



Hot Tips



Happy Hallanukkahivingsmasween!

November-December 2016

HOTLANTA SQUARES MEMBERS DONATE TOYS TO PEDIATRIC AIDS FOUNDATION

Hotlanta Squares members got into to the spirit of giving this year by donating toys to the Pediatric AIDS Holiday Toy Drive. On December 6th a table full of toys were presented to Paul Singh. A very special thank you to all Hotlanta Squares members who contributed. A special shout out to Joan Campitelli for coordinating the shopping effort.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FALL 2016 MAINSTREAM GRADUATING CLASS



Sha-Ron Cassel

On Monday, December 19th, 2016 graduation certificates were presented to six students by caller Mike Shagina and club president Clara Welch. Congratulations to our newest Hotlanta Squares dancers



Joanie Sanford



Robin Hancock



Kerry Sullivan



Victor Ing



Harry Tessler

But'cha ARE, Blanche!

Allan Hurst

allanhurst@gmail.com



As you'll see elsewhere in this issue, I attended a regional summit of IAGSDC square dance clubs in Northern California. The subject? How to revitalize our clubs.

The biggest shocker to most people during the afternoon came during the Marketing workshop, which was given by a very sharp lady named Deb Doyle. When she asked who we thought our target market was for new class members, we all told her "Oh, people in their 20's and 30's."

She kind of looked around the room with this "Are you freaking *kid-ding* me?" expression.

Nope, she said (and I'm paraphrasing her response), *aim older. Aim way older...like no more than ten years from your median age.*

And here's where I became quite amused. Most of the people the room shot her looks of total surprise, because they thought of themselves as being much (much!) younger.

This isn't an uncommon reaction. Very few people want to think of themselves as "older" (much less "old"). We live in a youth oriented society. To be labeled "older" is, for some people, tantamount to being led up the path to the old folks' home. (Or in our community's case, moving to a condo in Palm Springs.)

So I will, for this issue, play Bette Davis to most people's Joan Crawford for just a bit.

But'cha ARE older now, Blanche, ya ARE!

I've been dancing since 1995, and attended my first convention in 1996. I received my Ten Year Medallion in 2005...and this year, in St. Louis, I'll receive my Twenty Year Medallion. At each Convention banquet, I look around the room and see the same expression on many, many faces:

*When did we all get so **old**?*

Keep in mind that I never figured I'd make it to the ripe old age of 54, not when I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1981, just in time to watch as a substantial percentage of my friends and acquaintances dropped dead from HIV. At that point, without research (or research budgets!), HIV-related death seemed to be an inevitable conclusion.

Jumping back to the present: We're all dancing a little more slowly, a bit more deliberately. The LGBTQ community's dance level has skewed upwards into Advanced and Challenge as we've recruited fewer and fewer new dancers.

All of which brings us back to who Deb said is our *real* target audience.

Now, Deb terms herself a "brand storyteller", and she asked us, *How do you offer something that will get [new] people to give up something—be it time, money, or effort—to participate?* She went on to contend that if you understand to whom you're marketing, you can pick them out of any crowd like running a huge magnet through a haystack to find needles.

We were led through a fascinating exercise in which we defined "George", who was our mythical perfect target demographic for a new dancer. (And he could just as easily be a she, so maybe I should have said "Pat" to keep the example genderless.) I will use

“George[ette]” here to do my best to avoid gender bias.

Here's what we came up with as a starting point.:

George[ette], a typical Bay Area square dancer, is probably:

- Gay/lesbian/bi (or straight but not narrow);
- Age: 40's-50's (because most of us were in our 50's-60's; more on that later);
- Probably college educated;
- Geeky;
- Employed;
- Working in a white collar or academia job;
- Eco-friendly;
- At least a bit introverted;
- Probably partnered, but not necessarily joined at the hip;
- Social, but not necessarily cruisy;
- Flirty;
- Not a heavy drinker;
- Physically active.

How did Deb figure this out? She asked qualifying questions of everyone in the room. And yes, most of us fit that profile quite well.

It's important to note that this result is true for Northern California. If this exercise took place in other geographic areas, we'd see a number of differences. I suspect we'd see a greater diversity of employment in Canada, for example, or in the DC Metro Area, I'd expect to see a higher number of folks working in government and defense. Each area has its own profile.

Then Deb asked, *Why does George[ette] dance?* The answers we came

up with were that he/she enjoys:

- The challenge of a puzzle (and/or is math-minded);
- A sense of community;
- Exercise (or an excuse to exercise).

