

“NEW DANCER PROMOTION PROGRAM” BRECKSVILLE SQUARES

By Bill and Marge Webb

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How do you make a club grow and how do you invigorate a club—by getting new dancers! But how do you do that? As always, it's by asking people to come to lessons and learn. But we've tried that and we've asked everyone we know and got no takers. So then what?

The last two or three years we've had three or four new dancers in our classes and limited success in keeping them. So I decided we could do better. I talked to some of our more recent graduates and invited them to my house in November (before Marge and I went to Florida for the winter) and tossed around some ideas. We decided to meet once a month after we got back from Florida to come up with names of people who might be interested. We encouraged all of our club members to get involved and put names into a prospective new member box. We promised we would draw a name out of this box in July and give the lucky club member a special prize. That was the start.

Starting in May, we gathered and talked about ways to advertise our club and lessons.

General **calling cards** were made and given to all club members to give to anyone they talked to who had any interest in square dancing. This was just **general information with two contact names**; the person who gave out the card and mine. We had a nice article in the local paper and we did a demo at a summer concert on our town square.

At the end of July, we sent out a **general letter** to all those names we had collected telling about the value of square dancing, our local club, etc. and emphasized that lessons start only once a year in September at almost all clubs around Cleveland. We made new cards which promoted our “Fun Night” with finger foods 30 minutes before we started dancing. In August, we **sent another letter** out emphasizing that it now was only 2 weeks away and reminded them to be sure they had it on their calendar. Finally, we had the club member who solicited the new dancer call them and get their reaction and interest in coming. This initial mailing had 98 names. We followed this with **personal calls** and we had about 40 who were interested. The first night we had 29 show up and about 40 “angels”. It was an exciting beginning!

The numbers have fallen off to about 15 to 18 showing up each week. I have made a point of **calling those who miss** to see if everything is alright and encourage them to come back. We have a short 15 minute review before our regular class to catch up anyone who missed the previous lesson. Each week I have come up with a saying on a business size card and a treat for the new dancers to take home. It's corny, but they seem to look forward to it. After 9 weeks now, we are very pleased that it looks like we will have almost 20 who should graduate in April.

This effort took some time and the committee of seven couples helped keep us all excited about the end goal, but no one killed themselves and we had a lot of fun. The primary effort was to talk to anyone, where ever we were, about our great activity and if they showed any interest, get their name, address, and phone number so that we could follow up. It certainly was worth the effort and we hope we can do it again next year. Thanks to our great committee!