

# DANCERgram

February 2023



THIS &  
THAT

... for the latest news in the square and round dance community.

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## Round Dancer Celebrates 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday!



Bob Riley celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 27<sup>th</sup>. His daughter, Carol Mitchell just notified us of this big event. She states “Luckily he is in good health and just as independent as ever. [He] is still in his own home. Round dancing was such a big part of his and my mom’s life.”

To help him celebrate, we would like all of you to send him a birthday card to 2074 SW 13<sup>th</sup> Terrace, Boynton Beach, Florida 33426.

# Round Dance Council of Florida Announces 2023 Officers

The Round Dance of Council of Florida held their annual meeting during the recent Florida State Square and Round Dance Convention in DeLand. The new officers are:

President:	Sandy Sturgis
Vice Presidents:	Judy and Dwayne Barnhill
Secretary:	Earle and Carol Collins
Treasurer:	Ellen Brown and Don Bell



**Sunday, March 12, 2023**  
**1:30 - 2:00 pm**  
**Early Rounds (Ph II & III)**  
**2:00 - 4:00 pm**  
**Squares (MS/PLUS)**  
**w/Rounds**

**Cost: \$7.00 per Dancer**  
**Bring your own water & snack.**

**Mike Gormley - Caller**  
**Susan Wolford - Cuer**

**Arcadia RMZ Hall**  
**3263 NE Hwy 17**  
**Arcadia, Florida**

# Thoughts about Flyers

By Penny Green

Flyers are a very important part of advertising Square and Round dancing. They can be printed, handed out, posted on bulletin boards and the web, Facebook, or Twitter, and emailed. Ever since I started the DANCERgram back in 2007 (16 years ago), I have seen and worked with a lot flyers, and boy have I seen some things!

Below are some things to consider when creating a flyer. You may already be doing some of these things and there may be some you never thought about.

## 1. Creating the flyer

- a. Is there enough contrast between your background and the wording and graphics? Some of the flyers I have seen have a dark background and they use a regular black font for the wording. You can't see the type very well on a background like that.
- b. Be careful what font you use. Select a font that is easy to read; not something with a lot of swirls like *Edwardian Script* or *Calligraphic*.
- c. Don't try to squeeze too much on a page. You only need to show the highlights. If the flyer looks too "busy" some things will be overlooked. You can always put information on the back of the page if you don't have enough room on the front.
- d. I can't stress this enough – PROOFREAD! There are several spell check programs available. I recommend Grammerly. It not only checks spelling, it also checks sentence structure and grammar. If you don't have a program like this, have someone else proof it. Always be sure to use the correct spelling of names and verify that phone numbers are correct. These days, there are so many versions of how to spell a name. Don't assume you know the spelling, i.e. Bill Chesnut does not have a 't' after the 's', Dave Muller does not have an 'e' after the 'u'; Duane Rodgers does not have a 'd' in his last name; my name doesn't have an 'e' before the 'y' in Penny and there's no 'e' on the end of Green. (Sorry callers, but your names are always misspelled when I'm proofing!) Cuer is not spelled with a Q; it might be spelled that way in another country but not in the US.

- e. Include the complete address of where the dance will be. Don't just put the name of the building or put the city and not the state. Your flyers can be picked up at your dance and taken to another dance in another state. Don't assume that your city is the only one with the name it has and everyone will know it. As an example, everyone down here knows where Gainesville, Florida is, but did you know that there is a Gainesville in Georgia, Virginia, and Texas?
- f. Don't forget to include the levels of dance and the start and ending times; break down the time for Squares and the time for Rounds. If someone doesn't do Rounds, they won't want to come for Early Rounds. What is the preferred attire? Will there be refreshments or do you want everyone to bring their own drink and snack? How much does it cost to dance?
- g. Of course, it's good to list the caller and cuer. A picture of each of them is always good to include. Some dancers don't know their names. If they see a picture, they might recognize if they have danced to them before.
- h. Always be sure to add a contact person with their contact information.

## 2. Distribution of Flyers

- a. Mail or deliver a small stack of flyers to the clubs in your area.
- b. Consider posting the information on a community calendar.
- c. In Florida, send a copy to the editor of each of the Association newsletters and ask them to include the flyer in their next issue<sup>1</sup>.
- d. Also send a copy to the editor of the *DANCERgram* for inclusion in the newsletter and posting on the website at [sqdnxfan@gmail.com](mailto:sqdnxfan@gmail.com).
- e. Add the event to the calendar at [www.floridasquaredance.com](http://www.floridasquaredance.com).



shutterstock.com · 666048853

**Did you know** that there is a square dance insurance program sponsored by the United Square Dancers of America (USDA) organization? This is a secondary policy.

