

REPORT TO COMMUNITY
Billy Club Visioning Retreat
15 – 17 September 2006
Brooktrails Lodge, Willits, CA

*The Billy Club Visioning Retreat is summarized in this report. If you read only one thing, read the **Vision for Strengthening Our Community**, pages two to three. There you will find the vision for our community that we worked hard to develop. All the rest is background information to help you understand those two pages and find ways to contribute to the vision unfolding.*

Table of Contents

- Participants
- Vision for Strengthening Our Community
- Retreat Agenda
- Goals and Agreements (Resulting from the Retreat)
- Next Steps / Enlisting Community Volunteers to Help
- Background Summary
 - Billy Club Mission Statement – Existing
 - Billy Club Values Statement – Draft
 - Financial and Gathering Trends – 2000 to 2006
 - Participant Comments
 - Parking Lot (Unaddressed Topics)

Participants

Alan Bergman	George Bailey	Paul Mueller *
.....(Whatever!)	Jack Pilling	Rob Cossetta
Bill Blackburn *	Jean Sward	Robert Conrad (Goat) *
Carl Stokes	Jim Burke *	Sam Crow
Charlie Seltzer *	Joe Arcangelini	Steve Rockwell
Chas Nol	John Cwiakala *	Tim Henke
David Holmes	Marcus Borgman	Walter Ankrom (Buddy)
Ed Craig	Mark Hoffheimer	Wessie Russell
Ezra Cole	Mike Drum	William Stewart
Fred Fishman	Paul Connolly	

* Billy Board members

Overall design and facilitation: Paul Connolly

Design Team: Marty Dooley, Ron Vanscoyk and Retreat Co-coordinators John Cwiakala and Bill Blackburn

Minutes: Mark Hoffheimer, Bill, and Steve Rockwell

*A warm thanks goes to all who worked hard to make this weekend
such a success, with an especially big thanks to Paul Connolly!
We held each other and this vision with open hearts. Now for the work ahead!*

Vision for Strengthening Our Community: Enlisting Community Volunteers to Help

The following process for strengthening the Billy community was developed during the retreat. Its enactment will entail work in a variety of areas to be performed over the next several years in ongoing collaboration between the Billy Board and other community members. These action steps should be considered in consort with the “Next Steps” detailed on pages 5 to 8 where they are expanded.

All of these opportunities for participation involve joining with a group of interested Billies in further visioning and taking action on a vital area of Billy Club activity. Some people present at the retreat volunteered for the groups, other Billies not present were suggested/nominated and are so designated below.

Many of these working groups do not yet have any formal structure but are simply a meeting of volunteers interested in developing the community. Some of the groups involve supporting the work of a club portfolio holder (a volunteer who has taken on responsibility for managing a long-term area of club business). Some groups have the potential to evolve into formal committees or portfolios supporting the organization.

If you would like to help with one of these working groups or simply want to share your point of view on a topic, ***please contact the designated Point Person.***

1. Join the **Mission/Values Working Group** to review the Mission Statement and Draft Values Statement and refine as needed
 - Bill Blackburn, David Holmes, Fred Fishman, George Bailey, Jack Pilling, Mark Hoffheimer, Marty Dooley (*nominated*)
 - Point Person: **Charlie Seltzer**, 707-485-9632 (h), charlieseltzer@pacific.net
2. Join the **Outreach Working Group** to consider what non-Billies the club should make efforts to contact and how that outreach should be undertaken
 - Ed Craig, Jim Burke, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), Tim Henke
 - Point Person: **Mark Hoffheimer**, 415-552-1903 (h), 415-602-0165 (c), mth-sf@sbcglobal.net
3. Join the **Inreach Working Group** to explore why some Billy community members have stopped and other have continued attending gatherings, and to devise strategies for creating ongoing community relevance for Billies
 - Ed Craig, Jack Pilling, Paul Mueller, Ron Vanscoyk (*nominated*), Steve Rockwell, Tim Henke
 - Point Person: **Chas Nol**, 415-621-4538 (h), 415-617-4531 (c), chasnol@california.com

4. Join the **Gatherings Working Group** to create help juicy gatherings, developing ideas for making gatherings meaningful and exciting, truly serving current and future Billy needs and drawing the community together
 - Carl Stokes, David Carroll (*nominated*), David Holmes, Ezra Cole, Joe Arcangelini, John Cwiakala, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), Ron Vanscoyk (*nominated*)
 - Point Person: **Steve Rockwell** (Gathering Portfolio holder), 415-553-8680 (h), steve.rockwell@jud.ca.gov

