



COMMUNICATION KIT for Square Dance Leaders



B-029

INTRODUCTION

Communicating about and promoting square dancing is the responsibility of every dancer and a particular focus of leaders at the local, state, and national level. Whether it's announcing new class opportunities or advertising a special dance event, we need to get the word out to both current dancers and to the broader community. There are many ways to communicate about our favorite activity, from word-of-mouth to traditional media (newspapers, radio, television) to the ever-expanding range of online social media. This publication aims to provide some tips, hints, and information to support dance leaders in communicating about dance activities. It includes sections on:

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Advertising and Promoting Square Dancing through Traditional Media (Newspapers, Television, Radio)

Whether it's called a "press release," a "press statement," a "news release," or a "media release," we're talking about the same basic thing: an official announcement that an organization issues to the media. News releases are an important element of any communication strategy. These short documents announce events and other newsworthy items about your club or association.

What is "Traditional Media"?

The term "traditional media" encompasses communication devices such as newspapers, television, and radio. This contrasts to electronic-based communications strategies that are covered in the next section on "social media."

Why and When to Use Traditional Media

Traditional media outlets are most likely to cover major events such as a convention or newsworthy local activities such as a fund-raiser or community service event. Think about what would "sell" your event to the community you are targeting. If it is a major event such as a square dance convention, what might it offer to the city or the community? Will it attract out-of-town visitors? Will it showcase a city or community facility? If it is a community service or fund-raising event, what would make it newsworthy? Are you raising funds for a local charity? Are you "giving back" to the community through something like a clean-up project or blood drive?

Think about major media services such as local television stations or the city newspaper as well as smaller community media such as a neighborhood publication or specialized radio station. Target your news release to the appropriate audience.

Writing News Releases

Journalists are flooded with potential stories and pitches on a daily basis so you need to make yours stand out from the pack. While the format for a press release is basic, the content of the release should be anything but. As you start to write your press release, come up with the creative angle first. Then add in the important facts.

The basic format for a news release includes:

- **Headline:** brief attention-grabbing statement summarizing the news.
- **Dateline:** the city or community and the date of the release.
- **Lead paragraph:** first paragraph of the release which should answer the who, what, when, where and why questions; in other words, the facts.
- **Body:** additional paragraphs which provide supporting material and further details (i.e., direct quotes, relevant background information, statistics, etc.).
- **Boilerplate:** short paragraph giving information about the organization.
- **Source:** the organization issuing the release.
- **Media contact information:** at minimum, the name, phone number and email address for the contact who can answer any questions about the release.

1. Grab attention with a good headline.

The beginning of a press release is the most important. A strong headline will pull in journalists seeking good stories. Your headline should be as engaging as it is accurate. Use action verbs, clear, understandable language, and keep your headline simple and short. Most importantly, make it interesting: reporters get dozens, if not hundreds, of releases each day, so invest the time to write a compelling headline. It's worth the time and effort on your part.

2. Get right to the point in the first paragraph.

Because reporters are busy people, you can assume that they will only read the first sentence and then scan the rest. Get the message of your press release out quickly. Every important point should be addressed in the first few sentences – the who, what, why, where, and how of your event. The subsequent paragraphs should be for supporting information. Reporters don't have a ton of time to sift through details and fluffy background information -- they just need the facts that'll help them tell your story to someone else. There shouldn't be any new, crucial information covered after this section that the reader could potentially miss.

3. Provide statistics, public interest info, and/or quotes in your body paragraphs.

It's easy to fill up a page with a creative, colorful narrative. Leave the artistry to the writers — pack your press release with statistics or public interest statements that support the significance of your event. If it's a convention, how many dancers do you anticipate attending? If it's a fund-raiser, what is your goal? If it's a community service activity, how many people are likely to be involved?

There is a source of natural color that cannot be replicated: quotes. Including a good quote from someone in the organization or close to the event can give a human element to the press release. Make it a quote that reporters can use for context around your announcement and help paint a picture of how your news affects the community.

