

BILLY TIMES

—August 2010—

The mission of the Billys is to foster community, intimacy, and personal exploration among gay, bi, and queer men through shared values and heart-centered brotherhood.



How We Gather by Bill Blackburn

President, Board of Directors

I've been reflecting on how we gather, wondering what supports our community in being so vital and heart-centered. I want to share with you what my heart tells me as I explore that question. It feels to me that we allow ourselves to be authentic and open more quickly than usually happens elsewhere.

We call Heartcircle our core ritual and its effects are pervasive. Speaking from the heart, listening heart-to-heart – what better way to create deepening connections? Our Circles touch even those who don't participate.

The language we use opens our way to connecting deeply: community, brotherhood, tribe, family. Are we perfect? Hell no! Not in this life. Are families? But mostly, we talk through our differences and get beyond them.

Over a hundred Billys and two Visioning Retreats (2006 and 2008) worked hard over several years to create a Mission Statement and Billy Values Statement. That language arose from our sense of purpose, our commitment to integrity and our shared aspirations and vision. Our culture of caring for ourselves and each other is fostered by our sense of belonging. Our history supports us.

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Brian Friedman's Passing

Brian Friedman passed away on July 18. He collapsed while jogging in Palm Springs. Many Billys have expressed grief over the loss of Brian, particularly through billenet. Once such letter follows:



Dear Billys,

I too deeply share in the loss of our beloved Brian. I wanted to share something with the community regarding Brian's generosity and support of our community.

As many of you may know, Board members, like everyone else, must pay their way for gatherings or apply for scholarships. (In the past, when funds were more plentiful, some monies were allotted for such purposes.) Brian recognized the service to our community provided by Board members, and he established a fund, periodically replenished, that ensured that all Board members could attend gatherings, regardless of ability to pay. Brian did this out of generosity and love for our community, with no fan-fare or "public" acknowledgement (until now). He recognized service, supported it and enabled it, and I'm grateful for that. I'm a better person for having known Brian, and I too will miss him.

Warm hugs guys,

Mark Hoffheimer

Vice-President, Billy Board

Halloween Gathering Coordinators Needed!

Every year, ten to twelve Billys step forward to coordinate our five to six gatherings. We cannot do it without you!

An opportunity awaits you: to co-coordinate the Halloween Gathering! This gathering cannot take place if coordinators do not step forward. Our deadline for finding *you* is Labor Day weekend!

If you are a virgin coordinator or have done it once or many times - please contact me to take on this essential role.

Coordinating a gathering will inspire you, help you grow, satisfy your need for power, get you closer to more Billys, give you a chance to tap into many of your talents—some of which you may not even be aware of.

I promise to hold your hand and mentor you along the way if you want me to. You'll have the support of many others in the community as well.

Please contact me—even if you are *just considering* coordination.

Ruven

ruven@ruvenhannah.com, (415) 297-9545

How We Gather

(continued from page one)

Our volunteerism connects us as well. After we put our cars away in the parking lot, there can be a sense of classlessness, that we're all Billy equals. There may be a temptation to identify some as more central to our greater circle, but I find that that's most often simply a matter of how much they're doing to support the community. That centrality changes, too, as people flow through those supporting positions, and rightly so. Ideally, there are no stars. Or better, we are all stars in our community.

At the beginning of each meeting, the Billy Board reads a list of nine Goals and Agreements that have their origins in the 2006 Visioning Retreat. Among them, we intone these words: "The Billy Board is nested within and acting as a part of the community." And: "Community members own the Billy community." (That means you.) Our traditions of consensus decision-making and circling help keep us non-hierarchical.

Another support for our gathering is through our values around drugs and alcohol at our gatherings. The Billy Values Statement says it well: "We encourage ourselves to

be present and mindful by advocating an environment free of drugs and alcohol at our gatherings." Additionally, we have a sizeable 12-step membership, and they are helped to feel safe and welcome by following that value. We make allowances for medicinal usage as long as it isn't in the faces of those who want to be apart from it.

