

Billy Club Re-Visioning Retreat
Camp Gualala, CA
Oct. 1-3, 2004

Summary Report

The retreat was attended by 33 Billies and Billy-Kin. The opening ceremony was held on Friday, Oct. 1 and an overview of the weekend was presented.

Heroically facilitated, pro bono, by **Paul Connolly**, to whom we owe profound thanks!
Co-organizers: Fred Rabidoux and **Jim Burke**, deserving our great appreciation
Heartfully cooked and catered to, pro bono!, by **Burt Cohen**, with our deep gratitude!
Participants: Thank you, each and all!

Retreat Goals were identified as:

- 1) Understand where the Billy Club has been and how it is doing now.
 - a. History recognized as a solid foundation to build upon
 - b. Current understanding of the Foundation's finances
- 2) Clarify where the Billy Club wants to go in the future and how to get there -- articulate a vision for the future.
- 3) Work together to solve some immediate pressing problems
 - a. Improve communication between the Board and the membership
 - b. Address website issue
 - c. Improve our financial position, including a look at gathering fees, grants, and other potential sources of revenue.
- 4) Enlist new people to lead the organization
 - a. Tap into positive energy about the future prospects of the Billy Club
 - b. Recruit volunteers to meet short-term needs in the office and on committees
 - c. Identify/recruit new board members

Strengths that have helped the Billy Club to adapt in the past:

Heart Circles, high quality people, networking, camaraderie and fun, relationships, heart big enough for outside issues, diversity, inclusivity, sense of possibilities, etc.

Suggestions on strengthening the Board:

- Submit Board meeting agenda items early
- Identify new Board members soon
- Address barriers to serving, such as using available technologies to help people participate in meetings from different locations
- Identify a liaison between Board and community
- Distribute Board meeting minutes more timely and widely
- Publish Billy Times quarterly
- Recognize volunteers and tap them for service
- Maintain contact with Board Elders for advice
- Be welcoming of community guests attending Board meetings
- Create a "Volunteerism" portfolio
- Create an Ombudsman position

- Examine the issue of “perks” for Board members (currently one scholarship annually)
- Recruit Board members under 40
- Improve communication to community
- Develop a Board manual

Potential new volunteer members for the Board:

George Bailey, Charlie Seltzer, Marty Dooley, Wessie Russell, Mike Goldstein, Bill Blackburn, John Cwaikala, Ruven Hannah, William Bacon, Paul Mueller.

Participants were reminded that the Billy Club is owned by the Community, not the Board.

Qualities desired in Future Staff and Volunteers:

- Greater capacity with computer and accounting systems
- Full time employment (if budget allows) paying a livable wage, and benefits
- Compassionate presence in Billy Office
- Maintain high quality relationships with Gathering Coordinators & Portfolio holders
- Individual should participate in the local community and attend Billy gatherings
- Excellent communication skills and be highly motivated
- Available in Billy Office more frequently
- Utilize improved communication methods (i.e. web site postings) to facilitate dissemination to community

Develop the position of Volunteer Coordinator

- Maintain a “drop in center” presence in Ukiah (possibly with outside funding)
- Develop working relationship with other Ukiah area gay/lesbian groups

Outreach Discussion

Considerable interest exists in developing greater outreach; particularly by utilizing a web site. It could provide a community library and facilitate the dissemination of information from Billy Office to the community. It could be set up with a “passive” exterior site for outreach and a password-protected site for “inreach.” The issue of outreach, however, has been controversial in the past due to concerns about losing our community’s cohesiveness and/or security issues regarding web access. We had an impromptu heartcircle Saturday evening on this issue that was a highpoint of the weekend for many of those who attended; were able to deeply hear each others' concerns and come to CONSENSUS on ways to move forward!!! The deep listening of the heartcircle was seen as a major revelation in how to resolve difficult issues. And it was decided to create more outreach, including a web presence, while carrying the concerns of our community’s integrity into the design process.

Web Site Issues and Concerns:

- Password protection – does it work? -- and cost of software.
- Are password protected sites searchable (by Google)?

- Must have written permission before publishing any person's photo.
- The Billy Club needs fresh energy, new ideas, and new members would bring these to us.
- Gathering Calls and registrations could be put up on a web site, and reduce mailing and processing costs.
- It could also be used to disseminate historical as well as current information.
- It would be an asset in reaching new, younger people.
- "What are we afraid of? NAMBLA has more visibility than we do!"
- We need to have parallel information for those who don't have computers.

Other Outreach Opportunities

- Co-gatherings with like-minded communities in other parts of the state, or who have spiritual, rural, heart-centered, environmental focus...
- Sponsor local gay / queer events.
- Invite other groups to our gatherings.
- Seed other Billy-like organizations in other areas of California and the country.
- Encourage more word-of-mouth outreach.

Vision for 2008: Common Themes

In small groups, we were led in an exploration of our collective visions for the Billy community over the next four years. The following common themes arose.

- Still thriving after all these years!
- Financial health and stability
- Philanthropy: both incoming prosperity and outgoing ability to impact the world
- Model is replicated, having wide impact
- Gatherings remain affordable
- Values remain strong: learning, humor, personal empowerment, spirituality, inclusivity, heart-centeredness ...
- Land—place and home
- Cradle-to-grave connection in Billy Club with openness to new blood
- Flexibility and growth
- Community empowerment: *We own* the Billy Club!

Next Steps Following this Retreat

- Charlie Seltzer to investigate grants for social services.
- Board to consider sharing Billy Office space in cost cutting measure.
- Scholarship review committee should finalize recommendations to the Board.
- Investigate 501(c)3 scholarship administration issues.
- Annual fundraiser and matching fund should be undertaken in November; incorporating approaches to individual donors, specifying intended use of money, encourage full participation in giving.
- Board to review Web Site issue in November with intention that a "public" page be developed for outside inquiries and a "private," passworded page be developed for members. Andrew Adams volunteered to be the Webmaster.
- Board to re-evaluate the position of Resource Coordinator

Parking Lot items never gotten to:

- Develop process for mediation at various meetings/gatherings.
- Question of purchasing land.
- Benefit of “donations” rather than higher registration fees.
- Board / Community communication.
- Address scholarship hidden costs.

Comments at Retreat conclusion:

- We have re-energized and focused our commitment to the Billies as a heart-centered community, a philanthropic/social organization, and as a tribe.
- We had a simultaneous orgasm -- we really came together!
- The vision, commitment and unity are in place to maintain and grow the Billy Club.
- We have accomplished a renewed sense of value and purpose—transition from survival to a successful future.
- A vision to move forward was supported with a lot of new and positive information.
- We have revived a sense of sustainability.
- We have re-energized the Billies with many new members and a refined new vision.
- We came together with some sense of crisis and we leave with hope and commitment.
- We have identified processes and solutions to bring the Billy Club into the future as a relevant and thriving community.
- We have re-established our working balance between heartspace and business.
- We have successfully empowered the Board, old and new, to act on issues speaking to the core of who we are and how we work together.
- We approached challenges with open hearts and a loving commitment to the Billies and each other.
- We have clarified where we are, what we’d like to accomplish next.
- We are clearer about the past, present, and future of the Billies.
- We have re-envisioned our heart connection

A closing ceremony was held on Sunday before lunch, standing in a circle with arms entwined and smiles and gratitude pervading.