5. Invigorate the already existing Fundraising Portfolio by creating a **Fundraising Working Group** to focus on raising money, including developing a comprehensive approach for fundraising
 - Charlie Seltzer (grant writing), George Bailey, Paul Connolly, Paul Mueller (annual fall campaign), Scott Marley (safety monitors at Gay Day) (*nominated*)
 - Point Person: **Paul Mueller** (Billy Foundation Board Vice President), 707-272-6829 (h), pmueller@tidepool.com

6. Join the **Communications Working Group** to identify ways to enhance communication between the board and the community, and to support the Website Portfolio holder in examining and improving the role, content and usability of the website
 - Chas Nol, Joe Kukulka(*nominated*), Mark Hoffheimer, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), William Stewart
 - Point Person: **Bill Blackburn**, 707-874-9011 (h), billbb@sonic.net

7. Join the **Volunteerism Working Group** to develop ways to connect tasks with willing volunteers
 - Point Person: **Tim Henke**, 415-517-0614 (h), tjhenke@mcn.org

8. Join the **Billy Club Board**
 - Current Board members: Bill Blackburn, Charlie Seltzer (President), Jim Burke (Secretary), John Cwiakala, Paul Mueller (Vice President), Robert “Goat” Conrad (Treasurer)
 - Point Person: **Paul Mueller**, 707-272-6829 (h), pmueller@tidepool.com

Retreat Agenda

Friday 15 September

7:45 – 10:00 Opening, foundational work, and a group exercise: “When the Billy Club Has Shined.”

Saturday 16 September

9:15 – 10:30: What is our purpose and what are our values?
10:45 – 12:30: Who do we want in our community and what will we do together?
1:30 – 2:45: (continued)
3:00 – 5:00 Who will lead the organization and how?
8:15 – 9:15 Small group skits: “Acting As If: The Billy Club in 2011”

Sunday 17 September

9:00 – 10:30 Heart Circle
10:45 – 11:30 Next Steps
11:30 – 12:00 Final Remarks and Closing

Goals and Agreements (resulting from the Retreat)

- A. The Billy community should rely on clearly stated Mission and Values Statements and strategic forms of outreach to ensure that new attendees are likely to be aligned with Billy values.
- B. Membership in the Billy community should be self-selective in the sense that anyone is a "Billy" who continues to participate in Billy community events.
- C. Gatherings should be re-envisioned so that they include a mix of different sorts of gatherings, including gatherings based on strong ideas or themes, in order to make them more attractive, engaging and challenging.
- D. Mechanisms for exchanging information and ideas between the Board and the community should be improved in order to ensure a more viable community.
- E. The Board should more effectively articulate its manpower needs, as that will make it more likely that Billies would volunteer for tasks and committee work.
- F. A wide group of community members should share leadership and provide counsel to the organization and community and, in particular, strengthen the board in fulfilling its responsibilities.
- G. The Board should be understood to be nested within and acting as a part of the community.
- H. Community members should understand they *own* the community.

Next Steps / Enlisting Community Volunteers to Help

Most of the Next Steps entail the creation of Working Groups, which at this juncture are neither formal committees nor portfolios, though they may well evolve into them. (Committees address particular areas of interest when the need arises; they disband after addressing the issue. Portfolios address established club functions *on an on-going basis*.) To better understand the reasons for creating these working groups, please refer to the Participant Comments section that follows later in this document.

Each Working Group has a *designated Point Person* to expedite their creation. The Point Person will communicate at least once a month – at least a few days prior to the regularly scheduled third-Sunday Board meeting – with the Billy Foundation Vice President (currently Paul M.) regarding the status of the committees and portfolios.

The *initial step* of the Next Steps is communication to community members summarizing retreat findings and requesting participation in the Working Groups. Bill will distribute this report to members via e-mail and make hard copies available at gatherings. A Talking Circle will be held at the upcoming Halloween gathering to discuss this report and begin planning for its enactment.

The general sense is that working groups should have no more than 10 community members, inclusive of a chair.

The Next Steps are organized according to the broad themes of the retreat:

- Purpose / Values
- Community – Who and What
- Leadership

What is our purpose and what are our values?

