

# The Billy Foundation Gathering Manual

The purpose of this manual is to ensure that has everyone involved has a heart centered positive experience that contributes to the overall goals of the Billy Foundation, creating safety and enhancing intimacy as we create experiences for each other with love and integrity. This manual contains best practices, provides insight into overcoming obstacles and helps to ensure that we keep reminding ourselves to have fun and stay heart centered along the way. All are welcome to contribute and edit future editions.

**“It is not the critic who counts;  
not the man who points out how  
the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds  
could have done better. The credit belongs  
to the man who is actually in the arena,  
whose face is marred by dust and sweat  
and blood; who strived valiantly; who  
errs, who comes again and again, because  
there is no effort without error  
and shortcoming; but who does actually  
strive to do the deeds;  
who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions;  
who spends himself in a worthy cause;  
who at the best knows in the end the  
triumph of high achievement,  
and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails  
while daring greatly.”**

– TEDDY ROOSEVELT, 1907

Billy Gathering Manual  
2017 Update by Daniel Mandel

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## Version Information

Version #	Date	Created by	Notes
INITIAL DRAFT	05/02/17	Daniel Mandel based on previous Gathering Manual	Feedback from Kris Shanks and Ken Kunert
1.0	11/14/17	Daniel Mandel	
1.1	1/16/18	Daniel Mandel	Updates provided by Ken Kunert

## Getting Started

### MISSION STATEMENT

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.

<https://thebillys.org/whoweare/#mission>

We are a heart-centered community woven together by values to which we aspire and by our shared experience as gay and bisexual men. We strive to be present and mindful with each other and to foster:

- Compassion, generosity, honesty, and respect for ourselves and for others
- Responsibility for ourselves, to each other & to our community, including to those in need
- A vision of a world built on principles of nonviolence, sustainability, cooperation & service
- Celebration of our sexual and spiritual natures
- A warm welcome to new Billys
- Diversity that embraces differences in race and ethnicity, class, age, body type, HIV status, and physical ability, and also includes gay-identified transmen
- Reverence for nature
- Greater authenticity, bringing out the best in each other and ourselves
- Fun, frolic, and fabulousness
- Commitment to resolving conflict through active engagement
- The building of bridges to other communities that support our mission and share our values

To support our being present with ourselves and each other at our Gatherings, we encourage an environment free of drugs and alcohol.

## The Gathering Council

The Gathering Council is a small group of dedicated, engaged Billys who ensure that at least two General Coordinators are identified for each of our six gatherings. The Gathering Council are the portfolio holders for the Billys and as such are approved by the Board of Directors. The gatherings each year are New Years, MidWinter/Visioning, May Day; July 4th, Labor Day, and Halloween. The Gathering Council provides help and support that we encourage coordinators to utilize, and we meet monthly.

## Resource Coordinator (Billy Office)

**Kris Shanks (707) 545-1044, [office@thebillys.org](mailto:office@thebillys.org)**

The Billys Resource Coordinator (“R.C.”) is at the hub of the Billy organization, and along with the Gathering Council are here to help.

## General Coordinators

General Coordinators (“GCs”) are responsible for “holding” the energies of an entire Gathering within a “big picture” of the event. GCs are the captains of the ship from the launch of the gathering until the final circle and final clean up and walk through are complete! Let’s break it down to the essential important elements.

## Before the Gathering / Planning

- Create a Gathering theme that will bring Billys together in deep, relevant, “juicy” way
- Generate the Gathering’s overall logistical plan:
  - Design a schedule that launches, then grows, and finally grounds group energy
  - Provide a framework for your workshop sub-coordinator to understand the key events like dances, rituals and large group happenings for workshop planning and scheduling
  - Publicize the event, think of this as a Marketing campaign well in advance of the registration deadlines
  - Invite and Identify sub-coordinators and others to build out the vision by managing all the individual events and particular aspects of the Gathering plan

## During the Gathering

- Respond to the Gathering as it unfolds,
- Communicate proactively with sub-coordinators, staff, cooks, Gathering Council and Board members

- Manage logistical issues and keeping energies flowing in a successful direction