The tradition of helping each other in need is another one of our characteristics. As Billys were gathering during the dying times of the late 80's and early 90's, we helped each other to die and to grieve. Acts of generosity big and small have been part of us ever since those days. In the past year, Billys Care has organized a list of people willing to help Billys in need and the skills they can offer. [See contact information elsewhere in this issue of the Billy Times.]

Our Richard Locke Scholarship Fund is another way we deepen community. In the world we envision, no one should be prevented from participating fully in our community due to lack of money. Our funding does not enable us currently to offer all the support requested, unfortunately, but we do our best. My best guidance around scholarships is threefold: If you need a scholarship to enable you to attend a gathering, please ask for what you need. If you don't truly need one, please don't ask. If you can afford to give, please contribute to the RLSF so your brothers can join with you in heart-space.

The Billy Emergency Support Fund is another resource we have put in place in caring for each other, though it has fallen into obscurity recently. In this time of contraction and recession, I hope we can revitalize it. BESF provides small emergency grants to cover basic expenses such as heating or rent to those in deep need who are either HIV-positive people from northern California counties (counties that have no other HIV support organizations) or for any Billy from anywhere. Requests are very low and I'm sure, given the recession, that that must be because we haven't publicized it. Nor have we raised funds for it and that, too, needs addressing.

Although they're not official parts of the Billy Foundation, we also gather in Heartcircles and potlucks in various regions between gatherings, and on Hike Daddy's hikes and wherever we bump into each other. Billenet falls into less use sometimes, yet it rallies and becomes important when a juicy topic comes along, one of us falls ill and needs support, or as recently happened, one of us dies and we need to share our grief.

How do we gather? Well and deeply. We gather to create heart-space and healing, fascination and fun, and yes, sometimes we even have sex together! We forge community that is authentic and multi-faceted and compassionate. I'm pleased to be part of that energy with you. ☺

Community Collaboration

creating heartspace where we live!

Many of us over the years have expressed a desire to bring a Billy sense of ritual, heart-sharing, and play back into the “real world” after a Gathering. Outside of the confines and privacy of a retreat, however, it’s often difficult to engage people in a heartfull way, regardless of the fact that we know that there must be many gay men (and women, and straight folk) who long for the kind of community and intimacy that arise when we gather at Saratoga Springs, Rancho Cicada, St. Dorothy’s Rest, etc.

At our Friendship & Intimacy Gathering this past February, this “outreach” topic caught fire and a few of us began an effort to build partnerships with other local nonprofits. We aimed to team up with these organizations to create “mini-gatherings,” to bring Billy experience and “technologies” like Heartcircle to a wider circle of like-minded men.

The first of these community collaborations occurred this past June when Buzz Bense brought the Billy Foundation and the San Francisco Community Initiative together to co-sponsor and co-plan a mini-gathering that included singing lead by Doug von Koss, a Heartcircle facilitated by Bill Blackburn, and an excellent potluck organized by Steven Cismowski. Some 20 San Franciscans who had not previously experienced our work came into our circle; and some 20 Billys got the chance to meet and engage new friends. Huge thanks to all of you who were involved in creating this June 12th event!

The proof that we can effectively bring our work to a wider world is that the San Francisco Community Initiative has asked the Billys to help produce the sequel! Look for future announcements on Billenet about our second “mini-gathering” in San Francisco this coming October 2nd, the day before the Castro Street Fair.

— and if you know someone in the San Francisco area who secretly longs for a Billy experience, but can’t commit to attending a Gathering, let me know. Once the details about this 10/02 event are finalized, I’m happy to make sure everyone gets the word.

— and if you know a community organization that might be interested in partnering with Billys to create a “mini-gathering” in your neighborhood, please go ahead and sound them out about the idea. I’d be happy to help you make an event in your area come together.

Steve Rockwell

yrockwell@gmail.com
(415) 553-8680

Billys Care

The Billy community was founded on caring about (and for) our brothers. A Billy Care program has recently been formed specifically to address this issue.

The Billys Care Volunteer List is a listing of Billys willing to be contacted when a Billy is in need of assistance in times of personal crisis. The list is freely available to all Billys for the above use only. Our caring could find expression in something simple, like a check-up phone call. Or chicken soup when a Billy is sick, a ride, a grocery trip, help with a doctor appointment, pet sitting or transportation, helping to move, maybe even staying with a patient for a while after returning home — your need, you describe it!