1. Form a **Mission / Values Working Group** to review Mission Statement and Draft Values Statement and refine as needed
 - Review and revision (as needed) to be complete by the end of 2006. Mission and values statements are to be linked to one another.
 - The three-member team that drafted the initial Values Statement will revise the statement per comments from the Visioning Retreat.
 - The Mission / Values Working Group will review and revise the two statements, as needed.
 - Paul C. and Charlie will guide the revision process.
 - The revised Mission and Values Statements will be submitted to the Billy community (via Billenet and gathering meetings) for review and comment.
 - Based on comments from the community, the Mission / Values Working Group will further refine the statements and submit them to the Board for final approval.

- Working Group members: Bill Blackburn, David Holmes, Fred Fishman, George Bailey, Jack Pilling, Mark Hoffheimer, Marty Dooley (*nominated*)
- Point Person: **Charlie Seltzer**, 707-485-9632 (h), charlieseltzer@pacific.net
- Status: It could accommodate 1 or 2 additional members.

Who do we want in our community and what will we do together?

2. Form an **Outreach Working Group** to consider who we should be outreaching to and how that outreach should be undertaken
 - The “who” might include: rural, youth, men of color, disabled, ethnic, people with HIV / AIDS, isolated men
 - Outreach should be based on a clear presentation of our values as a community
 - Need to understand why people have stopped coming and what their needs are – (see also “Inreach Working Group” below)
 - Ideas: “bring a friend” gathering; urban gathering; lower fee for first timers; Billy 101 at gatherings; institute buddy system; network with other groups; build up scholarship fund (see “Fundraising Committee” below); attend gay day gatherings with booth, pamphlet; develop the website further
 - The Outreach Working Group’s work may result in the creation of an Outreach Portfolio
 - Working Group members: Bill Blackburn, Ed Craig, Jim Burke, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), Tim Henke
 - Point Person: **Mark Hoffheimer**, 415-552-1903 (h), 415-602-0165 (c), mth-sf@sbcglobal.net
 - Status: It could use additional members
3. Form an **Inreach Working Group** to understand why some community members have stopped and others have continued attending gatherings
 - Conduct a survey of current and former members to understand why they have either stopped or continued coming to gatherings, and to understand their current needs, including that of rural men
 - Also conduct a community-wide “skills” survey to document the abilities and interests of members in order to more easily gain their participation and match their skills to manpower needs
 - Working Group members: Ed Craig, Jack Pilling, Paul Mueller, Ron Vanscoyk (*nominated*), Steve Rockwell, Tim Henke
 - Point Person: **Chas Nol**, 415-621-4538 (h), 415-617-4531 (c), chasnol@california.com
 - Status: It needs additional members
4. Support expanded efforts by the Gathering Portfolio holder, Steve R, by creating a **Juicy Gatherings Working Group** to consider and promote themes for gatherings
 - Want more challenging and juicy gatherings

- Possible themes: sports; arts; anger / emotional aliveness; “each one brings one”; reunion of tribe; unlearning racism; Fathers and Sons II; sexual dynamics; spiritual focus
 - Working Group members: Carl Stokes, David Carroll (*nominated*), David Holmes, Ezra Cole, Joe Arcangelini, John Cwiakala, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), Ron Vanscoyk (*nominated*)
 - Point Person: **Steve Rockwell**, 415-553-8680 (h), steve.rockwell@jud.ca.gov
 - Status: It could accommodate 1 or 2 additional members
5. Form a **Communications Working Group** to identify ways to enhance communication between the board and the community and to support the Website Portfolio holder, Joe Kukulka, in examining and improving the role, content and usability of the website
- Ideas: regular community Talking Circles; transparency about scholarships (relates to Outreach), Billy 101 at gatherings, expand Billy Times, and consider turning the board announcement e-list into an interactive forum
 - Website Ideas: include history, gathering schedule, links from / to other selected groups, more photos, more representation of who we are
 - Committee members: Chas Nol, Joe Kukulka (*nominated*), Mark Hoffheimer, Marty Dooley (*nominated*), William Stewart
 - Point Person: **Bill Blackburn**, 707-874-9011 (h), billbb@sonic.net
 - Status: It could use additional members

Who will lead the organization and how?

