune, Denver Post, Wildlife Conservation, the Cricket Media magazines for children and many other publications.

ABOUT SOCIAL SQUARE DANCE (SSD)

Source: FaceBook Page 'Social Square Dancing'

Author Ron Shuping, Caller: I live in an area that the classes are and have been for a long time 0 to Plus! In Sept the clubs start their classes and run until late May or June. This is not enough time to correctly teach people to dance but it is what we have and we have "adjusted". Generally the classes start losing students a few at a time depending on how good the caller is but many get overwhelmed by the continued new calls they are expected to learn each week! By the end of the class those left are not the strongest dancers that you will meet by any means! Many of the new dancers will not go to dances other than class night!

Now lets look at SSD:

- 12 lessons, I give them a break between a few of the lessons so it takes around 15 weeks to complete which is a much less stressful experience! I suggest that they come help out in the next class and we give them dance time to practice the entire list.
- If they go through the class the second time they have NO STRESS and learn the calls completely and become very good dancers by the end of the 2nd class!

Some of these dancers will be happy to just dance SSD for the rest of their time as Square Dancers but others will express a desire to move up. NOTE: Because they had a break in learning their stress levels are very low meaning that they can learn easier. But as they own the basics they can learn the rest of MS in a short time. Give them another break and they can then learn Plus with little or no effort.

Why do we push so hard to get them to a certain level? Do we need a time line? I feel that it is once more the clubs and some callers that just don't understand and are falling to peer pressure!

Author: Shawn Brown, Caller: It seems my last post in this group was in November of 2022. I wanted to take this time to provide an update on the SSD community here in the Tri-State Corner of Pennsylvania, West Virginia & Ohio.

The SSD Community in our Tri - State corner continues to grow, with new dancers joining all the time.

We now have 5 SSD groups, (Including a brand new one, which I will get to in a moment) working closely together, offering lessons at different points throughout the year, making it easier than ever for people to start square dancing at any time. This accessibility is the key to success.

Each group provides SSD dancing on a weekly basis and they come together to put on special dances with traveling callers when the opportunity presents itself.

2023 was a year of progress and a whirlwind of events. With hard work and dedication from dancers throughout our community, we have rebuilt our entire dance community using the SSD program. This has resulted in a significant increase from our pre-COVID numbers.

On Wednesday, January 10, 2024, a brand new SSD club opened its doors in Pittsburgh, PA. **Square One, held its first open house dance and welcomed over 5 squares on their first night. A little over 20 of these dancers were brand new, experiencing our wonderful activity for the first time.** They hope to use this momentum to continue to grow throughout the year.



Attached to this post are photos and video from Square One's first dance on January 10th.

Anyone can make SSD successful if you put in the effort. All you need is a few clubs and callers who are willing to work together, offer lessons multiple times per year and above all else, offer SSD dancing year round for those dancers you graduate.

Thank you to everyone out there who is using the SSD program and making it successful. Let's continue the progress and success in 2024!

2024 CANADIAN NATIONAL FESTIVAL, CALGARY ALBERTA

News Flash!! More floor space has been acquired which raises our capacity to 650 dancers. It's still not too late to register for the wait list. There's plenty of time and the wait list is fluid. Please complete a registration form but do not pay at this time. We will let people know as spots become available.

23rd CANADIAN NATIONAL FESTIVAL



GLENMORE INN & CONVENTION CENTRE
1000 Glenmore Court SE, Calgary T2C 2E6
Hosted by **Alberta Square & Round Dance Federation**
Information & Registration: www.squaredance.ab.ca



STAMPEDE TO CALGARY

JULY 17-20, 2024 CALGARY, ALBERTA