

# Helpful Hints from Michelle McCarty

From

The Hunterdon Stars and Mercer ArcAngels (New Jersey)

[michbrit@optonline.net](mailto:michbrit@optonline.net)

## ***Who are Handicapable Square Dancers?***

- A) The developmentally disabled—mentally retarded, multiply handicapped, autistic, cerebral palsy, hearing/vision problems, sensory integration problems, blind
- B) Individuals in wheelchairs, with and without disabilities
- C) Individuals with a wide range of abilities. Some dancers will be able to dance programs beyond Mainstream, while others may dance the Handicapable list
- D) Individuals who have had strokes, have Parkinson's Disease, Alzheimer's
- E) Individuals who are of varying ages

## ***What makes these dancers different?***

- A) A slower pace—for music and learning
- B) More repetition required
- C) May be delayed in their motor skills, social skills, language skills, and processing skills, and may prevaricate
- D) Social skills—Very affectionate, not always conscious of "personal space", may need "personal space", some disruptive behaviors may occur, stubbornness.
- E) Timing Lists—Do not use standard timing charts. The program you are doing needs to be customized for each individual group. Standard singing call figures will be too demanding.

## ***What makes the dancers the same?***

- A) They LOVE dancing just like we do!
- B) They may be delayed, but they are not kids. They have similar interests like us: racing, sports, music.
- C) They are out to have a good time!
- D) They need the same structure/rules/etiquette that a square dance provides.
  - \*Sometimes they get noisy
  - \*Sometimes a pep talk is needed
- E) They LOVE praise and hugs as much or even more than dancers at typical clubs.

## ***What does it take to call for a Handicapable Club?***

- A) A love of the square dance activity
- B) Lots of patience
- C) An open mind
- D) Flexibility

## ***What do the dancers need from their caller?***

- A) A smiling face
- B) Consistency
- C) Accepting these individuals as who they are
- D) Positive outlook
- E) Praise and reassurance
- F) Sense of humor
- G) Angels—Angels are needed in a variety of ways

\*Use in the square to assist with individuals who need assistance

\*Use outside the square to assist individuals who need physical assistance, hand over hand help or redirection.

\*Remember to help where necessary—not everyone needs help. Some dancers just need to be lead in the right direction.

- H) A commitment to square dance norms—Teach them so they are not disabled in a different square dance situation
- I) A night of fun

### ***Remember there are different learning styles.***

- A) Appeal to all of the senses—Sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste
- B) Use verbal cues/key phrases—Let them fill in the blank
- C) Demonstrate—Go out and show them
- D) Be consistent—In the beginning, do not do partner changes during singing calls. Let the dancers adjust to where their home is, who their partner and corner are and spatially get used to doing the calls and how they feel.
- E) Use your environment to help you
- F) Use additional props
  - Bracelet for left hand
  - Electrical tape on the floor to assist in having the dancers find their home
- G) The music, rhythm and melodic intonation helps

### ***Music—The dancers LOVE to be able to sing or “get into” the music***

#### Patter Records

*Sin Wagon*—4B-6149

*Iko Iko*—S2K-2007

*Boogie Fever*—LM-209

*Funky Cowboy*—LM-219

*Rhythm Is Going To Get You*—ESP-710

*Swamp Thing*—MR-5021A

#### Singing Calls

*YMCA*—LM 206

*The Locomotion*—ESP-156

*Old Time Rock & Roll*—ESP-1073

*Pink Cadillac*—RB-3017B

*Do Rae Me*—DWN-110

*That’s The Way I Like It*—A-1022

*Joy To The World*—RR-247B

### ***If you are interested in calling for a Handicapable Club, what do you do?***

- A) Go to a Handicapable dance or exhibition
- B) Go to an activity sponsored by an agency dealing with individuals with disabilities
  - \*Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC)
  - \*United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)
  - \*Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)
  - \*Special Olympics
- C) Inquire around your area about summer camps for individuals with special needs.

### ***Search the web for information.***

- A) USDA—[www.usda.org](http://www.usda.org). Click on the icon named Handicapable Dancers.
- B) US Handicapable Square Dance Association—[www.ushandicapable.org](http://www.ushandicapable.org). This site introduces you to the Association, tells you about clubs, tells you about the Handicapable Convention, gives you a list of calls, and lets you ask questions.
- C) The National Arc—[www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org). This site will explain what the Arc is, its purpose, and to help you find your local Arc.
- D) The United Cerebral Palsy Association—[www.ucp.org](http://www.ucp.org). This site will explain what UCP is, its

purpose, and will help you locate your local UCP.

- E) The Muscular Dystrophy Association—[www.mdaua.org](http://www.mdaua.org). This site will explain what the MDA is, its purpose, and will help you locate your local MDA.
- F) The Special Olympics—[www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org). This site will explain what the Special Olympics are, their purpose and help you locate your local Special Olympics Chapter.
- G) I went to Google and put in *Camps for Special Needs*. There were many places to look and a few sort by location.