6. Form a **Volunteerism Working Group** to encourage more volunteerism in the Billy community
- Rely on skills survey (see Inreach Committee)
 - Ideas: create list of potential volunteers; consider ways to match opportunities with volunteers; consider ways to communicate needs with community (partner with Communications Committee); incorporate mentoring as critical part of attracting / training volunteers
 - Working Group members: none to date
 - Point Person: **Tim Henke**, 415-517-0614 (h), tjhenke@mcn.org
 - Status: It needs members
7. Invigorate the existing Fundraising Portfolio by creating a **Fundraising Working Group** to develop a comprehensive approach to fundraising
- Need to establish approach for fundraising, including how to break out between operations and scholarship
 - Ideas: volunteer as safety monitors at Gay Day, other events; explore ways to lower retreat facility costs; search for new sites (handled by Goat)

- Working Group members: George Bailey, Charlie Seltzer (grant writing), Paul Connolly, Paul Mueller (annual fall campaign), Scott Marley (safety monitors at Gay Day) (*nominated*)
 - Point Person: **Paul Mueller** (vacant position – defaults to Board VP), 707-272-6829 (h), pmueller@tidepool.com
 - Status: It needs additional members
8. Recruit new **Billy Foundation Board Members**
- Board Members – planning to remain: Bill Blackburn, Jim Burke, John Cwiakala, Paul Mueller, Robert Conrad (Goat)
 - Board Members – planning to leave: Charlie Seltzer
 - Point Person: **Paul Mueller**, 707-272-6829 (h), pmueller@tidepool.com
 - Status: Mark Hoffheimer and Steve Rockwell have expressed interest in joining the Board. Others are encouraged to consider joining.
9. Establish a **Point Persons' Liaison** to oversee the work of the various working groups established by the retreat and to report on progress to the Board
- Point Person's Point Person: Billy Foundation Vice President, currently **Paul Mueller**, 707-272-6829 (h), pmueller@tidepool.com

Background Summary

Billy Club Mission Statement – Existing

The mission of the Billy Club is to promote intimacy and community among gay and bisexual men, and to build bridges with supportive communities.

Billy Values Statement – Draft – Resulting from 2004 Visioning Retreat

We are a heart-centered community bound together by values to which we aspire and by our shared experience as gay and bisexual men. We strive to create a community locus where we can recreate, express, explore, experiment, connect, and celebrate, fostering transformation that leads to greater authenticity and that brings out the best in ourselves and each other. We hope to hold these values in all our personal undertakings, our interpersonal and community relations, and especially at gatherings where Heart Circle is a ritual embodiment of our aspirations.

It is difficult to name all the values that inform this work of building community and fostering intimacy among us, as called for in our Mission Statement.

Some of the values that have been named are:

- *Heart-centeredness, caring, compassion, respect for our own and others' essential nature*
- *Honesty, openness, integrity, being present*
- *Personal expression, creativity, growth*
- *Spontaneity, flexibility, willingness to experiment, playfulness, irreverence*
- *Reverence, spirituality, mindfulness*
- *Inclusiveness, diversity, acceptance*
- *Responsibility to each other and to our community*
- *Support of each other's physical and emotional safety*

Financial and Gathering Trends – 2000 to 2006

The numbers in the chart that follows provide a glimpse into the finances of the Billy Club over the past six years. As you can see, the percentage of our budget spent on gathering facility fees and food has remained relatively stable over the years. The percentage spent on administration and the amount we receive from our donors has also remained relatively stable. The number of people attending our gatherings, however, has been in steady decline for over three years. Not on this chart is one important set of numbers: in 2000 our gathering fees were \$45/night; this year they are \$70/night, an increase of \$25/night. During that same time period our cost of food and facility rent has increased by \$22/night.

Full financial records are available in the Ukiah office for community review during regular office hours, or contact the Billy Office, 707-462-0766, for other arrangements.

**The Billy Club
2006 Visioning Retreat
Financial and Gathering Trends, 2000 – 2006**

Year	Total Bed Nights	Total Expense	Cost/ Bed Night	Total Reported Income	% Earned Income	% Gathering Space Rent	% Food/ Cook	% Admin/ Staff	Mid Winter	May Day	July 4	Lbr Day	Hall o-ween	NYE
2000	2265	127,400	56.25	139,000	87%	45%	20%	35%	166	410	877	142	295	375*
2001	2719	172,800	63.56	153,100	83%	46%	22%	32%	173	523	1079	136	425	383
2002	2406	166,300	69.12	153,200	81%	43%	19%	38%	160	456	850	162	348	430
2003	2405	173,700	72.73	160,750	81%	41%	18%	41%	177	450	847	207	344	380
2004	2025	138,700	68.50	160,400	84%	45%	19%	36%	138	496	822	164	196	209
2005	1657	118,000	71.22	140,200	75%	43%	20%	37%	**	386	647	162	280	182
2006									59	343	571	102		

