

DANCERgram

June/July 2022



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

This publication is a sub-set of the *DANCERgram*, which provides Square and Round Dance news for the West Coast of Florida AND is the official Newsletter of the West Coast Square & Round Dancers Association (formerly the *West Coast Dancer*).

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West Coast Association

West Coast Association President's Message



I have been struggling with how to write this article and missed the deadline for the June issue, so this is the June/July issue!

Everywhere I go in the square dance community everyone is talking about the lack of dancers, the clubs that have folded, not getting new dancers, low attendance at the dances, conventions, and festivals, etc. What are you doing about it?

The majority of dancers are doing absolutely nothing!

Many years ago, my oldest daughter (not Jenny) repeated something she had learned in school – “more hands lighten the work”. How true is that? If everyone pitched in and helped out, it wouldn't be such a burden for everyone.

When I look at the roster of the upcoming Convention, it floors me how many people have taken on two or three roles in order to put on our next convention. A few years ago, and not that long ago, all the chairperson positions were easily filled. Some dancers have served on the convention committee in some capacity or another for so long that they can't remember when they started!

There are so many people who won't join a club or the association because they don't want to work or bring refreshments, but they sure show up to dance and partake of the refreshments! Every time I hear "I'm not a joiner" or "If I join, you'll put me to work", I think, "Well, I'm glad not everyone thinks that way or we wouldn't have dances to go to".

All of these workers are getting up there in age and as their health declines or they pass away, there's no one there to pick up the reins.

We keep losing dancers! What's the solution? Have more classes, but the experienced dancers can't take the time to recruit new dancers or show up faithfully at the classes every week to angel and get to know the new dancers. Very rarely will new people show up at a dance or club if they don't know anyone. Experienced dancers need to get to the classes and get to know the new people so they will visit your clubs. I personally know a couple who has been dancing for four or five years who visited two or three dances in my area; they haven't gone back to two of them because people aren't very friendly. How many other people are out there that I haven't talked to that think the same thing?

"I don't like wearing square dance clothes." Square dance attire is the uniform for our activity. Nurses wear a uniform, as well as law enforcement officers, airline employees, etc. Without saying a word, you are advertising our activity by being seen in our uniform. You will be surprised how many people will ask you about square dancing when they see someone wearing our "uniform". If you go out to eat before a dance, wear your "uniform" when you go to the restaurant, or wear your "uniform" into the grocery store to pick up refreshments for the dance. I see medical people, Amazon delivery people, airline employees, law enforcement officers, etc. in the grocery store or the pharmacy all the time.

Yes, we have Florida state convention chairpersons lined up through 2025, but what's going to happen after that?

Penny Green, President

Congratulations to David Muller for receiving his 50-years of calling pin! He was recognized at the recent CALLERLAB Convention. David was unable to attend the convention, but I know he received it because he's been showing it off! 50 years? You know he was just a baby when he started calling! Dave lives in Lake Wales and calls for Shufflin' Squares and is a guest caller at many of the area clubs. He was the club caller for Buttons and Bows of Lakeland when it folded. David is currently teaching a beginners class in Lakeland.



Look what the new dancers at Promenade Squares have learned to do!

In case you don't know, that's Marlene and Scotty Sharrer.

Each year the West Coast Square and Round Dance Association presents a Distinguished Service award. This presentation is traditionally presented at the annual West Coast Fall Fun Fest. As you know, we had to cancel the 2021 Fall Fun Fest due to COVID.

I decided we should still make a presentation, and I would go to the dancer's club to make the presentation. Well, it's hit and miss when and where this dancer will be dancing!

I finally caught him at the Convention Benefit Dance at Strawberry Square! I was given time on the mic to make the presentation during the dance.

Congratulations

to

Cliff Reiss

Cliff was recognized for all his work in designing and maintaining the DANCERgram website for the West Coast Association.

(www.dancergram.com)

Are you promoting a new dancer class?

The West Coast Association has a limited number of FREE yard signs available for that purpose. If you are interested in having some, please contact Penny Green at 863-224-3393 or sqdnfcn@gmail.com.

