

**News From Davenport/Bettendorf, IA**  
**Fast Track to Mainstream**  
**By: Doug & Don Sprosty, "The Calling Twins"**  
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The purpose of this article is to relate our very positive experience in early 2007 with teaching the CALLERLAB Mainstream program using the "Fast Track" (or accelerated) approach. We are writing this as we prepare our lesson plan to begin teaching in this format again in early 2008.

By no means is this a new idea but it was the first time we had used it and we are almost certain it is the first time it had been done in the state of Iowa. The class was taught on four consecutive Saturdays.

Starting on the second Saturday of February through the first Saturday of March we taught the complete Mainstream program to a class of very enthusiastic students. We had twelve students that began the class and ten that graduated. The makeup of the class included high school students, college students, forty-somethings, and what we would classify as active/energetic seniors. A good portion of the students had no previous square dance experience. Others took the class as a refresher course after having been out of dancing for a couple of years. Others took the class as a way to reinforce what they were learning in the traditional/conventional square dance class they were simultaneously enrolled in. One of the female students was an experienced dancer that wanted to learn to dance the "man's" position.

The students were required to pre-register and pre-pay for the class so that plans could be made as far as arranging "partners" for singles. The pre-registration was also necessary for planning the food preparations mentioned later in this article.

Enough angels were present to dance three or four squares each tip. The instruction was really no different than in a conventional/traditional class. The length of tips and breaks between tips were the same as any other class except for the fact that the dancing lasted six hours rather than the "normal" two hours. Many of the angels commented on the fact that they had more stamina than they thought they would. Some of them were concerned about this since it was a longer dance time than they were accustomed to. As a reward for the angel's efforts a drawing was held on the last day of class. A restaurant gift certificate was presented to the lucky winner. The angels danced free of charge as well.

The day began with a continental breakfast at 8:30 AM. Dancing began at 9:00 AM & continued until 12:00 Noon. Lunch was served and then the dancing continued from 12:30 PM until 3:30 PM. One important point is that lunch was provided so that the students did not have to leave the dance hall. This also provided time to socialize with the angels. Natalie Sprosty (round dance cuer & wife of Don) was the lunch coordinator and cook. The first day cold cuts, cheese, etc. were served to make sandwiches. The other lunches included a taco bar, baked potato bar and soups. The class was operated as a "caller run" venture but could easily be done by a club. This would make the food preparations easier as these duties could be divided among the club members.

Is the Fast Track approach for everyone? Obviously, the answer is NO! However, for the right group we found it to be an extremely viable alternative to the traditional/conventional 25 to 30 week class. Age & physical health are extremely important factors. Also, the timing of when to sponsor the class is important. We marketed the class as a way to beat the winter blahs and to get involved in an exercise program as a New Year's resolution. Offering the class in the spring, summer or fall may not be as effective due to competition from outdoor activities such as sports, camping, etc.

Is the Fast Track approach for every instructor? Our opinion here is also NO! In order to effectively teach under this format the instructor must be energized and must believe in the method in order to "sell" it to the students.

We welcome any questions and comments. Please call (563) 370-0209 or e-mail [TwinCaller@juno.com](mailto:TwinCaller@juno.com). At this writing we have seven students pre-registered for our 2008 class with the possibility of two to three more that have shown a genuine interest in giving it a try.