*Estimate, accurate numbers are not available

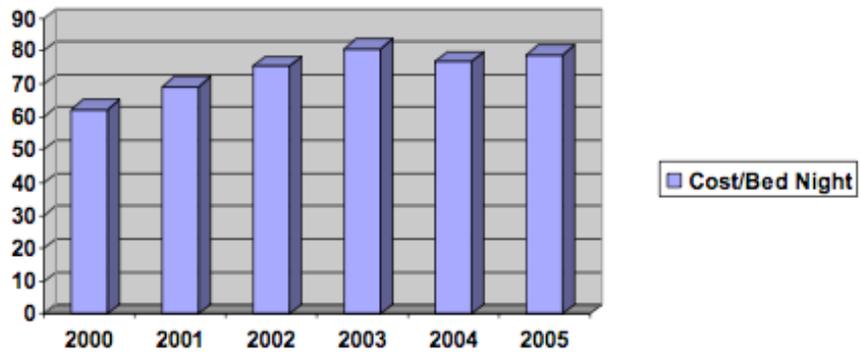
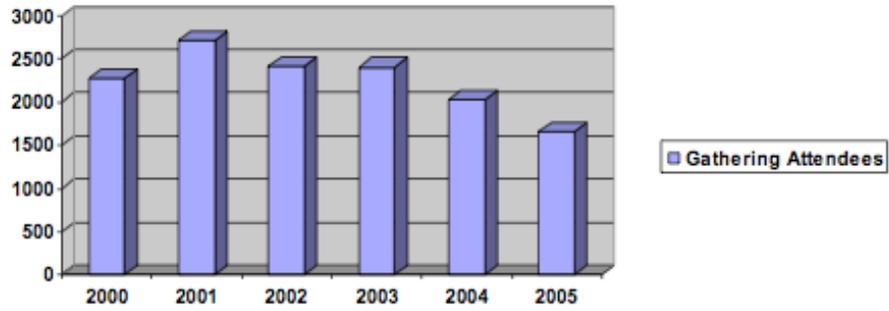
**Gathering Cancelled

First Section: Shows the total number of bed nights and total spent for that year. When you divide the bed nights into the total expense for that year you come up with the total cost to the Billy Club for each bed night for that year.

Second Section: Shows the total reported income and the percentage of that income that came from gathering fees.

Third Section: Shows the percentage of annual budget that was spent on these items.

Fourth Section: Shows a breakout of gathering attendance for each gathering since 2000. Not included was a June/2000 gathering that was held at Camp & Sons as a special outreach to rural Billies living in four rural counties. 15 people attended that gathering for a total of 23 bed nights.



Participant Comments

This summary of comments is organized in the order of the agenda items:

- Successes: When has the Billy Club worked well and why?
- Purpose and Values: What is our purpose and what are our values?
- Who and What: Who do we want in our community and what will we do together?
- Leadership: Who will lead the organization and how?

Note: The following comments were sometimes only made by one person, sometimes were an expression of general agreement.

Successes

When has the Billy Club worked very well as an organization and community and what factors contributed to these peak experiences?

Comments on Successes

- Board recovery during crisis
 - Board candor at Heartwood Gathering 2004/2005
 - Shared adversity – single purpose
 - Commitment
 - Consensus policy
 - History of heart-centeredness
- Dealing with the AIDS crisis – late 80's, early 90's
 - Place to relate – sense of purpose
 - Common ground
 - Deep intimacy
- *Personally*: a May Day, 5 years ago
 - Spirit of involvement
- Loving Communication July 06 gathering – strong togetherness
- Pos/Negative gathering
 - Fresh – many new Billies
 - Diversity of race and age
 - Groovy Santa Cruz energy
 - Transformative
- Billenet
 - A source of continuity between gatherings
 - Lately, very juicy
- A particular Heartwood heart circle – discussion about women and Billy Club
- Well run gatherings
 - Comfortable settings
 - Spiritual brotherhood
 - High volunteer energy
 - Structure gives focus
- Themed gatherings
 - Intimacy (e.g. Fathers and Sons; Pos/Neg)

- Last visioning retreat – common unity
- Sharing vision with others – web site, Ukiah visibility
- Inception – bringing rural people together
- Spin offs – potlucks, Billenet, writing circle, heart circle
- Sense of purpose
- Focus on current work, rising to the occasion
- Inclusiveness
- Roles are fulfilled in community
- Art shows and talent shows
- Collaboration with other communities and agencies, as in the PozNeg gathering last year
- Board integrity and grace
- Heart-centeredness!

