WHAT DOES CALLERLAB DO?

CALLERLAB is an international association of square dance callers. We work together to support each other, help further our understanding of the complex art of square dance calling, and how we can best give the most joy to dancers through square dancing.

Our member’s dues allow us to have a paid Executive Director, office, and staff. All members volunteer their time to implement and maintain the various projects that support caller education, caller training, and square dance programs.

CALLERLAB codified and maintains various dance programs -- Basic, Mainstream, Plus, Advanced, and Challenge. Reviewed every 3 years, each dance program has a list of calls, a set of definitions, and a recommended teach time. The initial dance programs also have timing, styling, recommended teach order, and teaching checklists.

CALLERLAB collected, maintains, and makes available a set of "success stories". These are examples drawn from real life of what has worked for a particular caller, dancer, or club in teaching, maintaining, or growing the square dance activity.

CALLERLAB hosts an annual convention. This allows square dance callers and other leaders in the square dance activity to get together for several days of intensive meetings, seminars, and dancing and share ideas and best practices. The audio from these sessions has been preserved and there are now over 1,000 hours of valuable information available, including great talks from callers who have since passed on.

CALLERLAB established several recognition awards that are presented annually. Including awards for callers who have called for 25 and 50 years, recognition for those who traveled to the convention from overseas, and those who have served the organization in a meritorious fashion, this is also our highest award -- the Milestone.

To be eligible for the Milestone one must have worked in an uncharted field of square dancing and effected positive change that has stood the test of time. Additionally we look for unselfish contributions, professional leadership, and that you have had broad influence in the square dance activity. Looking over the 60+ recipients, starting from 1975, one is reminded of how modern Western Square Dancing evolved to where it is today and how many great individuals have helped with this evolution.

CALLERLAB has established a consistent set of terminology for describing the craft of square dance calling, especially in the areas of moving dancers around the square and getting them home again.

CALLERLAB has established a course of study for training new callers and written the supporting educational materials. For those who wish to train callers, CALLERLAB has an accreditation program. Over 40 callers have become accredited caller-coaches, training thousands of callers. These individuals also volunteer their time to run caller training seminars at the National Square Dance Convention.

For callers who teach square dancing, CALLERLAB also offers a Certified Square Dance Teacher (CSDT). This allows callers to prove that they are good instructors and may assist them in being able to call in schools.

CALLERLAB also provides support for those who also cater to the one-time or once a year square dance party circuit. Before each convention we have a day and a half of special instruction and presentations by the best leaders in this area. Some of these presentations have been video and are available from the home office. Anyone interested in calling for these types of events should attend these presentations.
In between the beginner party and the Basic dance program we have the Community Dance Program and Traditional Square Dancing. Each allows dancers to enjoy set pattern dances with a minimum of teaching or lessons. Newcomers are always welcome, and yet the dancing remains compelling for longtime dancers. CALLERLAB has a committee that created the Community Dance Program, offers this style of dancing at the annual convention, and publishes a journal of dances throughout the year.

An organization as large as CALLERLAB has a lot of special interest areas. Committees composed of like-minded callers cover many of these. Some include, youth (both calling for youth and youth callers), working with handicapped dancers, female callers, calling in schools, ways of teaching square dancing, teaching and calling for non-native English speakers, our history, our future, and the square dance music business.

CALLERLAB is organized as a 25-member board of governors (elected by the membership) who set policy. Most of the actual work is delegated to ~30 committees (standing and ad hoc) whose membership is generally open to all CALLERLAB members and which are run democratically.

Early on CALLERLAB created a code of professional conduct which all of our members agree to. We have a grievance procedure to resolve disputes between members or a member and an outside party. On average one such complaint is resolved each year.

CALLERLAB assists local caller associations by providing speakers and ideas for keeping your local caller meeting interesting and meaningful.

CALLERLAB offers BMI and ASCAP music licenses to its members so they can perform licensed music at their square dance events. This transfers the burden of obtaining the proper licenses from the facility or hiring club to the caller, which provides a great service to everyone. We also offer liability insurance to our members. Finally, we have been on a campaign to stop the illegal sharing of music, which has flourished with the advent of digital music (MP3’s).

While CALLERLAB has always made its documents available for a nominal charge, with the advent of the Internet, our web site now makes available 250 documents for free, immediate download. An additional 35 (and growing) documents are available for our members. As you might expect, our most downloaded documents relate to the Basic and Mainstream dance programs -- the list, the checklist, and the definitions. While the English version of the definitions has been downloaded 10,000 times, the Danish translation is at 1,000 and the Japanese translation is at 600. Our overseas members and their friends create these translations and we greatly appreciate their help in making square dancing more accessible around the world.

CALLERLAB's newsletter, DIRECTION, is published 4 to 6 times a year for our members. It allows us to communicate with members who can't make it to our convention, report on the results of committee work, and publish member submitted information. We also send "blast" Emails to a list of those who have requested such mailings when we have something to say. Finally, we send periodic press releases to square dance publications.

The home office handles many phone calls and Emails (CALLERLAB@aol.com), each with a specific question or problem. When the office is unable to answer these, they are dispatched to the appropriate committee chairman, tracked, and then the home office sends out the final response.
WHAT DOES CALLERLAB FOUNDATION DO?

The Foundation for the Preservation and Promotion of Square Dancing was formed in 1992 as a charitable organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions. We use these funds to support projects that will preserve and promote square dancing.

Our first project was the publication of a brochure, New Song and Dance Routine, which presents square dancing in an updated light and could be used by dancers, clubs, and callers to promote square dancing in general, along with their contact information. We make these available at cost and have sold over 700,000 of them.

The Foundation was concerned about the health of square dancing and commissioned a marketing plan, known as the Phoenix Plan, in the late 1990's. As part of Phase I of this plan, the Foundation undertook a series of surveys and focus groups to determine square dancing's image with the general public. While our members generally acknowledge the findings of this work, they have been unable to make any of the changes required. CALLERLAB helped start an umbrella organization, The Alliance for Round, Traditional and Square Dance (The ARTS), and the future of the Phoenix Plan is in their hands, with CALLERLAB as a member.

The Foundation sponsored research to learn more about our dancer population in 2004. We used an on-line panel survey of 10,275 adults over 18 who have access to the Internet. The results of this survey didn't agree with many of our members' experience so we did another survey in 2007. Our members still didn't agree with the results and were unwilling to peruse this further.

The Foundation has an ongoing program to provide educational grants of several forms -- financial support to dancers who want to learn to call, support to callers who want to improve, and support to an organization who wants to run a leadership seminar or clinic (for dancers or callers). We approve 5-10 educational grants per year.

The Foundation has occasionally offered caller-training seminars before CALLERLAB's annual convention.

The Foundation has recently instituted a grant program for those in colleges and universities who need support in offering a continuing program of square dancing in their school. Many of us learned to square dance in a college club and we would like to make that opportunity available again.

The other side of the Foundation is generating funds to support the efforts listed above and in the future. We receive contributions from individuals, organizations (e.g., Grand Square, Inc., the National Square Dance Convention), fund raising dances, and our own members, especially through fund raising efforts at our convention.