Do Try This at Home!

by Linda Henry

Have you ever wished there could be a workshop for callers, musicians and/or organizers in your home community? Hopefully this article will give you a glimpse of how YOU could make that happen! In early 2005, I started thinking about the possibility of CDSS running a local one-day workshop. The goal would be to create a model that CDSS groups could use to offer their own events. I wrote a proposal for a pilot program which the CDSS Board approved at their annual meeting in the spring. A year later, that workshop has become a reality. Here's a glimpse of the day...

On Saturday, June 24, 2006, twenty-three callers from coast to coast gathered in Amherst, Massachusetts. The workshop was called Contra Dance Calling: Beyond the Basics in hopes of attracting intermediate-level callers, and that's exactly who came. The experience level ranged from one year to thirty!

Throughout the day, master callers Lisa Greenleaf and Brad Foster led classes simultaneously during three time periods. All participants were very interested in the beyond-the-basics topics: Communicating with the Band, The Language of Teaching Figures, One Night Stands, Teaching and Calling Challenging Contras, Programming an Evening, and Getting to the Next Level as a Caller.

Here are a few comments from the participants:

- "I enjoyed having the opportunity to work with a band and hear perspectives from the musicians."
- "It was helpful to have support about how to set clear goals for next steps as callers."
- "I called last night and felt great about it thanks to the weekend!"

In the afternoon we had a session called Flight Time and Feedback—each caller had the opportunity to call a dance and receive feedback and could choose whether s/he preferred to do this during the workshop or at the evening dance that was open to the public. Those who called during the workshop participated in a peer feedback process*; those who called in the evening received feedback from only Brad or Lisa. Many participants commented that they appreciated having the opportunity to call a dance, and that they found the feedback sessions to be supportive and illuminating.

In the evening, everyone from the workshop attended the Fourth Saturday Community Contra Dance held at nearby Munson Library. The calling was shared by the thirteen callers who hadn't called during the afternoon. The dance was very well-attended, and we heard comments like "That was the best community of dancers in this hall since the height of the Swallowtail dance." Music for the workshop and the evening dance was provided by LocoMojo: Amy Larkin and Shirley White (fiddlers) and

On Sunday optional debriefing those who wanted to More than half of the came and contributed improvement and their model might be used future. There was even socializing and a

On the whole smoothly. As you can village to pull it off. In Warkshan callens Line Chambers

Workshop callers Lisa Greenleaf and Brad Foster. Photos courtest CDSS Archives. yours truly on piano.
morning there was an
brunch at my house for
share afterthoughts.
workshop participants
their suggestions for
ideas about how this
by other groups in the
time for more
parting waltz.
the event flowed very
imagine, it took a
particular we'd like to

thank Lisa Sieverts (for so generously sharing her project management expertise), Brad Foster and Lisa Greenleaf (for our lengthy but crucial planning conferences by phone and for the wonderful classes they led), and our six very capable work scholarship folks: Chrissy Fowler (assistant registrar extraordinaire), Tim Van Egmond (who brought a delicious lunch spread), Anna Rain (provider of wonderful snacks and coffee), Jim Fownes (sound system wizard), Summer Young and Ricky Holt (stellar set-up and clean-up coordinators).

Prior to the workshop several participants let us know it would be challenging for them to have two classes going on simultaneously, and they wished they could clone themselves. Fortunately, Steve Howland, a local caller, generously offered to videotape the sessions (with Brad's help) and make DVDs available to the participants at cost after the workshop. So a big thanks to Steve, too.

We are also grateful for gifts from the family of Mary Kay Friday and from CDSS Board members and friends. Their donations to the Leadership Initiatives Fund made this workshop possible. (For information about the Fund, see our website, www.cdss.org.)

We plan to use our recent experience to create a "how to" manual that will be available to any groups that want to design and run their own workshop. In addition to advice, we can offer financial support to groups needing assistance. If reading this article sparks your interest in creating a leadership event in your area, please contact me at linda@cdss.org or 413-268-7426 extension 105. We'd love to help you make such a valuable contribution to your home community!

* See "A Feedback Tool," CDSS News, #194, January/February 2007.

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