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New Year's resolutions might include square dancing 'It's really fun to see everyone sort of light up'

By Karie Angell Luc
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It's a tradition to thank each other for the dance with a circular hand gesture and spoken words. Taken at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David's Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Inc./Chicago Tribune)

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Now here's a resolution for the New Year. How about giving square dancing a whirl and twirl, courtesy of the Glenview Squares?

The Glenview Squares welcomes new dancers to its free Square Dance Samplers during January, including on Saturday, Jan. 6 in Glenview at St. David's Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road).

Other complimentary offerings include the Jan. 11 sampler at 6:45 p.m. at the Patty Turner Center (375 Elm St.) in Deerfield and the Jan. 14 sampler at 2 p.m. at the Glenview

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Facing, in brown shirt is Janice Cha of Morton Grove, Glenview Squares public relations chair and a 20 year plus square dancer. “What hooks many of our new dancers is the sense of teamwork that develops as they learn the many calls during three months of lessons.” Cha said. Taken at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David’s Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Luc/Chicago Tribune)

People experiencing the sampler series over the years have come from municipalities such as Northbrook, Niles, Evanston, Winnetka, Skokie, Deerfield, Round Lake Beach, Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect and Morton Grove.

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Emilia Levinson of Glenview has been a club member for about five years and loves square dancing, “very much.

“It’s wonderful, it’s beautiful,” Levinson said.



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The Glenview Square Dance Club (according to [About Us – Glenview Squares](#)) was organized in 1950 in Glenview and promotes square dancing via lessons and dance events.

Dances are held indoors but during the earlier part of the COVID-19 pandemic, the club offered outdoor samplers to keep the safe momentum going.



In red shirt and dark hat is dance caller James Cha of Morton Grove at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David's Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Luc/Chicago Tribune)

On Jan. 6, the St. David's sampler drew many participants wearing PPE masks with the most recent COVID-19 and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) spike. But smiles were apparent behind masks as people socialized and danced in the church's downstairs fellowship hall.

Many newcomers to the Glenview Squares sampler series have a square dancing history.

In blue canvas-type shoes and not Elvis blue suede shoes was participant Ilene Schwab of Evanston, new to the Glenview Squares.

"I did it (square dancing) in college years ago," Schwab said, "but it's been a many years since I've square danced.

"It's fun," Schwab added, "I'm having a good time."

The samplers run about two hours and participants are encouraged to take rest breaks. No partner is needed to attend. Some come as spectators.

About dancing, "I like it," said Fritz Krause of Lake Bluff.



Janice Cha of Morton Grove, Glenview Squares public relations chair and a 20-year plus square dancer, said the, "square dance 'sampler' parties assume attendees know zero about the activity.

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Right, in red suspenders is FRITZ KRAUSE of Lake Bluff at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David's Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Luc/Chicago Tribune)

'California Twirl').

"The fun part comes when the caller puts the calls learned together in time to the music and dancers do their best to keep up," Cha added. "That's when it feels like 'Simon Says' for adults ... lots of laughing."

Cha's husband James Cha was the caller that Saturday afternoon, using a microphone to explain moves.

"I love square dancing, I love calling square dances and I think it's important to try to bring people some joy and happiness, especially with winter starting," James Cha said.

Outside, the first snowfall of 2024 was visible through the multipurpose room's English basement-type windows.

Joy Nachtrab of Evanston, Glenview Squares president, said the club has a fluctuating number of about 100 members. Soon will be the club's 75th anniversary.

"Square dancing is an opportunity to move your body, use your brain and enjoy a social opportunity," Nachtrab said.



Second from left, Jane Atkinson of Skokie participates at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David's Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Luc/Chicago Tribune)

lessons co-chair.

back.'

"The calls become a little more complicated ('do si do', 'allemande left' or

"It's good for the individual to build their body, excellent for keeping your brain and mind sharp, and then the social aspect is just an added plus," Nachtrab said. "You do indeed get to meet wonderful friends, the nicest people I've ever been around.

"They're always happy," Nachtrab said. "Dancers are often very happy."

Candace Risen of Evanston is the club's

then saying, ‘Oh my God, there’s so much more to it than that.’

“It’s a mental challenge, it’s a physical challenge, it’s social, it’s friendly.

“It’s really fun to see everyone sort of light up,” Risen added.

“It’s much more than they think it’s going to be.”

Ages 10 and older may consider Glenview Squares square dance lessons. Children aged 10 to 16 must be accompanied by a participating adult.

The Social Square Dance Lessons program for beginners is offered twice a year, in late January and in September.



Dance movement is happening and spectators observe. They are not blue suede shoes but they are blue canvas shoes. In those blue shoes is square dancer Ilene Schwab of Evanston, newcomer to this dance opportunity. “I did it (square dancing) in college,” Schwab said, “years ago, but it’s been a many years since I’ve square danced. It’s fun. I’m having a good time, I don’t know if I have stamina for two hours.” Taken at the Glenview Squares Square Dance Samplers series on Jan. 6, 2024 in Glenview at St. David’s Episcopal Church (2410 Glenview Road). (Karie Angell Luc/Chicago Tribune)

The paid fee 18-week beginners course, held in Deerfield and also in Glenview, covers the 50 calls needed for people to attend Chicago-area square dance events, according to

<http://glenviewsquares.org/lessons>.

There are also classes for established square dancers interested in growing master skills.

The Glenview Square Dance Club offers financial assistance to help with square

dance related costs such as for lessons, caller development, club membership dues and special dances.

Visit <http://glenviewsquares.org/grant-fund> to learn about eligibility, approved fund uses and application procedures. For questions, email lessons@glenviewsquares.org.

Karie Angell Luc is a freelancer for Pioneer Press.

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