

2013 Annual Regional Recap Report

San Jose/Silicon Valley - South Bay, CA

Prepared by: RealGirl, South Bay Regional

In 2013, our announce list grew by almost 9% (to 911) while our yahoo discussion list grew by about 6.5% (to 242). The Facebook page has 835 followers (a growth of almost 40% over last year). A MeetUp site was established in April 2013, and we have 69 members already. People can find us on-line in multiple ways:

Burning Man Regionals Page: <http://regionals.burningman.com/regionals/north-america/south-bay/>

Web page: www.southbayburners.org (which is being renewed/revamped in early 2014)

Regional Scoop email (push communication): southbay-announce-subscribe@burningman.com

Discussion group: southbayburners-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/sbburners

MeetUp: www.meetup.com/south-bay-burners

Twitter: www.twitter.com/southbayburners

Individual events for monthly meet & greets and other activities are created on Facebook and Meetup, posted on our webpage, and are included in our regular “Regional Scoop” newsletters that are posted to the announce list and discussion group. Twitter is used to post more immediate reminders of events as they occur.

Nineteen theme camps submitted their names and playa locations to be included on our website for 2013 (although over 30 theme camps have members who live in the South Bay):

8POD

Alternative Energy Zone Village

Camp Walter

Discofish

Hardly Davidson Café

Hair of the Dog

Hiney Hygiene Station
Iron Rose
Leopard Martini Lounge
Love Puddle
More Cowbell Saloon
Paint Your Phatootie
Primate Playground
Roasted
Roots & Vines
Silicon Village
Snowflake Village
South Bay CORE Camp
Twilight Spaghetti Theater

I make a conscious effort to vary the location of meet & greets over the year, to geographically cover the many cities that make up the South Bay and bring events closer to burners' homes to increase the likelihood that they can (and will) attend. Our roster of regional activities in 2013 included:

January – South Bay Burners Field Trip, San Jose Tech Museum
January – South Bay Meet & Greet, Cupertino
February – South Bay Meet & Greet, Sunnyvale
February – Costuming Workshop, Los Gatos
February – Burning Man Project Craft Day/Share The Love, Palo Alto
March - South Bay Meet & Greet, Palo Alto
April – South Bay Meet & Greet and Town Hall, Santa Clara
May – South Bay Meet & Greet, Redwood City

May – CORE Fundraiser/SPARK: A Burning Man Story Movie Screening, Cupertino

June – BRAF/CORE/10 Principles Booths, participation in CityCamp Palo Alto

June – 8th Annual SoulFire Precompression Regional Campout in Los Gatos

July – South Bay Meet & Greet, San Jose

July – BBQ-A-Newbie Picnic, Los Gatos

Aug – On-playa Regional CORE Happy Hour and CORE Burn

Sept – Virgin-No-More Graduation Meet & Greet, Campbell

Oct - SoulFire Annual Decompression Regional Campout in Los Gatos

Nov – South Bay Meet & Greet, South San Jose (Almaden)

Nov – Aurora Palo Alto Unveiling, Palo Alto

Dec - South Bay Santa Con

(in addition to regular CORE team meetings and build days to which the community was invited)

REGIONAL BURNS

Our 8th annual Precompression event, SoulFire 2013, was a 3-day, 2-night camping event that used many of the same volunteers who have been participating in prior regional burns. We also hosted a ranger training during our event which had 34 rangers in attendance.

Our overall attendance was at 220 people this year (down from 253 people in 2012). The event made \$665 which was applied to other regional expenses and to the fall's Decompression event (see financial disclosure, below). Comps were kept to a minimum for staff and rangers only, with no surplus to fund artists this year. For this reason, ticket prices will increase in 2014.

We continue to draw burners who have never been to a local event before, and had a good contingent of BRC Virgins as well (I host a Saturday morning Virgin's Workshop at the event for this reason.) Participants attended from South Bay Cities as well as Santa Cruz, North Bay, East Bay, and San Francisco and Sacramento, Fresno, Lake Tahoe and Los Angeles, plus a few special guests from Arizona, Oregon, Utah and Alaska! Activities at the burn included:

Theme camps: More Cowbell Saloon * Neon Chill Dome * Twilight Spaghetti Theater * Hiney Hygiene Station * Mist'r Cool * Nocturnal Lounge

Art: 2013 CORE Project elements (interactive crate decorating) * Ruckus * Wedding Arch * Red Sparrow * Interactive LED Art *

