

River City Squares

History of the River City Squares - 1991-2006 Square Dance Club in Lexington, Missouri

The River City Squares started life in 1991 as a Singles Square Dance Club. It was a part of a Singles Ministry sponsored by the Lexington United Methodist Church with Shirley Guevel as Director. There were several people in the River City Singles who had been Square Dancers and they thought it would be good to have a club in Lexington. Funding to get started was provided by the late Preston Raye, a member of the Single Promenaders. Preston, Shirley and Ruth Watt contacted Square Dance Caller Van Coble about getting started. Lessons started in February 1991 at the Municipal Auditorium in Lexington with Van Coble and Gary Mahnken sharing the teaching. There were 26 people in the first class. The Club was called the River City Single Squares. Graduation was in June and the first Club dance was in July 1991. Van and Gary intended to share calling with each one doing 6 dances in the year. That plan fell apart when Van's wife was transferred to Florida in July and they moved. Gary served as the Caller until July 1992 and taught the 2nd set of lessons to 14 new dancers in the fall of 1991.

The Club was eligible for Heart of America Federation membership when the 1st dance was held in July of 1991 with the required 32 members. The Club was sponsored for Federation membership by the Wheel N' Dealers, the Spinning Wheels and the Half-A-Pairs. The Club has also been a member of the Missouri Federation since the beginning.

The Club used guest callers from July 1992 to October 1993 when Ray Trowbridge took on the duties of Caller. Ray relinquished his duties as Club Caller in October of 1995 and Mike Schaff became the Club Caller in December 1995. River City Squares was Mike's first Club and it was a very successful partnership!

Membership in the club was open to any Single Square Dancer and also allowed Associate memberships for married couples. There were several couples who helped the Club in the early days, both as Angels and Associate Members. In September of 1996 the Club Name was changed to River City Squares. It was thought that the club might appeal to more people without the "single" designation. And in fact, a married couple, Ken and Audrey Campbell, worked very hard to help the Club survive along with other dedicated Club Members. Membership is now available to singles, couples, and young people who are children of members. Club membership has remained at about 40 with members from all over the area. Attendance at Club Dances has increased in the last few years

Dance locations have been the Lexington Lions Club Bldg, the Lexington Moose Lodge, the old United Methodist Church at 13th & South and since June of 1997, the new United Methodist Church on South 13 Highway where there is a large hall for dancing and a very large parking lot!

River City Squares participates in the Vigorous Visitor program of the Heart of America Federation but does not participate in "banner stealing". The Club has done parades and exhibitions, and hosts a parking lot dance at Lexington's "Heritage Days" every summer. Dances are held on the 4th Sunday every month. The Club offers a "New Dancer" program every year in the fall to teach new people.

In the summer of 2001, our beloved caller, Mike Schaff, was diagnosed with cancer. He continued to call the dances until he no longer could. Mike died in July 2002. The club used Guest Callers until January of 2003 when Bill Kanai was asked to be Club Caller for the River City Squares. We have lost some members and we are again working hard to survive. We don't give up easily!

August 2006