### ***How do you get a Handicapable group started?***

- A) Locate dancers—The best way to do this is to contact your local ARC, UCP, MDA, Special Olympics or other local association dealing with individuals with disabilities.
- B) Find a building
- C) Find a caller
- D) Find angels—Parents, local square dancers, volunteers
- E) How often do you have the dances?
- F) Insurance—If you have CALLERLAB membership, you are covered with Liability Insurance.
- G) Funding—Fund raising helps the dancers have other opportunities.
- H) Clothing—Put the word out to local square dance clubs. Square dancers are very generous people!
- I) What type of program do you do?

\*Line dances usage?

*Birdie Song (Chicken Dance)*—ESP 001

*Hokey-Pokey*—MGR-6995

*Electric Slide*—COL 2607

*Macarena*—GMP-502B

*Virginia Reel*—MGR-7345 (May need to be modified version)

*Amos Moses*—Jerry Reed

*Boot Scootin Boogie*—Brooks and Dunn

*Wild, Wild West*—The Escape Club

\*How long is the dance?

\*Do you split the group?

\*How many breaks?

### ***What is your goal?***

- A) For the dancers

\*A night of fun!

\*Keep everyone dancing

\*What do you do when it is one of those nights?

\*Don't get upset if you repeat a lot from week to week.

\*Go to a Handicapable Convention

The 1st Convention was in 1988 with 350 attendees.

The Convention in 2000, in Williamsburg, had 550 attendees.

The 1<sup>st</sup> West Coast Convention was in 2003 and had 245 attendees.

The 2004 Convention in St. Petersburg, FL, had 330 attendees.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> West Coast Convention was in Las Vegas, NV, in 2005.

- B) For yourself

\*Have reasonable expectations. Don't underestimate their abilities. Don't overestimate their capabilities.

The dancers are eager to please! Give them a healthy challenge.

\*You are giving of yourself. Don't blame yourself if it one of those nights.

\*The rewards are more than you could dream of!

# WHAT DO THESE DIFFERENT DISABILITIES MEAN TO YOU AS A CALLER?

## ***A. Downs Syndrome/Mentally Retarded***

- Slow response time—needs a few more seconds to process the information
- Need concrete cues
- May have difficulty with spatial awareness
- May be easy to understand, may use sign language or picture symbols, may not speak
- May be unaware of social cues—could get in personal space
- Varying degrees of capability
  - some dancers may need no assistance
  - some dancers may need a little assistance
  - some dancers may need a lot of assistance and/or physical assistance

## ***B. Autistic***

- May not make direct eye contact with you but is listening
- May rock or move when the music is playing or when it is not playing
- May speak very well, may have speech difficulties or may not speak at all
- Social skills are affected—may enjoy social interaction, may have fleeting instances of interaction or may stay more removed from the group
- May make loud noises
- May have difficulty with loud noises
- Varying degrees of capability
  - Some dancers may need no assistance
  - Some dancers may need a little assistance
  - Some dancers may need a lot of assistance and/or physical assistance
- Needs cues that are clear, concise and direct—extra wordiness is not as effective

## ***C. Sensory integration difficulties***

- May not respond right away
- Needs to filter out background noise to hear calls
- May do better with physical cues—can feel what their body is doing
- May be very distractible
- May dislike loud noises

## ***D. Cerebral Palsy***

- May need more time due to physical limitations
- May have difficulty with twirls—sets them off balance
- May be unable to use one side of their body well
- May be cognitively able to understand the calls, but challenged by their physical capabilities
- May be in a wheelchair (See “Helpful Hints From Cory.pdf” handout.)
  - Do they need a pusher?
  - Can they maneuver the chair by themselves?
  - Do they have an electric wheelchair?
- May have difficulty communicating—may have intelligible speech, may have speech problems or may have an augmentative device (talking box) or use sign language

### ***E. Blind or Partially Sighted***

- May be totally blind, have some sight, may see shadows, may see outlines of figures
- May have sight but have no peripheral vision
- Will need more auditory cues
- Will rely on touch and contact to be successful
- Will have to think of cues that they are familiar with since they may not have actually seen something

### ***F. Deaf or Hard of Hearing***

- May be totally deaf, have some hearing, may have hearing aids
- There are sound systems available to assist people who have hearing difficulties
- When you play your music, turn up the bass so they can feel the music also
- May rely more on visual cues and movement to learn

### ***G. Multiply Handicapped***

- May have any variety of disabilities
- Severity of the disability may not be very significant but the combination of two or more disabilities may cause problems

### ***H. Dancers in Wheelchairs***

- May have no other disability except being unable to be mobile
- May have other disabilities
- May be in an electric wheelchair, be in a chair and can self maneuver or be in a chair and need to be assisted
- Some moves are very difficult for wheelchairs to do based on how they move (e.g. Allemande Thar)

### ***I. Stroke victims***

- May have one side of their body affected and can only move the one side
- May affect other parts of the brain and may affect response time, vision, depth perception, balance

### ***J. Parkinson's patients***

- May have difficulty with fine motor movements
- May do better with contact and moves that have arm connections to help balance and stabilize themselves
- Speed may be an issue and may need slower music and more time to complete the moves

### ***K. Alzheimer's patients***

- May have difficulty with spatial concepts
- May have difficulty with short term or long term memory and retention