Great News from Rockville, Indiana.

Debbie Miller reported from the International Camporee in Rockville, Indiana that the Square Wheels took the prize again with the most tabs collected - 49.8 lbs! The campers also donated \$370 to the Shriners Hospital & the NSDCA matched it with another \$370.



The 2022 National Camporee was held in Rockville, Indiana.

Wayne & Debbie Miller, Pat & Tom Herscha

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Thank you for a successful convention

The 71st National Square Dance Convention® ended June 25 in Evansville, Indiana with hundreds dancing until the end of the afterparties at 11 p.m. Over 2,000 dancers registered, with 365 asking for solo ribbons. 202 dance leaders volunteered.

The 71st NSDC Committee, also known as the “River Rat Brigade,” thanks everyone who helped in the planning and execution of the convention, but most of all, to the people who attended it. We hope you all had a good time and plan on coming to future National Square Dance Conventions®. A big yellow rock to the bands that provided live music, The Ghost Riders Square Dance Band, Critter Du Jour, and Supertrad.

The GSI caller school had 48 callers attend to hone their skills. Eight squares of dancers braved the 99-degree heat to dance to Kristy Williams at the Market on Main Flash Mob Demo Dance. John and Carolyn Cook, General Chairman, cut the cheese to start the convention.

Participants took advantage of all the dancing and special events, which included the Last Man Standing Square Dance Competition (eight squares with the winners being The Misfits-Barry & Anita Johnson, Ted & Shelly Lizotte, Brian Clark & Shauna Kaaria, Tom Manning & Janice Sahlstrom), Showcase of Rounds, Showcase of Ideas, Fashion Show, Exhibitions (River City Riders and California Heritage Dancers), Bid Session, Keynote Address

by Tom Davis, Parade of States Closing Ceremony. There were also plenty of vendor booths and chances to register for the upcoming conventions (72nd Mobile, AL, 73rd Milwaukee, WI, and 74th Shreveport, LA.)

We want to thank all the media that covered our convention. These publications published information about the Convention in at least three issues and sent us their publications: *American Square Dance Mag*, *Carolina Caller*, *Central Ohio Email Tree*, *Chit Chat*, *Colorado Emails*, *Colorado West Area Square & Round Dance News Bulletin*, *DANCERgram*, *Direction*, *Dixie Crier*, *Footnotes Washington State*, *Grapevine CA*, *Happy Tracks*, *Here Tis*, *Iowa State Square & Round Dance Magazine*, *Michigander*, *Modern Square*, *My Corner*, *Southern District News*, *Texas Star*, *The News Around Cow Counties*, *The Show-Me Doins*, *Travel On*, *USDA Magazine*, *WASCA Calls & Cues*. The Blue Line Club inductees were Edythe Weber, editor for *The Show-Me Doins*, and Jim Bobo, editor for *The Caller*.

We hope you all enjoyed reading the 71st NSDC ten issues of the National Squares Online. To receive your free editions of the National Squares Online 72nd NSDC issues, fill out the 72nd long-form or sign up at nsdcnec.com. The first issue will be in July 2022.

It has been a privilege and honor for Indiana to host The National Square Dance Convention® for the fourth time. All of us River Rats will swim downstream and see you all in Mobile, AL. next June.

How To Be A Good Angel

The monthly magazine *American Square Dance* carries a regular column called “Callerlab Viewpoints.” In the September 2015, issue (Volume 70, Number 9, September 2015) the author presented excellent advice on how experienced dancers can help newer dancers by being “Good Angels.” The article was included in the Fall, 2015, Promenader, but with the summer season of Plus classes getting started, it seems appropriate to present it again.

All experienced dancers should read this article, even if they aren't specifically angeling a class. Here it is in its entirety (with minor changes to adapt it to our area):

Callerlab Viewpoints, by Mike Seastrom

The following has been edited from "Square Dance Nebraska—Ideas." A special thanks to Mike Bramlett for sharing some great information on the subject of how to be a good angel.

