



The Riderwood Reporter

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Square Up! for beginner dance lessons at no risk, free open house September 10



Becky and Howard Lessey, facing the camera, await the instructor's next "call" by caller/instructor Kenny Farris, as part of square dance every Wednesday morning in Studio 1.

By Henry Heilbrunn
Square Dance Club

The Lesseys go for the workout—primarily for their brain; secondarily for their body; and, most satisfyingly, for the music. It comes together on Wednesday mornings at the weekly square dance in Studio 1 of the Wellness Center.

"A lot of people's perception of square dance is dosado, allemande left, and circle around like we did in grammar school – and that's it," Becky Lessey explains. "They don't understand there are more calls to learn and how good it is for the brain."

"We need to exercise our brain," adds Howard Lessey, "to keep ourselves cognitively healthy. Add 2,500 steps in a square dance session, and you see the physical benefit. Finally, there's new friendships when you dance cooperatively with seven others in a square."

The Lesseys returned to square dance when they arrived at Riderwood one year ago. They took the beginner lessons. Each was paired with an experienced dancer to help them learn -- and now they help new dancers learn the calls, taught by Kenny Farris, the instructor/caller who has been at Riderwood since 2009.

The next beginner class starts with a free Open House on Wednesday, September 10, at 10:15 a.m. in Studio 1 of the Wellness Center. It's a no-risk chance to see if you will enjoy square dance. Come as a single, we have a partner for you, or bring your

own partner. No special attire, just comfortable, firm shoes.

You don't have to know anything about square dance; the instructor will have you dancing in the first 5 minutes to easy calls that he explains. The free Open House, which is Lesson #1, lasts 90 minutes, with frequent rest breaks.

Lessons continue every Wednesday morning for one hour from 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. in Studio 1 of the Wellness Center. Optional free practices occur on Monday nights; free video demonstrations are online. The eight one-hour "starter" lessons on Wednesdays cost a total of \$40, payable in advance (after which lessons with additional calls continue on Wednesday mornings for \$5 each). The number of beginners is limited to provide experienced partners from among our 60 regular dancers. Reservation payments can be arranged through squaredance@riderwoodlife.com.

"We both love different kinds of music," says Becky. "The caller plays popular tunes that we all know from our early and current lives. We get to sing along and dance to them."

Becky and Howard have long musical traditions before and at Riderwood. Howard has played his trumpet since age 9, was part of the Washington Redskins band for 30 years, and now is with the Columbia Concert Band. Becky sings with Riderwood Rocks, part of the Encore Creativity for Older Adults, and the choir for the Riderwood Jewish Community.