4. Boilerplate, source, and contact information.

Clearly name the organization issuing the release, and provide a clear, brief description of who you are and what you do. Include a link to your website or other source of additional information. Be sure to provide specific contact information for follow-up; at minimum, a name, email address, and phone number.

5. One page is best, and proofread – proofread – proofread!

As with most good writing, shorter is better. Limit yourself to one page if possible, though two pages is acceptable. This will also force you to condense your most salient information into a more readable document — something journalists are always looking for. And don't forget to proofread your press release before sending it out. Even a single mistake can dissuade a reporter from taking you seriously. Consider having several other people from outside your organization read your release to see if it makes sense and provides necessary information to promote your event or activity.

Distributing News Releases

Writing a press release is only half the battle. Once you're finished writing and editing the release, it'll be time to focus on distribution. These days, most media use online methods to receive news releases (e-mail, websites) but the personal touch is always good for follow-up.

First, consider your audience – is your event newsworthy to the entire city or more specific to a specific community or neighborhood? Would the television media be interested – for example, is it a major event or a high-interest story? Would it be something the citywide newspaper would be likely to cover as local news or special interest, or would it be more appropriate for a smaller community publication? Could you get radio coverage on a specific station or as a public service announcement?

Once you've identified your target audience and the related appropriate media, then get on the Internet and research how those news outlets prefer to receive news releases as well as their time frames and cut-off dates. Here are a few considerations:

- E-mail the release to targeted media contacts. Hint: check the website to identify specific individuals that cover your type of story (e.g., local news, arts and entertainment). Add a personalized message to indicate how your news connects to what they cover/write about.
- Go “off line” as well. Journalists receive tons of e-mails, so a phone call or even a “snail mail” submission may catch their attention.
- Plan your timing. If you are hoping for an article on a major event, give sufficient lead time for a reporter to pick up the story and fit coverage into their schedule. A news release submitted the day before your convention may not fit into their schedule, but one submitted a couple of weeks in advance might give them sufficient lead time.
- Publish the news release on your website, Facebook page, and/or other social media presence as well as submitting it directly to the news media. This can widen your distribution and perhaps pique the interest of someone you didn't specifically contact.
- Follow-up! If at first you don't get a response, don't give up. Try follow-up e-mails or phone calls. And even if your first story doesn't get picked up, keep trying. Sometimes timing is everything – your release may just drop in on a slow news day or connect with the interest of a new journalist.

Advertising and Promoting Square Dancing Through Social Media

What is Social Media?

“Social Media” is a term for computer-based technologies that allow people to create and share information via virtual communities and networks. The realm of social media continues to expand as electronic devices proliferate and people search for new ways to communicate with their friends, their communities, and the world. Some of the most common social media platforms currently include Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest. However, new platforms continue to be created regularly so you and your organization need to keep current!

The Power of Social Media Today

The most powerful aspects of social media include its breadth and its immediacy. Whether it is Facebook Pages with hundreds or thousands of followers, or Tweets and Re-tweets, your message can reach a wide audience in a very short period of time. Many social media users have their computers or smartphones set to “ping” them whenever a new post is made on one of their sites. And most of us can’t resist checking those “pings” or regularly logging in to view new entries.

Why & When to Use Social Media

Consider using Social Media when you want your event or your activities to be shared immediately and repeatedly with either a targeted audience or a wider group. The type of message as well as the type of event or activity will help you determine which platforms to use at which times.

Social Media Platforms

FACEBOOK

What is it?

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. The site includes features such as:

- Pages, which allow members to create and promote a public page built around a specific topic.
- Groups, which allow users who have common interests to find each other and interact.
- Events, where members can publicize an event, invite guests and track who plans to attend.

When & Why to Use It?

Facebook is currently the most widely-used social media platform across the country, and indeed around the world. It is easy to set up an account, build a profile page, and create groups or events. Using Facebook, dancers can communicate with other dancers as well as with the non-dancing community. It is a great way to quickly and

repeatedly share information on upcoming events or share photographs or videos of events that have just happened. It can also be a great way to entice non-dancers into the activity by posting photos or sharing information that show how much fun dancers are having as well as those that illustrate how dancers support each other and the community.

