

Heartland Squares Success Story: How We Did It

As submitted by Roberta Beier, President

Prior to Covid, at its peak, Swingin' Singles had 134 members. Then, due to Covid and the changes in club structure, we lost over half our membership. In 2023, the reorganized and rebranded Heartland Squares had only 58 members. Per Mike's article, we have been running an aggressive rebuilding campaign ever since and we currently have 97 members. In 2024 and 2025 we had two beginner lesson series, and we are getting ready to launch our second beginner lesson series in 2026 on September 14.

We have had mixed results with our advertising campaigns. We would get a few people from on-line efforts and posted flyers, but most of our new students were still coming from word-of-mouth. In 2026 we started working with Rhythm & Roots (R&R), through a program established with the Heart of America Federation of Square Dance Club (HOAF). FYI - I am also the president of the HOAF. As president of the HOAF, I was the main contact with R&R and implemented the HOAF's marketing strategies that are discussed below.

Heartland Squares made several changes to our advertising campaign as a result of what we learned by working with R&R and it has really paid off. We hosted a community dance, we called it a Modern Square Dance Party, on August 25th and we had 143 people in attendance. Sixty-six of those were square dancers and 77 of them were guests that were brand new to square dancing! It's impossible to say which of these had the biggest impact, but below is a summary of everything we did:

- We created a Heartland Squares' gmail account and google profile so that when people googled us, they would find a robust and current profile.
 - We posted and continue to post pictures and videos to the profile.
 - We included hours of operation for all times that we were willing to take phone calls, not just the hours that we dance.
 - We asked our membership to post reviews, which they did! We have 16 reviews, most of which include a written review. Written reviews are important because they factor strongly into google's search algorithms.
 - We created products in order to have more text on the profile, further strengthening our search results.
 - We post events to our google profile.

- The results have been interesting. We are getting visits from people searching for night clubs, clubs, ballroom dance lessons, country dance places, dancing near me, date night for couples, etc. In fact, of the 35 categories of search results, 21 of them do not mention square dancing, and of the top ten results, only one mentions square dancing, and it comes in at 3rd place. The number one & number two search results are nightclubs and nightclub. I think this is amazing, because these are people that didn't have square dancing on their mind until they did a google search for nightclubs.
- The HOAF created a website which is a landing page for people searching for square dance lessons in the KC Metro Area, called SquareDanceKansasCity.org. Participating clubs have their own landing pages. The SquareDanceKansasCity.org website has a "Find a Club" page which enables searches to find lessons by location and by day of the week. Each participating club has their own landing page, which provides information about our upcoming lessons and community events. All of our printed flyers contain a QR code that directs people to our landing page. This page is user friendly, simple, happy, and easy to navigate.
- We marketed our event as a Modern Square Dance Party. This turned out to be significant. Everyone started referring to the event as a "Party," which is more accessible to non-dancers than a square dance. It's a lot easier to accept an invitation to a party than a square dance.
- We created flyers and social media posting with these things in mind:
 - We used photographs of real people having fun. We did not use any AI generated or enhanced images. Our grandchildren made it very clear that they are turned off by AI images and will just swipe right past them when they are on the internet.
 - We did not use any square dance jargon. There was no reference to "Mainstream Lessons" or "Callers" for instance. We learned that when you use square dance specific phrases, it immediately makes non-square dancers think this event is not for them.
 - We made sure to emphasize "no experience" and "no partner" were needed.
 - We printed our flyers on 1/4 page card stock and included our QR code. The 1/4 page card stock is a much better flyer than a full page on regular paper. These flyers slip into a purse without getting crushed. With one fold

they fit in a back pocket. They are easy to stick to the fridge. They feel substantial.

- We kept the flyers simple, with only the essential information printed on them. And a great photo or two. We made sure the photos showed smiling dancers in street clothes.
- We customized the on-line flyers, depending on where we were posting the flyers.
- I have attached a couple of examples.
- We created a professional Facebook page. We already had a group, but that was only for club members. We did not have an outward facing Facebook page. The HOAF also created a page, which they called Square Dance Kansas City (SQDC).
 - Well before we were ready to start advertising for lessons, we started posting to both the Heartland Squares and SQDC pages. We wanted people that landed on the pages to see robust, current pages with lots of people having fun. The results have been impressive. The SQDC page has 5 reels that have been viewed over 10,000 times, one of which has been viewed over 30,000 times.
 - Heartland Squares created an event on our Facebook page and we paid to boost the event. We reached 4,945 people with our event ad, and had almost 200 people indicate that they were interested in or were going to the event. This ad cost us \$88.
 - We regularly posted to the event discussion on Facebook, so that interested people would get reminders of the upcoming event.
 - Heartland Squares' Facebook page joined local community groups on Facebook, and promoted the event in those groups.
 - We created a lot of content for the page, making it robust and fun.
 - I am just now starting to add instagram content. I am also starting to experiment with tiktok and Reddit.
- We put our event advertisements in local community calendars including the KC Star Community Calendar and ArtsKCgo.com

- We printed hundreds of flyers and gave them to our members. Our board and our members invited friends, family, coworkers, and other people they interacted with on a daily basis.
- Heartland Squares invited all of the area KC Community Square Dance clubs to the event and told them they could promote their lessons at our event.

At the dance we collected information about how guests heard about the party. A little under half indicated Facebook, Google, or internet search.

We are a little under two weeks away from the beginning of our lesson series and we have 27 students signed up for lessons, 21 of which attended the party. We have followed up with everyone that attended the party and expect more to sign up soon. Our goal is to have 40 people sign up for lessons. It is important to note that several people that attended the party picked up a flyer I created that showed all area lessons, because they were not available on Monday evenings. Also, even if a person who attended the party does not sign up for lessons, the fact that they attended the party is a huge win. Our primary objective right now is to spread the word about square dancing. Our goal is to make modern square dancing something everyone in Kansas City is aware of, after that, it will be easier to recruit for lessons.

Speaking of awareness, this spring, Heartland Squares submitted an application to be included in the Kansas City Favorites Magazine. We ran a months-long campaign to have people vote for us, and Heartland Squares was voted the 2026 Best Dance Studio! Here is a screen shot from the website:

<https://www.kansascityfavorites.com/listing/2026/dance-studio>