

<https://square-dance-revival-2.kit.com/posts/happy-hoppers-success-story-upcoming-leadership-training-national-campaign-success>

Happy Hoppers Success Story





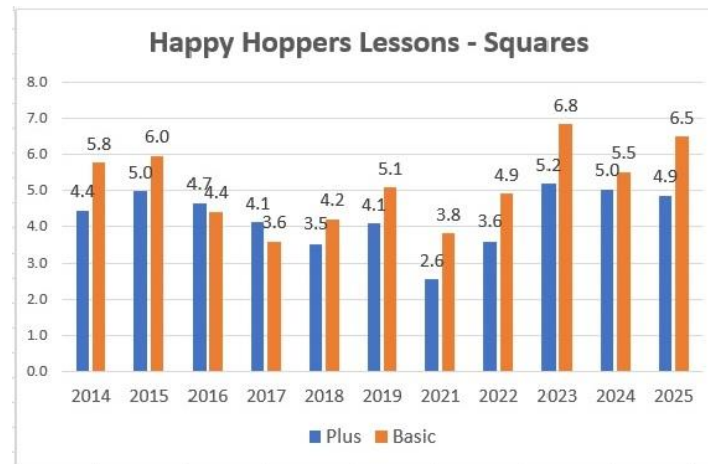
WHAT'S NEW FROM SQUARE DANCE REVIVAL!
This week: July 21, 2026
Happy Hoppers Success Story, Upcoming Leadership Training
Learn From Our National Campaign to Introduce Non-Dancers to the Joy of Square & Round Dancing

ENSURING THE FUTURE OF
MODERN SQUARE & ROUND DANCING

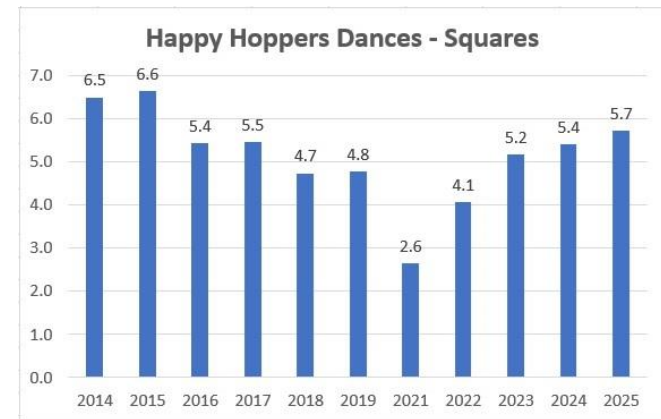
A Different Approach to Lessons— and a Club That's Thriving

What if beginner lessons weren't simply a path to graduation, but a fun and valuable part of square dancing in their own right?

Washington State's Vancouver Happy Hoppers Club offers an interesting example of how rethinking the traditional lesson model can create an active, welcoming dance community. One of the larger clubs in the state, Happy Hoppers credits much of its success to the model established by longtime caller Jim Hattrick and continued by his successor, Craig Abercrombie. Tom Halpenny sent this club success story in with some great stats to illustrate their success.



Happy Hoppers Rosters



Membership Year	2026	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2002
Membership Total	90	93	97	92	78	98	80	108	89	102	111	108	105	121	120	110	107	96	108	85	88	77	55

Unfortunately, square and round dancing clubs were not immune to the pain of COVID, and these membership stats show that. But the Happy Hoppers were undeterred and focused on rebuilding.

Rather than offering one lesson cycle each year, they start a new Plus/Mainstream lesson session every eight weeks—four times a year. There is no formal graduation and no pressure for participants to move on to club dances. Dancers are encouraged to learn and progress at their own pace, deciding for themselves when they are ready for the next level.

Perhaps most interesting is the club's view of experienced dancers who continue attending lessons. Rather than seeing "angeling" only as a volunteer obligation, the club recognizes that attending lessons can be a rewarding destination in itself.

The lessons offer plenty of dancing and practice at full tempo in a casual, welcoming environment. New and experienced dancers mix freely, everyone dances with everyone, and longtime dancers can continue improving their skills while helping newcomers learn.

For some, the lesson experience is actually their favorite part of square dancing.

One dancer has attended the club's lesson sessions for 15 years—approximately 60 sessions—and still looks forward to them.

Tom reports, "I like meeting new dancers and watching their 'fresh brains' gradually learn the dancing skills. I attend both lessons and dances, but I like the lessons more. You meet new people, everyone dances with everyone, and you get lots of practice."

In recent years, the club's lessons have sometimes drawn higher attendance than its regular dances. Another club in the area uses a similar model and has also experienced excellent attendance.

The Happy Hoppers story raises an important question for clubs everywhere:

What if we stopped thinking of lessons only as something dancers need to complete before the "real" dancing begins?

For some people, regular, welcoming, low-pressure lessons may be exactly the kind of square dance experience they want. And when experienced dancers enjoy coming back year after year—not simply because they are needed as angels, but because they genuinely enjoy being there—new dancers benefit as well.

The lesson program becomes more than a pipeline for producing graduates. It becomes a thriving social and dancing community of its own.

For clubs looking for new ways to attract and retain dancers, the Happy Hoppers model offers a valuable lesson: **Success doesn't always require getting everyone to follow the same path. Sometimes growth begins by giving people more ways to belong.**