

Central Ohio Council of Dance Clubs

At the meeting of the Central Ohio Council of Dance Clubs (COCDC) on May 4, 2009, it was announced to the council representatives that we were forming a group to try to promote square dancing, recruit more new dancers for our classes in the fall, and ultimately to increase membership in our clubs. Mary Galentine agreed to chair this committee. We gave the club representatives information of when and where the first meeting was going to be held. We also sent out this information by email to dancers from all of the clubs and announced it at each of the club dances we attended for the remainder of the spring. Dancers representing eight different Central Ohio clubs attended the first committee meeting in May.

We were successful in getting CLUB MEMBERS involved, even though towards the end there was only a hand full of us that really were left with getting the ball rolling. In these meetings we discussed ways to increase the numbers of new dancers recruited and the importance of us working **together** to make this happen. We decided to purchase polo shirts with the logo on them "Ask Me About Square Dancing". In all, from August to October, we sold over 160 shirts. That is 160 bill boards of advertisement. We also created a business type card that had the same logo on it. The background of the card was the US Flag, with two people's names, phone numbers and email address as points of contact. The back of the card was a coupon for two free dances lessons with the locations of where they were being held in two different parts of town. We also stated on the card that if those locations did not work for the person, to please call one of the numbers on the other side of the card for information of clubs in "their" area. The two of us listed had already agreed that we need dancers and that it did not matter what club they chose, and I know several people were referred to clubs that did not participate in our campaign just because that was the closest club for the new dancer. We put these cards on bulletin boards in library's, grocery stores, post offices, anywhere we were allowed. All during our summer dances we reminded our dancers of these meetings and encouraged them to join us. In late August and early September we wore our polo shirts and went to street dances and demos to do our best to get new dancers. We passed out flyers to anyone who might be interested, giving them information about square dancing and the health benefits received from square dancing as well as listings of locations where they could go to learn. We had pot luck open beginner dances at two different locations to help get people interested. There was also a pot luck meal at one group's first free beginner class. Other promotional activities included writing articles and sending them, along with photos, to local publications, and posting dance class information on a number of free on-line listings of community activities. Some clubs added or improved their web sites. All the attention placed on recruitment seemed to energize the dancers to talk to people about our wonderful activity.

I believe the combination of all of these things as well as the efforts of those that were involved on the committee is why our classes have increased as much as they have this year. We are starting to really work **together** to keep our culture alive. We have 98 new dancers who started classes this fall (25 at Bucks & Does Singles, 18 in the combined Orbiting Squares/Friendly Ties class, 14 at Grove City Squares, 13 at Little Brown Jug, 13 at Westerville Promenaders, 8 at Bunkhouse Reelers and 7 at Hicks & Chicks. One club, Rhythm Reelers, will be starting their class Nov 10.)

I would just like to say THANK YOU to everyone who helped with this campaign, even if you were not able to attend every meeting. Your efforts are seen in our results!