## General Information

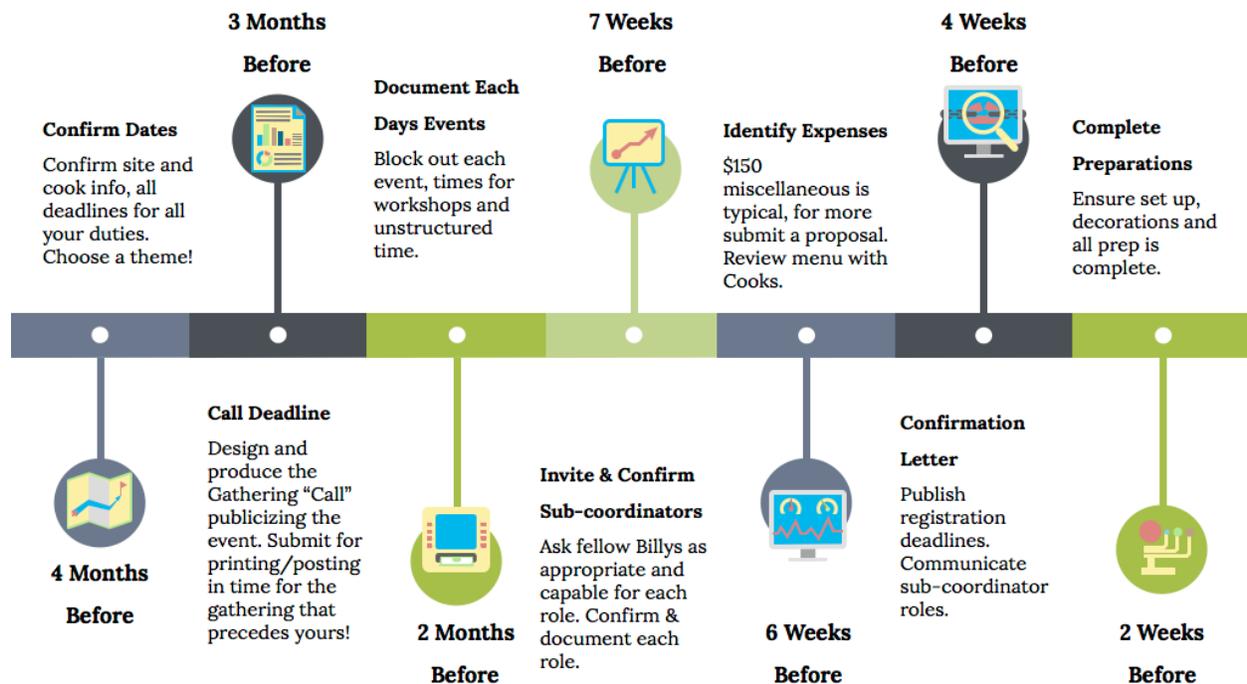
A General Coordinator should be present for all of the Gathering, from the start of site preparation through the end of clean-up. If that proves impossible, make sure someone is present in your stead who fully understands the Gathering plan, schedule and sub-coordinator duties, and who is able and willing to make all necessary ad hoc decisions.

Please seek support when you need it and delegate as many tasks as you can. (It's generally not recommended that Gathering Council members be personally in charge of any Gathering events.) Feel free to engage them in your planning, ask them questions and seek their support as problems arise. They can clarify official policy and traditional procedures, and are happy to brainstorm with you and offer assistance. They can also put you in contact with past coordinators who have used the site or managed activities similar to those you are contemplating.

# TIMELINE:

Billys rely on Gathering Coordinators to complete the tasks outlined below. Acting within the suggested timeframe will allow for maximum publicity and smooth planning of the event, and may be required in order for the Billys to meet its contractual obligations with the site and/or cook. (If you are getting a later start, however, you may need to do many of the initial tasks all at once.)

## Gathering Timeline



## LINES OF COMMUNICATION:

There are many important individuals and groups involved in a successful gathering. It is not uncommon to need to ask a quick question, request a clarification, or seek out some details in order to proceed with any sort of task. As you work your way through this process it is a good idea to think about who needs to know, who must know and who would benefit from knowing each piece of information.

The Billy Foundation Board of Directors contracts for Gathering sites and cooks about a year in advance. Any contract issues that come up should be communicated to the Billy Foundation Board.

Understand the attendance that is expected at your Gathering and the resulting impact on the facilities, the planned events, and the Gathering schedule.

This table is intended to help you navigate your way through these lines of communication.

Remember to delegate tasks where possible and understand each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities.

NOTE: All facility questions should be directed through the Resource Coordinator.

STAKEHOLDERS	Contract Questions	Gathering Questions	Meal / Food	Facility Questions	WorkShop Scheduling	Post Gathering Questionnaire
Board of Directors	X		X			
Gathering Council		X	X		X	X
Resource Coordinator	X	X	X	X		
Facility Contact			X			
Cooks			X			
Sub- Coordinators					X	X
Billys						X

# APPENDIX

The information in this appendix is provided to give you detailed examples, guidelines and useful tools to make your tasks easier. It is important to understand best practices and the way Billys typically handle gatherings. But it is also important to take risks! Give your gifts, and take a chance. Be clear about your intentions. Ask for help along the way. Surprise all of us. Surprise yourself. Transform and delight us!