Is your halo on straight? As many club members as possible must come to the class as "angels." What are "angels"? They are the wonderful people who volunteer their time to ensure that new dancers have the best possible learning experience.

"Angels" provide new dancers with their first real look at a club. How "angels" behave and treat new dancers, other "angels," and visitors will affect class members' decisions regarding whether or not to join your club.

"Angels" are also role models. No matter what the instructor and club try to communicate to the students regarding etiquette, attitudes, or styling, class members inevitably take their cues from what they see "angels" doing. So it is important that "angels" be extra careful to be good role models.

Smile, be enthusiastic, and enjoy the dancing. Be friendly, courteous, and gentle. This is sometimes easier to say than do, especially if it has been a long day. Let's be honest; some of us have personal agendas, perhaps disagreements with club policies, or less than cordial relationships with specific club members. These issues are out of place at new dancer events and must be put aside.

Although most of us do the right things instinctively, the majority of the time it can't hurt to reiterate certain points. The following advice for "angels" has been extracted from several sources, including articles in square dance publications and handouts prepared for other clubs.

"Angels" Are Not Teachers.

This is perhaps the most common misconception that can cause problems. The primary teaching function of an "angel" is to teach by example and be in the right place at the right time. One important thing you can do is establish handholds after every move. Not only does this help students maintain their

orientation in the square, but it's also a very good habit for every dancer to develop.

It is always tempting to explain something your square is not getting, and the new dancers will often ask you to do this—but you must resist. It diverts the student's attention from the teacher and one of the most important things for a new dancer to learn is to listen to the teacher/caller. Sometimes you can clarify a simple point for students between tips; this is fine, but not while the caller is at the microphone.

Another difficult point is just how much help you should give in getting dancers into the right place. Dancers, after all, must learn to do the moves on their own. To gently guide someone through a maneuver, if they have a momentary lapse of memory, might be okay and sometimes one can help by indicating nonverbally where a person should go. Just remember that we accomplish little by pushing or pulling a dancer through an action when he or she doesn't know what was supposed to have been done.

It is better to let a square break down rather than to use force getting people into the right place. A broken down square is an indication to the instructor that dancers are having problems. Be sure the teacher is aware of the problems. Raise your hand if necessary and ask the teacher to explain something if your square is having trouble.

But be careful not to embarrass any dancer by the way you ask for help. It is much better to say that “the square is not getting a certain move” rather than saying “Steve is not getting a certain move.”

Encourage students. Let them know that all new dancers make mistakes and that things get better with practice. Also, “angels” make mistakes too. It is good to admit to them cheerfully, as it makes the students less tense about their own mistakes.

Club Styling

Club styling is always a major source of contention. It is important new dancers learn the calls with standard CALLERLAB styling; that is, without the added flourishes that are done in certain areas. The teacher will introduce these regional differences at appropriate times after the calls are mastered. “Angels” must use only the styling which has been taught to the class.

This is not always easy. How many remember to Swing Your Partner without a Twirl at the end? It is really very important not to introduce more confusion into a new dancer's learning experience. Some students are going to want you to teach them how it's done before they have mastered the call, but you should resist the temptation.

Some Random Additional Advice

- Square Up With Everyone, not just a few friends. Seek out the new dancer who is having difficulty and ask them to dance with you. Make sure that new dancers are not sitting out because “angels” are dancing.
- End Conversations Promptly when the teacher begins a tip. If you are not dancing, keep your conversations far away from the dance area.
- Cheerfully Lend A Hand if you are asked to help set up or clean up, help with refreshments, or take attendance.
- Watch For security problems, accidents, and dangerous situations like spills or debris on the floor.
- Notify The Instructor if there are problems with the sound.
- Don't Complain about the hall, the floor, the caller, or anyone attending the class.
- Don't Criticize students or other “angels.”

Remember:

- Your name badge.
- You are an example to the new dancers and an ambassador for your club.
- Have fun! “Angels” are a key part of whether a new dancer continues dancing or joins your club.