**Did you know** any Florida square dance club can participate in the insurance program if they have 100% participation?

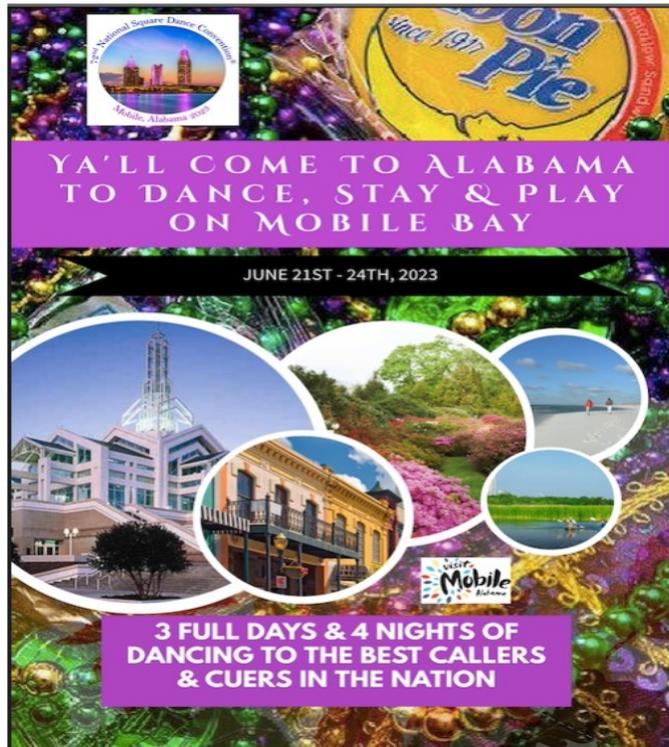
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<sup>1</sup> Email [sqdnxfan@gmail.com](mailto:sqdnxfan@gmail.com) for a list of all the publications in Florida with their contact information and submission deadlines.

**Did you know** if your club does participate in the insurance program, that members of your square dance<sup>2</sup> class can be covered free of charge until the end of the class? At that time, they need to join a club participating in the insurance program in order to continue being covered.

**Did you know** that if you are not a member of a square dance club that participates in the square dance insurance program, you are not covered at any square dance activity?

**Did you know** if you are a member of a club that doesn't participate in the square dance insurance program because you live in a community with a home owner's association, you are not covered on any dancing outside your community i.e. demonstrations, parades, banner raiding, etc.?



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<sup>2</sup> This is for beginner dancers or former dancers that have not danced in years!

# New Year's Eve in Mobile



The first MoonPie Over Mobile celebration was held on December 31st, 2008, and was the idea of then Mobile City Councilman Fred Richardson. Since then, the city of Mobile has been lowering a giant tall lighted mechanical MoonPie that weighs 600 pounds and is 12 feet tall to celebrate the coming of the new year. At the stroke of midnight, the MoonPie drops 317 feet in 60 seconds from atop the 34th floor of the RSA Trustmark building, followed by a laser light show and epic fireworks display.

Earlier in the evening, the World's Largest MoonPie is cut and served to the public in the Courtyard of the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel. This is followed by the Second Line Parade from the Courtyard to the Main Stage led by elected officials. The public is invited to bring a Mardi Gras umbrella and join the procession! This event is attended by over 50,000 revelers every year.



**SPECIAL PRIVILEGES**  
*\$50 Per Person*  
*Limited Availability*

**Your chance for VIP treatment!**  
**Join our Elite Club!**  
**Membership Benefits include:**

1. *Private Club Lounge access at Mobile Convention Center with snacks, coffee & soda.*
2. *Access to Education Lounge at Riverview Plaza Hotel.*
3. *Reserved priority seating at all events: Opening & Closing Ceremonies, Bid Session, Keynote Speech, Organization Round Table, and Fashion Show.*
4. *Front Row seating at Wednesday Night Special Event Three on A String Dinner/Show (with paid admission).*
5. *Express Check-in line at Registration.*
6. *Priority boarding and seating on bus tours (with paid admission).*
7. *Priority service in buffet lines at convention center.*
8. *Guided tour of NEC Archives by NEC member.*
9. *Ten free tickets at Ways & Means (\$10 value).*
10. *Exclusive Souvenir!*
11. *Special ELITE Badge Ribbon providing Recognition, Friendly Smile, and Thank you from every Team Mobile Member. 😊*

**Register online at [www.72nsdc.com/elite](http://www.72nsdc.com/elite)**



Will this be your first National Convention?

Check out our first timers guide at <https://www.72nsdc.com/first-time/>

Follow us on FaceBook by joining our public group 72<sup>nd</sup>  
National Square Dance Convention®

Welcome to the 72<sup>nd</sup> NSDC! Please take a few minutes to  
watch our Welcome video. You can find it at

<https://youtu.be/A8C7eX7Gi6k>

Have you read the most recent National Squares E-  
Magazine?

