

Billy Times

Winter 2005



“Our mission is to promote intimacy and community among gay and bisexual men, and to build bridges with supportive communities.”



The President’s Message

by

Jim Burke

President, Billy Foundation Board of Directors

When I was asked by the Billy Board to write a column for the first issue of the Billy Times in a year, my mind naturally started reflecting on this past year. And what a year it has been, both for our hard-working Board, and for the Billy community as a whole. A year ago, we were faced with a massive embezzlement from our former office worker, which left us teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. The Board began discussing how many more days we could keep the office open, and whether we could even put on last year’s Heartwood gathering. At the time, we were legally gagged from discussing our situation publicly, and were unable to do any fundraising to dig ourselves out of our financial hole. It was looking very bleak indeed.

But as our winter of discontent gave way to a sunny and warm spring, the fortunes of the organization improved dramatically. The legal issues were finally resolved with our former employee, and were at last able to discuss the issue fully with you, months later than we wanted to. We could legally fundraise again, and that coupled with a series of successful gatherings this past year, made us financially solvent once again. We’ll still need to fundraise this fall—it’s part of our annual budget, and needed to get us through 2006—but we aren’t immediately facing impending doom as before. This past summer, we also hired Marcus Borgman as our new Resource Coordinator, and he has done a terrific job keeping the office functioning on a day-to-day basis.

The Billy Club is back, and flourishing. For this I not only thank our Board members—Karen Ottoboni, Charlie Seltzer, Paul Mueller, Robert (Goat) Conrad, John Cwiakala, Bill Blackburn, and Mitch Trachtenberg—but most importantly, I thank you, the Billy membership. Your patience, your support, your compassion, and your concern is ultimately what pulled us through.

However, the main purpose of this is not to focus on the past, but to tell you about some of what we as a Board are

doing and looking to do in the coming year. Aside from helping to put together quality gatherings, we have 2 major initiatives in progress. The first one deals with improving communication between the Board and the membership. During this past winter, many Billies complained—quite rightly, I think—that the Board was too removed and too uncommunicative with the rest of the organization. Part of this was due to the legal gag order we faced.

But part of this is more systemic, and needs to be addressed. This year, we re-doubled our efforts to hold Community Advisory Circles at each gathering so Billies can meet directly with Board members and discuss issues of interest. Also, the Board has revived the Billy Times after a long hiatus. We’ve encouraged and supported the setting up of BillyFon, 510.533.8136. The brainchild of longtime Billy Jason Serinus, BillyFon provides taped information about upcoming Billy events, from potlucks to gatherings, to Board meetings. The Board has also encouraged the further development of the Billy Club website billyclub.org. While still very much a work in progress, the website is designed to be a repository of all public information relating to the organization, from the minutes of Board meetings to news impacting the entire organization. Finally, there is the organization’s E-mail list, which sends out to interested Billies important bulletins and news items of interest to the organization. If you want to join this distribution list, contact Marcus Borgman, at 707.462.0766, or email the office at office@billyclub.org.

Another initiative we’ve started is a reaching out to other gay and gay-friendly organizations in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. This is an effort on our part to “walk the walk” when it comes to part of the mission statement of the Billy Club, “to build bridges to supportive communities....” In this area, we’re exploring the possibility of renting out the largely underused back area of our office to one or more gay/gay-friendly organizations based in Ukiah. This does not mean any formal merger with any other organization. But renting our underused back office space will not only allow us to make some money, but more importantly allow us to better network with other organizations that have the same kind of vision we in the Billy Club have. Also, at the end of May of next year, we will be sponsoring a gathering dealing with current HIV+/- issues confronting the gay community. We will be working closely with other AIDS organizations in Mendocino county and Santa Cruz to pull off this important event, and we hope to work with them in the future on other activities as well.

In this and all other activities we are planning, we need your support, your help, your heart, and your ideas. As has been said many times before, “you own the Billy Club.” The Board is merely your representative to the outside world, and we’re useless unless we feel the wind of our membership at our backs. Please contact us at any time with your ideas, your input, and your concerns. That’s what we’re here for.

Finally, I urge any of you who might be interested in getting more involved with the organization to attend one of our monthly Board meetings (contact the Billy Office for upcoming dates), and also to consider joining the Board. It’s been a rewarding but also a very tough year for us, and more than one Board member will probably step down in the coming months. We always need new blood, and that need is more acute than ever right now.

I wish you all well, and I hope you have a happy holiday season and a great 2006.

Halloween 2005 Wrap Up

by Steve Rockwell

A huge thank you to everyone who participated in the Halloween gathering. We generated a magical energy that could only have arisen through the combined efforts and hearts of everyone present. I watched with some surprise and much gratification as things evolved smoothly, and with far grander results than I'd ever anticipated.