## GATHERING'S AT A GLANCE

GATHERING	Location	Size	Key Characteristics
New Years	St. Dorothy's Rest / Camp Meeker, CA	Medium averaging 70 people, depending largely on available bed-space.	Primarily indoors this is for both Billys and Billykin (male or female family and friends of any sexual persuasion). Typically there is some form of ritual and dance on New Year's Eve.
Mid-Winter	Saratoga Springs, near Ukiah, CA	Medium-sized for some 70 people is unique in that is traditionally planned by a group of 3-6 core facilitators, who collaborate on a Gathering where all activities revolve around a central theme, attendants are expected to participate from the start of the Gathering through its conclusion. For Billys only (gay/bi/queer men or transmen). Note: Visioning Retreats are open to Billy and Billy Kin.	Honoring the pensive moments before Spring when the ice is about to crack, this time is set aside for facilitated, deep, theme-oriented experiences where new territory can be explored and mindfulness and soul searching can occur. Enjoy the opportunity to engage with like-minded men on a challenging topic that has broad impact on our lives.
May Day	Saratoga Springs, near Ukiah, CA	Large 4- or 5-day Gathering attendance up to 120 people, around 85 in beds and the remainder tenting. Weather is unpredictable but both indoor and outdoor activities are usually planned. A longstanding feature of this Gathering is some form of May Pole ritual. Billys and Billykin (male and female family and friends) of any sexual persuasion are welcome.	With the return of warm weather and the renewal of life – and our primordial hope that plants and the planet reawaken from dormancy, thereby allowing us to live -- May Day themes revolve around daybreak, sap rising, spring flowers, childlike faery wonder, the earth, the potent pole, adolescence and falling in love. Create and appreciate all this beauty! Enjoy rediscovering the physical world through the use of our bodies.

GATHERING	Location	Size	Key Characteristics
July 4th	Saratoga Springs, near Ukiah, CA	Our largest Gathering and it may last for up to 10 days (confirm contract) and have daily attendance of up to 185 people (85 in beds and the rest tenting). Hot weather, outdoor events, poolside activities and nudity abound. This is a Gathering for Billys (gay/bisexual men or transmen) only.	Mid-summer we celebrate the abundance of our world, our sense of belonging, the glory of basking in the sun with the best of friends. Themes build on the outdoors, high noon, heat, sexuality, manhood, joining of the tribe, reunion of friends, showing art & sharing talents. Rediscover and arouse your sense of play!
Labor Day	Held at different locations. In 2016 at Groundswell Center and Ecovillage, Yorkville, CA	Usually only as long as the 3-day holiday weekend. Smaller rustic Gathering with an attendance about 60 people. Weather is usually hot, outdoor events and nudity abound. Note: Although limited to 60 people in the past, at either Saratoga or Groundswell this is becoming a larger gathering of up to 100+ people. It is open to both Billys and Billy Kin. It is a 4 day event.	Last days of summer are good for hammocks, sunsets, and letting go. Days growing shorter, time is too dear to be structured. Swim in a river, share long conversations and read a good book under a tree.
Halloween	Saratoga Springs, near Ukiah, CA	Halloween is a large 4- or 5-day Gathering (attendance up to 120 people, around 85 in beds and the rest tenting). We relish the unpredictable weather, planning some outdoor activities as well as a great costume dance. For Billys (gay/bi/queer men or transmen) only.	Celebrate the darkening of the year; explore the thin veil between ourselves, our ancestors and those to come – focus on how communal ritual can bring us into deeper empowerment. Halloween explores the fullness of autumn, moonrise, the journey through the hole, emotions, loss, rain, the masque and mature adulthood.



## TIMELINE DETAILS

### Gathering Call

#### Due: 3 Months before

The gathering call is necessary for publicizing the event. The language for the first two pages of the call, including any artwork, must be laid out in final form (see CREATING A GATHERING CALL section). Submit these pages to the R.C. early enough that both proofreading and printing can occur in time for the Call to be handed out at the Gathering before yours.

### Timetable of Events / Workshops

#### Due: 2 Months before

Create a timetable for each Gathering day that blocks out when the key events will occur as well as times for workshops and space for unstructured “down” time. Gatherings generally begin with the potluck dinner on the first night, and end after lunch on the last day. Identify the key events that will need a sub-coordinator to plan and organize them. Remember to allow for change, and be flexible!

#### Gatherings should include the following events:

- Dinner (First night of Gathering)
- Opening circle to launch the Gathering (First night of Gathering)
- Theme ritual to launch the theme and its events (Choose an evening early in the Gathering)
- Daily Heart Circles (Usually in the mornings)
- Billy 101 (Saturday to include weekenders; but during a meal has not worked well)
- Community Circle (Right after lunch but not on prime Saturday)
- Culminating event/ritual (For maximum number of participants)
- Cleaning Circle (Last day to announce cleaning teams)
- Closing circle to ground group before leaving (Before lunch on the final day)

#### Event Location

Planning locations can be a puzzle. Be sure to understand any timing or logistical dependencies for a smooth experience. Does your event need a lot of room or a little room? Any special equipment? Any food or special desserts planned? Is the sequence of events important? What will you do if it rains? Where will the rituals be? The heart circles? The workshops? Billy Boutique?

## General Preparation and Planning

What materials, preparation and participation will the planned events require? The more you can plan in advance the more successful your gathering will be. Do you need to set aside a weekend for build party to make decorations, costumes or focus on rituals? Put yourself in the position of a new Billy experiencing the gathering. What about a long time Billy? What about a shy Billy?

**SET UP:** Do you require special set up required by your theme? Do you anticipate decorations, or signage needs? What is the experience like as participants arrive? How will you welcome each Billy?

