

BILLY TIMES

June 2006

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



Letter from Board President, Charlie Seltzer

What Don't We Talk About

I'm very active in planning the Billy Club's HIV Positive/Negative gathering. So I've been thinking a lot about HIV lately. I remember reading 25 years ago this month, of the first cases of a strange cancer affecting gay men in New York and Los Angeles – a cancer that would first be named GRID (for Gay-Related Immunodeficiency Disease) and later, AIDS. I remember living in San Francisco during the 1990s and watching half my community, and my beloved partner, Tom, die of AIDS. It's hard to believe that the first HIV medications that really did anything became available only 10 years ago. It seems like another life time.

Sex and HIV are so clearly linked. But something I don't hear us talk about very much is the role that drugs play in HIV transmission (and in our lives.) Some drugs – especially those both injected and shared – can spread HIV by themselves, or at least by the way they are put in the body. I've only had a conversation with one Billy about his injection drug use, so I don't know how common this is in our community. I know lots of Billies who use other drugs, though – who smoke pot, drink alcohol, or do meth. Some do these drugs to enhance sexual pleasure. Of course these drugs also lighten inhibitions and therefore might lead us to do things sexually we wouldn't ordinarily do.

Case in point: I was recently talking with a Billy friend who told me that one night, not long ago, he got both drunk and stoned. He met a "hot Spanish guy" with whom he had sex. It was only a couple of days afterwards that the Billy learned through a mutual friend that the "hot Spanish guy" was HIV-positive – a useful fact the "hot Spanish guy" somehow never mentioned and my Billy friend neglected to ask about. In fact, as my Billy friend related the story, he and the "hot Spanish guy" never talked about anything; they just went at it. The Billy, scared that he might now have HIV, went to his doctor and got a round of post-exposure prophylaxis. Fortunately, he was within the narrow window of time in which such prophylaxis works.

My friend was lucky; but not everybody is. HIV transmissions are still happening in the gay male communities. Drugs, even fairly benign ones like alcohol and marijuana, can

make us act stupid; can lead to us taking risks we wouldn't ordinarily take.

Of course we live in a society that condemns drug use with one hand, while promoting it with the other. Drugs and alcohol are almost everywhere. When I grew up in New York, alcohol was only available in a liquor store. Now you have your pick – gas stations, convenience stores, supermarkets and department stores to name a few. And I live in a county where marijuana cultivation and use are so normalized that a few years ago, the voters instructed the county sheriff to make prosecution of small time pot growers their lowest legal priority. Lots of Billies smoke pot. Same is true with drinking alcohol. Yet I don't hear us talk about our drug use. Do we not consider it an issue? Is this one of those things we don't want to talk about?

And then there's meth. It too seems everywhere these days (though recent reports from San Francisco say meth use is, finally, on the way down among gay men.) I work in a drug and alcohol program, and I have to tell you meth is the most destructive drug I've ever seen in my life. So many people in Mendocino County have been devastated by meth. I've heard some Billies tell me they use meth and that they're not addicted. I hope they're right.

While injecting meth (and sharing a needle) can spread HIV, the other two common ways of doing meth – snorting it or smoking it – don't. They can, however, spread another awful disease - hepatitis-c. Hepatitis-c is an epidemic in our country. It's at least four times more prevalent than HIV, and it's strongly associated with meth use. Thankfully, it's not as devastating as HIV – at least for most. I've never heard a Billy say, "I have hepatitis-c." But since about one-third of HIV-positive men (nationally) are co-infected with hepatitis-c, and since there are many Billies with HIV, it makes sense that some Billies will have hep-c. Is this true? Is this something else we don't talk about?

By bringing up the topic of drugs in the Billy community, I hope I am not sounding judgmental. I am only wondering if Billies and Drugs is a topic we, as a community, want to address. And lest you think I am fixated on drugs, I think there are lots of topics we don't talk about in the Billy Club. Mothers and sons is one. What we do for work is another. Domestic abuse (yes, it happens even between same-sex couples) is a third. What else don't we talk about? ♦

Join the Board?! Are you Nuts?!

by Jim Burke

The above headline is the typical reaction I received in the past year from some Billies when I asked them to consider joining the Billy Foundation Board of Directors. And frankly, I can't really blame them. The past year or so was a difficult time to be on the Board, as we navigated through an embezzlement and financial crisis. Board meetings were long, arduous, and more than a little tedious at times, as we sought to rebuild our finances and our office procedures, among many other things.