[Click this link to find all of the E-Magazines related to the 72nd NSDC.](#)

<https://nsdcnec.com/national-squares-e-magazine/>

## **Elmer Sheffield Dance**

On December 20, some 25 callers<sup>3</sup> and cuers<sup>4</sup> met in Tallahassee with about ten squares of dancers to honor long time caller Elmer Sheffield and his wife Margie. Many of you have danced to Elmer either at a Blue Grey dance in Lake City or the NEFSARDA Fall Festival a few years back or at a state or national convention. For most of the last 50 years Elmer has called around the country. He also recorded square dance songs on a couple of labels before creating ESP records.

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3 Bob Poyner (FL), Tom Miller (AL), Lenny Newberry (FL), Mark Fetzner (FL), Tim Tyl (TX), Bill Chesnut (FL), Don Bachelder (MA/FL), George Lavendar (GA), Elmer Sheffield (F), Dave Viera (F), Daryl Lipscomb (OK), Tony Oxendine (NC), Wade Driver (TX), Rusty Willoughby (AL), Jay Henderson (ID), Ronnie Langley (AL), Chris Burchfield (FL), Daryl McMillan (AL), and Larry Letson (IN).

4 Sandy Sturgis (FL), Margaret Newberry (FL), Michelle Vieira (FL), and Susan Snider (FL).

Elmer has had a Christmas dance at the Capital Twirlers in Tallahassee for a number of years. He has brought out part of the ESP band and the club has done a big dinner as part of the evening. Elmer has been dealing with a couple of health issues so the club decided to make Elmer and Margie the focus of the party. John and Libby Penrod reached out to caller Darryl Lipscomb and he arranged for callers from all over the country to attend. We honored a man who has dedicated a great portion of his life to our activity and made many callers and dancers happy with the music that he has released for us to use. We hope that Elmer can fight through his health problems, continue to keep Margie straight and keep putting out that great ESP music. If you were there last month you felt the love for the Sheffield family. If you weren't there it is hard to describe. Stay safe, enjoy dancing, look for new dancers and visit the clubs whenever you can. We will be watching for you in a square.  
Bill & Mary Chesnut

Reprint from NFSARDA *Grapevine* – January 2023

## **Mike Hogan on Marketing**

I've spent some time over the past few months asking two questions of co-workers and acquaintances who know very little about square dancing: if you and your partner decided you want to take square dance lessons, how many classes would you expect to take before you could go to square dance, and how much would you expect to pay for each lesson? When I can, and only after I have their answers, I describe what taking square dance lessons entails. All were surprised at how long it takes, and how little it costs. We are used to how we do it, so maybe their answers will shock you.

Of the 23 individuals I've asked, the average number of classes they expect to take before they can attend and participate was 6.6. The most common answer was 5. The lowest number was 4 and the highest number was 12. I'll save what they think it would cost per lesson for a later article but suffice it to say they expect to pay substantially more than we are charging. There was an interesting trend as well: the older the respondent, the longer they were willing to stay in class, but the less they would pay.

One of those follow up discussions was with 28-year-old woman named Hailey. I learned several things from her. The number one benefit she was looking for was to have fun. She would never commit to 20 weeks of lessons. She does not want to join a club whose average member is 40 years her elder. She expected class to be held in a church, dance studio, or gym. She would not take class at a senior center. She would not be surprised or offended that at some point in the evening there was a dance tailored for dancers who could do more than she could. Finally, if she enjoyed it enough to stay in the hobby, she would want to

learn even more. Our lesson product is 20 to 50 weeks of class before the student can participate in a dance, often given in senior centers and basements, by 70-year-old callers, and clubs whose average member age is 70+. Hailey won't be taking lessons.

The fix is the creation and support of an entry program built around what the beginner wants and expects, not what serves our club best, or our personal dance preferences best! Before we turn our world upside down, perhaps now is the time for CALLERLAB, or The ARTS, or The USDA to fund professional research to determine what the beginner actually wants and expects. A sample size of 23 is too small to validate its accuracy. Such research would tell us, by demographic, how long they would stay in lessons before expecting to go to dances, how much they think it costs, if they would care if there was a Mainstream or Plus tip held during the dances programmed for them, if they would naturally seek out more material, if they expect to dance in a basement or a palace, and so on. Every one of us has an opinion on these topics. It's likely that none of us are 100% accurate!

Until more in-depth research is available, I'm going to draw only three conclusions from my research which is: Beginners want to have fun! Beginners expect to be able to attend regular dances after six weeks of class! Beginners are resistant to committing to 20 weeks or more of class.

Currently the two shortest to teach programs recognized by CALLERLAB are the Basic program and the Social Square Dance program (SSD). Both are estimated to take 12 weeks to teach. Can we use one of these programs for beginners? Do we need to create an even shorter program? Either way, how would that effect my Mainstream or Plus club?

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## **The United Square Dancers of America's Zoom Series Social Media Committee Proudly Presents**

### **Beyond the Dance Floor Dancing**

**Dancing** – We all miss dancing! Just when we thought we were getting back on the dance floor some of our plans have once again been challenged — not completely ended, but revised. The great news is how well the square dance community all over the World has adapted to and benefitted from the challenges we've been facing. How have we benefitted? Remote networking platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom have introduced us to new

friends and dance experiences we might never have enjoyed before — from Zoom dance sessions with international participation to opportunities to participate in State, National and International dance events, conventions and workshops.

