

COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE SQUARE DANCING

Article For November Prompter

As this article is being written our promotional efforts for the September classes is complete and the 6 clubs initiating beginner classes have completed at least one class. Although it's too early to draw conclusions, this report will describe what we know. So far, the beginner class sizes range from 1 square to 8 squares. The Committee's recommendation was to have just 4 clubs providing classes in order to create larger classes that are more likely to retain the dancers. The Committee will work with those clubs with very small classes to either merge or carefully "mentor" the dancers so we don't lose them. Further, this mentoring process needs to occur within all our classes since it "appears" that we lose too many dancers within the first few weeks. As noted in last month's article it is important to determine why people drop out-in particular if we can readily solve it (don't like the night, the location, etc).

So far our most successful promotions are the country radio station, flyers, VALPAC coupons, dance teams, PSA announcements, and people getting friends or neighbors. The news station and the movie theaters were not very successful this time. However, we must caution about making a final judgment since many people do not recall how they heard about us and a promotion in January may provide very different results.

All our promotions focus on the FUN OF SQUARE DANCING. To help our beginners experience this quickly, we have 5 beginner hoe-downs committed. They are November 13 at Rogers, January 15 at Rogers, March 4 at John Muir, March 18 at Rogers, and April 1 at Rogers. Everyone should make an effort to support these beginner hoe-downs so that new dancers can experience the sociability and enjoyment of dancing.

Looking ahead, The Committee plans to promote our January classes during the first 2 or 3 weeks of January. It is very important that ALL OUR CLUBS PROMOTE THESE CLASSES-with flyers, contacting friends, etc.

To maximize the enjoyment of square dancing it's equally important for every club to promote all hoe-downs, those for beginners and club dancers. And finally, there are 3 critical areas where The Committee needs your help. First is to help us find opportunities for our Dance Teams. This effort has the potential to be highly successful and we need more opportunities to demonstrate within set environments such as church groups, or social clubs, etc. Second is to actively distribute flyers to various business and work areas, community centers, and clubs within your area. And third is to continue contacting anyone you see about joining us in this fun way to socialize and exercise.

Van Symons

Article For December Prompter

Currently we have 6 clubs providing beginner square dance lessons and 3 providing workshops. For the beginners, our callers have scheduled 4 newer dancer hoe-downs for year 2000 (1/15, 3/4, 3/18, and 4/1) and they are listed in the Prompter. It is important that our newer dancers experience the fun and excitement of dancing at these hoe-downs. YOUR PARTICIPATION AT THESE HOE-DOWNS IS CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS. You can help them by showing how much and why you enjoy this activity, answer their questions, and assist them through the calls. TRY TO BE THERE-WE NEED YOU.

Somebody must love us square dancers. Recently Ameritrade initiated a set of ads during the football games and on CNN which utilize square dancing as their theme (Johnny Preston is the caller). These are outstanding ads that show the fun and excitement of dancing. Certainly this can only help our advertising campaign for our four beginner classes starting in January. For these classes, we plan to repeat our radio and VALPAC ads, the PSA's, flyers, and dance teams.

As for the future, the Committee plans to focus the promotion expenses on the most productive areas that complement our efforts and that continue to "change the image of square dancing." Our focus is on 3 efforts that

cost nothing but are highly productive. First is our DANCE TEAMS. Our initial effort was very successful since 20 of the 25 participating couples indicated they would like to take lessons. To maximize our potential, we need your help in identifying places to perform. Our preference is perform where we can get audience participation-such as at a club, church, or event.

Second, is our effort to RETAIN current dancers. Friendliness, enthusiasm, and fun are the key elements. Our motto is "KEEP FUN IN YOUR DANCING AND YOU WILL KEEP YOUR DANCERS." For club night, there are many good ideas such as a "good night" tip, amateur night, mixer tips, dance cards, caller gimmicks, mini squares, progressive squares, birthday dances, and theme parties. Equally important is for each of us to organize, encourage, and get current dancers to participate in the many enjoyable activities that are outside of our club. Hoedowns, raids, parties, mystery trips, picnics, and social events greatly increase the friendliness of dancing, help people to know each other, and in general help them to feel a part of square dancing-rather than just something we do once a week.

And third, is always a significant contributor-PEOPLE GETTING PEOPLE. Many dancers seem to feel they have run out of friends. But, even if true, you haven't run out of contacts. Distributing flyers to community centers, work areas, and church groups, promoting dancing at various clubs, social groups, and events can be very successful. It's amazing how many people say they once danced in 3rd or 4th grade and would love to try it-they just needed someone to contact. I was at an RV Halloween party recently and 3 couples at my table said they would love to try it. We also get many people from the Internet-they're trying to find a place to learn to dance. The point is-there are many people looking, they didn't now that YOU ARE A SQUARE DANCER-WEAR IT PROUDLY.

Van Symons