Purpose and Values

What is our purpose (mission) and what are our values?

Mission Statement Defined:

- *Our purpose – why we exist*
- *Structure of statement*
 - *Infinitive verb: to _____*
 - *Condition to be changed or developed*
- *Recipe*
 - *Clear and focused*
 - *Concise and memorable*
 - *Aspirational (i.e. strong desire, aim)*
 - *Match organization's capacity*
 - *Can include means, but not means alone*
 - *Inspirational*

Feedback on current Mission Statement

The existing Billy Club Mission Statement may be found on page 9.

- Too small – needs to be more aspirational
- Dated – leaves out bisexual and transsexual men
- Length is good – short
- It is aspirational enough
- Unclear if building bridges really is part of our purpose – if it is, then do it
- Need to breathe more life into mission
- Is clear – short and sweet
- Excellent as is
- “Building supportive communities” is good to be included
- Need to understand what we mean by “intimacy” and “community”
- Need a values statement to complement it
- Can hold it in your mind
- Consider diversity if we are committed

- Succinct
- Not “promote” – change to “deepen”
- Changes to “supportive individuals and communities”

Values Statement Defined:

- *Underlying beliefs and philosophies that guide an organization / community*
- *We agreed this should be a living document, able to be changed as we change and grow*

Feedback on Draft Values Statement

A draft values statement, prepared prior to the retreat and based on work done at the 2004 Re-Visioning Retreat, may be found on page 9.

- Focus on core values
- Focus on community, not individual level
- Values related to intimacy are different than those for building bridges – add values to build bridges
- May want three sets of values – for intimacy, community, and building bridges
- Need to act on inclusiveness if we truly hold that as a core value
- Worldliness, accessibility
- Go deeper into heart-centeredness – what’s that mean?
- Warmly welcoming to new Billies – inclusiveness
- Don’t forget the physical – respect bodies, pleasure, sex affirmative
- Capacity for loving behavior
- Add reference to generosity and mutual support – speak to how we support, contribute to each other
- Patience – relates to active listening
- Too long – don’t make so long
- Avoid “it is difficult” phrase (too negative) – say “while we can embrace many values”
- Are these “requirements”? – do we need to sign off on them?
- Clarify community “locus” – say environmental setting or just setting
- Say “connect” and “celebrate”
- I like the word “transformation”
- Responsibility is personal, too – include responsibility “to ourselves”
- Avoid long sentences
- Too much a laundry list? – usefully vague
- Mention Two Spiritedness – feminine and maleness in us
- Add body-based, physical values
- How to use this, will we just create it and have it in a file somewhere?
- Could read it at opening circles, at Billy 101
- Add magnanimity, lovingness, egalitarianism, generosity, being of service, altruism
- Reinforce safety
- Speak to diversity in values statement

Who and What

Who do want in our community and what will we do together? A series of questions was posed in four parts regarding: 1) younger participants, 2) current and former community members, 3) rural men and 4) diversity.

PART 1

Do we want to attract new younger participants and, if so, how can we do so?

- Need to replenish our community
- Interest in differences and surprises
- Focus on goals and solutions, not current problems
- Need to inculcate young men; need more mentoring
- Have a special first-time registration fee (subsidy) like CMG
- Expand scholarships for young people
- Have a younger men's gathering
- Tap into Sonoma County's Positive Images gay youth group, S.F.'s Lyric, and other groups

PART 2

How can we serve current participants as they age? How can we retain people? How do we reach back to the people who have left?

[Note: Community = new people entering (outreach) + current people retained ("inreach") – people leaving community]

- Create working agreements for dealing with conflict, to create a safe place
 - Reinforce safety with values discussion
- Have more advanced programs for long-timers; more planned, less organic – after a while, gatherings can seem the predictable
- Need more juicy gatherings, more challenging
 - Last Halloween gathering had a new approach
- Brainstorm gathering themes and have a list for people to take on
- Enhancing safety too much can create blandness
- Make gatherings more affordable
- More transparency with scholarship program
- Need to actively care about one another – peace making, behave in loving fashion
- Avoid over-planning
- Create a buddy system for new people
- Some people who need them don't feel comfortable applying for scholarships so they drop away
- People can drop off the mailing list unaware
- Make gatherings more dynamic and fresh
- Keep gatherings well organized, ensure warm welcomes
- Expand repertoire of activities (e.g. smaller heart circles, teas, art)
- Need to infuse energy with new people