Joe Balestreri is maintaining the list of volunteers. If you’d like to add your name to the volunteer list, make corrections, want a copy of the updated list, or want to request some help, please contact him at amato@sonic.net or (707) 331-0191. People who agree to be placed on the volunteer list are not be obligated to fill any specific requests.

We all know that a healthy community needs to extend beyond the occasional gathering. The world is experiencing tough times right now and Billys open to a request of help from another Billy will strengthen our whole community. The more of us who include our names on the Billys Care Volunteer List, the more likely we’ll be able to come through for a Billy in need and, in turn, that person will more likely be there for another. Please sign up and please spread the word! Ω

THE BILLY TIMES

The Billy Foundation

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What Is Your Passion?

Do you just love to garden? Have you collected every possible form of ceramic frog created? Perhaps your passion is one of music. Do you carve out any possible time to sing, write music, or play an instrument? Maybe your passion is your work; do you get up each morning and rush off to spend your day doing a job you love? Our passions for people, places, experiences, and objects give our lives emotional dimension and texture.

Now think about your passions with respect to the Billys. Do you ever miss a particular gathering? Are Heartcircles your favorite way of self discovery? Perhaps your passion is the connections you make with your Billy brothers. Maybe your passion is coordinating or sub-coordinating a gathering. Maybe your passion is being a Billy and all that it means to you.

The Billys need your passions more now than ever before.

2009 was a great year for support and donations to the Billy Foundation. Because of that support, we came very close to reaching a zero budget deficit, which means we only had to pull a small amount out of our shrinking reserve account to make up the difference. For 2010, we are planning on a balanced budget and it is our hope not to touch the reserves at all. We would like that to become the trend going forward.

Your gifts of support over the years have been wonderful and we hope you will continue to support the organization whenever possible. I thought I would lay out some of the areas where the Billys need your support, and hopefully it will help connect you with an area of your passion for the Billys.

- The Richard Locke Scholarship Fund, aka RLSF – This fund supports anyone who wants to come to a gathering but can't afford all or some of the gathering fees. We want to make sure no one is ever turned away from a gathering because of their inability to pay, yet in recent times, our funds have not been able to meet the increased need.
- Billy Emergency Support Fund – For meeting the essential needs of all Billys and any HIV+ individual in Mendocino, Lake and southern Humboldt counties.
- Billy General Fund – Used to support the Billys in many ways, such as deposits for gathering spaces and gathering cooks, funds for coordinators,

supplies for gathering calls, rosters, and general gathering and office supplies, etc. Gifts to the general fund directly reduce our deficit.

- Gathering Affordability Fund – This fund has been supported through corporate grants. It allowed us to reduce the nightly fee for a gathering or gatherings for anyone who would like to take advantage of the discount.

You might ask, "How can I help?"

Financial support is always welcome. This can be as small as what you can afford. Did you know that you can set the Billy Foundation up on your banking bill pay system and set the payment to automatic? If 200 Billys gave \$5 a month, at the end of the year we would have \$12,000.

Matching funds: If you give a gift to the Billys and work for a company that has a gift matching program, please submit the paperwork as the Billy Foundation is a 501(c)3 and will qualify.

Billy Foundation Board of Directors Scholarship Fund: This fund is used instead of the RLSF to support Billy board members who are unable to attend gatherings due to financial constraints. The Board is now seeking one or more donors who can support this fund.

We can always use your input, as the Billy community belongs to all of us. If you hear of an organization that might be able to financially support the Billys, please let us know.

Other non-financial ways of support are the following:

Create a fundraiser: You could host a big yard sale, an event where the proceeds go to the Billys. You could host a night of Billy entertainment and sell tickets. You could even have an old fashioned Bake Sale.

Recruit new Billys: Every time we are able to exceed the minimum we have set with the venue owner, the more money the foundation will make at a gathering. The new people also bring a wealth of new ideas and excitement to the Billys.

Coordinate or Sub-coordinate a gathering: We are a volunteer organization and we are always in need of the vision, creativity, and ingenuity of our Billys to bring that Billy spark to our gatherings.