In October of 2020 the **United Square Dancers of America** — USDA — your National dancers' organization, introduced a monthly series of web-based programs via Zoom to support clubs on the business and marketing end of our activity. The programs were used to introduce more dancers across the country to who/what USDA is, the programs and services we provide, and a way to keep square and round dancing in the forefront of people's thoughts even if they aren't able to get together on the dance floor. Since the introduction of the initial workshops, topics have evolved to include Marketing, the SSD dance program, Social Connections and the recruitment and retention of callers. We've been lucky enough to partner with CALLERLAB on several of these programs and look forward to partnering with other national organizations for future program offerings. We've had participation from dancers and callers from all over the world, sharing ideas, program guidelines and coping strategies

**Beyond The Dance Floor** – It takes a lot of effort and organizational skills to keep our favorite activity alive and USDA is here to help. From bylaws to event planning, club officer duties, promotion, communications, newsletters, youth and handicapped programs – this series is designed to help groups across the country build and grow your clubs.

**Want Direct Notification of the Next Session?** Watch your email, our website and Facebook for links to the actual, **FREE** workshops. If you would like to be added to our email notification list send us your name and email address to [Education@usda.org](mailto:Education@usda.org).

**For more information or to check on scheduling updates, please contact us at:**

USDA Online Education: Bonnie Abramson, Chair – [OnlineEducation@usda.org](mailto:OnlineEducation@usda.org)

Or visit our Facebook page and join our Facebook group

<https://facebook.com/groups/314405916617> (United Square Dancers of America – USDA)

**Saturday, October 16, 2021 - Title: USDA's Insurance Program** - Faculty: Elizabeth & Eddie Sanders, USDA Insurance Director, Stephens, GA  
Description: Information about USDA's Insurance program, including who qualifies, how it works and what is covered. During the program Elizabeth will review the new rates for 2022 as well as how local,

**Saturday, November 13, 2021 - Title: USDA's 501(c)3 Group Exemption Program** - Faculty: Jim Maczko & Patty Wilcox, 501(c)3 Group Administrators, San Diego, CA; Pat Inglis, 501(c)3 Group Renewals, Stone Mountain, GA

Program Description: Discussion and overview of the USDA's 501(c)3 Group Exemption program, including how to apply, what are the requirements, what are the benefits and why should groups apply. Once in the group, what are the requirements to maintain your status? Session will also cover USDA's new Associate Member category which allows individual clubs to join USDA and take advantage of the program.

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#### Inspirational Quotes from Ed Foote

"A day without laughter is a day wasted." ...Winnie the Pooh, cartoon character

"Joy increases as you give it." ...Norman Vincent Peale, minister & author

"God prefers kind atheists over hateful Christians." ...sign on church billboard

"Anyone who has the power to make you believe absurdities has the power to make you commit atrocities." ...Voltaire

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better." ...Maya Angelou, poet

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## Smooth Dancing

The most commonly used call in modern western square dancing is probably the least understood for dancing comfort. The call **RIGHT AND LEFT THRU** dates back to our traditional days and has easily been around for more than one-hundred years but is so plainly defined by CALLERLAB as a *Right Pull By* and *Courtesy Turn*; that is the nuances of how the call is danced have disappeared.

...we start with two facing couples, gently shake hands, the call Pull By is mis-named, and it is a pass by without pulling or yanking on anyone.

As you start to pass by, Boys start extending your left hands behind the dancer you are passing. Girls use your left hand resting in his and begin the Courtesy Turn action right way. Let's talk about the Courtesy Turn, Girl's left hand resting in Boy's left hand. Boy's right hand should be on the Girl's shoulder blade, it offers on consistent place for the man to rest his hand. Be sure to

guide with the boy's left hand with a slight pulling action – do not push with the right hand.

Where the call often goes wrong, is the dancers gripping too hard for the initial Right Pull By, this will cause one dancer (usually the Girl) to be pulled away from their partner, making the Courtesy Turn almost impossible. Another place is the Boys failing to place their right hand on the Girl's shoulder blade. They might let their right arm hang limply causing a smooth movement to become clumsy and awkward looking. In some cases, the Boys allow their right hand to wander around the Girl's back, maybe trying to find a safe place to rest their hand for the turn, but it is anything but courteous. While some teachers advocate for the Girl to place her hand behind her for the boy to make contact there, this also tends to be a bit clunky, fishing for hands while asking the Girl to move her right hand forward for the Pull By, then behind her back, then forward again for the next call.

Here is a link to a teaching video of Buddy Weaver's approach to learning right and Left Thru

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dluncfplOjc>

Note to Callers: dancers will learn to dance this call only as smoothly as you teach it. You only get the first chance to teach it right, if you fluff that, the dancers will have either started to master doing it wrong or will perpetually struggle on an otherwise easy call. Watch out for the Girls appearing to turn away from their partner on the Courtesy Turn, it could be the right hand grip is too strong on the Pull By, especially by the Boys.

