

AMERICAN CALLERS' ASSOCIATION VIEWPOINTS

By Patrick J. Demerath

Square Dancers and Callers – A New Spirit

The American Callers' Association in its attempt to be of service to all callers, dancers, and associations has provided current, timely, and effective information on new dancer recruitment, winning ways to retain club dancers, and pitfalls that drive square dancers away from 2000 to the present. ACA really appreciates the positive comments, encouragement to continue, and contributions from callers and dancers all over North America and abroad to continue these initiatives. ACA will continue to provide information that will help the square dance community recruit, retain and retrieve square dancers.

The ACA 2019 July, September and August ACA Viewpoints addressed recruiting new students, students dropping out of classes, and newly graduated dancers quitting square dancing right after graduation. The following numbers are, heart breaking: Of a class of 20 students approximately 10 drop out during lessons. After graduation approximately 5 more stop dancing. During the first year 2 leave square dancing leaving 3 dancers of the original students still square dancing. This year with the horrible Corona Virus, restarting square dancing whenever Corona Virus subsides, and square dancers are free to start will very difficult, but it can be done with **a NEW SPIRIT**.

This month's ACA Viewpoint presupposes that square dancing will get through the Corona Virus sometime but will be somewhat different. First of all there may be fewer dancers and fewer and smaller clubs. Secondly, returning square dancers will be faced with significant decisions. Treat recruiting new dancers as before. Some night categorize this as "Second Class Citizens" looked down upon because they can't dance like experienced dancers. Thirdly, pay the price that of 20 new students only 2 - 4 stay with square dancing. All of these three variables spell increasing the decline.

What is the **NEW SPIRIT**? It is simple to define but hard to live with. **NEW SPIRIT** means for square dancer to find possible new dancers invite them to dances or open houses and make them feel **welcome**. Square dancers must make them feel more **welcome** than any other activity except church if applicable. Square Dancers must join in on the lessons and dance with student / new dancers every tip. Between tips square dancers must not huddle together and avoid the new student dancers. Occasional covered dish type dinners must be scheduled during lessons. Graduation is really a commencement, which means a beginning. Square Dancers must really put forth efforts to make the newly graduated dancers a vibrant part of the club. Square dancers must stay with them together in the hall. Dance mixed squares of new and experienced dancers. Square dancers can make it work only if they create and live a **NEW SPIRIT** for square dancing. Forget the old ways we used to do and create new better and more welcome ways to do it. Square dancers are in charge of making the **NEW SPIRIT** keep square dancing alive.

Callers everything just written was addressed to square dance club dancers. **Callers**, you are the heartbeat of the club. **Callers** making the **NEW SPRIT** for all of you means 500 percent more effort and remember that new dancers are the life blood of square dancing.

ACA strongly advocates that square dancing has the potential to be a new home and interest to all dancers. Square dancers and callers you have a choice to make either continue on as before and lose square dancers and clubs or create your own **NEW SPIRIT** and move forward. Either do it or square dancing will lose. Square dance club members mentor one on one new dancers. Get to know them personally and show an interest in them other than dancing and take action that newly graduated dancers do not sit out the tips but get them into squares as soon as possible.

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Square dancers and Callers the choice is yours. The responsibility is yours. The success or failure is yours.

Any individual, club, caller, or association who wishes to communicate his/her opinions on this subject is encouraged to contact the American Callers' Association at Loulet@aol.com or Dr. Patrick Demerath at pdemerath17@gmail.com

Please visit our website newsletters [American Callers.com/news](http://AmericanCallers.com/news).

Since most are not dancing, think about and plan your own **New Spirit**,