This was a special gathering in numerous ways, in part because the visioning circle who planned the gathering was stimulated by numerous Billies to break the mold of Halloween's past. We hoped to go a little deeper into our personal journeys, and our journey together, by reengaging Billy ritual. So, this gathering dedicated 26 hours to rituals (personal and group experiences where Billies might establish more direct contact with ancestors, our bodies, nature, and tribe, and through that contact provoke a deeper sense of what each of us wants to do with out "wild and precious lives" and interweave ourselves in community). In order to look at these rituals from a fresh perspective, there was an attempt to rethink our use of space at Saratoga Springs by designing new routes of travel and by hosting our "house party" in the main lodge, and an attempt to create a new sense of time through use of an ongoing "heartbeat" drum. Amazingly, people readily stepped forward to take turns being drummers, witnesses and listeners -- keeping the heart drum beating throughout the entire 26 hour period until a final moment of profound silence standing before the crackling bonfire. And then the horned buck danced!

To give a special sense to this [Space Between Time], meals, heartcircles, volunteer tasks, daily schedules, everything was altered from the "status quo" -- sometimes to initial confusion, but eventually to great success. Throughout there was a tension between "expectations" and "experience" that people used to define and create their personal sense of gathering. My great thanks to everyone for trusting each other so that we could accomplish being together in new ways. Since this was indeed an experiment, I'd love to get feedback from everyone present as well as others in the club. What were your impressions and experiences, and how is your wild life going forward?

It really does "takes a village" to create a Billy gathering. Thank you Small Group Leaders (Mark Hoffheimer, Roland Hulstein, Fred Rabidoux, and Jim Williams). Thank you SubCoordinators (Jim Beale & Danny Rubin, Tom Benson, Greg Bjornstad, Steve Cismowski, Brian Friedman, Jim Hughson, Greg Jesser & Robin Leavitt, Lloyd King, Daniel Latham, Aubert Loida, Three MacDonald, Scott Marley, Oliver Miller, John Mountain & Michael Dawson, Lenny Pinna, Fred Rabidoux, and William Stewart). Thanks also to Jason Rowe and Rico Avila (heartbeat drum), Jim Gilson (drum core), Roland Hulstein and Guy Albert (sweat lodge), Muiz Brinkerhoff (Saturday night Sufi dance), Fred Rabidoux, Roland Hulstein, Daniel Latham & Jeffrey Obser (fire priests), and George Anthony and J.M. Rodriguez (house party). And, of course, an enormous thank you to Burt Cohen who produced hours of scrumptious food yet managed to remain his heart-centered, congenial self.

Part of why I remain a member of the Billy community is because of the huge hearts and intelligence that Billies bring to creating engaged community in the space of a very few days. I stepped up to co-coordinate this Halloween gathering in part to get to know you all better, hear your stories, and learn from your experiences and wisdom. (This was a process that started shortly after May Day -- so there were months of stories!) A number of people gave themselves to our visioning process even though they could not themselves attend, and I send huge hugs and thanks to Bill Blackburn, Mario LaPlante, Kirk Read, Joe Rodriguez, and Ed Wolf for their inspired guidance and time. Nothing, of course, would have been organized or communicated to the community at large without the beautiful work of Marcus Borgman, our Resource Coordinator. And, my thanks to all of the members of the Billy Board, but especially Jim Burke, for allowing me and the other members of the visioning circle to stretch the boundaries of a gathering and put things together in new ways.

Finally, I want to thank the souls who gave themselves to our visioning circle process and held the [Space Between Time] as a place where all of us could self-journey, and recreate tribe, and simply have fun: Steve Cismowski, Fred Fishman, Scott Marley, Michael Starkman & Ruel Walker. You are truly powerful and loving men with insight into life that I hope you continue to share with us all.

Poz/Neg Gathering Planned

by Rick Nevitt-Lamantia and Marcus Borgman

Earlier this year, Santa Cruz Billy Dan Driessche wanted to produce a gathering to explore issues for HIV + and HIV-gay men. He thought maybe pharmaceutical companies would pay for it. Later, the State of California came through with one-time funding for a similar purpose, and Santa Cruz and Mendocino public health departments began planning. Mendocino Public Health Dept. has already signed a contract with the Billy Club to produce such a gathering.

The Billy board agreed because it fits in with the focussed-theme gatherings we like to do for mid-winter. But to keep it a strongly Billy-influenced gathering we all decided to do it later in the year when there will be better weather for tenting and more people could attend.

This gathering is focussed so everyone is expected to attend the workshops. It has been a few years since we had a gathering focused on HIV, and since there is energy and money for it, we are going for it.

