

RESPONSES TO THE QUERY TO CLUBS:

FROM TERRACE (No caller, dancer leader using Moving and Grooving and records)

We didn't do much in the way of marketing/advertising during the past 2 years. I have just been feeling my way to see if we could keep our club alive and wanted to see how things went before we tried to find more dancers. **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!** Unfortunately the one couple who found us that way moved away and the other would love to dance but is stuck on a shift that keeps her from joining us on Monday nights :

VANDERHOOF (Two ladies just starting to call + caller from Prince George 2X/month)

In the past 10 years we have attached our "Youth Nights" to the Pro-D activities that our community puts together. The Pro-D community puts a flyer out for each Pro-D day and lists all the area activities that will keep the students "busy" on their day "off".

Because we dance the night before the usual Friday Pro-D (there some on Mondays , but not many) we take advantage that perhaps the students are able to stay up a little bit later (ages 8/9 to 18) . We use the first hour of our dance night for them. We invite interested students to come and give it a try and invite parents to come along. We have had some successes. In one case the family came out to dance (4 of them) but the parents ended up dancing with us for 2 years not the students ... until they moved away. We have also had local church groups send their entire youth group (once it was 12 students!!!) to our youth night. Never have we seen such energy. Such fun!!

There were 7 boys and 9 girls. Most came with parents and grandparents.

We asked for ages 8 to 18 but ended up with ages all the way up to 70.

There were a couple of girls that were 7 but did all right in the end.

Because we had advertised in a couple of school newsletters (I guess the secretaries picked up on the event from FaceBook or the email I sent actually met their deadline...) **and there was a home schooling group site that advertised too (only 4 from that info)....** it was a mix from all over.

I was just thrilled..... like I said.... I was expecting 5 or less... and got just over 14 kids.... a couple came and went early.

We will try it again for the next Pro-D as well.

VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Country Cousins recruited **25 new dancers for the 2 free lessons in September 2014.** We will graduate 17 next month. We had 42 show up and 24 stay in 2010, and 26 show up with 24 staying in 2012. **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.

Answers needed: Timing - when given out? Wording.

From SD mag: Do fundraising for service clubs churches etc and hope that people get hooked enough to want to come to SD classes

CAMPBELL RIVER RIPPLE ROCKETS

The advertising for the Ripple Rockets Square Dance Club in Campbell River has not brought forth great numbers.

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.

I think we need to do something different. 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 – or has this already been done?

"Looking forward to square dancing in Sept. Lots of fun. Most clubs have two free lessons in September for anyone to try it out."

VICTORIA MAVERICKS

As Mavericks president I would say that 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 socialising outside the dance floor.

ABBOTSFORD GRAND SQUARES

Over the years our most successful results at Abbotsford Grand Squares for bringing in new dancers has been-

#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.

About 2 years ago AGS Executive did some brain storming and 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.

I even had a Border Customs Officer notice my button and asked - Are you a Square Dancer? 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

We have actually had miserable luck bringing in new dancers - none at all this year. And only 1 came back from the previous year - the reason cited for not continuing was they didn't feel they could dance well enough to be in mainstream - and felt guilty for breaking squares down - although told repeatedly that a) squares break down whether new dancers are in them or not and b) it's only by repetition that calls are learned. The biggest problem is that those who are coming in to learn are old - over 65 and they have trouble remembering although learning something new is very important as we get older. They felt they were pushed through too fast - and the reality is our caller Don Krebs taught at a pretty slow pace.

Interestingly - we danced in Aberdeen Scotland last year - the only club in Scotland still going. Same age range as here. They do beginners on Mon evening, Regular dance on Thurs - alternating Plus and Mainstream during the evening and once a month get together on a Sun afternoon to dance A level - just to keep their hand in. Every 3 years they host a European festival which they have to limit to only 300 people - and consistently get 150 from Germany - and half of the German group are young dancers - 20, 30 and 40 year olds - so perhaps we should be finding out what is different in Germany to keep young people joining.

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.

I'd like to follow up on what Heather Wallace told me - Abbotsford holds an open house where all the different programs - square, round, line, clogging etc are available for a try and they are boasting of a success.

