

FAST TRACK PROGRAM

- by Pat & Ray Duffy, EDMONTON



ABOUT THE CLUB

In 2011/2012, the Country Sunshiners promoted and started New Dancer lessons under the watch full eye of Gary Winters. However, our turnout was low and to our dismay, by Christmas most of our new dancers had disappeared. During a meeting to discuss the results it was suggested a new format might be in order as the current one had not worked and maybe a compressed time frame would be better received. At the 2012 A.G.M. the Club discussed our future and the need for new members. It was decided to initiate the FAST TRACK

Program with the hope of increasing the interest in Square Dancing.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Mainstream Program is taught over a period of seven weeks. Dancers attend seven Friday evening sessions and four Saturday morning and afternoon sessions. Each session is two hours, for a total of 14 hours of instruction. The cost of the program is \$100 per person, for couples or singles of all ages, and dress is casual. In the second year, at the request of the New Dancers, a review weekend in March was added at a cost of \$25.

ADVANTAGES

- Because of the condensed time period, dancers have faster and improved retention and recall of the material.
- The shorter learning time appeals to the general public. ie. easier to sell a 7-week program than a year-long program.
- The New Dancers could dance with the Mainstream group within months of starting.
- New Dancers participated in the special dance nights (eg. "Rodeo Week Dance" and "Black is Back – Halloween Dance"). They pitched right in and helped with bringing food, set up, and clean up.
- As the New Dancers gained confidence, many did club visits, often to regain our Mascot.

DISADVANTAGES

- The Club's regular dance night is also on Friday nights, and the Fast Track Program changed the evening to a 'teaching dance'. To compensate, visitors were not charged and instead, a donation box was made available. Some chose to pay, and others did not.
- A few of the seasoned dancers found the evenings boring and felt that the level of dancing had decreased.
- During the first year, there was difficulty making sure the New Dancers were proficient in all moves. However, over the last two years, caller Murray Few adjusted the program and the New Dancers are now reasonably proficient.

RESULTS & OBSERVATIONS

- The New Dancers brought increased numbers to the club in a short period of time. 2012-13: 12 dancers; 2013-14: 16 dancers; 2014-15: 13 dancers.
- Over the past two year, 19 dancers stayed with the Club.
- Over 3 years, four dancers are serving on the executive.
- Two of the dancers have helped to start a new club in Devon with caller Tom Gray.
- Two others joined the new club as they live closer to Devon.
- Two dancers now dance regularly at another club closer to home, but continue to visit our Club.

For Ray and myself we found this Program to be great. It was wonderful to see and feel excitement, happy faces, hear a lot of laughing from people who never really heard of square dancing before, learning and enjoying doing so. We did not feel bored and were not affected by the level of the dancing. At the end of each dance, in our now large circle of smiling faces, a resounding thank you to our Callers for giving us another great night of dancing. Our special thanks to Murray Few for pulling this Program all together.

