

Mount Baker Council Task Force on Recruitment and Retention
SUMMARY OF JANUARY 6, 2019 NO EXPERIENCE DANCE

After one of our prominent callers issued a challenge to the Mount Baker Council (MBC), a task force was formed to work on a marketing plan for recruitment of new dancers and retention of current dancers. The meetings have continued for about 10 months and have been attended by all clubs in the council. Our first task was to read and discuss the Square Dance Marketing Manual Callerlab published in March 2018. We recognized the need to improve the public image and awareness of our activity. This manual also encouraged the use of modern methods of marketing, including social media. We learned a lot from this important publication.

There were lots of ideas and suggestions about how we should proceed. The MBC had not had a Publicity Chair for over 2 years, so there was some catching up to do. We started with some simple tactics, such as creating and distributing buttons that said "Ask Me About Square Dancing." Our first major project was to sponsor a "No Experience Necessary" dance before the start of lessons in early January 2019. This happened this past Sunday and has been viewed by the committee as a success. We were fortunate to identify a partner in the Mill Creek Family YMCA. This event was dually promoted by the Y and the MBC. The facility was well located, a large room with good floor and good sound system and great visibility. The prep meeting the day before the dance found the committee members anxious about the turnout. We were pleasantly surprised when 40 new dancers and 98 Angels came to dance and interact for two hours. The 6 clubs in MBC who are starting lessons in the next 4-6 weeks had tables set up and manned with members to explain about their lessons and encourage folks to join them. Many commented on the smiles and laughter and conversation going on. The staff from the Y was pleased with the outcome of this community event. This format shows potential and it is the committee's hope that we can repeat the event at this Y and also partner with other Y facilities in the Pacific Northwest. The mission of the Y fits well with our objectives. We will be collecting data on how successful this event was in converting our guests to new students. Fingers crossed. A debrief meeting will talk about lessons learned from our first event and start the planning for future events.