Basic How To's

The Facebook application itself (www.facebook.com) provides easy-to-follow steps for creating Facebook pages, groups, and events. You just click on "Create" and follow the prompts! There are also some free Facebook guidelines, cheat sheets, and tutorials available on line. An even better resource is probably your children or grandchildren!

Hints on Using Facebook to Communicate About and Promote Square Dancing

Facebook is a real-time communication method. Many users check their Facebook pages multiple times a day. Here are just a few hints to make Facebook a valuable tool in your communications toolbox:

- In the News Feed view, the most recent posts appear at the top. If you have an important dance you want to publicize, create a post or an event in a timely manner before the dance, then re-post it yourself or ask your friends to re-post it so it keeps appearing.
- Post photographs or videos either during the event or immediately after to let people know how much fun you had. If you post photographs, consider "tagging" the people in it so that the post will also appear to their friends. This is a way to continue broadening the community that learns about the square dance activity.
- Keep your Facebook page current. Folks like to know what's coming up next or see what has been happening.

TWITTER

What is it?

Twitter is an online news and social networking service where users post and interact with short messages, called "tweets," which are restricted to 140 characters. Some important Twitter vocabulary includes:

- **Tweet:** A 140-character message.
- **Retweet (RT):** Re-sharing or giving credit to someone else's tweet.
- **Feed:** The stream of tweets you see on your homepage. It's comprised of updates from users you follow.
- **Handle:** Your username.
- **Mention (@):** A way to reference another user by his or her handle/username in a tweet (e.g. @squaredancer). Users are notified when @mentioned. It's a way to conduct discussions with other users in a public realm.
- **Hashtag (#):** A way to denote a topic of conversation or participate in a larger linked discussion (e.g. #NationalSquareDanceConvention, #cloggingisfun). A hashtag is a discovery tool that allows others to find your tweets, based on

topics. You can also click on a hashtag to see all the tweets that mention it in real time — even from people you don't follow.

When & Why to Use It?

Twitter is ideal for communicating short messages that can and should be shared widely. It's a way to let people know what's going on, to track trends or even be a trend-setter yourself, to monitor breaking news on a range of topics, or generally just to make yourself heard. The key to twitter is "short, sweet, and to the point." You can also embed links to anything online like a website you want to encourage people to check out or a video you'd like them to watch.

Basic How To's

To get started with Twitter, go to www.twitter.com and click on the "Sign up" button (currently in the upper right of the screen). To begin, you will need to provide your full name, a phone number or e-mail address, and a password. From there, just follow the directions to create a "handle" (your username, which can be based on your real name or something totally creative), provide a profile picture, and build a basic bio. You can create a Twitter account as an individual or on behalf of your club or organization.

Once you have an account, you can:

- Send tweets (write your message up to 140 characters and click the "tweet" button; you can also be creative using special fonts, line breaks, or colors to make your "tweets" stand out),
- Re-tweet (re-send/share messages from others),
- Follow (find friends or search for others that might share your interests; once you've been a user for a while then Twitter will give you suggestions based on your tweet and other internet use),
- Get Followers (use hashtags as key words to get people to find and follow you / your group).

Hints on Using Twitter to Communicate About and Promote Square Dancing

Twitter is best used for telling the world (or at least your followers) what you are doing, where you are going, and what you are interested in. Here are just a few hints about using Twitter to communicate about square dancing:

- Tweet frequently about how much fun you are having square dancing.
- Tweet during a dance, sharing short fun statements or photos that will capture people's attention.
- Tweet dates, times, and locations of upcoming dances or events.
- Tweet dates, times, and locations of square dance classes; include links to websites or Facebook pages that can provide more information.
- Use hashtags such as #squaredancing or #(your club name) to help people find and follow you and your tweets, and to make your subject searchable across social media sites.
- Embed others' handles (e.g., @caller name or @your friend's name) in your Tweets.

INSTAGRAM

What is it?

Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly or privately on the service, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter.

When & Why to Use It?

