

SUMMARY FROM CLUB RECRUITING QUERY and other RESEARCH

LETTER SENT TO CLUBS:

I am writing to all Square Dance Club Presidents / Contacts to ask for help with a bit of research.

The BCS&RDF Task Force on Revitalization's sub-committee, Live Lively, is researching successful marketing / advertising methods used by clubs throughout B.C. that have attracted new dancers.

With your help, we can find out what is working and so share this information with all clubs in the province.

I would really appreciate it if you would share with us the **two** most successful advertising / marketing methods that brought in new dancers to your club in the past two years.

I would be most grateful if you could take a few minutes to email me a response.

Thanks,

Nick Turner
for the sub-committee working on ways to attract new dancers (in droves!)

Bill and Jean Woods and Paula Weir (Region 9),
Marianne Hall (Region 1),
Gord Ruedig (Region 8)
Bob Byrne (Region 3)
Nick and Mary Anne Turner (Region 5)

RESPONSES

VANDERHOOF

The new dancers we got came because we know them and invited them to join. The others who contacted us found my name by looking online so the Region 5 web site works! (Terrace)

In the past 10 years we have attached our "Youth Nights" to the Pro-D activities that our community puts together.

We advertised in a couple of school newsletters and there was a home schooling group site that advertised too (only 4 from that info.

We advertised on 3 group sites (Vanderhoof Drifting Squares, a home school group site from Vanderhoof, and the Vanderhoof Community group page) and many people saw it and came out to try Square Dancing

COUNTRY COUSINS (Vancouver Island)

25 new dancers for the 2 free lessons in September 2014.

Our most successful strategy is a letter/card with an invitation to join us for coffee and dessert and an introduction to square dancing. These are handed out by club members to anyone they come in contact with it can be someone they camp next to during the summer or anyone they have an appointment with. The

invitation states “You and your guests” are invited. Hoping of course that they bring friends. The other one is a toss up between the web page and the local papers and magazines who offer a free ad in their “What’s Happening” page.

FROM SQUARE DANCE MAGAZINE

Offer fundraising for service clubs churches etc

CAMPBELL RIVER

2014 1 new member from an article we put in the local paper.

2013 2 new members from an ad in the 50+ Active Living Bulletin

2012 Two new members from posters we put up all over town.

Suggestion: How about if every club asked it’s Facebook members to put a short blurb on their Facebook page in the last week of August saying something like the following “Looking forward to square dancing in Sept. Lots of fun. Most clubs have two free lessons in September for anyone to try it out.”

MAVERICKS (Vancouver Island)

Most of our new dancers come because of word of mouth advertising. We are lucky enough to have some very enthusiastic members who are still in the work force and talk to all and sundry about square dancing. I think it is more difficult for retirees to do this because generally they do not come in contact with as many people. Also we have a caller who is very proactive and he does quite a bit of advertising through local papers. The hardest part is keeping the new dancers – even though they really enjoyed the lessons – if they don;t come to the summer dances – they may not feel confident enough to come back in the fall. The final thing which I think is extremely important is communication and socializing outside the dance floor.

ABBOTSFORD GRAND SQUARES

#1 - excited existing members making personal contact and giving a personal invite to 3 introductory sessions to join them for fun and an evening out. A made up card with info and their phone number is given. AGS has put a Free notice of "Open House" (in September) in the local Abbotsford News. We spent \$41 for a small ad under coming events, got one inquiry.

We had a generic "Button" with “Ask Me About Square Dancing" made , which could be pinned and worn on their lapel of jacket or shirt. I wear mine year round and continually get inquiries.

In my opinion, it's the atmosphere and attitude of existing dancers who create the BUZZ within their Club. The two most successful methods of getting new dancers were handing out business-card size invitations to perspective members and personal one on one contacts. Any other media or signage did not work.

SALMON ARM

Reason cited for not continuing was they didn't feel they could dance well enough to be in mainstream. The biggest problem is that those who are coming in to learn are old - over 65

We need to attract younger people - not necessarily teens. Unfortunately when we hold an Open House in September - they look at the average age (over 65) and when the 3 free dances are over - they don't come back. The costs (hall and Callers can be too high to have a new dancer class)

KAMLOOPS PLUS CLUB

Limited success advertising in the local paper and community recreation guide.

personal invites from club members to their friends and neighbours.

we do joint advertising with a mainstream club to bring in new dancers into the square dancing community.