Second Note to Callers: it is advisable to wait more than a few weeks before introducing this call to new dancers. As Scott Brown has said (paraphrasing) the call places an anchor in dancers' minds, particularly Boys, that after a Right Pull By there is a left faced turn coming next. This makes it difficult for dancers to learn Square Thru where the boy pulls by with the right but does a right face turn. Many experienced callers teach Square Thru weeks before introducing Right & Left Thru. It is a logical approach to teaching square dancing. Just Remember to teach properly and with the nuances of how the call is danced, the first time.

Here is the link to the CALLERLAB Teaching Resource

<https://teaching.callerlab.org/basic-patr-1/right-and-left-thru-definition/>

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## Mike Hogan on Marketing

### Promoting Square Dancing

I'll be writing about the 4<sup>th</sup> P: promotion in the next several articles. I could write books on this topic, but I'm limited to around 600 words per article, so most of 2023's articles will be on this topic.

Google defines Promotion as follows:

1. Activity that supports or provides active encouragement for the furtherance of a cause, venture, or aim.
2. The publication of a product, organization, or venture to increase sales or public relations.

Google also says: "Promotions refer to the entire set of activities, which communicate the product, brand or service to the user. The idea is to make people aware, attract and induce to buy the product, in preference over others."

There is a process every business must go through, regardless of the product or service they offer, to attract and induce consumers to buy from them: The Marketing Funnel. Drive awareness and image with a mass amount of people first. A smaller number will become interested in the product. A smaller number of those will make the purchase. It all starts with building awareness.

The only research on Image and Awareness I'm aware of was conducted by Starworks research firm funded by CALLERLAB, and specifically the CALLERLAB Foundation, about twenty years ago. They summed up the state of our activities image as follows.

#### Image

"Square dancing has an image problem in the general public, particularly among those in the targeted empty nester Baby Boomer age group. This target population sees square dancing as out of date, country oriented, for hicks and hillbillies, using old-fashioned music and patronized by senior citizens in fluffy dresses with big hair, big belts and RV's. Most people say they are familiar with square dancing, but their familiarity is with traditional square dancing, not with modern western square dancing. As a result, their image of square dancing is strongly influenced by the traditional square dancing and does not reflect the realities of modern western dance." Starworks

Let's take apart what their focus group participants thought about our image. Is square dancing out of date? Is it country oriented? Do only hicks and hillbillies participate? Do we use old fashioned music? Are we patronized by

senior citizens in fluffy dresses with big hair, big belts, and RV's? Opinions are like noses; everybody has one.

Out of date? It depends. If your caller walks, talks, acts like they are over seventy years old, then yes – outdated. If your caller still plays music from 45 rpm records, then yes – outdated. If classic country and bluegrass are the only genres of music your caller uses, then yes – outdated. If your club requires ladies to where the traditional square dance dress with petticoats then yes – outdated. If most of the men in your club still wear a cloth tie with a clasp, then yes – outdated. Understand that outdated is subjective. I'm not sure how a hick or hillbilly is defined, but I'm guessing it's not good. I personally know a pilot, an engineer, a truck driver, a receptionist, a scientist, and folks from many other work categories that square dance. Clearly the diversity in education, income, and lifestyles of our dance population would indicate square dancing is not “for hicks and hillbillies.”

Square dancing has changed many of the “image” items over the past several years, at least many clubs and callers have. Very few callers use 45 rpm records. The vast majority use software written specifically for managing and playing square dance music and are using laptops or tablets. There is nothing wrong with classic country and bluegrass, but callers have the availability to, and many use, music from almost every genre. The movement away from traditional dance dresses, petticoats and cloth ties is clearly evident on almost any dance floor today. So, in my opinion, square dancing is not outdated, but most who don't square dance still think it is. We can fix this.

Next month we'll look at Starworks research results about awareness. Have a great month!

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## **The Big Picture by Buddy Weaver**

In square dancing today, there is one question asked more than any other – are you successful with SSD and if so, how are you doing it?

Let's face it; while the SSD – Social Square Dance program is gaining traction and popularity, it is still new to most of us in the square dance world. American Square Dance publication is a strong proponent of the SSD program. As publisher, I believe the propagation of Social Square Dancing and ultimately the growth of square dancing happens through education. This month's feature is pragmatic teaching from someone who is successful with the SSD program.

For the first time in square dance history, we have the strongest principals in our activity firmly behind a new program that has only one purpose – growth of square dancing. These leaders, many are veteran callers who are no stranger to meeting challenges are a willing resource to everyone in the general public wanting to learn how to build Square Dancing in their own area.

It is a great pleasure to feature one of our veteran leaders who introduces us to a successful SSD program. Here is Deborah Carroll-Jones on “How I Employ SSD”.