Instagram's primary purpose is also the reason to use it: sharing lots and lots of photos (and videos). Everyone loves pictures – they like to see themselves in photographs and they like to see photographs of others, especially if those other people look like they are having fun or doing something interesting.

Basic How To's

You can sign-up for an Instagram account at www.instagram.com (or you can also log-in and sign-up through Facebook if you already have a Facebook account). From there, you will create your own profile (very brief) as well as find others to follow (similar to Twitter). You can establish your account as private (where others request to follow you and see your pictures) or public (where all your posts appear publicly). Instagram is best used with a mobile device such as a smart phone or tablet; you can download the free app from the Apple App Store or from Google Play.

Hints on Using Instagram to Communicate About and Promote Square Dancing

Instagram is simple – just set up an account (for you or your organization) then post lots of photos! Think about photos that will best represent the activity and/or a special event – they could feature a full floor of squares, the caller(s) or cuer(s), the decorations, a fun moment, and so on.

YOUTUBE

What is it?

YouTube is a video-sharing website where users can upload videos (generally 15 minutes or less) that anyone can watch.

When & Why to Use It?

Like Instagram, YouTube's primary purpose – sharing videos – is the reason to use it. Square dancing (and all the related dance forms) is best viewed in action – the movement, the choreography, the outfits, the music, the caller & cuers, are highlighted through video. So if you have someone willing to record videos at your classes or dances, then you can promote the activity through YouTube.

Basic How To's

To view videos already posted, you don't need an account – just go to www.youtube.com, type in a search term (such as square dancing or the name of a specific event or group), and see what pops up! To upload videos, you will need to set

up an account. Once you have an account you can click the upload button, create a channel (if you don't already have one), and upload your video! During the upload process, you can designate whether the video will be Public or Private. YouTube will take most common video formats such as MOV, MP4 (MPEG4), AVI, WMV, FLV, 3GP, MPEGPS, and WebM.

Hints on Using YouTube to Communicate About and Promote Square Dancing

You could use YouTube to share videos of a special dance event or even to promote square dancing to the broader community. Quality does count to some degree – a fuzzy, shaky video is not attractive and will generally not retain people's attention. While your video doesn't have to be professionally edited and titled/sub-titled, it does need to look good to best represent both your event and our activity in general.

Additional Hints on Using Social Media

Like any effort to communicate about and promote square dancing, using social media takes both planning and time. As an individual, you need to think about the time you have and how it can be best leveraged to promote our activity. Is Facebook the easiest platform for you since your grandchild can help out? Do you communicate best in short bursts that lend themselves to Twitter? Do you take a lot of photographs? If so, then Facebook or Instagram might be your best starting point.

Clubs or associations should consider identifying a Social Media chairperson or committee to both create and manage your social media presence. This can help ensure that activities and events are promptly promoted and reported, that accounts and pages are kept interesting and current, and that your message is getting out to the best, broadest audiences.

You can link your Social Media accounts so that posts on Instagram can also appear on your Facebook page, or Facebook posts can appear in Twitter. This can save you time by limiting the number of times and places you post the same or similar information, and broaden your reach across different populations.

Like and Share your posts and pages with other square-dance related pages to broaden your message and your presence. For example, you can post about your annual special dance on your club's Facebook page but also share it on your association's page, or you can share a post from the United Square Dancers of America page to your own page.

Other Strategies for Advertising and Promoting Square Dancing

There are many, many ways – beyond the media – for advertising and promoting square dancing. Here are just a few that have been tried around the country.

Fliers, Fliers, and More Fliers

Despite our electronic age, many people still respond to the printed page. Interesting, colorful fliers are still a great way to communicate about classes, special dances, and community events. Bringing fliers to dances is one of the primary ways we communicate about our club party nights, festivals, and conventions. Distributing fliers around the community is also one of the common ways to advertise new classes. Think broadly and creatively about where you can distribute fliers: libraries, community centers, gyms, adult schools, restaurants and shopping malls, and more! If you can, tailor your flier to the audience you might attract at each location. If you are posting fliers at a gym or exercise club, emphasize the health and fitness benefits. If you are distributing fliers at a library or community center, you might emphasize the social/friendship benefits or the community service opportunities.