## Invite Sub-coordinators

### Due: 7 Weeks before

Begin inviting sub-coordinators who are capable of managing the operational aspects of the Gathering (like Registration) or organizing the key events you have planned (like the rituals or Talent/No Talent Show). (See Appendix 4, and sections 2-18.)

**IMPORTANT TIP:** Find Ride Share, Talent/No Talent Show and Workshop coordinators immediately, so that contact information for these people can be included in the confirmation letter. (The R.C. will send you Gathering roster updates so you can contact registrants to fill vacant sub-coordinator positions– but don't wait as you'll want your sub-coordinators to begin planning their activities as early as possible.)

Ask the GC about each person you intend to contact to be a sub-coordinator, in order to take advantage of the Billys institutional memory of their talents and capabilities.

Get a mix of people: those who are elders in the Billy community, those who have never coordinated before, those who have been recently involved in Gatherings, and those who have not attended in a while.

Contact people early in order to encourage them to attend the Gathering:

Give each sub-coordinator an overview of your expectations about their role and responsibilities. The clearer they are on what they need to achieve, the fewer problems will arise and the less you will get pulled into resolving last-minute "situations".

Talk to each potential sub-coordinator about their attendance plans. Ideally, select sub-coordinators who will attend the entire Gathering and be present in person for the set-up, continuity and clean-up of their area of concern.

It's vital that the following subcoordinators get to the Gathering site early, before registrants are expected to arrive. If your first choice for one of these positions can't be there at the start, it's best to find someone else. Problems occur when the person "in the know" isn't there to do their work.

Housing	Kitchen Queen	Registration	Volunteer Coordinator
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The following subcoordinators need to stay through the end of the last day of the Gathering until all clean-up has occurred.

Dish Dude	Kitchen Queen	Site Restoration	Volunteer Coordinator
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## Identify Gathering Expenses

### Due: 6 Weeks before

Each Gathering is currently allocated a total of \$150 for miscellaneous expenses by the GCs and sub-coordinators. If you anticipate necessary expenses exceeding \$150, submit a proposal (indicating the expenditure need and the cost) to the R.C. no later than 6 weeks before the Gathering so that he can have time to submit the request to the Board for approval at a monthly Board meeting. Expenses above \$150 that are not pre-approved will not be reimbursed.

From time to time, Gathering teams have used their allocation to rent a van/truck to convey supplies. The Billy Foundation carries insurance with liability/property damage coverage to any vehicle receiving damage by such a rented van/truck, however it does not cover the rental vehicle or the driver.

## Confirm Cook's Meal Schedule

(The R.C. can provide you with the cook's contact information and the planned menu.)

Though mealtimes may be altered, they are typically:

Breakfast 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Lunch 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Dinner 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Late Night Dessert Ad Hoc
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At Gatherings with attendance over 120 (i.e., July), lunches and/or dinners may need to be simplified and/or served cold in order to fit this time schedule.

Discuss any special food events, like a late night dessert for a Talent/No Talent Show, a poolside barbecue, art show hors d'oeuvres, afternoon tea, etc.

The last day of the gathering has special considerations for the final lunch meal. Nothing should be cooked for this meal to ensure a rapid easier clean up. To go containers should be made available to facilitate reuse of left overs. Paper plates also ensure that the final dish cleanup will occur with the breakfast meal. Some dishes still will need to be cleaned following lunch, so plan for that.

## Confirmation Letter

### Due: 4 Weeks before

Create a confirmation letter (per Appendix 5) and submit it to the R.C. for proofreading, printing and mailing. You should have Ride Share and Workshop sub-coordinators in place and include their contact information in the letter.

Put out a registration reminder on all appropriate communication channels encouraging people to register by the deadlines. Register yourself, and remind your sub-coordinators to register on time.

## Communication Channels

1. The Website: <https://thebillys.org> This is the official Billy Foundation website.
2. The Yahoo group list serve (also an unofficial channel) known as BilleNet: [billenet@yahoogroups.com](mailto:billenet@yahoogroups.com)
3. The official Billy Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BillyFoundation/>
4. The unofficial Billy Facebook group (Howard Grant's the creator / moderator): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/149504775092169/>
5. The official email Newsletter called the Billy Bulletin: <https://thebillys.org/contact/>
6. The SF Billy potluck yahoo group list serve: [billy-potluck@yahoogroups.com](mailto:billy-potluck@yahoogroups.com)
7. The Billy YouTube channel can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/BillyFoundation/featured>
8. As of 2012 The Billy Foundation is also on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/BillyFoundation>

## Communicate Sub-coordinator List

Send your final confirmed list to the R.C. and GC team. Make sure to identify how you wish to use your administrative scholarship nights and lottery exemptions (see “Coordinator Perks”, above). Send the final list of sub-coordinators out to all of your sub-coordinators, so that they can be in contact with each other.

## Housing / Scholarship / Lottery Deadline

### Due: 3 Weeks before

The R.C. will send some sub-coordinators (Dish Dude, Housing, Ride Share, Safety/First Aid, Site Fluffing, Site Restoration, Workshops, etc.) the names and contact information for registrants who have special needs or have offered help. The R.C. will also send the Registration coordinator a Gathering roster which details registrant arrival times.