But that was then. This is now. And this is a VERY different now. The Billy Club, while it always needs to raise funds, is back on solid footing financially. The Billy Office is being competently run by our new Resource Coordinator, Marcus Borgman. Gatherings are being held regularly, and are successful.

With our recent troubles behind us, this is an exciting time for the Billy Club, as well as for the Board of Directors. Why? Because with the arrival of new faces at our gatherings, and the changing face of the AIDS epidemic, the Board is looking at new directions for the organization. Obviously, any new directions are up to the Billy community to decide; what the Board does is help to raise issues for the community to look at. For this reason, the Board will be inviting interested Billies its biannual Vision Retreat, to be held sometime this fall. Look for a "call" about it in your mailbox this summer.

But back to the Board. Currently, we have six solid, sturdy, dedicated Billies on our Board, which is the minimum currently allowed under our bylaws. Eventually, one or more of them will want to step down, and they'll need to be replaced. I'm not here to ask you to immediately sign on the dotted line and join us...what I'm asking is that you come to a Board meeting in the coming months, and see what we're about. Here's some of the things we're talking about right now:

- ❖ Our annual budget (not as boring as it sounds.....honest!)
- ❖ Organizing our Vision Retreat
- ❖ New fundraising opportunities
- ❖ How to make our consensus process work better
- ❖ Expanding our outreach in northern California, and beyond
- ❖ How to bring in more new Billies to the organization
- ❖ How to better deal with our aging Billy population
- ❖ How to better apply our Mission Statement

....and many other issues as well. Do any of these appeal to you? Do you have some ideas of your own to bring to the table?

If you do, or even if you don't, I urge you to come to one of our upcoming Board meetings. They are held the third Sunday of each month, at 1:15 PM. Below are the locations for the May, June, and July meetings:

- May 21**—the home of Jack Piling
76 Devon Court, Santa Rosa
- June 18**—The Billy Foundation Office
210 South Main Street, Ukiah

see Joining the board page 3

Visioning Retreat Envisioned

by Bill Blackburn

You are invited to the Billy Visioning Retreat being planned for this Fall.

A Visioning Retreat is currently held every two years, bringing together members of the community who recognize the importance of the Billy Club, want to support our work together, and participate in setting its future direction. It's a great place to find out more about what goes on behind the scenes to keep the gatherings happening and the Billy Emergency Fund going. (The BESF offers assistance to people in need with HIV/AIDS in the northern rural counties and Billies in need everywhere.)

We held a Visioning Retreat two years ago and over 30 enthusiastic Billies participated. The weekend was facilitated by Paul Connolly, a Billy who is a skilled organizational development consultant. His clarity and strong, gentle guidance made the weekend very powerful. Paul is willing to facilitate again this year and we're working with him to set the date, and we'll be announcing the date in a month or so.

We came out of the last retreat with a lot of enthusiasm and, though we ran into a bump in the road shortly thereafter, that enthusiasm enabled us to get beyond those difficulties to the point where we're now ready to envision what we want next for the foundation and the community.

Are there ways you'd like to see our gatherings grow and change? How can we build our community, welcoming in new members without diluting what we have? Are there ways we can increase the age and racial diversity of our community? Can we deal with rising costs in ways that don't make our gathering fees too high for some people? How can we facilitate better communication within the community? These are only some of the questions we can address together.

If you're interested, I encourage you to participate. It's an opportunity to spend time with other dedicated Billies and to support the magic we create when we gather together. ♦

Financial Update

by Paul Mueller

What a difference a year can make! Last year around this time we were struggling to make ends meet and were uncertain about what the year would bring. Now I am happy to report that this past fiscal year (ending March 31) has been one of stabilization and growth for the Billy Club. During the course of the year we received two of the largest gifts ever received by the Billy Club – a \$10,000 matching gift from an anonymous donor and a \$5,900 grant from the Irvine Foundation. While the numbers are preliminary it appears that these two gifts, when combined with generous donations from many, many Billies, have helped us to end our fiscal year with retained earnings of over \$20,000!