As a courtesy to the community, don't forget to collect unused fliers after your event is over or your class has closed. (They make great scratch paper!)

Public Service Announcements

Some radio or television stations, particularly small local outlets, may provide free public service announcements, particularly if your club or organization is non-profit. Check station webpages for information and requirements. Think about how to advertise or promote your dance, class, or community service event in a short, catchy, "sound bite." This is the time for the elevator speech, not the dissertation. What could you say in a few sentences that would catch the audience's attention and encourage them to attend or support your activity?

Billboards and Sandwich Boards

One club in California advertised on a bulletin board in a well-traveled area to promote new square dance classes. They emphasized that "this is not your grandfather's square dance" (or something like that), included a picture of dancers in casual attire, and provided a date, location, and contact information. In addition to attracting potential class members through the billboard itself (and they did get some), the billboard was also photographed and shared through Facebook which broadened the reach considerably. Pricing and availability will obviously vary by area, but it might be worth checking out. It could even be used for a regional approach by providing contact information that could lead to classes on different days in several different areas.



Clubs have also tried putting sandwich boards out in front of dance halls in the weeks before new classes start. They invite passers-by to stop in and watch dancing, and also attach fliers with information on upcoming classes. This could be a great way to get folks “in the door” to see how friendly square dancers are and how much fun they are having. Then, even if they don’t live in that particular area, club members can let them know how to find a square dance club/class where they live.

Adult Education Classes

Some clubs and regional organizations have brought in new dancers by initiating a class through a local Adult Education program. These programs may be run by a community college district, local school district, or other organization. They will usually offer a 9-12 week “course” that is published in their catalog. This is another way to get dancers “in the door.” If they have fun, then they can be encouraged to continue on through either a second course (e.g., level one/level two or part one/part two) or on their own. It is important for the club to have a plan for keeping class members after the official course ends, so they can be brought up to club level and hopefully become regular members.

Chambers of Commerce and Visitors’ Bureaus

Local Chambers of Commerce want people to visit their community or city and have a positive experience. Square dancers are among the friendliest, most welcoming people around. Consider contacting your local Chamber or Visitors’ Bureau to see how they can help you promote square dancing in your area. They may be willing to put out material on clubs and dances in the area, help you find locations for special dances or festivals, or provide you with advertising space on websites or in publications.

Sharing the Benefits of Square Dancing

Live Lively – Square Dance!

As we work to promote and grow our activity, it helps if we can share the many benefits of square dancing. There are social benefits, physical and mental health benefits, and benefits to the community. The information below can be shared through club newsletters, included in recruiting or promotional materials, and provided to the media.

The slogan “Live Lively --- Square Dance!” was chosen after reviewing multiple phrases used by various clubs around the nation. A square dance caller/marketing professional, Mike Hogan, suggested it. The ARTS-Dance Organization voted for it to be used in future marketing material. “Lively” means full of life and energy, active and outgoing, energetic, animated, spirited, vivacious, enthusiastic, vibrant, exuberant, cheerful, zestful, and exciting.

General Promotional “Blurbs”

Dance leaders are often looking for short “blurbs” to include in promotional materials, club newsletters, news releases, and other communications. The following short paragraphs have been collected from various publications and websites, and may provide starting points that can be tailored to your local needs and interests.

- Are you interested in an activity that is drug and alcohol free and generally conducted in a smoke free environment? What about one where you can make many new friends and at the same time have fun, forget your troubles and get some exercise? Modern Western Square Dancing may be just the activity you have been missing...
- It's a New Generation of Dancing!
It's time to erase the old image you might have of square dancing from your school days or TV. Today's square dancing is done to the best of modern music, including pop, country, rock, disco, gospel, hip-hop, bluegrass, and more! There are a variety of dance steps and exciting new patterns to learn. Best of all, there are new people to meet, friends to make, events to attend. You can dance all over the country and all over the world. Square dancing is "Friendship set to music." This is one of the best kept secrets in town.
 - It's fun!
 - No prior dancing ability needed!
 - It's an aerobic, weight-bearing, calorie-burning activity!
 - It forms lifelong friendships!
 - It develops teamwork!
 - It increases listening skills!
 - It's economical!
 - It broadens your social life!
 - It's performed in healthy non-smoking/nondrinking environment!
 - It's multi-generational!