Since county funds will be paying for this gathering for about 60 county residents, we are still working out how to make it available to Billys not living in Mendocino or Santa Cruz counties. Santa Cruz Billys are planning the workshops. The Billy office will be handling the location and cook contracts, and process registrations. This is a new animal; it is and it is not a Billy gathering as we have known them. Please contact the Billy office for your specific comments and concerns, and stay tuned for more information.

Message From Heartwood

Hi Billies!

It's that time of year again to be thinking about the Heartwood Gathering! It is such a joy to have you here during New Year's! We had a lot of fun last year, and I hope Billys who missed out on last year's events will be with us this year. Of course, it wouldn't be as fun if Billys who were here last year didn't come back for another New Year's on Heartwood's beautiful mountain land.

Here are a few things to remember to pack once you've registered:

~We're in a remote area, so please remember to bring your flashlight

~It's the winter, and warm clothes/boots are a necessity

~Sometimes it may snow (which is gorgeous!) and snow chains might be a good idea for your car

I am so glad to be helping to coordinate another wonderful event and to be welcoming the 2006 New Year with you! I hope you'll help us Heartwoodies celebrate this year and show us how to have a good time!

Love Jamie (aka Margaret)

PS - Never been to Heartwood before? Check out our website at heartwoodinstitute.com You'll love it!

Billy Club Gatherings

typically start with a potluck dinner the first day and end after lunch on the last day. Please contact the coordinators, when known, to volunteer for any of the many positions necessary to make Gatherings a success. Contact the office if you wish either to coordinate a Gathering or work with its future coordinators.

2006 Gatherings

Mid Winter

Coordinators Needed! This gathering might be cancelled if no coordinators appear

May Day

Billys and Billykin
Coordinators Needed
Thursday, April 27 - Sunday, April 30
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

HIV Poz/Neg

Billys Only
Rick Nevitt-Lamantia, Dan Driessche
Friday May 26 - Monday May 29
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

Independence Day

Billys Only
Coordinators Needed
Thursday, June 29 - Tuesday, July 4
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

Labor Day

Billys and Billykin
Coordinators Needed
Thursday, Sept. 2 - Monday, Sept. 6
Camp and Sons, Mendocino County

Halloween

Billys Only
Coordinators Needed
Thursday, Oct. 26 - Monday, Oct. 29
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

New Years

Billys and Billykin
Coordinators Needed
Dates Pending
Heartwood, Humboldt County

Billy Email

Billy Board minutes, agendas and other information are available via email. If you're interested in receiving them, email office@billyclub.org.

The Billy Office

Office Open:
Wednesday - Friday 10am - 1pm
and other times Wed - Fri unscheduled,
call for information

Game Nights

1st and 3rd Saturdays
At the Billy office from 7pm to 10pm.
Bring games, snacks and non-
alcoholic drinks.

Billy Lunch:

Wednesdays at 12:45pm
Meet at the office. We dine locally.

Local Socials

are unofficial get-togethers that happen monthly and usually include schmoozing, a potluck meal and heart circle. Here's contact information and the attendance policy. Some socials welcome Billykin.

East Bay Potlucks

Contact Steve Mendoza at
510.649.0894 or at
smendoza@library.berkeley.edu

Mendo Potluck

Coordinator Needed!
Call Billy office

San Francisco Billy Potlucks

Contact G-Fry at
gregthebarbersf@yahoo.com

Sonomen

(Men only, and other Billys)
Contact Arjuna at 707.869.9704
or at starjuna@sonic.net

South San Francisco & Santa Cruz Area

Coordinator Needed!
Contact Lou Ceci at 650.969.9556
or at ceci_lga@yahoo.com

The Billy Times

should be published four times per year and included with Gathering calls. We need a regular Editor - please contact the office if you can help! To subscribe to the Billy Club's mailing list, send a \$20-25 sliding scale yearly subscription fee. If you can't afford that, send what you can afford. Your renewal date is noted on your address label. Contact us at:

The Billy Foundation
210 South Main Street
Ukiah, CA 95482
Voice 707.462.0766 / Fax 462.0827
office@billyclub.org
Resource Coordinator: Marcus
Borgman

The Billy Times

Temporary Editor: Marcus Borgman

Board Meetings

Are open to all Billys and Billykin on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Two meetings a quarter are at the Billy Office with the third month in Sonoma County. Call office for location details.

Board of Directors

President: Jim Burke
Vice President: Karen Ottoboni
Treasurer: Paul Mueller
Secretary: Charlie Seltzer
with Robert "Goat" Conrad, Bill
Blackburn, John Cwiakala, Mitch
Trachtenberg

Ongoing Board Portfolios
BESF: Wil Gonzales, Paul Mueller,
Bob Kuder

Gatherings: Rick Nevitt-Lamantia
BillyFon: Jason Bellecci-Serinus
Billy Boutique: Bill Murphy
Website: Ruven Hannah, Joe Kukulka

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