## Ritual Planning

Meet with the Ritual coordinator and necessary participants to discuss the Gathering rituals and their part in the overall flow and theme of the weekend.

## Sub-coordinator Check In

Contact your other subcoordinators to make sure they are on track to accomplish their tasks. If they want to talk with people who had their job at previous Gatherings, the Gathering Portfolio holder can provide contacts.

## Final Registration Deadline

### Due: 2 Weeks before

Hold a sub-coordinators meeting before the Gathering to check in about how things are going and uncover any potential problems. Use this as an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss the theme, rituals and overall plan for the weekend so that everyone is working in alignment. Meeting face-to-face may generate new ideas and talking through the specifics of each planned activity may bring awareness to gaps in planning and help people coordinate their efforts. You may want to meet with your sub-coordinators at key points in the gathering as well. Make sure to note the following at your meeting:

Each sub-coordinator is responsible for getting all of his/her supplies to the site. By the time of the meeting, each sub-coordinator should be able to identify all their supply needs. (Sub-coordinators may use this meeting to collaborate on transport of identified supplies from the Billy office.)

The Volunteer coordinator and each sub-coordinator should ensure their volunteer needs are met within those registered for the gathering. Good communication and coordination with the Registrar are important! At the Gathering, each sub-coordinator is responsible for problems caused by no-show volunteers. Many Billys will rely on the schedule put out in the confirmation letter or on the Welcome Sheet, so make sure that sub-coordinators delegate work and plan for more volunteers than they think necessary in order to minimize any delay caused by unexpected problems.

Each sub-coordinator is personally responsible for clean up of any part of the site that was used for their area of concern, packing up their supplies, and removing their supplies from the site. Due to space concerns, only supplies that originated from the Billy office should be returned there. All other supplies should be taken home for personal reuse or to be trashed. Supplies returned to the Billy office must be packaged in the same containers in which they were stored prior to the Gathering (to avoid the need for post-Gathering inventory).

## Prepare Welcome Sheet

### Due: 1 Weeks before

Prepare the Welcome Sheet (Appendix 6) to note the Gathering schedule and anything else registrants will need to know upon their arrival. Send the edited document to the R.C., who will make copies to put in the Registration Supply box (for Registration to hand out at the Gathering). Feel free to change the artwork and format of the sheet.

### At the Gathering

**Hold a sub-coordinators check-in meeting** on the first day of the Gathering to see how set-up is going. Praise everyone for their work. A brief heart circle will help your sub-coordinators arrive in Billy space, drop their “planning” baggage and feel connected to the site, to the group, and to the theme. It will help start the magic.

**Lead the First Dinner Circle.** Welcome everyone to the site and introduce site staff and the sub-coordinators. Make clear that smoking is restricted to the “smoking pavillion”, and that all cars must be removed to the parking lot due to fire department rules. Announce the events for the evening and next day, and invite everyone to Heart Circle next morning.

**Lead an Opening Circle.** Don’t create a complex ritual but provide a simple way to bring everyone together into community and “launching” the Gathering. Something light, fun and participatory works wonders to mingle people and get energy flowing.

**Be present at the entire Gathering to oversee things and trouble-shoot.** Continually thank and appreciate the individuals who are volunteering to make the Gathering happen (especially your sub-coordinators). Be prepared for glitches, they won't ruin the Gathering. You have a great community behind you. Trust Billy magic to make it all work out.

**Lead all meal circles.** Keep your personal schedule clear before meal time, so you are available to ring the bell and start the meal circle 15 minutes before the meal is ready to be served. Announce the events for the evening and next day, and emphasize the importance of Heart Circles for our community. The Volunteer Coordinator should thank the meal preparers and dishwashers by name, and solicit any gaps in volunteer signups. Ride Share may solicit rides for anyone headed home. *All announcements should be brief, so that the entire circle lasts no more than 15 minutes.* (At Saratoga Springs, meal circles should occur by the bell and away from the main lodge, as the kitchen fans make it difficult for people close to the lodge to hear announcements.) Ensure that a cook's tip jar is labeled, placed prominently and announced, usually on the most populated day of the gathering.

**Hold a sub-coordinators check-out meeting** a day before the Gathering is over. Make sure everyone understands the clean-up they need to accomplish and has a plan for getting the work done and their supplies taken off site. Thank everyone for their efforts in creating the Gathering.

**Lead the final Dinner Circle.** Try to make this the final moment for Gathering-related announcements. Give thanks to everyone who helped put the Gathering together. Thank all sub-coordinators and anyone who made some other special contribution (such as the cook); thank everyone who came and participated and volunteered at the event.

**Lead the Closing Circle** before lunch on the final day of the Gathering. Note that we are re-entering the everyday world after having been opened and made vulnerable by Gathering intimacy and sharing. Encourage people to remain in contact with each other and keep engaged in our development as individuals and as a community. If the directions were called at the beginning of the Gathering, call them again to let them go. Ground the group energy with a simple silent way to acknowledge other. Then verbally mark the Gathering's official end.

