

“NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY DANCES”

By Dave Harry

March 2, 2015

Last year, in preparation for our 2014 fall Mount Baker Council Dance, we set the groundwork for a successful Mainstream and “No Experience Necessary Dance”, to be run simultaneously. We rented Leota Junior High, which included the teacher’s lounge, cafeteria, small gym, and large gym. Then we went to work on our ad campaign. First, we notified the greater Seattle Square Dance Councils of our intent and then we sent e-mails to all of the teachers and schools where I teach square dancing. We invited the schools to participate in the “No Experience Necessary Dance”, and we encouraged the Seattle area square dancers to invite their new students to dance with us and also to bring a non-dancing friend. We advertised in a local social dance calendar and a weekly online newspaper calendar.

The dance was a huge success! We had 72 paid squares, 15 of which danced in the “No Experience Necessary Hall” and over 50 squares danced in the Mainstream Hall. To put things in perspective, our average council dance is about 25 squares. We featured “The B C Boys” (Ray Brendzy, Steve Edlund, and Brent Mawdsley, all of Canada) as the Mainstream callers and me as the new dancer caller. In the new dancer hall we had a display board featuring square dance information and a drawing container for a free set of lessons. We collected about 40 names in it. We invited the brand new dancers into the Mainstream Hall for the last set of squares of the evening. I watched them as they migrated over there; not one couple left early! It was bumper to bumper, shoulder to shoulder in that huge gym, and they had a great time. I can’t think of a better way to introduce new dancers to our activity!

Our school participation could have been better. In the beginning, we offered the PTSAs of the school district a percentage of the net proceeds, thinking this would create active involvement, but word of the plan didn’t apparently spread. Also, we didn’t know that we needed to have our flyers approved by the school district ahead of time, so we lost some advertising time there (the flyers in the schools were being destroyed), and one of the high schools had a major football game that night. So we didn’t get the student participation that we wanted (20 students participated), but considering all, we feel we had a huge success! We did follow through with our monetary donation to the PTSAs, hoping to build Goodwill.

We already have a plan like this in place for our upcoming Washington State Festival, where a dance floor and two evening time slots are set aside for “No Experience Necessary Dances”. Our council dance was so successful that the club sponsoring our next fall council dance has also decided to include a “No Experience Necessary Dance” in its format.

It is my opinion that every big square dance and CALLERLAB function should include a dance like this, so the general public can not only see but also experience the joy and excitement of our festive activity. Happy Dancing!