I have been teaching Square Dancing in the Metroplex for the last 10 years. I also taught classes and workshops on the west coast for 20 years before that

Most of our programs have remained fairly stagnant for the last 40 years with minor changes here and there. The Social Square Dancing Program (SSD) is the first of its kind to come along in decades, AND it is (MY OPINION, MY ARTICLE) THE BEST TOOL TO REVIVE THIS ACTIVITY THAT THE PANDEMIC ALMOST KILLED.

The SSD program was developed using those calls most called in the CALLERLAB Mainstream program. It consists of what the majority of callers call on a regular basis to the majority of their dancers, even though the dance/club may be identified as “Mainstream”.

I have been employing SSD for teaching classes and calling dances because it’s proved to be the best vehicle for getting people on the dance floor and into the club. It is not without its hiccups, so I have made some adjustments which allow my students the time they need to assimilate the calls. I also provide an extra session to boost morale, confidence and give quick exposure to those Mainstream calls not included in SSD.

I would LOVE for SSD to be a pure stand-alone program here in the Metroplex, and while many folks, callers and some clubs like the “concept in theory: they are reticent to give up what they have survived. The word “compromise” is valuable here and it is what I have done.

So...here’s how I employ SSD and have been rebuilding the base population of our dancers. SSD suggests 3 classes a year at 12 weeks each, which means opening up enrollment for new dancers more than once a year; only having the option to start once a year was a marketing problem.

I have found 12 weeks is not enough time for the dancers we attract to learn and be even partially comfortable with the material. But asking folks to commit to more than that at first has a negative impact; folks these days are not inclined to invest time the way we did 40 years ago. Therefore, I start with a

class of 14-15 weeks. This takes some of the pressure off ME, as the instructor, to be absolutely certain we get all the SSD calls taught before time runs out! AND, it means that if we have “one of those nights” when learning just doesn’t occur, we can back off and make it up the following week.

If the class starts in September, we go 14 – 15 weeks (depending on the calendar) and then graduate as SSD. At that time, we’re deep into the holidays and we go dark, except for any club dances.

In January, we come back but NOT with a new class for beginners. We have what I call a “Cobweb Class.” This 8-week class is open for any experienced or newly graduated dancers who wish to have additional floor time 0 it’s to dust away those cobwebs, increase confidence and present (quickly) one or two calls per class that complete the Mainstream program so they can go visit other clubs in the area. ALL OF MY STUDENTS ENROLL IN THE Cobweb Class because they are already hooked, they’re club members and they appreciate the safe environment to learn/practice.

This transitional workshop period is CRUCIAL to my success. Most of our dancers have joined the club after graduation, but then with a break of 2+ weeks, they get out of the habit of attending! This is the gateway.

As the new dancers are assimilated into the Texas Reelers, the club dances are called purely at SSD. When a Mainstream call has been presented in the Cobweb Class, I have the choice to also include it at the regular club dance, IF I so choose. If there is a particular call I’d like to use at that dance and haven’t taught it, I do a quick run through first. SSD NEVER LIMITS ME from calling/using whatever I want!

After the Cobweb Class ends, we immediately start another SSD class. The ones who just graduated previously are encouraged – actually they’re expected – to return and serve as Angels ... plus, they’ve been actively involved in recruiting. The spring SSD class also runs 14-15 weeks, followed by the 8-week transitional workshop class (which we call “Summer Fest” but is a cobweb class,) which takes us through the end of July. At that point, we have no classes for the month of August.

So to recap ...

1. I increase the suggested class duration from 12 weeks to 14-15.
2. Dancers are graduated and assimilated into the club at that time.
3. An additional 7-8 week workshop is offered for all grads to build confidence and show the remaining Mainstream calls.
4. Dances can be subtly adjusted during this – if needed – to include some of those calls. Two classes are offered per year, one in the spring and one in the fall which opens or marketing opportunity.

5. SSD, with its shorter program of the most popular Mainstream calls, gives me plenty of material to keep all dancers engaged and entertained.
6. Taking a month off gives the club and the instructor a much-needed break from classes.

The class is the beating heart of the club. If the hearty isn't kept vital, healthy and strong, the body will not survive. SSD gives me enormous flexibility to provide the "magic" of Modern Western Square Dancing while realizing our world now requires less time in lessons in order to be a full-fledged Square Dancer.

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## **Helping Hands by Buddy Weaver**

### **Let the Public See**

*"Square dancing, what's that?"* A typical impression given by non-dancers and one which must be smartly answered in order to transition this person into a square dancer. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this is by sharing the message of our activity through demonstrations and exhibitions.

Think of an exhibition or demonstration as an opportunity to sell square dancing. When selling something, you must first consider your buyers – *your audience*. Where can you find potential dancers? Mutual benefit organizations like homeowner associations, parent/teacher organizations, fraternal groups, retired armed forces, firefighters, state employees, etc. All of these groups have regular meetings and most offer social functions where they are looking for entertainment. Sometimes these groups are leading a fund-raiser where square dancing as a demo and audience participation would be exactly what they are looking for.