Social Benefits

Square dancing has many social benefits. Those of us already involved in the activity know that it is a great way to make friends and enjoy being with a variety of people. The following short “blurbs” can be used to share some of the social benefits of the square dance activity.

- Square Dancing, and all of its related dance forms such as round dancing and clogging, are great ways to meet people in a non-threatening, relaxed social atmosphere. You never know who you are going to meet. Square dancing provides an atmosphere for people of all ages to interact with each other. Lifelong friendships are formed, and many dancers have met the love of their life at a dance.
- Square Dancing contains a social component that solitary fitness endeavors don't. While promoting both physical and mental health, it also gives you an opportunity to develop strong social ties that contribute to self-esteem and a positive outlook.
- Square dancing brings people together, forming common bonds with each other. The benefits of square dancing begin when you walk in the door, and continue from the time the music starts to the hugs and handshakes all around at the end of a tip.
- Everyone – from regular club members to those just passing through town – is welcome at a square dance.
- In addition to regular clubs, there are groups that cater to particularly singles, youth, handicapped, gays & lesbians, campers, and more.

Benefits to Physical Health

Those of us who dance know how much exercise you get over the course of an evening, much less a multi-day festival or convention! Several studies and publications have reported on the physical benefits of square dancing. You may wish to include some of the following information in your promotional materials to attract new dancers, as well as in your club or association newsletters to help retain the dancers you have through helping them recognize the physical benefits to the activity.

- Square dancing is walking at a steady pace (about 120 steps per minute) to a called pattern with musical accompaniment. Square dancing combines mental concentration with many aspects of good physical exercise including sustained activity, flexibility, balance and coordination.
- Square dancers walk between 2½ and 5 miles in a typical evening of dancing burning calories with every step. Dancing continuously for 10 to 15 minutes at a time improves cardiovascular conditioning. Five-minute breaks allow dancers to socialize with others from diverse backgrounds who share a common joy. The

energy put into dancing affects heart beat rate, blood pressure, rate of calorie burn, and cholesterol profile.

- According to a 1994 Mayo Clinic Health Letter, "dancing can burn as many calories as walking, swimming or riding a bicycle. During a half-hour of dancing you can burn between 200 and 400 calories. In, one study, researchers attached pedometers to square dancers and found that each person covered five miles in a single evening. Regular exercise can lead to a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol profile. The side to side movements of many dances strengthens your weight bearing bones (tibia, fibula and femur) and can help prevent or slow loss of bone mass (osteoporosis). If you're recovering from heart or knee surgery, movement may be part of your rehabilitation. Dancing is a positive alternative to aerobic dancing or jogging.
- A 1996 study by Dr. Arron Blackburn indicates that Square Dancing will add ten years to your life. He states, "It's clear that square dancing is the perfect exercise. It combines all the positive aspects of intense physical activity with none of the negative elements." The square dance movements raise the heart rate like any good aerobic exercise should. All the quick changes of direction loosen and tone up the muscles - but not so severely as to cause injury. In square dancing, when you're not moving, you're clapping hands or tapping feet, which all contribute to long term fitness.
- Square, Round, & Contra dancers react to calls as they are given. This forces the body and brain to be tightly coordinated. Since the calls are memorized, this keeps the brain sharp.
- Studies have shown that adults who have a history of activities such as dance, tend to have less incidents of falling as they get older.
- Exercising to Music Doubles the Benefits - From Ohio State University, 2004. To turn a heart-healthy workout into an IQ lift, just add music. A team at Ohio State University found that cardiac patients who exercised to music did twice as well on a test of cognitive ability as they had done after exercising in silence. Exercise alone causes positive changes in the nervous system, and adding music may stimulate different pathways in the brain.

