

September State Promotion from Dee and Ken Scott

The first square dance convention in 1952 in Riverside, CA, attracted 6,500 dancers; the largest national convention in 1976 in Anaheim attracted 39,796 dancers. In 2002 St. Paul attracted 8,828 dancers; this year Long Beach attracted 4,912--the smallest number ever!

Reasons? "Change" everywhere: the global economic crisis, the prices, the swine flu, unemployment--the list is endless! Ironically, the only thing "certain" is this world is that there will be "change."

Change causes anxiety. When we're not sure how to change, we revert to the "old ways," the supposedly tried-but-true ways that worked in the past. The problem is that change is occurring so fast today that what worked last year probably won't work as well this year. What worked in 1952 or 1976 or even 2002 is history!

As your clubs are trying to attract new members, consider some of today's "changes." People have short attention spans; the world serves instant gratification for the body and mind: prepared food and electronic communication--texting, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube. What does all that change mean to square dancing?

- Traditional "demos" scare off new recruits. They watch you respond to 60 or more calls and say, "I can't learn all that!"
- Square dance outfits turn off many spectators. Often heard is "I'm never going to wear that getup!" Many women today do not even have a skirt in their closet! Flyers with graphics that show the "traditional outfits" go unnoticed.

Change! What changes can square dance make?

- Do Square Dance ABC. Involve your audience from the moment you start. Ask them to dance with you, not just watch you. Every dancer should go into the audience and get a partner. Learn their names. Use them. When the "ABC dance" ends, the participants will feel they can now "square dance." And they can! Let them dance at the ABC level until they request the opportunity to move on. If they want to become a "mainstream" or "plus" dancer, they will ask for details.
- Wear causal clothes--neat, clean, dressy causal. Clean jeans, nice slacks or skirts, dressy shirts, t-shirts or blouses. Mike Seastrom detailed "new-dancer fun night" in the August issue of American Squaredance: "Your club members should not dress in square dance attire at these events because it will separate you from your guests. You'll have a more difficult time getting your guests to dance because they'll think that you are all 'professional' dancers, and they will be more self-conscious about not being 'good enough' to dance with you. If everyone is dressed in like attire, it removes a barrier and keeps everyone together for that event."
- Clubs need to get all their events listed on www.squaredanceminnesota.com. Like fast food, one website that has it all! No more searching, no more wasting time.
- Clubs today need websites that are constantly updated so visitors can find current information for the ABC dances, the classes, this week's dance, next month's dance and the year's schedule. Remember: instant gratification! We need to give the 2009 spectators fast access to all the information they desire. Once they've tried square dancing, they've experienced firsthand all the "f's": fun, friends, fellowship, family, and food.