Thank you for all your support of the Billys. We hope you will explore your passions for the Billys and find ways to support the organization that also supports you.

Mike Eccles

The Richard Locke Scholarship Fund, aka RLSF, needs you!

(In other words, your Billy Brothers need you.)

Upon the death of Richard Locke, we received a gift of money left to the Billys in Richard's will. This gift was used to begin the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund. The fund was set up to support anyone who could not afford to attend a gathering due to financial constraints – no questions asked. Over the years this fund has made it possible for many Billys to receive all or part of their gathering fees to attend the gathering(s) of their choice.

That original gift from Richard Locke was used up long ago, and each year since then we have relied on the kindness and generosity of the Billys to replenish this fund. In recent times we have seen an upturn of requests for scholarship aid. Sadly, we have also seen a downturn in support for the RLSF fund. For example, the upcoming Labor Day gathering has received requests of support for over \$3000. This gathering only has \$1200 in RLSF funds budgeted to cover these requests. We are rapidly working to bridge this gap, but we need your help.

Every gift you make to RLSF (\$5.00, \$15.00, \$50.00, \$500.00, etc.) goes directly to Billys who need this financial support to attend a gathering.

We know that everyone has experienced some level of belt tightening around the changes in the world's economy in recent years. We ask that if you have anything extra to spare – If you can afford to sponsor one gathering day or any portion of a day for someone – please help.

Now is the time for some of that wonderful Billy magic.

Thank you for your generous support.

To make your gift, write your check to the Billy Foundation with a note to let us know you would like your gift to support the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund. Send your check to:

The Billy Foundation
1100 Coddington Center Suite 3
Santa Rosa, CA 95401-3516

To pay online: <http://www.billyclub.org/donate.html> and click the "Add to Cart" button for the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund. ☺

Billy Foundation Annual Budget April 1, 2010 - March 31, 2011

Each year and over approximately two of its meetings, the board of directors focuses its attention on the budget for the upcoming year.

In estimating the budget, the board must consider many factors. Two critical items are (1) projected attendance at gatherings and (2) estimated donations from the community. Donations are estimated primarily by looking at past trends.

It is important to note that without ongoing financial contributions from the Billy community, we will not succeed in achieving the balanced budget that the following table describes.

Throughout this issue of the Billy Times, we present many ways to contribute to the Billy Foundation. Please be generous when you think about your community.

INCOME		
Gathering Registration Fees	\$100,000.	
Donations	38,000.	
Merchandise, Interest	1,000.	
Total Income		\$139,000.
EXPENSES		
Gathering Facility Rental	\$62,000.	
Payroll, Insurance, Accountant	42,000.	
Meals at Gatherings	21,000.	
Office Rental, Utilities	7,000.	
Gathering Prep	5,000.	
Miscellaneous	2,000.	
Total Expense		\$139,000.

Final Notes on the Budget

INCOME – EXPENSES = \$0.

Balanced Budget for 2010-2011.

Last Year's **Budget**: \$13,000 loss.

Last Year's **Actual**: \$7,000 loss.

Thank you, everyone.

Labor Day 2010 ~
Billy ~ Come Out and Play!

September 2-6, 2010
Rancho Cícada, Plymouth, CA



Come and play.
Come and see who we are.
Come and celebrate our child within.
Come and experience the beauty of our diversity.
Come and share Billy spirit, magic, ritual and
authenticity.
Come for fun, frolic and fabulousness.

Billy – Come Out and Play!

Be in touch with the caring and insightful parts of your inner child. Stimulate your mind and body, explore your issues, be creative and childlike. Connect with the spirit of your inner child and just let yourself have fun.

The last days of summer are good for hammocks and sunsets; the days are unstructured and it's a great time to simply relax. It's a time to be innocent and playful. It's ALSO a time to enliven our community and our time together with our natural desire to share, to trust, to be heartfelt.

Let's include the kid in who we are. We don't stop being adults, we expand who we are to include the kid that we also are. Put on the cape of childhood. Heal your inner child. Share your fears and dreams. Let the magic of your inner kid ignite the gathering.