Benefits to Mental Health

Our mental health is just as important as our physical health. The following information can be used to share the mental benefits of involvement in square dance activity.

- Square Dancing and related dance forms are led by a leader giving commands. When you dance in this format, you become so focused on the task at hand that your other mental worries are forgotten, at least for a couple of hours.

- Square Dancing is known to protect against dementia, presumably because it requires multiple mental and physical skills. From a study lead by Joe Verghese, Neurologist at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, New York, June 2003: Mentally challenging activities can significantly reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Seniors who exercised their minds lowered their risk of developing dementia by as much as 75%.

Community Service

Many clubs and regional associations participate in community service activities. These types of experiences continue the social bonding among dancers while supporting their surrounding community. They can also serve to promote square dance clubs and the square dance activity by making it more visible in the community. Often participating dancers may wear club attire or specially designed shirts or vests.

There are many, many community service opportunities. Clubs and associations may participate in events that are associated with a particular cause of interest to one or more members, that are held within the area where the group dances, or that support the greater community. Following are just a few community service experiences that you may wish to explore and promote to your dancers and within your community:

- Participating in or supporting participants in fund-raising walks or runs (such as Relay for Life or the Step Out Walk to Stop Diabetes).
- Serving food or assisting at a soup kitchen or special event providing food for the poor or homeless.
- Reading to young children or to students at schools or libraries.
- Participating in community, park, or beach clean-up events.
- Collecting items to donate to a local charitable organization (such as food for a food bank, school supplies for foster and homeless youth, socks and coats for the homeless).
- Creating care packages to send to the military overseas or to under-privileged countries.
- Perform a square dance demo (preferably a participatory one) at a school or senior citizen facility.



Promoting and Communicating About the United Square Dancers of America

The United Square Dancers of America (USDA) is a “dancers” organization that serves and supports the square, round, contra, clogging, line and heritage dance communities. USDA aims to support and promote square dancing (and the related dance forms) through both national-level activity and through providing resources and support to state and regional levels. The information below can and should be shared with dancers at the club, association, and state levels. It illustrates how dancers can have a voice through their leadership and participation in regional, state, and national activities. It also describes the resources available through USDA to support local dancers and their organizations.

What is USDA?

The UNITED SQUARE DANCERS OF AMERICA, INC. (USDA) was formed on June 26, 1981 during the National Square Dance Convention in Seattle, Washington. As a “dancers” organization, USDA serves to represent the square, round, contra, clogging, line and heritage dancer in decisions which are made at the national level relative to the development and growth of the dance activity. This representation takes place through the various State and Regional organizations affiliating with the USDA. As a united voice, the USDA can express the views of the dancers on a national level so that they might be relayed to other national and international groups with whom the dancers interact such as leaders, callers, cuers, instructors, commercial enterprises, other dancers, etc.

How Does USDA Support Dancers and Dancing?

The purpose of the United Square Dancers of America is to:

- Promote and perpetuate the total Square Dance Movement which includes Square, Round, Contra, Clogging, Line and Heritage Dancing.
- Establish a line of communication from the individual dancer to a recognized unified body so that an expression of varied opinions can establish or influence policy for making decisions at the national level.
- Provide for education to further the growth and enjoyment of Square Dancing.
- Encourage cooperation between member clubs, state associations, councils, federations; national and international organizations; or other groups involved or interested in the promotion of Square Dancing.
- Provide a forum for implementing the benefits of membership in the United Square Dancers of America and assist members in any way possible.
- Represent Square Dancing to the general public as a wholesome, enjoyable family type recreation.

