

# SWOSDA INFORMATION SESSION

## MAY 13, 2023

PRESENTED BY CANADIAN CALLERS COLLEGE

Welcome to the SWOSDA “Leadership” Information Session

Today we are going to discuss:

What is a leader

What is a club Angel

What is a “tape” group

What is a caller

In order to address these topics, we have divided today into three main sections:

#1) Dancer Leadership within a Club

#2) Dancer Leadership in a Club without a Caller

#3) Caller Leadership

A microphone has been set up here and at indicated times during the afternoon, we are hoping for some sharing of information from YOU.

We welcome all POSITIVE suggestions and comments and ask that you keep your timing to about two minutes each. I would mention at this time that the complaint department is currently closed and will not be open today.

### **Section #1 DANCER LEADERSHIP WITHIN A CLUB**

What is Leadership and how can we apply it within a Club? First, we should ask ....

## 1. What is a Leader

- Someone who has an interest in and the ability to work with other folks to run a club.
- A couple or individual who has a skill to offer to the executive of a club; secretarial skills, social skills, computer skills (flyers etc.), financial skills, muscle (setup tables, chairs, decorations)!
- Someone who has the ability to get people involved and motivated to help.

These attributes all sound like qualities for members of an Executive. For those clubs that have an Executive, a challenge has always been how to encourage folks to volunteer ... or be coerced. A recruitment suggestion might include a “Job Description Binder” that lists the positions and exactly what is expected. This could be made available, perhaps on the flyer table, and possibly include a list of past executive members for folks to go to for reference or advice. (Photo albums are perfect for that type of info). Communication is always a good tool!

But, **Leadership is not** just about being on the executive! Every member of a dance club can contribute – perhaps by:

- supporting club events as a member
- arriving early to dances
- welcoming guests and members alike
- dancing with everyone in the club - don't be part of a clique
- visiting other clubs and wearing YOUR club badge
- taking a turn as a greeter even though you aren't on the executive
- taking a turn to provide refreshments
- being a supporter of open events by offering to carpool folks (especially newer dancers) to ensure they can attend and feel comfortable at other dances (Sometimes a home club member

greeting them at the door of another club's event and dancing the first tip with them, sets the tone for newer dancers to continue to visit other events)

- contacting former dancers who are still able to invite them back into the world of social square dancing – and bring them to the club, if required. Sometimes, the partner of a deceased dancer may wish to get involved again if your club welcomes single dancers.

## 2. What is a Club Angel

- a. An Angel is someone who goes out to help the club with a new class
- b. Or be a spare dancer for any other program the club teaches
- c. The key here is they HELP. They don't hinder, they don't overstep the Caller and they don't interfere when the Caller is teaching.
- d. At this point I have a square that is going to get up and we will show how an Angel supports the teaching process or not!
- e. If you would like to be an Angel. Or would like to help someone understand how to be an Angel. Please pick up the handout for that. (**Handouts available on [www.canadiancallerscollege.com](http://www.canadiancallerscollege.com)**)

At this point, I want to mention a process called “The NEST” This is a program that was introduced at CALLERLAB several years ago and there is a club in Alberta that is using it successfully. It is a process that allows people to join the club at any time through the dance season. The dancers are worked with outside the normal dance space in what is referred to a learning station. These folks are walked through the calls the club is currently dancing, by Leaders or Narrators trained by the caller to “instruct”, in order to bring them to the point that the club is dancing. And although it may take several

weeks for them to “catch up” each dance night, they are added to the regular dance space for a time period decided by the caller to dance with the club members, to the point of their knowledge. Something to think about for new classes as well as dancers returning to the activity after several years of not dancing. I mention this now because, if an Angel really had the interest and ability to learn how to “teach/instruct”, it would be a good thing to have them in your Nest Program. They could perhaps become the “Nest Narrator”. The Nest is a good instrument for contacting former members and allowing them to return to the club with a comfortable refreshment of figures. This type of program requires that the club caller is supportive of the process.

Other non-standard programs available include: ABC program, 12<sup>th</sup> Night Program, Multi-cycle Program

- Caller MUST buy into these programs as they directly impact his/her program
- Possibly a consideration for new callers – not as much or as long a commitment for initial learning

## **Section #2 – DANCER LEADERSHIP IN A CLUB WITHOUT A CALLER**

Normally, a club or group of dancers without a caller is referred to as a “Tape Group” or a “Tape Club” (regardless of the music media ie: CDs, Videos Digital files, etc.)