A lot of people in the room seemed to be pretty hung up on the target age though. “No, no,” they cried, “we want 20 and 30 some-things in our clubs!”

Why? Because that's how old we all were when *we* started dancing.

That was then, this is now. Back then, there was no internet, there weren't a lot of electronic devices designed to keep people from interacting in person, and we were a herd of people who were comfortable socializing in person...when we felt like socializing. (Don't forget our introvert tendencies.)

Deb suggested (as gently as she could, because a few people Just Were Not Getting It) that **a typical 20/30-something wasn't going to want to dance with a bunch of 50-year-olds.** She went on to explain that we could probably skew our marketing message “down” no more than 10 years past our median age...at present.

And here's where the genius of her idea became obvious to me, and seemed to elude a couple of people sitting near me. Start with the low-hanging fruits (pun intended) who are within 5 or 10 years of our ages, because *those* folks *will* be comfortable socializing with us.

Get them interested in square dancing, get them involved and committed and having fun, and once we have a critical mass of 40-50-year-olds having fun in our clubs, *then those folks will start recruiting people ten years younger than themselves...*meaning 30-40 year olds.

Once the 30-40-year-olds have been integrated into the community, they can recruit the 20-30-year-olds for whom people in our session

were clamoring.

This wasn't the short-term/quick-fix plan that some people wanted to hear, but it made so much sense to me that of all of the things that could have stuck in my head after five hours of meetings, this is the single idea that stayed with me. *Recruit within 10 years of our current median age. Over time, the median age will drop.*

This certainly wasn't the only challenge facing recruiting new members. Deb pointed out a number of potential barriers to new students based on non-dancers' perceptions of square dancing. Some examples:

- A *nine-month* class commitment is *scary* to most people.
- Our websites are mostly designed for existing dancers, rather than being very welcoming of new dancers.¹
- Square dancing's public image still involves wearing skirts and other funny clothing.
- The perception that square dancing is done to "hick music."
- The uncertainty of whether or not singles would be welcome, or if people had to show up for class with a partner.
- The peculiar (to non-dancers) language and vocabulary of square dancing.
- Classes that only start once a year

Looking at that list, I started to wonder how I ever became interested in square dancing!

Finding George(ette) wasn't quite as easily defined. We ran out of time to explore this topic fully, but here are some places that came up in the discussion of "*Where to find George(ette)?*":

¹ There are exceptions. Deb suggested people check out the Puddletown and Chitown websites. I also suggest that the Bay Area Queer Contra website is an example of a dance website that's friendly to new people.

- LGBTQ employee groups
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter)
- Meetups for LGBTQ groups, especially for physically active groups that like hiking and walking.

In addition to the above, we added some existing known to be successful recruiting venues, including:

- LGBTQ AA meetings (great source of folks looking for sober activities);
- Pride parades and celebrations;
- Demonstration dances.

The next time your club gets ready to recruit new dancers, you may want to consider keeping some of the above ideas in mind. I'm hoping that another Bay Area square dance club summit will bring Deb back for a deeper dive into using marketing demographics to beef up the next generation of club classes.



The preceding article has been reprinted with permission from
The Call Sheet
Professional Journal of the Gay Callers Association

The Call Sheet is the official publication of the Gay Callers Association (GCA).

The Gay Callers Association is open to anyone who calls and/or teaches for GLBT square dance clubs. No assumptions should be made about the sexual orientation of any contributor to this publication.

On the web: <http://www.gaycallers.org>

On Facebook: "GCA – Gay Callers Association"

JOHN PARDUE 11/17
JENNETTE HANS 11/19
ELAINE CONN 11/21
LINDA PATRICK 11/23
MOE PRADO 11/25
TODD PRICE 11/27
MAREK WHITE 11/27
SAM SHEPHERD 11/29
ABBY TURKEL 12/2
MIKE MASSEY 12/6
CAROLINE CARSTENS 12/8
CLARA CHESEBRO 12/15
MICHAEL PALMER 12/17
SARALYN LEVINE 12/18
SUSAN LITTON 12/20



Sam's Tips on Recruiting Dancers (Clara's comments in parenthesis)

by Sam Serotte and Clara Welch

1. Wear them down over the years (be shameless).
2. Go with other square dancers on outings, for example to the zoo, when anyone in the group greets other non-dancers that are friends or associates, talk to those people about square dance, i.e. we dance on Monday nights, we have so much fun, we are going to Palm Springs for convention, etc. (don't be afraid of strangers, a friend of a friend is a friend).
3. Call or text them a few days before class and remind them of the time and place (get their contact information - i.e. cell phone number).

