

# For love and money, couple can be found square dancing

By Renee Wijnen  
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**W**hen neighbors invited Anna and Howard Hoffman to take square-dancing classes with them 10 years ago, Anna Hoffman thought her husband would decline. "I thought, 'Oh no, there's no way they'll get him to do it,'" she says.

But their neighbors seemed to have the power of persuasion.

"If it would have been anybody else, I would have said, 'You've got to be crazy,'" Howard Hoffman says. "But we tried it; we had a really good time. The other people who were part of the class were fun people, and it was the group that basically became the charter members of Skirts 'N Flirts."

Ten years later, the square-dance club has a membership of 10 couples and holds dances every fourth Saturday of the month from September to May at the Schaumburg Teen Center, which is in The Barn, 231 S. Civic Dr.

Today, the Hoffmans' interest in square dancing extends far beyond their membership in Skirts 'N Flirts. Since retiring last year, they have expanded their activities, which include taking classes and teaching. Currently, they dance in some form every day of the week.

Although the couple quickly became enthusiastic about the activity during the class they took 10 years ago, they didn't always dance well together.

"Believe it or not, Anna and I, when we first started dancing together, were like two left feet on a dance floor," Howard Hoffman says.

The reason for their initial difficulty was that Anna Hoffman, 55, a Scottish native, and American-born Howard Hoffman, 56, grew up learning different ways of dancing.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, he occasionally went dancing with friends at nearby dance halls and learned to dance the classic steps of ballroom in the so-called American style.

Meanwhile, just outside Glasgow, where Anna grew up, dancing was a popular weekend activity. But there, the steps were slightly different in what is called Continental style.

Once the problem was diagnosed, they quickly remedied it.

For the Hoffmans, square dancing blossomed from a favorite hobby to a business last year when the oil company they worked for announced it was closing its offices in Schaumburg. They had worked for the company more than 20 years, she in marketing and he in human resources. The couple opted to take early retirement instead of moving with the company back to the Los Angeles area, even though that's where they met and married in 1971. They decided to start teaching dancing because it was their favorite hobby and they had the time to do it.

Their classes include square dancing, country-western line dancing and round dancing, which the Hoffmans describe as "synchronized ballroom dancing." They teach classes at several suburban centers, including the Rolling Meadows Senior Center in Arlington Heights; the Villa Park Park District; Rob Roy Country Club Village, a condominium complex in Mt. Prospect; and the Hinsdale Community House.

Howard Hoffman also has become a "cuer" for round dances—he calls the moves during round dances at square-dance club functions. Round dancing, which usually makes up half the program



Tribune photo by Gerald West

Anna Hoffman dances with Joe Lentino. "The best part is definitely the people," she says.

at club events, is slower than square dancing and is danced in a circle moving counterclockwise.

He cues all the round dances for Skirts 'N Flirts events and works under contract with other square-dance clubs to cue their events.

"We're on the go just about every day of the week," he says. "We've made a business of it."

The Hoffmans have found that the business of square dancing is hardly routine.

In the spring, they taught two hearing-impaired students in their class how to line-dance with the help of a sign-language interpreter.

"The two girls in our class never missed a beat," Howard Hoffman says. In fact, the two students enjoyed the class so much that they invited the Hoffmans to come to the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf in Mt. Prospect in June to teach a lesson.

"They enjoyed it so much, but they were in a class with all hearing people, so they suggested that we come and do a class with all hearing-impaired people," Anna Hoffman says.

In another class this spring, they had an 84-year-old student who has had two knee replacements.

"Her doctor has told her it is wonderful for her, so I think it's one of those things [that's] good for seniors because they can come out and meet people—and it's good exercise too," Anna Hoffman says.

In addition, they danced this summer for a group of visitors from Schaumburg's sister city, Schaumburg, Germany, and for its prince, who arrived later in the summer.

Friends who have known the Hoffmans since they were introduced to square dancing note that their dedication to the activity was apparent almost instantly.

"They were always out dancing," says Joan Kopp, president of Skirts 'N Flirts, who, with her husband, Chuck, also are charter members. "Within two years of lessons, they were out teaching, which is very unusual, but they loved it so much and were excellent students."

Although they enjoy dancing, it is not the steps they have learned but the experiences they have been introduced to that keep them committed, Anna and Howard Hoffman say.

"The best part is definitely the people," she says. "We've met so many wonderful people, and it is really a nice way to socialize."

For more information about the Skirts 'N Flirts or other square-dance clubs, call Joan Kopp at 885-3119.