There are numerous reasons for Tape Groups but most commonly they happen when a caller is no longer able to call for a club, if the club is in a remote location and a caller is not accessible or when a

group of dancers wants to explore something that their caller is not able to provide (ie: the next dance program or DBD sessions).

There are 3 major “types” of Tape Groups and these are:

- i. Teaching System Tape Groups
- ii. Workshop Tape Groups
- iii. Dance Only Tape Groups

All Groups have a “Leader” that is usually an individual (or couple). This Leader assumes responsibility of operating whatever Teaching or Dancing system has been purchased, including the providing and operating of equipment and should possess the following attributes:

- Patience, Patience and more Patience! Be aware that there is no live caller to get people moving again in 2 or 3 calls when there is a breakdown so often the music is stopped and run back to play through the trouble area again. This happens ... a lot ... and it is “Life in a Tape Group”!
- Having said that – the Leader needs to ensure that ALL members in the group also have patience for when breakdowns happen, the starting and stopping of the music and dance affects everyone in the group, not just those that are having difficulties
- Most importantly for running a Teach Session or Workshop Session, the Leader(s) should know and understand all the definitions of each call in the session they are running, ie: Basic, Mainstream, Plus etc. \*\*\* **Definitions for all CALLERLAB programs through C1 are available on line at [www.callerlab.org](http://www.callerlab.org) for free download**
- Possessing the patience and skill of a teacher can be most useful

**i)** Let’s talk about the most complex type of Tape Club first – Teaching System Groups:

A Teaching System type of tape club is one where a Leader is teaching a complete program, whether it be to beginner dancers or dancers who

want to move from say, the A-1 program into the A-2 program. In this type of group there is often a lot of walking through calls and learning definitions so it's essential that the Leader be well versed on definitions in order to smooth out any trouble spots. Teaching System Clubs can be augmented by dancing sessions to prevent "overload".

Teaching Systems are often expensive as they're designed for a specific purpose – not just a "dance party". ALL Teach Systems purchased should be used within the guidelines of the provider. Actually, Canadian Caller's College is the only available Teaching System of its kind. Most that are available are stand-alone walk-through segments on you-tube of specific calls.

Just touching on Teaching Systems, Canadian Callers College also has a short CD on Teaching Kids. Jeff has done many sessions working with kids in school and camp situations and he has devised a modified program that eliminates gender identification and many calls that require more touching than just a handhold. Please contact him for any details.

ii) So moving down in complexity, the next type of group is a Dance Tape Group with a Workshop

This type of Tape Club is again similar to the Teaching Club in that there is a Leader, with all the above Leader qualities, who is usually responsible for equipment operation and knowledge of definitions in order to help dancers if needed to ensure dancer success. In this club, the dancers are often learning or reviewing specific calls or exploring different applications of one or two calls. There is still a lot of walk-through and learning of definitions. So again, Workshop Clubs can be augmented with dance sessions to make a complete event.

\*\*\* Reminder: all Callerlab definitions are free and available and Taminations is there for anyone to use. Taminations is a free on-line program that shows graphic movements of all square dance calls. See the link on [www.canadiancallerscollege.com](http://www.canadiancallerscollege.com)

iii) And last but, yes, the least in complexity (but some would say the most fun) is the Dance Only Tape Group

These groups are often more of a social gathering with dancing. They are not as challenging long term and can be easily adapted to club parties, caller vacation fill-ins, snow days, simply keeping your club together until you decide what happens next circumstances, or augmenting anything in between. Dance CDs are more readily available than Teaching or Workshop CDs and can usually be purchased directly from the caller. It is a good idea to try to have a selection of different style callers in order for all your dancers to be entertained.

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There are many “Tape” groups around the world run by people who don’t want to be a caller but desire to keep dancing alive in their area as there is no caller available. So they purchase tapes or CDs from either one caller or multiple callers. These are either teaching sessions, workshop sessions or dancing sessions.

So how do you obtain these Tapes or CDs?

