

The NEST Program For New Dancers

Imagine a New Dancer program that:

- Allows people to join any week they want.
- Allows dancers to bring their friends any week they want.
- Allows people to return and pick up where they left off after being away on vacation or because of illness.
- Is tailored to an individual's learning pace, without holding others back, or having to wait for others to catch up.
- Provides on-the-spot, one-on-one instruction, without disrupting the whole floor.

This may sound like a pipe dream - but it's real, and it works!

The program is called **THE NEST**, and this is the 3rd year that we've used it in the Calgary club where we teach **New Dancers**. This program was designed by an American square dancer, Dale Bennett, in 2012. It is run with a Caller and several Narrators. The Mainstream Program is broken down into one-couple, two-couple and four-couple calls. The Narrators, who are trained square angels, teach the one and two-couple calls at stations, using a script of patter. They read the script and stop when they reach a new call. The Narrator teaches the call, and then the script is read again until the next new call. After several new calls, the same script can be re-read with patter music, to reinforce the calls that were taught. On completion of the one and two-couple calls, which make up 70% of the Mainstream program, the New Dancer is ready to move to the last station - the Four-Couple calls, which is taught by the Caller in the main hall.



This year we had quite a few new dancers join during January to March. Some of them made it thru to Mainstream, and some completed about half of the program. We also had some dancers that started in the fall, but due to absences, did not complete the Mainstream program. This group is our Basic Dancers, and it means that in the fall when we start up again, we have a possibility of nine dancers returning before we've even advertised!

Because this is our third year, we have built up our base. We used to dance one to two squares an evening, we now dance three to four squares, and occasionally five. The mix has changed from mostly experienced dancers (square angels), to a 50/50 split, and sometimes even more new dancers (1st & 2nd year) than experienced. The average age has also been lowered with most of the dancers in their 40's – 60's. Our lessons feel more like a party night because of the enthusiasm and energy that the new dancers provide!

If you think your club might benefit from THE NEST program, or if you want to find out more about it, please email me for the material and more information. claudia.littlefair@gmail.com.