Hot Tips Tip of the Month

Don't Be A Stinker



Square dancing involves being in close proximity and physical contact with other dancers. Please be courteous to other dancers by being mindful of body odor. Many are aromatically offended by strong odors and some such as cigarette smoke, strong perfume or cologne, or scented body oils and ointments can trigger allergic reactions. Offensive odor can make other dancers uncomfortable and that can spoil everyone's fun.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

PDP is coming up January 13th - 15th. Sign-up sheets are being circulated for volunteers to staff critical positions. If you are attending Monday and/or Tuesday night classes, please visit the sheets at the sign-in table and sign up to help out. If you are out of town, please contact Saralyn Levine or Mike Shagina to find out where and when you may be needed.

In addition to our website, www.hotlantasquares.org, look for Hotlanta Squares groups on Facebook and MeetUp



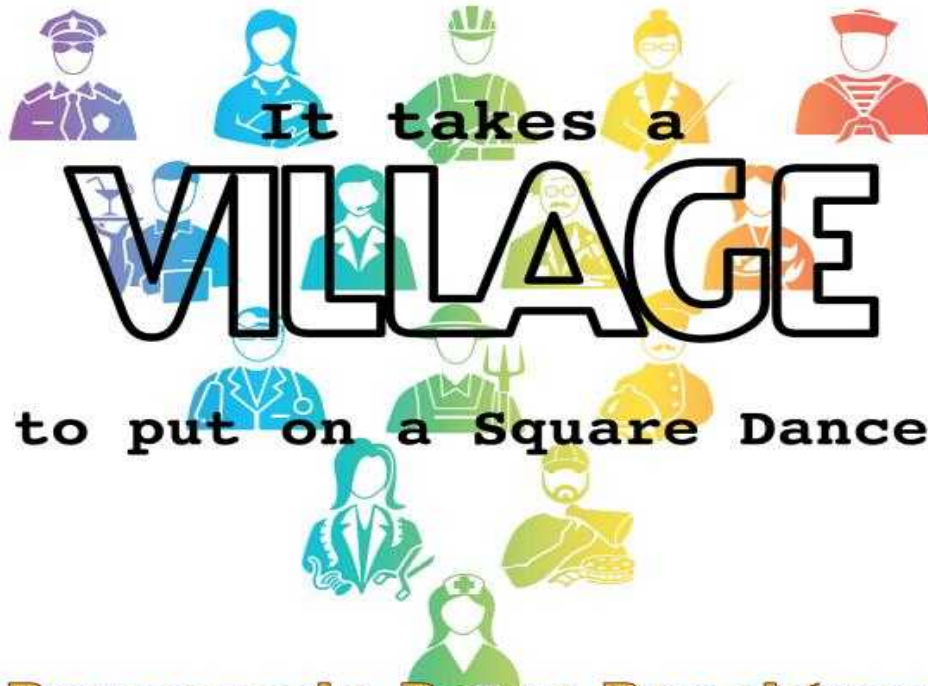
HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Home For The Holidays Holiday Dance Wednesday, December 28, 2016

Featuring
BETSY GOTTA





Promenade Down Peachtree
Atlanta, Georgia January 13-15, 2017

Where:

Decatur Recreation Center
231 Sycamore Street
Decatur GA 30030

Host Hotel:

Is yet to be determined at this printing.
Please check our website for updated
hotel information.
<http://iagsdc.com/hotlanta/events.html>

Dayle Hodge
Columbia, Maryland



Michael Maltentfort
Chicago, Illinois



John Marshall
Sterling, Virginia

Register on line
<http://iagsdc.com/hotlanta/PDP/PDP2017.html>





**YOU ARE INVITED
TO A FREE
OPEN HOUSE**



**Have you or someone you know ever wanted to learn how to square dance?
Well, here's your chance to try it!!**

Come to Hotlanta Squares' Free Open House on January 23, 2017 at 7:30pm

**You'll get a chance to meet the caller and club members and learn a few calls
If you like it (*and I'm sure you will*) you'll want to come to our Monday classes this
spring. Classes are \$5.00 at the door. No contract or advanced tuition required.
Classes meet Mondays from 7:30pm to 8:30pm from February through mid-June.**

**The Open House and all classes will be at
City of Light MCC
3125 Presidential Parkway
*Atlanta, GA 30340***

Visit www.hotlantasquares.org for additional info