- Replicate Poz/Neg gathering
- Conduct fundraising campaign for subsidies to attract new / young people
- Have themed gatherings (think outside the box)
 - Sports – volleyball, etc. (Mike Drum will co-coordinate)
 - Arts
 - Gay men and anger
 - Bring a newcomer – be more intentional about this
- How bring in new people? Web site with clear statement of who we are
- Accept the framework of “7 Generations,” considering the impact of current activities on future generations
- Have more gatherings – create more energy and magic
 - Smaller, concurrent, regional gatherings, no need to go through office
- Could partner with David C. to lower costs
- Survey old timers who left and ask why they left
- Educate community about scholarship fund more
- Risk / safety balance (have a safety tent?)
- Continue with no alcohol / no drug policy
- Do a workshop in sexual dynamics
- Do an urban gathering (need to fundraise for it)
- Elders / all of us need to watch for isolated new comers
- Volunteer as safety monitors at Gay Pride to cover scholarships – we could fund Richard Locke Scholarships for a year this way!
- Don't want to attract just anyone – want values alignment
 - Want self-selection based on what we stand for
- Take “excess” over the \$70/per person per day registration fee and put into scholarship fund rather than general fund
- Have a mix of gatherings (deep, easy going)
- Have reunion of tribe gathering

Web Site

- Put updated web site link on Billenet
- Web site still hard to find / access (log in)
- Make less of the content password protected, like Calls
- Register web site in search engines
- Link with supportive communities / affinity groups
 - With web sites? Be careful!
- Make website representative of us so people can self-select out and in (publicity and pictures need to be carefully selected)
- Post the gathering schedule on web site, other stuff
- Consider name change – take “Club” out – call it “The Billies” so finding web site is easier, sounds less clubby, less like a weapon
- Use potlucks more for outreach to gatherings
- Make a section on the web site for comments – make it more interactive
- Put webmaster name / contact on web site

PART 3

Do we want to stay true to our rural roots and, if so, how can we do so?

- Our roots were rural
- Perhaps 80% participation from Bay area now
- Hard for rural men to plan ahead – different mindset
- Hard to sustain rural connection
- Juicy gatherings will attract rural and urban
- Our gatherings may be too expensive for some rural men
- Rural men may not like the size of our gatherings, maybe can't relate to the more urban topics of discussion
- Rural men need to state their needs – need a core group to spearhead
- No longer only game in town for rural men – maybe need not as strong today
- Reach out to rural gay groups in other regions (i.e. Chico, Yuba Center)
- Maybe just focus more on Bay area
- Rural connection is about connection to earth / nature – rural men bring valuable qualities
- Bay area folks like rural base alternative (in a Two Spirited way) – they want off-grid, closer-to-earth mentors
- Relates to an alternative values system – it is a metaphorical urban / rural distinction
- Should continue rural AIDS / HIV education
- Rural / urban mix is about diversity

PART 4

Are we truly willing to commit to diversity at our gatherings? Why do we want more racially, ethnically, disability, class diverse participants and how can we reach them? And how will we accommodate them?

- Diversity gives taste and inspiration
- Need to not just say it, need to do it
- Diversity is challenging – we want this
- Relates to young people – they are more diverse
 - However, there may be a generational difference – there may be less interest in back-to-the-land with younger, more diverse men
- Less chance of diversity off-grid
- Need to be clear of who we are and not compromise
- Poz/Neg gathering attracted more Latinos and that was wonderful
- Relates to class issues, too
- Some men of color don't feel comfortable in rural setting
- Disability issues, too – are facilities accessible? – Saratoga isn't accessible. We do fairly well with body type kind of diversity, but there's more welcoming to do
- Gender relates to diversity, too – are we welcoming of transgender men? Then we should say it.
- Some transgender men are gay and some bi and some straight. Our outreach to gay and bi covers those transgender men who are appropriate.