That's the good news. On the other side, we generally received less income overall due to lower than projected gathering attendance. The Board, wanting to encourage as much attendance at gatherings as possible, lowered gathering fees from \$65/day to \$60/day and extended the "No One Turned Away For Lack Of Funds" policy to all gatherings in hopes of making the gatherings available for anyone who wanted to attend. Despite these efforts, attendance was below the previous year. Are there factors other than cost that are impacting our gathering attendance? This would be a great discussion item for a Visioning Retreat! The Board remains committed to making gatherings as accessible as possible and will continue to encourage contributions to the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund so that money is reduced as much as possible as a barrier for those who want to attend gatherings

While last year's surplus helps us to breathe easier, it really got us back to where we needed to be all along. Having some money in the bank helps us to better pay the bills when the cash flow is slow, like during the winter months when there are fewer, small gatherings. It also helps protect us against the financial loss that occurs when bad weather or other factors negatively affect gathering attendance.

As we look ahead to this current year we have reason for both optimism and caution. We are deeply appreciative that the anonymous donor has renewed his \$10,000 pledge for 2006 and is willing to match all contributions to the Billy Club up to that level – whether a donation to the general fund, the Richard Locke Scholarship Fund, or the Billy Emergency Support Fund. This pledge gives us a strong financial base from which to approach the year. Simultaneously, we will be facing a hefty rate increase from Saratoga as well as increased food costs that will require the board to consider raising gathering fees to cover the increased costs.

As always, give any Board members a call, write us an email, attend a gathering Advisory Circle, or participate in a Visioning Retreat with your ideas and suggestions. Let's build on this successful year with renewed optimism, enthusiasm, and hope for the future! ♦

The Billy Foundation Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual April 2005 through March 2006

	Apr '05 - Mar 06	Budget	\$ Over Budget	% of Budget
Ordinary Income/Expense				
Income				
Earned Income	107,247	138,750	-31,503	77%
RL Scholarship Fund	3,989	5,000	-1,011	80%
Merchandise Sales	2,205	2,500	-295	88%
Contributed Income	24,867	30,000	-5,133	83%
Fundraising Events	403	2,500	-2,097	16%
BESF	2,899	3,700	-801	78%
Government Contracts	12,896			
Suspense income	671			
Total Income	155,176	182,450	-27,274	85%
Expense				
Bank Charges	1,196	1,600	-404	75%
Communications	2,063	1,800	263	115%
Event Costs	69,093	112,150	-43,057	62%
Independent Contractors	4,085	3,100	985	132%
Insurance	2,336	1,076	1,260	217%
Payroll Expenses and Taxes	31,454	34,517	-3,063	91%
Publications	83	1,800	-1,717	5%
Repairs & Maintenance	1,187	1,700	-513	70%
Cost of Merchandise	1,232	500	732	246%
Advertising	317	500	-183	63%
BESF disbursements	1,275	2,500	-1,225	51%
Postage	1,693	3,900	-2,207	43%
Conferences and Meetings	0	250	-250	0%
Board Expenses	1,285	1,250	35	103%
Donations Given	0	500	-500	0%
Fees & Licenses	70	25	45	280%
Printing and Copying	2,269	4,150	-1,881	55%
Hospitality	82	200	-118	41%
Miscellaneous Expenses	244			
Office Rental	7,425	8,300	-875	89%
Supplies	1,222	2,100	-878	58%
Travel & Lodging	376	818	-442	46%
Utilities	1,572	2,000	-428	79%
Suspense	0	0	0	0%
Total Expense	130,558	184,736	-54,178	71%
Net Ordinary Income	24,618	-2,286	26,904	-1,077%
Other Income/Expense				
Other Income				
CHOW Grant	3,398	4,770	-1,372	71%
Total Other Income	3,398	4,770	-1,372	71%
Other Expense				
CHOW Expense	6,490			
Capital Equipment	0	500	-500	0%
Total Other Expense	6,490	500	5,990	1,298%
Net Other Income	-3,092	4,270	-7,362	-72%
Net Income	21,526	1,984	19,542	1,085%

Joining the board from page 2

July 16—Our Annual San Francisco Meeting

At the home of (yours truly) Jim Burke
370 26th Avenue, #3, San Francisco

Feel free to call the **Billy Office (707-462-0766)** for directions or carpooling information.