Let the nature spirits and child spirits play around us!

Let your child within empower all our lives as we express our compassion, generosity, love and respect for each other and ourselves.

Notice: Please bring your drums, flutes and other musical instruments.

Parking at Rancho Cicada is very limited. Carpools are encouraged. We are expecting a full Gathering, so please carpool. If enough people register by August 15th, and let us know that a van to the gathering would help, we will ask for this to happen. This would be a great way to begin the gathering on the way to the site.

This gathering, "Billy – Come Out and Play!" is open to Billys and Billykin. You must pre-register to attend. No drop-ins. Attendees must be 18 or older. No alcohol, no recreational drugs, no pets (except those assisting someone with a disability). This is a camping facility, priority for housing will be reserved for those with special health needs.

From the Heart, Your Gathering Coordinators.

Michael Towne: helltowne@aol.com 510 517-0856

Ken Kunert: kkunert@mac.com 805 720-4528



Sonoma County Welcomes Billys

On August 1, Brian Haley and David Bowes hosted a welcome Open House for the Billy Foundation at their home in Santa Rosa. Invitations were sent to public officials, non-profit organizations, and Billys in the Sonoma County area. The Russian River Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence led a heartfelt blessing that shared the Billy vision and helped establish opportunities for continued partnerships with the Sisters. Thank you *Sister DeManda Refund* for bringing together The Sisters and The Billys!



The Sisters welcome The Billys

Over 40 people showed up for an afternoon of friendly conversation, networking, and good food and drink. Marcus Borgman and Ken Kunert helped plan and prepare for the open house. They indicated that this was an opportunity we couldn't pass up. According to Ken, "Brian and David were so easy to work with. They made this event a great start for the Billy Foundation to build community while pointing to our office in Sonoma County. The Billy vision and mission became visible to organizations and officials that were not aware of who we are or the many ways

we help build community. Next time they see the Billy name, they will remember and be likely to support our community building efforts."

The afternoon presented a chance for Sonoma Billys to talk about how they, as the "local" group of Billys, can help keep the vision alive and get more involved, whether being available to stuff envelopes, organize the Billy supplies, or just stop in the office to meet with other Billys. The partnership with the Sisters will continue to develop and we look forward to expanded partnerships with the community. Ω

Exciting New Opportunity: Guide Upcoming Gatherings!

This opportunity doesn't often come along in the Billy community, so please consider this carefully. We are looking for a Billy to hold the Gathering Portfolio. This is a great chance for you to make your imprint on future Billy gatherings! If you have ever wanted to bring your artistic and/or organizational skills to our fabulous Billy Gatherings, now is the time to step up!

The Gathering Portfolio recruits and supports gathering co-coordinators, giving them creative and logistical support as needed. This is a volunteer position, appointed by the board of directors.

While we have a formal job description [on the web site](#), we encourage you to contact [Ruven Hannah](#), (current Gathering Portfolio holder), Steve Rockwell, (former Gathering Portfolio holder), or the [Billy office](#) for more information. We are looking to fill this position now. Ω

Gathering Schedule

Labor Day

There's still space available!

[Download the registration form](#)

user name: billy
password: heartspace

Halloween

Billys only (Coordinators Needed!!)
Saratoga Springs, Upper Lake, CA
Oct. 28 – 31 (Thursday – Sunday)

New Years (2011)

Billys and Billykin
St. Dorothy's Rest, Camp Meeker, CA
Dec. 29 – Jan. 2 (Wednesday – Sunday)

Monthly Potlucks

Monthly potlucks that are loosely affiliated with the Billys occur in Sonoma County, the East Bay, San Francisco, and Sacramento. To learn more, contact the volunteer keepers of the mail lists directly:

San Francisco: Greg Fry
gregthebarbersf@yahoo.com

Sonoma County: Mike Goldstein
mikegoldst@yahoo.com

East Bay: Alan Oakley
alanoakley-oakley@sbcglobal.net

Sacramento: David Buechler
dbuechler@sbcglobal.net

The Billy Foundation

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Marcus Borgman

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<http://www.billyclub.org>

user name: billy
password: heartspace