

Ken Ritucci Milestone Award
50th CALLERLAB Convention
Tuesday, April 15, 2025
Presented by Ed Foote

Good evening. Over the years at these milestone presentations, often the speaker will give details about the person without actually giving the person's name, thereby letting the audience try to figure out who the recipient is.

But that is difficult to do tonight, because if i tell you anything about the person's background, most of you will know right away who it is. So i'm going to give you a one sentence statement about our recipient, then we'll all know who it is, and we can proceed from there.

Tonight's recipient has organized and run more callers schools throughout the u.s. And the world than any other person in the history of square dancing! That's right - tonight's recipient is Ken Ritucci.

Ken has been an accredited callerlab caller coach for 33 years and has been teaching callers for over 40 years. He runs his northeast callers school every fall in new england - this year will be the 21st consecutive year for this school! The school averages 25 - 30 students every year!

He has also run other schools around the country: california - 7 years, alabama - 4 years, minnesota - 3 years, the institute for leadership development in massachusetts - 6 years, as well schools in georgia and florida.

But that's only in the u.s. He has also run 15 schools in europe, including germany - 7 years and russia - 5 years. Russia is significant, because this is the first time any caller has run a school there, thus helping to open this country up to square dancing. And he did it for 5 years.

In addition, he has run schools in denmark, the czech republic and australia. He has also been on the staff of 16 other caller schools, and he has conducted numerous one-day caller clinics in a variety of states, as well as in canada and europe. He has even run two speciality schools: one geared to just teaching, and the other one for advanced & challenge.

At all of his schools Ken follows the callerlab curriculum and he gives special emphasis to encouraging everyone to to be a member of callerlab.

He has also conducted countless seminars at the callerlab convention, as well as at the national convention, which he attends almost every year.

By doing all these schools, Ken has made a major impact on square dancing throughout the world. Think of the numer of callers he has trained - easily over 1000 callers. It is safe to say that every week in all parts of the world, dancers are being affected by the callers that Ken has trained.

But it doesn't stop here. Ken is also an accomplished traveling caller, traveling throughout the u.s. And the world - calling over 200 dances a year at mainstream through c-3b, including a variety of festivals and conventions.

Since he is consistently invited back everywhere he goes, it is clear that he is providing enjoyment for thousands of dancers. He is a true ambassador for square dancing!

We've been talking about Ken's accomplishments. But what about Ken as a person?

There are a number of reasons why all of us are here in "earth school," and one of these reasons is service: we are all supposed to be of service to others. Ken can be considered a case study in how to be of service in life.

1. He has served 18 years on the callerlab board of governors: 9 of those years on the executive committee, was vice chairman for 2 years and chairman of the board for 2 years.
2. He is currently chairman of the callerlab accredited caller coach committee. As such he arranged for several projects to be completed in the past 2 years and is currently overseeing additional projects. In other words, Ken gets things done.
3. Ken has been president of the new england council of callers asso., the springfield area callers asso., and the connecticut callers asso. - not just once, but 3-4 times for each of these associations.

And he has also been vice president of these associations.

4. Ken has programmed the new england s/d conv. Many times. He programmed the 2015 nat'l conv. In springfield, ma., and he was the keynote speaker at the 2011 national convention in detroit.

Obviously, Ken is a living example of what it means to be of service in life.

One of the requirements for the milestone award is unselfish contribution - not thinking of personal gain or monetary reward - having an attitude that thinks of others first.

Ken Ritucci is one of the most unselfish callers i have ever known! For example:

1. At every callers school he runs, he gives out a syllabus. That's not unusual - everyone does this. A typical school syllabus might be about 50 pages. I've seen a couple schools that give out a 100 page syllabus.

Ken gives out a 360 page syllabus! 360 pages! To every student! Do you realize how much it costs to produce a book of this size?

Even when he is hired by someone else to be on a caller school staff, he will give a copy of this syllabus to the other staff members, and often will give it to these students as well.

He could easily produce a much shorter syllabus, but he goes overboard in order to provide the students with total information on every subject in the callerlab curriculum.

2. Another example of unselfish contribution: at every school he runs, no one under age 20 has to pay - they get in free.

3. Another example: at many schools the staff gets paid based on the number of students who attend. If attendance is low, the staff gets less money. Not at Ken's schools - he makes sure that his staff receives a nice fee Regardless of attendance.

At various times he has sacrificed himself and only broken even or even lost money on a school, rather than ask anyone on his staff to take less money because attendance was not what was expected.

4. Also, at his primary school every fall in new england, which is now in its 21st consecutive year, he will give special awards, such as plaques to 5 year attendees, and engraved crystal awards to 10 year attendees.

He also gives an engraved crystal microphone gift to every staff member, and every year an engraved chrystal award to a staff member or a square dance couple for lifetime achievement.

All these plaques and engraved crystal awards - he doesn't have to give these out. He does so because he considers it the right thing to do.

Ken always conducts himself in a totally professional manner, and he is always promoting callerlab. When he visits overseas, he has been asked to conduct numerous seminars on callerlab, and he shows how the goals of callerlab are in line with the goals of the overseas organizations.

At every school and seminar, whether in the u.s. Or overseas, he is always encouraging people to become a member of callerlab.

By the way, just for complete disclosure, i'll mention that Ken has a masters degree and is currently teaching history and theology at a high school in his area.

Summary: from his callers schools, to his clinics and seminars, to his chairmanship of various caller organizations, to his heavy involvement with callerlab, to his traveling calling throughout the u.s. And europe, Ken has been exercising influence for decades.

So you would think that, after all this time, he would be backing off and slowing down. Not so! He is running just as many caller schools and doing just as much traveling calling as he did 20 years ago.

He has been calling for 50 years. Yet he is still heavily involved in service and in practicing an attitude of putting others first.

Many years ago someone said: "we grow to heaven leaning on the arm of someone we have helped." Ken has a lot of arms. Hundreds of arms. Thousands of arms.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to present to you milestone award recipient Ken Ritucci.