Thinking back to some of the most well received demonstrations and the Elks Lodge Fundraiser for Handicapped Children's' Fund pops to mind. A western themed event where a country music band has us doing a square dance demo during their break that included audience participation. The folks in attendance were so into square dancing that we couldn't get them to sit down when we were done.

Another great exhibition took place at a military post exchange. Not only active duty folks who were looking for something new to do in their new station, but also lots of retired service personnel. The latter is a great group that really takes to square dancing.

*“We tried it once and it was too difficult.”* A good suggestion when displaying the activity in hopes of drawing others into it is to keep it simple. **Don’t flub the opportunity to sell square dancing by displaying the latest, greatest, and most difficult.** For example: the call RELAY THE DUCEY might get a kick out of the dancers but to the non-dancing audience, it has lots of moving parts and can easily look too difficult.’

One of the most successful dancing demos we have done was having our beginners dance at the street fair exhibition. These folks had been in class about seven weeks so they were comfortable with only a dozen or so calls. They had not been around square dancing long enough to have expensive costumes, so they wore clothes that looked like everybody else in the audience. They looked like ‘one of us’. There were no kicks or awkward twirls. There was the initial nervous feeling of demonstrating their newly acquired skills in front of hundreds of people, but the nerves quickly became smiling and laughing. Most surprising of all, many of the audience were the friends and neighbors of our students who came out to watch them doing this “square dancing they’ve been raving about.” We had the largest spectating audience ever and our next class (which started two weeks later), had more than forty new students who were at the square dance demo.

*“We always thought it was hillbilly music and hokey.”* With great credit to the entertainment industry, many people equate square dancing with barns, dancers jumping around while clapping, and a banjo with fiddle along with some guy on a hay bale yelling out calls. Those of us in square dancing know that can’t be further from the truth which is why our square dance demonstrations can be the best way to overcome typical impressions of non-dancers.

Starting with the music our caller (if available) should be using music that has been produced this century. Eschew the vinyl records and any of the music from vinyl records. Today’s music has production values and instrumentation that compares to vinyl record music like a High Definition does to a black & white TV. Be careful you don’t go to an extreme in the other direction when it comes to square dance music. Sometimes in an effort to impress the audience, the caller uses music that is so far removed from a danceable beat or so musically busy that the dancers can’t dance or worse, there are singers in the mix with explicit lyrics. There are a few who are using songs that have objectionable, suggestive or even offensive lyrics where the user is clueless. Not sure about explicit lyrics? When in doubt, throw it out.

Sometimes the caller may think singing call lyric is funny when it’s just plain inappropriate. In a closed dance setting, a caller may casually use a singing call that glorifies some behavior that folks may find offensive and in this closed setting, a dancer might make the caller aware of this so as to avoid upsetting

dancers in the future. However, in a **demo or exhibition, here won't be a second chance to make a good first impression.** Care must be taken with music used at a square dance exhibition. Watch out for lyrics, either in hoedown music or singing calls that is not okay for use with general audiences.

Recently a reader's comment was published remarking that the best demons had the caller using singing calls only because they felt patter calling sound more like a drill Sargent barking orders at the dancers. There is a lot of experience to show that is true. **Singing calls that are popular songs in recent decades or heard on the radio not too long ago are a great way to connect with a listening audience.**

Some forty-years ago, the song "*The Devil Went Down To Georgia*" was popular on country radio and one of the country stations heard it done as a singing call at a square dance demo. The station was quick to get that caller into their studio to record the singing call and begin playing it mixed with their play list. It made square dancing part of the country music mainstream and significantly helped get people in the door for the next<sup>4</sup> class.

Demonstrations often work in one of two ways. First, as a "soft sell" to the general public a wide broadcast of the positivity of square dancing that has no specific outcome other painting a favorable picture of our activity. A great tool for long term marketing, where the general public has a good feeling about square dancing just outside of direct view so they are more likely to join a beginner class at some time in the future. The second way an exhibition can be used is to recruit non-dancers into a beginner class starting within a week or two of the demonstration. Dancers: dress attractively but not expensively. Remember, we're selling a reasonably priced activity, Callers: call symmetrical, eye-catching patterns that encourage the participants to have a good time but to dance smoothly. Have a talk with your exhibition group beforehand and impress upon them the importance of teamwork, of dancing together to the music and of avoiding the spins, twirls, and flourishes that may feel like fun but usually present an unattractive picture.

