

Dancing for Health Festivals

By

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The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls to drive square dancers away from 2001 through 2007. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over the country and from abroad to continue these initiatives. ACA will continue to provide information that will help the square dance community recruit, retain and retrieve square dancers as well as encourage the dancers to speak out on the cumbersome, antiquated and deleterious dance programs.

This month's ACA Viewpoint discusses proven methods to bring square dancing to the public with positive recruiting results. New dancers entering the square dancing family today often hear more seasoned dancers talking about the past days of too many dancers for the hall size. They described how square dancing was one of the most popular activities in their city or town. They also talked about how people tried to enter square dancing classes but could not because the classes were full.

Conversations often drift into a debate over why square dancing's numbers have fallen over the past two decades. Many square dancers come to the conclusion that, because of changes in society, square dancing has lost its appeal to the public, but they stop short of addressing the issues of how do we counter these changes and attract new squarer dancers now.

The question of membership in square dance clubs has been the main topic of concern for square dances and associations, and square dance leaders are continually trying new ideas. A recent idea came to ACA from a person who had been involved in a University Career Fair where several universities pooled their resources and invited companies, government organizations and area students to participate. University and College Career Fairs are happening all around the country. Perhaps, the same concept could be used to make square dancing more visible to the community. An idea might be to not only invite all square, line and round dancing organizations to participate but to other organizations like, ball room dance, Tai Chi, health, and social organizations to participate in “Health Activities Festivals.”

Each participating organization could have a table to display posters and provide information about what they do for the community. The location could be in a shopping mall on the weekend before a major holiday hoping that the pre-holiday shopping would best maximize square dancing’s exposure. Public service announcements could be submitted to local cable television companies and radio stations to help spur visitations to the mall on the weekends in question. Flyers could be mailed to area churches, universities and schools promoting the “Health Activities Festival”. At the “Health Activities Festival” each organization could wear their appropriate costumes such as square dancing, line dancing, or martial arts clothing and may demonstrate their dancing etc.

The mall “Health Activities Event” can be a success on many levels as it will provide an opportunity for people to ask questions about square dancing and meet a square dancer. Secondly, organizations will receive inquiries about square dancing etc. that could result in new members. Thirdly, visitors to the festival may ask for an application to join square dance lessons. Organizations that have banded together to increase exposure to the public have had success recruiting new members. In some cases, mall authorities have asked the groups to schedule an follow on “Health Activities Fair.”

Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers’ Association at Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at demerath@tsum.edu.

The American Callers' Association is looking out for you.

Until next time, Happy Dancing.