WILLIAMS LAKE

Word of mouth is the biggest draw.

Some of our members (older than 2 years) were asked, encouraged, to join many years in a row, before they finally joined,

Press releases published in local papers

Two 8' X 4' boards that we attach to two high traffic locations in town.

Posters in town and in neighbouring community stores and post offices.

Word of mouth is encouraged, but many dancers shrink from approaching strangers. We have shirt-pocket sized hand outs advertising upcoming new dancer sessions. We dance at the Stampede breakfasts as an awareness effort and go "suaroling" at Christmas time.

OCEAN WAVES (Courtney Van Is.)

2 very successful free Beginners Night this year.

an article In our local papers stressing the health benefits of square dancing as well as a longer article in a newspaper insert on health and recreation.

put up some well designed posters around the community.

posted a copy of the poster on a local dance web site. Not sure what kind of results we got from that but decided it won't hurt to let those salsa and tango dancers know we are out there too! The results? 24 new beginners the first night and a whopping 36 the second. and those who can't come to classes now are potential future dancers.

SAMENA SQUARES WASHINGTON STATE

There is no magic pill. The pendulum swings both ways, some years are good and some are not. This year... article in the local weekly paper about the club and lessons.

"word of mouth." I don't know who the first person was but they talked to family; cousins decided to come; someone mentioned how fun it was at work and the next week co-workers came too. They all bring spouses and pretty soon it is a crowd.

My boss is a square dancer so we talk about square dancing a lot at the office. Many days the square dance calendar is taken off the wall to show people pictures of some of our trips and dances. This year one of our patients came but not through talking to us. They came because they go to church with one of the couples in the club and a couple of the ladies are in book club together. My boss wondered why they didn't come years ago from talking to us. My theory is that there needs to be a tipping point. You hear about it from one person - sounds like fun - but when you start hearing about it from more friends or acquaintances it tips the scales toward action.

We had former dancers returning Others were new to the area and were looking for an activity. They found us on the Internet.

Many years ago the Samena Square were like many clubs slowly losing members. The club leaders decided that they weren't going to worry about that. They were going to focus on making it a fun and friendly club. That is a large part of their success.

In terms of their new dancers...The week before lessons start we have a social gathering (spaghetti dinner, ice cream social, etc) for club members to bring their friends too. Other people that we meet different places

are invited too. At my office on my desktop I have a file of patients that have expressed interest. They get a personal invitation from my boss. I call a dance party with squares, lines, mixers, and circle dances. We usually fill the hall. Not everyone comes back but most do.

There are three open weeks of classes. At class on Week 4 (sometimes Week 5) every student has a club badge engraved with their name and a 'student' bar. The new dancers are included in club activities from the first. There is always a non-dancing Christmas outing. They are invited.

Many club members go with them to student level dances at other clubs.

24 weeks of lessons. My goal as the caller/teacher is that they be able to dance to any caller any where. Can they do that today? No. We are going to have 8 weeks of workshops beginning in April after Easter. They are all planning to come. When our workshops end, the Mt Baker Teachers, Callers, and Cuers Association will begin the 10th summer of Summertime dances. So there will be 12 weeks of dances before the fall dance season starts.

The other things that I do...

Starting with the first night of lessons, I get everyone's email address. I send out a weekly email newsletter. It includes information about square dancing, upcoming student level dances, etc. I also include an abbreviated definition of the calls that we learned that week so that they can review them before the next week. The newsletters are also posted on my website -

To summarize this long essay... There is still no magic pill. Be friendly! Have fun! Be inclusive! Have fun! Rinse, lather, repeat! Have fun! Susan Morris caller, Samena Squares

BEEJAY DANCERS KAMLOOPS

Two years ago we had no new dancer class as Merv Meyer was doing a class for the Kamloops Square Dancers. Those dancers were to come to the Bee Jay Dancers, but quit and kept the dancers. (not a good report for other clubs)

This year I ran another ad and it looked like we would have 1 1/2 squares but ended up with 4. We have trained them in our mainstream nights - thanks to the club members agreeing to do this again.

We run a small ad due to the costs of ads the ads do not change much and have brought mostly a square to take the program

The best year was 35 dancers. 1 square out of that danced about two years and then vanished - they were mid aged working people.

I have in the past talked about getting a corporate sponsor even if it was just to add "Square Dancing is Fun 1-800" on each receipt they gave out). Cost and leg work would be the issue.