I hope you'll consider coming to one of our meetings to see what we're about. And, if you find it appealing, I hope some of you will consider joining our Board of Directors. If you decide to do so, instead of being "nuts," you'll be joining a group of hardworking Billies who passionately love this organization, and want to the Billy Club to continue to offer its unique vision of community to all who are interested. Hope to see you soon! ♦

Billy Club Gatherings

typically start with a potluck dinner the first day and end after lunch on the last day. You can contact the coordinators, when known, to volunteer for any of the many positions necessary to make gatherings a success. Contact the office if you wish either to coordinate a gathering or work with its future coordinators. I'll try to pass your information or request on to them.

Visit billyclub.org for online access to the current gathering call or to pay with a credit/debit card. Issues of the Billy Times are also available.

2006 Gathering Schedule

Independence Day

Billys Only
David Carroll

Wednesday, June 28 - Tuesday, July 4
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

Labor Day

Billys and Billykin
Coordinators Needed

Thursday, Aug. 31 - Monday, Sept. 4
Camp and Sons, Mendocino County

Halloween

Billys Only
Coordinators Needed

Thursday, Oct. 26 - Monday, Oct. 30
Saratoga Springs, Lake County

New Years

Billys and Billykin
Coordinators Needed
Dates Pending

Heartwood, Humboldt County

Billy Emails

Billy Board minutes, agendas and other "official" information are available via email, separate from the gathering list. If you're interested in receiving them, email office@billyclub.org. Billenet is not a part of the Billy Foundation.

The Billy Office

Office Open: Wednesday - Friday
10am - 1pm and other times Wed -
Fri unscheduled, call for information.

Game Nights

1st and 3rd Saturdays

At the Billy office from 7pm to 10pm.
Bring games, snacks and non-
alcoholic drinks.

Billy Lunch

Wednesdays at 12:45pm
Meet at the Billy office to dine locally.

Local Socials

are unofficial get-togethers that happen monthly and usually include schmoozing, a potluck meal and heart circle. Here's contact information and their attendance policy. Some socials welcome Billykin.

East Bay Potlucks

Contact Alan Oakley at 510.436.3330
or at alanoakley@aol.com

Mendo Potluck

Coordinator Needed! Call Billy office.

San Francisco Billy Potlucks

Alternates men only/open to all
Contact G-Fry at
gregthebarbersf@yahoo.com

SonoMen

(Men only)

Contact Jack at 707.838.4193
or at jack@touchforlife.com

South San Francisco & Santa Cruz Area

Coordinator Needed!
Contact Lou Ceci at 650.969.9556
or at ceci_lga@yahoo.com

The Billy Times

should be published four times per year and included with gathering calls. We need a regular editor. Please contact the office if you can help! To subscribe to the Billy Club's mailing list, send a \$25 sliding scale yearly subscription fee. Short on cash, send what you can afford. Your renewal date is noted on your address label. Contact us at:

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Ukiah, CA 95482
Voice 707. 462.0766
Fax 707. 462.0827
office@billyclub.org
Resource Coordinator:
Marcus Borgman

The Billy Times

Temporary Editor: Marcus Borgman

Board Meetings

Are open to all Billys and Billykin on the 3rd Sunday of each month. Two meetings a quarter are at the Billy Office with the third month in Sonoma County. Call office for location details.

Board of Directors

President: Charlie Seltzer
Vice President: Paul Mueller
Treasurer: Robert "Goat" Conrad
Secretary: Jim Burke
with Bill Blackburn, John Cwiakala
More board members are needed!!!

Ongoing Board Portfolios

BESF: Wil Gonzales, Paul Mueller,
Bob Kuder
Gatherings: Rick Nevitt-Lamantia
BillyFon: Jason Bellecci-Serinus
Billy Boutique: Bill Murphy
Billy Times: **Volunteer needed!!!**
Website: **Volunteer needed!!!**

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