Membership in USDA

Membership is open to any organized nonprofit square dance groups or other groups representing square, round, contra, clogging, line or heritage dancers that will subscribe to the By-Laws, Rules and Policies of the UNITED SQUARE DANCERS OF AMERICA, INC. In states which do not have a statewide organization, or when the state organization elects not to join USDA, area or regional organizations may join the USDA to represent the dancers of their state. Applications for membership in USDA are available from any of the USDA officers or on the USDA website at <http://www.usda.org/member.htm>. Benefits of USDA membership include:

- Participation in a national organization dedicated to supporting, promoting, and communicating about square dancing and its related dance forms.
- Having a voice in decisions that are made at the national level relative to the continued development and growth of the square dance activity.
- Sharing experiences and ideas with like-minded dancers in other regions and states.
- Ready access to a range of free educational and promotional materials that promote and perpetuate the dance activity.
- Access to economical dancer accident and group liability insurance coverage.

USDA Programs

The United Square Dancers of America offers several programs and resources that support both individual dancers and their clubs and associations.

Leadership and Education Materials: USDA produces a wide range of quality club leadership and educational materials for use by dancers and leaders to promote and perpetuate the dance activity. These include tri-fold information sheets on a variety of topics, as well as longer pamphlet and booklets. All materials are available for download, free of charge, from the USDA website at <http://www.usda.org/educ.htm>. For printed materials, individuals may order up to a maximum of 10 copies of each Tri-fold Information Sheet and up to a maximum of 2 copies of each Pamphlet or Booklet at no charge. Additional copies of Pamphlets are \$.50 each and Booklets are \$1.00 each. Order forms are available on the website. USDA materials are not copyrighted and duplication for club and organization use is not only permitted but encouraged!

USA Traveler Program: What better way to share the fun of square dancing than by doing it wherever you travel? USDA supports and promotes visitations across the country by offering the USA Traveler Program. The goal is to encourage dancers to dance their way across all 50 states, visiting local club dances, regional festivals, or state conventions. There is a reward: once a dancer has danced in 48 different states, they qualify for paid admission to a National Square Dance Convention; after completing 50 states, they get another paid admission to a National Convention! Then, if the dancer enjoyed the first round, they can do it again through the "Second Time Around" program, which offers the same rewards at 48 and 50 states. Visitations are documented 12 states at a time on a USA Traveler Form. Once the first 12 states have been completed, the form is submitted and the dancer receives a USA Traveler Badge



with a 12-state swinger. Once a second form is completed for 24 states, another swinger is provided; this is repeated for 36 and 48 states. Documentation of 50 states is rewarded with a gold "50-state" swinger to complete the badge. Further information along with a printable USA Traveler Form are available at <http://www.usda.org/traveler.htm>.

Youth Scholarship Program: To help support and assist youth dancers to further their education, USDA established the USDA Founders Memorial Youth Scholarship Program to annually award a merit-based scholarship to a student who has shown their dedication to the promotion and perpetuation of the total square dance movement. Nominees must be a high school senior or college freshman who is active in square dancing, round dancing, contra dancing, or clogging. Further information on USDA youth dancing, including the scholarship program and related application forms, is available at <http://www.usda.org/youth.htm>.

Handicapable Program: USDA encourages and supports handicapable dancers across the country. Handicapable dancers may receive registration reimbursement for attending a National Square Dance Convention, and USDA also provides monetary support to the biennial Handicapable Square Dance Conventions. Further information is available at <http://www.usda.org/handicap.htm>,

Insurance Program: Every square dance organization needs General Liability and Accident Medical Expense coverage while conducting and sponsoring dance activities. As closely as safety rules are followed, accidents can and will happen. This insurance program, especially designed for USDA dance groups, provides Accident Medical Insurance, which helps protect club members from financial loss due to a covered accidental bodily injury, and Liability Insurance, which protects the club and its members and association officials from financial loss due to unforeseen incidents which may develop into litigation against members and dance organizations. Further information is available at <http://www.usda.org/insuranc.htm>.

Discount Prescription Card Program: USDA participates in a discount prescription card service where users can save 20 to 25 percent off the retail price of prescription medications. The discount prescription card program is available to anyone – not just square dancers. Even if an individual already has prescription drug coverage through other medical insurance, the USDA program may offer assistance for medications not covered through the regular plan. For further information, or to print discount prescription card program cards, go to <http://www.usda.org/CARDS.htm>.