

## **“A SUCCESS STORY GROWING CLASSES”**

**By Don Wood**

Much like many other areas, five years ago we were failing. Our classes were small, if we had enough for a class at all, and clubs were stagnating if not dying. Five years back we decided a change was necessary. Our dancer's organization and callers got together and came up with a modification of another caller's program that was having success in his area. Our success did not happen overnight. It took a couple of years and some tweaking. More importantly, it took cooperation between callers and clubs. Frankly, it was change or die as an activity. Thankfully we chose to change.

I should mention this amount of attendance is not an anomaly, it is fairly typical; at least it has been for the past three years or 18 classes. In any event, I thought you might enjoy seeing a success. We had 9 squares last night. What fun! My colleague (Glenn Raiha) was teaching, and I attended as my Monday class just ended and won't start until February. What a joy it was to see a full hall of happy smiling faces. I do hope that others will consider what we are doing and be able to take something positive away from this. Please feel free to contact me should anyone want more information.

I recently read a posting from a caller proposing a ten week course for square dancing. This would, in that callers' opinion, require the removal of some calls and the addition of others; specifically some Plus calls. This was from an ACA member. As you are aware, I am a member of both organizations. What prompted me to write to you is this.

Without respect to the Plus calls, this is close to the program we run in our area. I work with another caller (a CALLERLAB Member) and we run a program structured as follows. To begin with, there are six start dates in our program over a given year. We have class on Monday or Thursday.

1. In September, a ten week program from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday; the Basic 51 program is taught.
2. Five weeks after starting the Thursday class, a Monday class begins; the Basic 51 program is taught again.
3. Once the Thursday class has completed the ten week course, another Basic 51 class is started. Basic is taught from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Mainstream from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
4. Dancers who completed the Basic 51 program can choose to return and “angel” the new Basic 51 class and attend the Mainstream portion.
5. This scenario is duplicated for the Monday night class.

Generally, this structure is working well. It is relatively standard for me to have between five and eight squares attending every Monday or Thursday. This is our fifth year, and we believe the program is working. Many of the dancers will go thru the program multiple times to get comfortable with the calls. They are actively joining clubs; and in our area, square dancing is growing.