In Washington State - school gyms are used and the school boards do not charge the clubs any rent for teaching beginners - thus the only cost that must be covered is the teacher. Here the club must cover the teacher and the hall - which if we are lucky we can get as low as \$50 for 2 hours - right there we need 10 people at \$5 to cover the rent per night - and then the caller is another \$50 - \$60 / hour. Maybe we should be lobbying the MLAs to get the school districts to allow their gyms for free for physical fitness type activity - which is what it was in the 70s when I learned.

KAMLOOPS (PLUS)

We have had **limited success advertising in the local paper and community recreation guide.**

This has brought in a few new dancers as well as some previous dancers that have come back for a refresher. We have also had a few new dancers from **personal invites from club members to their friends and neighbours.** In the past two years this has brought in about a dozen new dancers. Our club at this time only has a plus night, so **we do joint advertising with a mainstream club to bring in new dancers into the square dancing community.**

Hope this helps and looking forward to your report as it is a struggle to get new members.

PRINCE GEORGE

It seems that **word of mouth is the biggest draw.** Most beginners came because they knew somebody in the club and had been encouraged by them.

Phillip joined after seeing Northern Twisters dancing for demo purposes . That was not in the last two years.

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

VANDERHOOF

You may have heard this from Sandi, she was so pleased and so excited: Every year at this time the school has a pro D day on the Friday following our square dance night. She has always invited **youth to come out for the first hour** of the evening, She may announce it at Church. Usually members bring young people from their family. Never very many. This year 18+ people showed up. **Sandi credits facebook for the turnout.**

She used your programme (MOVING & GROOVING) and had every one dancing and having fun in no time at all. It was quite encouraging.

WILLIAMS LAKE

We've had good successes with getting **press releases published** in our local papers, we have two **8' X 4' boards** that we attach to two high traffic locations and we advertise on the two signboards as you enter the city from north and south. We place **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.

For the past two years we have attracted 11-12 dancers each year but have had poor success in retaining new dancers mainly because Life got in the way causing poor attendance and dropping out - however 5 from 2013 returned in 2014.

COURTENAY

Ocean Waves, Courtenay had 2 very successful free Beginners Night this year. We ran 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. Used the information on your website, Brian, to write the article. Also put up some well designed posters around the community. Will attach the news article and poster to this email.

We also 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!!!! This Monday will tell as it is the first night to commit to the season but hope to end up with at least a couple of new squares. It looked like everyone was having a wonderful time so 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...

1. The club celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2014. Some of the ladies were able to get a very nice article in the local weekly paper about the club and lessons. Our oldest student came from that source and was thankful every week that she had found us. Will they be able to do it again this summer? Don't know.
2. As [Bill Margerum](#) mentioned above "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.
3. 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.
4. There were also a number of former dancers who were coming back after a period of time dealing with family issues or the death of a spouse. Some were local dancers that we had kept track of over the years. Others were new to the area and were looking for an activity. They found us on the Internet.
5. The 9 year old is the granddaughter of a dancer in another club in another town but she lives just down the street from the hall. Grandpa came and danced with her every week. She had a blast!

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 Samena Squares host one of the first student level dances at Halloween. We encourage costumes. There are no rounds. I mix squares and party dances.

The new dancers are included in club activities from the first. For example, when it is time to decorate the hall for the holidays, it usually happens on lesson night. Everyone brings cookies. Everyone pitches in to transform the hall. We dance and it's a party. There is always a non-dancing Christmas outing. They are invited.

Many club members go with them to student level dances at other clubs. Larry and I go with them as often as we can.

I will also add that there are 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 - www.callersusan.com. under the Samena New Dancers tab.

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

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 add 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.

In the past going back to our meetings in the Cotton Woods barn we had a think tank session, we split into 4 groups and talked about ways to bring in more dancers.

Good ideas flourished and the association kept a small committee working on that with a rep from each club. Nothing we tried seemed to work.

I have in the past talked about getting a corporate sponsor even if it was just to add "Squaredancing is fun 1-800" on each receipt they gave out).

I can remember Brian Elmer doing presentation at a spring meeting on how to go about approaching companies. I thought of the Ford Motor Co. right away thinking that Henry Ford's early interest and involvement would be a good in.

Cost and leg work would be the issue.