(For *American Square Dance* subscription information, send an email to: AmericanSquareDance@gmail.com)

Submitted by: Peter Emmel

Reprint from the Fall 2015 issue of the *Promenader* in Rochester, New York

REPRINT

Are You Working for or Against Us?

By Penny Green

What an odd title! What's that mean "are we working against each other"? When I hear people promoting only their club or only their lessons, the hair on the back of my neck just stands up and my blood pressure jumps just a few points.

When we are struggling so hard to keep our clubs running, to recruit dancers to our classes, just to recruit more dancers period, why would we be so narrow-minded as to not promote square dancing as a whole?

When you are talking to anyone (young or old, married or single) about square dancing and the night of your club dance or class doesn't fit their schedule, don't stop talking. Keep talking and let them know there are dances and/or classes on other nights and tell them what they are and when they are. So what if you are putting people in someone else's club or class; you're getting us more dancers!

Don't rush new dancers into club membership before they have "graduated" from a class so that you "get them first" before they join another club. If you are truly practicing what you preach, that you are a friendly club and a fun place to dance, they will want to join without you pressuring them into it.

I know that a lot of you have shirts, jackets, and caps that reference square dancing. How many of you wear them to other places other than dances or dance-related activities? You have no idea how many times I get questions when I wear my jacket with the huge square dance logo on the back of it.

When you schedule your classes, are you paying attention to what is going on in your area? Who else is having classes? What day and time of day are they having their classes? Do you make any attempt to schedule your class so that it doesn't conflict with other classes near yours? When classes in the same area are on the same night, new dancers are unable to attend more than one class if they want to. I always encourage new dancers to try to attend more than one class; this will help them better. Please be considerate when scheduling your classes so they don't conflict with other classes in your area.

We have to stop with this mentality of “we have to get dancers for our club and not worry about the activity as a whole.”

Do you tell Singles they can’t come unless they bring a partner? Do you cancel a class because you have too many single women?

So back to the question, “Are we working against each other?” when we only recruit for our club and/or classes, when we are selective about who we recruit, when we “compete” with another club or class to gain participants, when a select few are out there constantly promoting the activity and the rest of the group is just sitting back complaining about how we are losing dancers, that we have tried everything, that won’t participate in banner raids or visit other clubs and festivals/conventions?

It’s time for everyone to step up and promote the ACTIVITY! When you are talking to anyone about square and round dancing, be knowledgeable about what is going on in your area and provide them with all the information. Always make visitors and solos welcome when they show up at your dances. Just because you have a greeter at the door doesn’t make you a friendly club if all your members sit in their little groups and don’t talk to these dancers, don’t include them in your squares, etc. Attend the classes in your area and angel these new dancers, even if your club isn’t sponsoring the class or you don’t belong to a club. They need all the help they can get so they can learn faster and get out on the dance floor sooner.

What are you doing – working against us or with us?

Reprint from DANCERgram – February 9, 2009

The DANCERgram magazines presented on this website are written and published by a square and round dancer concerned about preserving our dance activity. The magazines include Planner (weekly), This & That (monthly), Joys, Concerns, & Sympathies (as needed), and Directory (as needed). All of the magazines are under the DANCERgram banner. In the event of new information between publication dates, notification is sent via the Flash. The Editor reserves the right to edit, condense, or rewrite any submission to the DANCERgram magazines. Opinions expressed in any DANCERgram magazine or on this website are not necessarily that of the Editor or the West Coast Square and Round Dancers' Association. All new information (since the previous issue) in these magazines is highlighted in yellow. Distribution of the DANCERgram magazines is encouraged via forwarding or hard copies. All of the Magazines, as well as additional content, can be found at www.dancergram.com. If you would like to receive the DANCERgram Magazines via email or you would like to submit information to any of the magazines, please contact the Editor at sqdnfan@gmail.com or 863-224-3393.

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DANCERgram Magazines

Planner (weekly)

Joys, Concerns, & Sympathies (as needed)

Directory (as needed) • WC Key Contacts • WC Dances • SCCA • Links

This and That (monthly) • WCA president's message • Federation president's message • Club News • Reprint of articles • New Articles