

# TIMES SENIOR

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## COLUMBUS AREA SQUARE DANCE CLUBS

### Friendship set to music

by Mary Anne White

Members of the *Buckeye A2s* square dance club can be found promenading and do-si-do-ing inside the social hall of the Gahanna Community Congregational Church on the second and fourth Wednesdays of every month. Some of the dancers have been involved in square dancing since they were children, while others discovered it later in life as a form of enjoyable exercise and socializing. Whether they are in their 40s or their 90s, the members always look forward to an evening of fun.

Although square dancing is a unique American folk-dance, you can trace its roots from England and France. The square dance in the U.S. began in New England when the first settlers and immigrants from Europe brought with them their various national dances like the schottische, the quadrille, the jigs and reels, and the minuet, to name a few. After a hard week of carving farms and towns out of the wilderness, the settlers would gather in the community center on Saturday evening to enjoy socializing and dancing. Square dancing is strongly associated with the United States, in part due to its association with the romanticized image of the American cowboy in the 20th century, and 31 states have designated it as their official state dance.

Paulette Henry, a *Buckeye A2* member, decided to learn to square dance after becoming a widow. "It was something that I wanted to learn, and it was an opportunity to meet people. I joined a square dance club in Grove City because that's where I lived then. Learning

the steps and remembering the calls help my brain focus."

Henry explained to Senior Times various aspects of square dancing. "There are basically two kinds of square dancing. Eastern square dancing is the traditional style that first arrived from Europe. Western square dancing is now the more popular style."

Henry continued, "A square is made up



Members of Buckeye A2s Square dancing



David and Jamie Sewell

"All the members of this square dance club are like family. We watch out for one another and check on one another because we care about each other. I used to wear a jacket that had a slogan on it: Square Dancing is friendship set to music. That really represents what square dancing is."

Jason Raleigh

the difference between a Caller and a Cuer, Raleigh provided a simple explanation: "Basically, a Caller sings the moves for a square dance. A Cuer only speaks out the dance maneuvers for a round dance." He is a member of the American Callers Association (ACA) and licensed through the Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI) and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) organizations.

David and Jamie Sewell are members of the *Little Brown Jug Square Dance Club* in Delaware, Ohio but were visiting dancers at the Wednesday evening square dance in Gahanna. Jamie recently received the 2024 Honoree Award from the Central Ohio Corporation of Dance Clubs (COCDC) for her outstanding service to Western Square Dancing in Central Ohio. The Sewells enjoy the exercise and camaraderie commonly experienced among the square dancers at the various clubs



Jamie Sewell wearing her western square dance dress

of four couples (eight total dancers) and there can be many squares on the dance floor. You don't need to be a couple to get involved with square dancing. Individuals can be paired with another person while another dancer takes a break. A dance is called a Tip and each one lasts about 10 minutes with breaks between each Tip."

Debbie Kitts of the *Buckeye A2s* grew up square dancing. She recalls square dancing as being part of the fun when she had a family of her own.

"When we would go camping, the adults and kids all enjoyed square dancing. There would be a campfire afterward, and we would make campfire pies. It was always a lot of fun for everyone."

Kitts told Senior Times,

is the smiling entertainer and club Caller for the *Buckeye A2s*. Raleigh started calling in 1992. He is a full-time, traveling, yodeling caller who instructs several beginner through advanced square dance classes each year. When asked to explain

in central Ohio.

Many of the dancers who spoke with Senior Times encouraged people to come to any of the many square dance clubs in the area. Although many dancers

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