**Assist with Site Restoration.** Although the sub-coordinators will be responsible for returning Lost and Found items to the Billy Office and generally cleaning up the site, the GCs should have a sense of how the final clean-up goes and assist as necessary.

**Final Site Walk Through.** The General Coordinators should be present for a final walk through with facility staff to look through and document any site damage that may have occurred. It is a good idea to take notes and report back on any damage, irregularity or concerns to the R.C..

## Wrap Up: Public / Private Thank You

### Due: 1 Weeks after

Send a public thanks out on all appropriate communication channels in appreciation of your sub-coordinators and all the Gathering participants. Send personal thanks to your sub-coordinators and anyone else who contributed to the Gathering.

Submit a wrap-up report to the Gathering Portfolio holder so that the Billy Foundation can learn about your experience and take advantage of what you learned to improve future Gatherings. You might include: your theme; your call, publicity, attendance; welcome/ emotional support; registration & housing; the Gathering site itself, housekeeping, set-up and tear-down; food/ food prep/dishes, beverages & snacks; volunteer system; ritual; heart circle; workshops; talent/ no talent show; special events; Billy Boutique; this Gathering; and anything else that should be brought to our attention.

Submit receipts for expenses to the R.C. for reimbursement.

*Though everyone has dispersed from the Gathering back to their homes in far flung places, know that the Billy community truly appreciates your service and work as a coordinator. Thank you.*

## Important Administrative & Financial Planning:

Because Gathering housing and food costs are pegged to the number of people attending the Gathering, attendance is closely tracked. All coordinators, sub-coordinators and special event organizers of a Gathering must be officially registered prior to the housing/scholarship/lottery deadline, and must pay the Gathering registration fees or apply for scholarships. Note, though, that the Board has approved the following exceptions:

**Administrative Scholarships.** Two General Coordinators may receive scholarship for each night of the Gathering. These Administrative Scholarships are for the length of the gathering for Co-Coordinationators to use as they see fit. You may use these scholarship nights yourself or allocate them to sub-coordinators to use. Let the R.C. know how you wish to allocate these scholarship nights, before the housing/scholarship/lottery deadline for the Gathering.

**Lottery Exemptions.** The GCs and all sub-coordinators (up to a maximum of 20 people) are exempted from any registration lottery and guaranteed spots at the Gathering. Let the R.C. know how many exemptions you will need and who to give them to, before the housing/scholarship/lottery deadline. This includes the members of the BOD as well.

If they include the minimum deposit, the R.C. will process paper registration forms, and registrations emailed via the website, in the order they are received in the office. Phone or fax registrations are not accepted.

**Note about the housing/scholarship/lottery deadline date:** If fewer registrations than the capacity for the Gathering have been received, all complete registrations will be accepted, scholarships will be granted to the extent possible, and indoor housing requests will be passed on to the Housing coordinator. If more registrations than the capacity have been received, a lottery will occur and a waiting list created. After the housing/scholarship/lottery deadline, registrations will be accepted (and housing allocated) if there is room, otherwise registrants will be placed on a waiting list. After the final registration deadline, the R.C. may still accept late registrations (1) once all waiting list registrants have been admitted, (2) if no scholarship is involved, (3) if there is housing capacity at the site, (4) if the cook can accommodate additional participants, and (5) upon payment of late registration fees. This is not an additional fee but rather an increase in cost.

## OVERVIEW OF RECENT GATHERING THEMES

### Choosing a Theme

While Billy Gatherings are neither therapy nor support groups, they tend to be transformational moments for most people, a time of growth through being seen/heard/ touched, sharing, contact with nature, silence, learning, doing new things, drag, community service, etc. Make your Gathering the type of Gathering you'd personally like to go to. Imagine the look and feel of the event. Brainstorm on the activities that could occur that would support the theme.

Grand Pilgrimage	New Years	2003/04	Heartwood Institute	John "Big Franny" Foley & Ian Signer
Journey to Calamus	Mid-Winter	2004	Saratoga Springs	Beast WillAm (William Bacon) & Richard Applegate
Beltane 2004	May Day	2004	Saratoga Springs	David Hollander & Jan Johansson
Music and Laughter	July 4th	2004	Saratoga Springs	Wingate Greathouse & Rick Hansen
Last Splash of Summer	Labor Day	2004	Camp & Sons	Daniel "Panda" Driessche
Behind the Mask	Halloween	2004	Saratoga Springs	Bruce MacDonald, George Anthony & J.M. Rodriguez
Celebrating Unity in Community	New Years	2004/05	Heartwood Institute	Joe Arcangelini & Richard Evans
Let's Frolic Anyway	May Day	2005	Saratoga Springs	Mike Goldstein, Greg Fry & Jim Stockton
Gathering of Hearts	July 4th	2005	Saratoga Springs	Mark Hoffheimer & Ruven Hannah
Ready . . . or not	Labor Day	2005	Camp & Sons	Jim Williams & Fred Winter
Rituals in the Space Between Time	Halloween	2005	Saratoga Springs	Steve Rockwell, Bill Blackburn, Ed Wolf, Fred Fishman, Michael Starkman, Ruel Walker, Scott Marley & Steve Cismowski
Telling Our Tales	New Years	2005/06	Heartwood Institute	Scott Marley
Canvas of Dreams	Mid-Winter	2006	Saratoga Springs	George Anthony with Gregory Rowe
Scattering Seed	May Day	2006	Saratoga Springs	Scott Marley & Jim Williams
Loving Communication	July 4th	2006	Saratoga Springs	David Carroll with Joe Arcangelini
End of Summer Frolic	Labor Day	2006	Camp & Sons	Sean Brient
Heart-Centered Inspiration	Visioning Retreat	2006	Brooktrails Lodge	John Cwiakala & Bill Blackburn
Pirate Party	Halloween	2006	Saratoga Springs	Scott Marley & Steve Rockwell, with Nature
Time Trek – The Journey of Life	New Years	2006/07	Heartwood Institute	Mike Goldstein & J.M. Rodriguez