Let the public dance. Your visits to the supermarket have undoubtedly put you in contact with those store employees who are passing out bite size samples of a new cheese spread hot hors d'oeuvres or perhaps a miniature ice cream cone. The purpose, of course, is to get you to taste the product, be sufficiently lured to pick up a package or jar of the product and take it home with you. "Sampling" in square dancing works in much the same way. You want to say to the non-dancer, **"Here, sample what square dancing is all about. You can't dance? Nonsense! Here, let me show you simple it is".**

Supermarket food sampling takes into consideration that a first you may be skeptical. How many times we've watched people moved by the give-away table,

shaking their heads, not wanting to be talked into trying something they might not like. Have you ever noticed how good the product looks? How great the smell? Take a page from the book of merchandising and if you are going to give a sample to the non-dancer, make certain that it bite size and not a whole meal. If through one of the local churches or the PTA or under the auspices of your club, you put on a one-nighter, don't try to teach everything in the book in a first taste test. Do a dance of recruitment, the purpose of which is to woo the individual to taste the sample. *"There, wasn't that great? That's what square dancing is all about. Come, join our new class and get in the fun."*

A few weeks ago, thirty-two university students asked to come by the local beginner class to learn more about modern western square dancing so that it could be part of a production they were staging. The decision was made to take a tip to get the university students up on the floor with class and angels. Here is how one tip went.

- Got everyone in circles of eight people.
- Circle Left and Right just asking them to dance to the beat.
- Forward and back counting the steps for them and adding "into the middle with a cheer" as they went along.
- Circle Right now drop hands and go single file. Keep going two people side-by-side. As you are going, place the Man on the inside, if you are two Ladies together, the lady on the inside **is now dancing the Man's part.**
- Promenade
- Home Position
- Heads identified and Circle Left then the same for Sides
- Heads Right Hand (Left Hand) star
- Face partner, Grand Right and Left coming back to partner then Circle Left or Promenade
- Lastly, Allemande Left

One tip and a great taste of square dancing. By request, a second time around with the students was done this time using a singing call ("Ramblin' Man") and the same calls they already learned.

In closing, start planning. If you only had moderate success with past recruiting programs, change your tactics. As a club, try something different. If it's going to consist of a lot of work in order to generate a lot of joy, let only the joy show.

(From Bob Osgood and Buddy Weaver.)

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## **Social Square Dance by Barry Johnson**

Last month, we started reviewing the fundamental basis of the Social Square Dance program: if a club offers shorter, simpler lessons more times per year, they will grow their membership faster. Offering lessons twice a year instead of once per year makes a big difference, of course, but there is much more to the SSD advantage than just that.

Real world experience shows us that the SSD program produces improvement in three important areas: recruitment of new dancers, the percentage of dancers that complete lessons, and the percentage of new dancers that remain active with the club after the first year. Why is this?

First, recruitment: Think of the difference between making a 12 week (90 day) commitment versus a commitment of 20 or 30 weeks. If you don't know if you could enjoy the activity or not, you would be more likely to accept a 90-day commitment instead of one that is 4 or 6 months long. But even more important is the starting date for the next round of lessons: If another set of lessons begins very soon after the previous one, then the newly graduated dancers (who are proud of their success and excited about the dancing) will be able to bring their friends to the next set beginning "in a just few weeks!" Your newest dancers will be your best recruiters, and the immediacy of the next set of lessons turns out to make a big difference. New dancers can share their fun with their friends quickly, instead of waiting for several months.

Next, graduation: the shorter, simpler set of lessons means that there are few cases of people falling ill, getting too far behind and dropping out. It also results in few cases of new dancers being "burned out" and overwhelmed by too much complexity. There may also be some dancers that unwillingly do need to drop out of class, and others may benefit greatly from going through the class again. Those dancers are much more likely to rejoin the next round if "it starts in just a few weeks" instead of hearing "come back next year".

Next month, let's talk about how the SSD program improves the retention of new dancers as active members within the club.

Link to CALLERLAB's SSD web page

<https://callerlab.org/dance-program/social-square-dancing/>

## All Things Considered by Ed Foote

### TRAVEL SCAM WARNING

Because of the heavy traveling many square dancers do for weekends, festivals and conventions, I thought it would be appropriate to re-print an article from a local newspaper. While we have all heard about various scams, I had never heard of this one before. Here is the article:

You arrive at your hotel/motel and check in at the front desk. Typically when checking in you give the front desk your credit card (for any charges to your room). You go to your room and settle in. All is good.

The hotel receives a call and the caller asks for (as an example) room #620, which happens to be your room.

The phone rings in your room. You answer and the person on the other end says the following: "This is the front desk. When checking in we came across a problem with your charge card information. Please re-read me your credit card number and verify the last 3 numbers on the reverse side of your charge card"

Not thinking anything wrong since the call seems to come from the front desk you oblige. But actually, it is a scam by someone calling from outside the hotel,

They ask for a random room number, then ask you for your credit card and address information. They sound so professional, that you think you are talking to the front desk.

If you ever encounter this scenario on your travels, tell the caller that you will be down to the front desk to clear up any problems. Then, go to the front desk, or call the front desk and ask if there is a problem,

If there was not a problem, inform the manager of the hotel that someone tried to scam you of your credit card information by acting like a front desk employee, or ask the front desk employee to inform the manager of this situation. Always come to the front desk to handle any problems or issues in person.

Anyone traveling should be aware of this scam.

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