- Put “diversity” in our values statement – if we mean it
- Need to empower young and diverse people to do what they want
 - May need to give up power
- Perhaps have an Oakland gathering
- Continue to use web site as outreach tool (will attract young people)
- Men of color are already coming to our gatherings, and some of them are comfortable coming back
- some hear an occasional racist comment or more often a “joke”. Can we lovingly challenge each other when we hear this?
- We have some work to do to raise our awareness of race issues, hope to not make each other feel guilty but to really “get it” and become more sensitive
- We need to be allies so if someone is offended, they know who they can come to for support
- Many don’t come back because they don’t see themselves sufficiently reflected
- Start with the “intimacy” and let diversity stem from that
- Just being a human is important
- Being “color blind” – is this ignoring differences?
- Values are the common denominator of who should be with us
- Is the Billy Club culture alienating to diverse communities?
- We want our twin and we want our other
- We simultaneously embrace and reject women
- What defines the “whiteness” of our group
- We need workshops!
- Religious diversity is a reach, not sure we’re ready for that!
- Have flexibility in values
- The Billy culture is rigid and flexible
- Could have a Spanish language heart circle at a gathering to make Latinos more comfortable
- Eliminate barriers in culture
- Organize an “Unlearning Racism” gathering – could be uncomfortable but valuable
- Accepting and tolerating is not enough
- Do Gay Day outreach in diverse communities (e.g. Oakland)
- Continue the diversity conversation on an ongoing basis
- Again, whatever we do, do values-based outreach
- Establish allies with people of color, women, etc.

Leadership

Who will lead the organization and how?

How can the Board perform better and roles be clarified?

How can the Board composition be improved?

How can the Board structure be improved?

Paul Connolly presented the following factors for consideration

Leadership should be shared, “rotated” – analogy of a flock of geese flying with leaders changing

There is a continuum of contribution from “a little” to “a lot” – all is valuable

Leadership Issues:

- Community ownership
- Bottom-up vs. top-down culture – we seem to be a bottom-up culture
- There are many leadership roles without being on the Board
- Board members have benefited from serving
- There is a degree of burn-out if too much work is shared by too few

Characteristics:

- Create vision and plan
- Communicate vision / plan and motivate others to achieve it
- Set goals and direction
- Innovate
- Allocate resources
- Prioritize

Board Roles:

- Create and implement vision (shared with others)
- Help secure financial resources (shared with others)
- External relations / ambassador roles (shared with others)
- Fiduciary / legal accountability (by law, Board only)
- Oversee staff (by law, Board only)

Comments on Leadership

- Board should act as a council for the community, a guardian of the community’s values and vision.
- Yet there is a range of tasks that can be done by non-Board members
- We want to follow a shared leadership model
 - Communicate this to the community better
 - Develop a second tier of leadership
 - Include Portfolio holders, committee members, others – a connected network, perhaps in electronic form, on an ongoing basis, like an ongoing Advisory Circle
 - Be intentional and make it happen
- William Stewart has advocated an interactive listserve of Board members and people most concerned with the community to discuss issues, arrive at recommendations. (This is likely a part of the last point above.)
- The Board ultimately needs to make decisions

- Board could communicate hot topics on upcoming meeting agendas and get community input, including visitors to attend meetings
- Board needs to ask people to do things more often, but delegation is hard unless it's known who is willing and what skills are offered
- Do a skills inventory to match members with needs
 - Develop a database and put it on the web site
 - Could even automatically generate e-mails
- Make Board meetings less onerous so as to be more conducive to attracting visitors
 - Meetings could be better run
 - There could be more committee work that would relieve the board of long discussions
 - Consider rotating meetings every quarter: 1 in Ukiah, 1 in Santa Rosa, 1 in SF/East Bay, repeat
 - Meetings could be more potluck-like
- We are on the brink of a new era – not in crisis mode now – that's exciting!
- Have a Talking Circle (like we did at 4th of July) in place of a heart circle at gatherings (Talking Circles are the community talking to itself about community while Heartcircles are more internally focused on the individual.)
- Allow visitors interested in one item to schedule a specific time to be heard in a meeting if they don't want to stay for all of it
- Get agendas out earlier
- Communicate more clearly to the community about the Board, including about the Board's legal responsibility
- Communicate the things community members can do on their own, projects that can happen outside official channels

Reflections on the Retreat

Abundance

Hopeful

Radical

Gratitude

Cautious optimism

Action

Stay Positive

Inspiration

Empowered

Unbridled optimism

Recruitment

Transition

Volunteerism

New direction

Less doubt; more hope

Relief

Blissed out; bliss

Brave new world

Possibilities abound

Commitment

Parking Lot (Unaddressed Topics)

These topics came up during discussions but were not focused upon and are considered not pressing issues before the Billy Foundation but more for the community to develop.

- Co-housing / senior housing / land
- Creating Billy-like communities elsewhere