# CREATING A GATHERING CALL

The Call is usually printed two-sided on 11" x 17" lightly colored paper, thus creating four pages of text. General Coordinators should design and lay out pages 1 and 2 (as below) and e-mail them as a PDF to the Resource Coordinator at office@thebillys.org. Once a draft has been created, the R.C. will send the pages to the Gathering Portfolio holder and/or others for proofreading and get back to you with any questions.

**Page 1.** This cover page of the Call is designed and formatted by the general coordinators. It includes the following information:

Gathering Name, with additional words such as "Billy New Years Gathering 2006/2007"	Gathering Dates	Site Location (i.e., Heartwood Institute, Garberville, California)	Theme Statement & Creative Artwork
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**Page 2.** Reserved for the GCs to lay out their vision of the Gathering. It includes any special information that people registering should be made aware of. (EXAMPLE: Halloween 2005 where attendees were alerted to an all-night drumming ritual and the coordinator's preference that people not arrive on Saturday.)

**Additionally, include the following key information** (using your own words): Specify whether this is Gathering is for "Gay/Bisexual Men and Transmen" or if it is also "Open to Billykin." You must be pre-registered to attend. No drop-ins. Attendees must be 18 or older. No alcohol, no recreational drugs, no pets (except those assisting the blind or deaf). Camping is encouraged. Priority for indoor housing is given to those with special health needs. Car pooling is urged as a way to conserve resources and connect with other Billys.

**NOTE:** The registration form does ask if you need or can provide a ride. The form doesn't adequately explain that a ride is not guaranteed. Some gatherings have dropped participants due to lack of rides.

**Page 3.** This page is provided by the R.C. It holds the registration form, scholarship application and registration deadlines, refund policy and liability release. Talk with the R.C., however, about any special registration concerns unique to your Gathering.

**Page 4.** This page is also provided by the R.C. It contains general information about registration fees, the lottery, the Food Policy, Scholarship Policy, the Gathering roster, and a brief description of the Billys and its mission.

Once the final version of the Call has been agreed upon, the R.C. will have the Call printed and mailed, distributed electronically to the email list, and placed on the Billys website.

## SUB-COORDINATOR ROSTER

	Name	Telephone	E-mail
General Coordinator			
General Coordinator			
Billy Boutique			
Dish Dude			
Heart Circle			
Housekeeping			
Housing			
Kitchen Queen			
Registration			
Ride Share			
Ritual			
Safety/First Aid			
Site Fluffing			
Site Restoration			
Snacks & Beverages			
Talent/No Talent Show			
Welcome/Emotional Support			
Billy Buddy			
Workshops			
Billy Office/Resource	Kris Shanks	(707) 462-0766	<a href="mailto:office@thebillys.org">office@thebillys.org</a>
Cook			

# GUIDELINES FOR A CONFIRMATION LETTER

## **Confirmation & Welcome:**

Let people know they made it into the Gathering and that, unless they received a phone call from the Billy office, they received the scholarship they requested.

Remind them of the Gathering site, days and dates, and the Gathering start and end times.

Thank those who have volunteered to help with set-up, transport and tear-down and tell them they'll be contacted.

People cancelling their registration need to contact the Billy Office ASAP in order to maximize their refund and provide space for another Billy.

Graphically set apart each of the following sections from the rest of the letter text. Many of us skim these letters, so highlighting these sections may help communicate the information.

## **What To Expect at the Gathering:**

Specify that Gatherings require each participant to pitch in and help with meal preparation, clean-up, or other duties. Having a volunteer spirit and friendly attitude will go a long way.

Announce if a Billy 101 seminar will occur. These are opportunities to meet people in a comfortable, intimate setting and ask any questions you have: How can I better experience this Gathering? Are other Billy events coming up? How the group is organized? How did the Billys come to be? What values characterize the Billy community?

Include the Gathering schedule, so that people can plan to arrive in time for meals or other events. Note how long it takes to drive to the site (3½ hours to Saratoga Springs from San Francisco).

Getting to the Gathering: (directions and map to the site will be included by the Resource Coordinator)

Remind people that drivers are needed. Ask everyone to contact the Ride Share coordinator if they can offer a ride. Passengers willing to accommodate themselves to whatever is available will increase their chances of getting a ride.