There are RULES! -

Sharing Tapes / CDs with other clubs is absolutely not permitted. Callers who sell these systems use it as a form of income and don’t permit copying or sharing.

There are few basic methods to obtain material for your club:

1. Purchase from callers who have these available

2. Ask a caller if you can record them at their regular club making sure they know it will be used at a tape group.
3. Hire a caller to come and call at your tape group and record the session. This information needs to be explained before the caller agrees to call for your club
4. Purchase recorded music from record producers  
<http://www.musicforcallers.com/>
5. If you have a record player, you can acquire S/D records. Most records have an instrumental side and a “called” side.
6. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of teaching material out there. There are some things on you-tube that are generally instruction only without actual dancing.
7. Roy and Betsy Gotta produced some videos many years ago which are still available but again, minimal dancing - just walking instruction. [gottadance@eboard.com](mailto:gottadance@eboard.com)
8. There are several callers who sell Singing Call dance CDs
9. You can search the internet for callers who offer dance CDs although most only sell these at their own dances or at the festivals they call at.

**It is unacceptable to tape or record a caller without their permission. Even with their permission, some events dictate recording practices that would override any permissions given. ie: Festivals & Conventions**

So the last piece of information before we break is:

What do you need for equipment to be able to do all this. Actually, not much depending on the size of your group.

1. A laptop and a set of reasonably good powered speakers will do fine for dancing to.
2. If your club is bigger and you use a hall of some kind you will need a bit more power to sound the room. You can



purchase a Karaoke machine from Amazon for under \$200.00 that will most likely do the job for you. Most have an input that you can connect your laptop to. And a microphone is included.

3. A variable speed CD player is also an option.
4. You will need some kind of software on your laptop to play the music. Our suggestion is to download WinAmp for free and then pay \$10.00 and download its Pacemaker plugin. This plugin will give you the ability to adjust the tempo of the played piece, if needed.
5. Certainly, there are lots of other software programs out there but I know these work effectively.

### **Section #3 – CALLER LEADERSHIP**

#### **3. What is a Caller**

- a. A caller is an individual who gives dance commands.
- b. Sometimes the caller is a teacher
- c. Sometimes the caller is a singer
- d. Sometimes the caller is an entertainer
- e. Sometimes the caller is a great choreographer
- f. Sometimes the caller is all the above
- g. Callers go through a great deal of training to become a competent person to keep dancers dancing and develop a following in their field
- h. Callers are required to know and understand all the definitions of every call they use in every program they wish to call
- i. Callers are required to be leaders and are often asked for their opinion on topics such as running a club & teaching
- j. Callers are expected to know what they are doing! 😊

- k. Callers are expected to invest in their craft with reasonably good equipment and a variety of music
- l. Callers are expected to arrive early and stay late

### ***What do you need to be a caller?***

- You need a desire to be a square dance caller!
- You need a sound system to play your music and a microphone
- You need a laptop or an electronic device that plays music
- You need to purchase music to call with
- You need a set of checkers to write or check choreography
- You need a source for Callers note services – these can provide a good source of choreography
- You need to have an abundance of patience
- You need to be compassionate
- You need to have an understanding of music or have rhythm or be willing to take lessons
- You should be dancing at least one program beyond what you call
- If you have a partner, they need to support your desire to be a caller
- You need to attend a caller school at some point in your calling journey

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### **What DON'T you need to be a caller!**

- You don't need to be perfect when you start
- You don't need to be able to sing
- You don't need to be bossy or have an attitude
- You don't need to invest 24 hours a day into learning to call
- You don't need to expect to start calling PLUS right out the gate or ever!

Canadian Callers College is a Continuing Education organization for individuals wishing to acquire or upgrade calling skills. Sessions, Clinics and Schools are available. For inquiries or information, please visit our

website at [www.canadiancallerscollege.com](http://www.canadiancallerscollege.com) or contact Jeff Priest at [jeff@jeffreypriest.com](mailto:jeff@jeffreypriest.com).

Thank you for sharing your day with us. Hopefully, you'll explore some of these ideas and that they will help with maintaining what dancing we have. Be sure to check out the Grow Your Club Program thru SWOSDA to help with new dancers and, hopefully those new ideas and the tips we discussed here today will help us all to be dancing well into the future!!

Jeff & Andrea Priest