

New Richard Locke Scholarship Policy

The Billy Board of Directors is pleased to announce an updated Richard Locke Scholarship Fund Policy. The new policy will be implemented when registration opens for the May Day gathering, on March 4, 2020.

The new policy will award fewer, but larger, scholarships at the time of registration. We acknowledge that a limited number of scholarships may result in some Billys not receiving the support they need if they register after all scholarships are distributed. But we hope the immediacy and transparency of the new scholarship policy will create an easier and more equitable financial aid process with limited RLSF dollars.

This past fiscal year, the Billy Foundation received over \$43,000 in scholarship requests. We were able to fund \$30,599 in scholarships last year thanks to over \$14,000 in donations from the Billy community, and an increase of \$8,000 budgeted towards RLSF by the Billy Board of Directors. Additional funding came from the Russian River Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, and the Diversity Fund.

The Board directed an ad hoc committee - consisting of David Grossblat, Kris Shanks, Martin Dooley, Rob Roy Woodman, and Robert Zarren - to take a look at the previous policy, and the committee identified five issues to address. They are:

- 1) the emotionally charged process of being asked to pay more for a gathering when available scholarship funds do not cover the requested number of nights;
- 2) the inability to plan, for both locals and long-distance travelers, when the amount of scholarship support is not known until a very short time before the gathering;
- 3) the lack of transparency as to how scholarship funds are distributed;
- 4) the lack of definitive guidelines for scholarship eligibility;
- 5) the inequity of a scholarship policy that gave everyone the same percentage of what they requested, without taking into account people's differing financial needs.

To address these issues, the scholarship committee recommended that a fixed number of scholarships be made available at the time of registration. The amount of scholarship support will depend on the length of the gathering, and the availability of RLSF dollars.

Here's what the registration page will look like when you go to register for May Day:

Scholarships from the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund (RLSF) and other sources are available to people with self-identified financial need. Scholarships are lump-sum discounts and will automatically be applied to your registration. If scholarships are all distributed, you may add your name to the waitlist, and you will be notified if additional scholarship dollars become available.

We recognize that everyone's financial situation is different, and we recommend the following:

If you are able to comfortably meet all of your basic needs, and have access to financial savings, health care and have disposable income (able to buy coffee at a shop, go to movies, buy new clothes or similar items each month) **please consider donating to the scholarship fund** to support your community and improve access to the gathering for all.

If you have some financial stress, but are still able to achieve your basic needs, are employed or have regular income, have access to some financial savings, have a car, and have some disposable income (are able to buy some new items, go on vacations, etc.), **please consider registering without using a scholarship.**

Please select one of the scholarships based on your self-identified financial need, if you stress about meeting basic financial needs and don't always achieve them, have no access to savings, are unemployed or underemployed, or have no or very limited disposable income (rarely buy new items because you are unable to afford them).

Overnight Scholarships

- Scholarship of \$70 [5 remaining]
- Scholarship of \$110 [5 remaining]
- Scholarship of \$150 [5 remaining]
- Scholarship of \$190 [5 remaining]

What are the changes to the scholarship policy?

PREVIOUS POLICY	NEW POLICY
No guidelines; anyone who requested a scholarship was offered support.	The dollar amount of individual scholarships is based on suggested income guidelines
People were frequently asked to pay more towards fees or reduce the number of nights at the gathering when the offered scholarship did not cover their request.	The amount of scholarship support available for a gathering is displayed in real-time on the registration page; people can decide when registering how much they can afford for a gathering.
The dollar amount of individual scholarships depended on how many requests were received, and therefore were not finalized until two weeks before the beginning of the gathering.	The dollar amount of individual scholarships is fixed. Scholarships are made available at the time of registration, and they are distributed on a “first-come, first-served” basis.
Anyone who applied was awarded a scholarship. However, the amount of each scholarship depended on a combination of dollars requested and the number of requests. The outcome of this process was impossible to predict.	There are a limited number of scholarships for each gathering, and the number of available scholarships is visible in real-time on the registration page. The number of scholarships is based on our past experience of how many requests we get for each gathering and the total amount of scholarship money available.
Scholarships tried to cover at least one night.	Scholarships are based on support for a minimum of two nights.

As we all know, no policy is perfect. From our first days, we have tried to make it possible for everyone to come to a gathering, and the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund policy has changed several times in an effort to reach that goal. Our intent is to incorporate feedback to improve future iterations of this policy. Let us know your thoughts as we try this out as a community.

Sincerely,

The Billy Foundation Board of Directors and the RLSF Scholarship Committee