Encourage people to create a workshop. Have them contact the Workshop coordinator.

Encourage people to create a Talent/No Talent Show act. Acts must be no longer than 5 minutes, and will be limited to one song. Let them know where the show will take place (inside/outdoors).

**Important contact information (phone and/or email):**

General Coordinators	Ride Share Coordinator	Talent / No Talent Show Coordinator	Workshop Coordinator
Gathering Site telephone (Saratoga Springs office – (707) 275-9303)	Gathering Site telephone (Saratoga Springs office – (707) 275-9303)	CalTrans’s road conditions number – for touch tone phones: (800) 427-7623 - toll free	Billy Office - (707) 462-0766 - <a href="mailto:office@thebillys.org">office@thebillys.org</a>

**What to Bring:**

- \_\_\_ Bedding (if applicable)
- \_\_\_ Towel
- \_\_\_ Toiletries, Sunscreen
- \_\_\_ Tent & decor
- \_\_\_ Flashlight & batteries
- \_\_\_ Snack to share at the Snack Table
- \_\_\_ Healthy snacks to contribute to the snack table
- \_\_\_ Clothing: layers for warmth, special “ritual wear”, drag, etc.
- \_\_\_ Medications with a few days extra supply
- \_\_\_ Something special to add “extra” to the Gathering

**Do Not Bring:** recreational drugs, alcohol, pets, or fireworks.

## WELCOME SHEET EXAMPLE TEXT

*Here's a challenge:* Discover what treasure may be had by spending a good moment with each of the following members of our Gathering community: a person you think has radically different interests than you; someone whose state of health is different from yours; someone you are not remotely attracted to sexually; a man who you feel superior or inferior to; a person of another race; a person of a greatly different chronological age; a person from a different economic strata; a man who you otherwise feel would be impossible to relate to; **and to you New Billy, Welcome!**

We're glad you are here! We hope you will be able to attend Billy 101 (an orientation to the Billys) or a pod group, and invite you to be part of each morning's heart circle – as many of us feel that is this ritual that creates and defines our community. (See the back side of this page for the weekend schedule.) If you have questions, or just want to check in, most Billys are warmly open to learning about you and talking about their experiences.

Still, every one of us has had ups and downs at Gatherings and we've all felt "alone in a crowd" at times. This feeling can be especially pronounced if you're new to the community. It's fine to take time for yourself; you don't have to do everything. But if you're feeling lonely or on edge, look for one of our Welcome/Emotional Support coordinators. These people have dedicated themselves to being available this Gathering to make everyone feel at home and to give assistance through moments of emotional difficulty. If you get ill or develop physical problems, we have a first aid kit and a Safety/First Aid professional available to provide help.

As a community, we aim to bring gay, bisexual, and gay trans men (and our friends) together around heart and openness, breaking the patterns of distance and wariness that sometimes characterize modern life. We try our best to establish safety in our connections, yet realize that we are each individually in charge of our own boundaries. We're living and learning, and trying out best.

Your energy and insight are important gifts to the Billy community. Thank you for bringing your unique self here to be with us. We're excited about the opportunity to begin to get to know you, to welcome you in, and to grow a new friendship.

## GATHERING SCHEDULE EXAMPLE

We'll attempt to keep on the same schedule each day, to make it easy to plan your time. If you're new to an activity it may be particularly helpful to show up before the starting time so that you can be sure to catch any explanatory or preparatory instructions.

7:00	Yoga/Meditation (Optional)	<i>HEART LODGE</i>	informal daily practice
8:30	Breakfast	Main Lodge	<i>(hopefully, coffee available by 6:30)</i>
10:00	Heart Circle	<i>HEART LODGE</i>	Depending on size of gathering smaller breakout heart circles should be suggested
12:30	Lunch Circle	Main Lodge	Sunday: Closing Circle before Lunch and AFTER clean up is complete!
1:00-6:00	Workshops	(various locations)	Community Circle and Billy101
6:30	Dinner Circle	Main Lodge	
8:30	Evening Events	Thurs. Main Lodge Fri. --- <i>HEART LODGE</i> Sat. -- <i>HEART LODGE</i>	-- Opening Circle Welcome & Introductions -- Theme Ritual -- Talent/No Talent Show

A bell will be rung 10 minutes prior to meals and 10 minutes prior to the start of each circle. A second bell will be rung 20 minutes into each meal to signal the start of meal clean-up. Other events will take place without forewarning.

**Billy 101** is an easy comfortable orientation to how Billys came to be, how the Gatherings run, and information about the organization and annual events. New Billys please join us! Please do your best to schedule as a workshop slot, as scheduling during a meal has not worked well.

**A Community Circle** for everyone to get updated about recent Billy events and to give input for the future of the Billys and Billy events, will be held Friday right after lunch.

A rideboard (for noting rides needed or offered) will be posted on the Main Lodge porch. A lost & found and first aid kit will be kept just inside the porch doors.

Schedule changes will be announced at the circles before meals.