

**News From
The Sage Swingers**
Brunswick, ME
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In the various square dance magazines and web sites you can read how square dance clubs and national organizations have plans for advertising square dancing, for “improving” our public image, for altering the dance program and for growing memberships. For the SAGE Swingers in the process began with a change in philosophy.

What are the club’s goals for its dancers? The Club thinks this can determine how you go about gaining and keeping new members. The Clubs goals today are different from what they might have been five and ten years ago. For example, at SAGE Swingers some of our goals are:

- 1) To help the club grow by getting more new members
- 2) To make sure people are having a good time learning to dance.
- 3) Insure that new members return.

Here are some of the “old” goals the club no longer strives for.

- 1) The Club does not feel people need to graduate from a Mainstream program by a certain date.
- 2) Classes do not have to start in September only.
- 3) Learning to dance is not a race to see how quickly you can get to Plus or A-1
- 4) The Club tends to downplay classic square dance clothes and make sure people know it’s optional

These ideas express themselves many ways in how the club recruits and how new dancers are treated. The club does start a class in September, but a class also starts in January.

With the help of club caller, Bill Fulton and his wife, Norma, SAGE Swingers try to make dancing as low key and fun as possible. They have recognized in order to keep new dancers interested there have to be many opportunities for them to dance, and that means more Mainstream dances. SAGE Swingers has been scheduling more and more Mainstream dances and we search for Mainstream dances on the schedule for our club to support. If you want to get and keep new dancers, Mainstream is the place to be.

The SAGE Swingers tried all the methods described in a handout they prepared to recruit for the club. No single one of the methods brought in mobs of people but, taken together, they have helped them build classes of two and three squares and graduate 39 dancers over two years. The Fall class of 2002 has witnessed a continuation of the club’s success with 28 additional dancers participating in the first two free workshops and 18 remaining through October. The additional regular support of club members has helped us dance with 5 to 8 squares at every workshop this year.

The handout mentioned above describes the methods The SAGE Swingers use for the operation of their club. These methods have worked for them. These handouts are available from the CALLERLAB Foundation via electronic mail as a .PDF file or via regular mail as a paper copy to anyone who requests them, please contact the Foundation: Phone (321) 639-0039; E-mail: FoundationFL@aol.com for more information. A small donation of \$5.00 would be appreciated to help defer postage and handling costs.