Grab your partner ✨
Permanent pairings or no, dance is the thing

By C. RICHARD COTTON
Special to The Advocate

LAFAYETTE — It takes two to tango. That number is actually easy to reach. It takes eight to two to square-dance; filling those slots can be more difficult.

Square-dancing is a couples thing. Couples — husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend, friend and friend — dance in concert with three other couples.

But what do you do when you're not a couple and you want to dance? Dancin' Singles is the answer for some Lafayette-area noncouples who want to shuffle a deck.

Every Monday at 7 p.m. they come together at the Girard Park Recreation Center to spin and twirl in answer to Butch Huff's square-dancing calling.

And there's no telling where a little dancing might lead.

“We met at Dancin' Singles,” Fran Patton said of her introduction to her husband, Steve Patton. That was more than four years ago; they've been married three years.

Fran explains it like this: She had square-danced earlier in her life, before her husband of 22 years passed away. She "just wanted to take (a square-dance) class again" and heard about the singles dancing action.

Steve, 56, heard about the group at a church singles group he attended after the death of his wife.

“We knew each other a year before we dated.” Fran, 57, said. And they still attend Dancin' Singles.

Although she and Steve were successful finding a mate through Dancin' Singles, Fran added, "I don't think any of us were looking for a husband."

Huff, who has been calling for the group since its founding 10 years ago, said Fran's story of marriages within the square-dancing group is low; there have actually been "about six couples get married in the last 10 years," he said.

"There have been some splits up, too," Huff confided, "but we don't talk about that."

Barbara Naomi goes to dance, although she admits there are possibilities "if you're looking."

Felicie and Emilie Rapp hold hands before a dance starts at the Girard Park Recreation Center. Although married, they are members of the Dancin' Singles square-dancing club.

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The Sea Saws meet on Fridays in the recreation center at 7 p.m. According to Bob and Rosalind Landry, who serve as the Sea Saws' state board as well as presidents of the 3,000-member Louisiana Square Dance Association, the group, like most square- and round-dancing clubs, is actively seeking new members.

"Younger people are not really getting into it," said Rosalind. "We've tried to recruit a lot of people. It's not a 'hick' type of thing."

The Sea Saws offer two free lessons for newcomers to try it out and see if square dancing is for them.

Rosalind said most people are surprised to discover how much exercise there is in the activity.

"They say that square-dancing is a 10-year workout to your life," said Rosalind.

Round dancing is offered at 7 p.m. at the recreation center on Tuesday. Bob Van Atta and his wife, Lynn, of Prairieville are the instructors. Bob explains that round dancing is a couples thing — no squares of multiple couples — guided by a caller rather than a caller and danced in a circle.

"It's kind of a nonlinear line dance, where each dancer needs a partner. Bob said line dancing, popular in country western bars, requires no coupling.

The music for round-dancing also varies from square dancing in that round-dancing can be done to "anything from contemporary pop music to rock 'n' roll from Frank Sinatra to the Bee Gees," Bob said.

As with the square-dancing clubs, the Van Attas offer lessons at the Cajun Steppers' weekly dances. For more information on class schedules and rates, call Bob Van Atta at the Cajun Steppers round-dancing club at (225) 430-9731 before 4 p.m. Bob or Rosalind Landry of the Sea Saws square-dancing club at (318) 896-9717; and Butch Huff of the Dancin' Singles square-dancing club at (318) 261-1313.

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