Screening of new movie: Burning Man & The Meaning of Life

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpO9bRlkQws>

Activities and Workshops: South Bay CORE Welcoming Reception * Sunset Sake * Playa Portrait Studio * Virgin Workshop * South Bay CORE Crate Decorating Workshop * Tie-Dying Workshop * Ecstatic Dance Movement * Body Painting & Theatrical Makeup Workshop * Wild Things Scavenger Hunt * Aerial Rope Performance * Costume Exchange

Music: Acoustic Theme Song Creation * Trichromatic Vibraphone

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGXmPzspJWI> * Dumah.DJ

https://soundcloud.com/dumah_dj * Nick Tara <http://soundcloud.com/naltara> * Airsun * Ellis D. * FMU * Naltara * JJ Lurid *

The fourth SoulFire regional Decompression campout was held in October and drew 85 people (down from 101 in 2012). This event is traditionally much smaller than the summer Precompression, and ticket prices don't cover expenses. This event lost \$205 (included in final accounting, below.) In addition, we had very few volunteers for critical service areas like greeters and rangers, and many of the volunteers pulled at least a double shift. If this can't be resolved well in advance for the 2014 Decompression, alternatives to a camp-out type of event, or cancellation, will have to be discussed. However, we did have a host of fun-filled activities to enjoy:

* Friday opening reception * Wienie Roast at the fire pit * Effigy Building Workshop (Build Saturday night's burn structure) * Virgin-No-More Diplomas for those who missed them at the Sept. Meet & Greet * High Tea and Petit Fours * Rope Suspension Performance * Bare Butt Bocci Ball * Tea House * Amour S'Mores * Anything But Clothes Dance * Burn The Wee Man! (Effigy Burn at the fire pit) * Sticky Monkey Nature Hike * Art Is The Spirit Made Tangible Workshop * Texas Hold'Em * Nekkid Scrabble

Music: DJ Joel * DJs R2D2 and Smudge * Live funk by Hoopty <http://www.hoopty.net> * Aota by Nicholas * The Dusty Bumm (debut theme camp)

VENUE SEARCH

The venue we use for both the Precompression and Decompression burns, Lupin Lodge, is a privately owned clothing-optional 110-acre site just 17 miles south of downtown San Jose. Lupin was founded in 1936 and its zoning is grandfathered in to the city of Los Gatos. This year, Lupin obtained a permanent county fire permit for a 4-foot burn barrel and we were able to enjoy burns at both events. A small effigy was built for the Decompression that was happily burned on Saturday night.

One advantage of using Lupin as a venue is that it has an element of privacy and infrastructure that makes it easy for a small group of people to be responsible for planning, placement, gate, etc. On one hand, many on the Lupin staff truly enjoy the burner presence and have gone to Burning Man themselves. However, due to its aging infrastructure and the fact that Lupin has permanent residents and members, and has largely transitory work-exchange staff, the level of professionalism and follow-through is wanting. For example, we often have a problem with the office staff not being adequately trained, or closing early because the staff simply does not care enough to work the full shift they have been assigned. We need to ask repeatedly for portopotties to be re-stocked with supplies. And an incident at our Decompression, in which one of our working rangers was repeatedly harassed by Lupin staff for having a service animal, created a major conflict throughout our ranger team. We will proactively hold a meeting with Lupin management by March 2014 to fully document our punch-list and event policies, including accessibility issues.

Another issue at our Decompression was due to Lupin intern residents inviting their friends to our event. These friends may have been underage, seemed to have “snuck in” through a porous perimeter, and arrived inebriated and unsafely driving. As they did not purchase a ticket and were guests of a resident, this presented quite a problem for us from both a liability and a cultural standpoint. We had several reported thefts (cell phones, tent LED decorations, a playa coat) at a rate that has not occurred at prior events, and it’s unknown how much the “non-burner element” contributed to this. Again, at the risk of sounding non-inclusive, we have to document an event policy with Lupin management to enforce separation of participants who have purchased a ticket to our event, and those who are on Lupin property for non-SoulFire reasons.

Due to the two above incidents, I received feedback from several directions that we have outgrown Lupin and need to find an alternative venue. To do this will require an increased level of participation from the community to build a full and committed event team, both to perform a venue search and to distribute event lead activities to responsible people. An initial meeting date for a Venue Search Team was set for November 25th; however, only two people responded to the call for participation and neither of those two people could actually make the meeting. Further, with the region’s finances typically at break-even (or less) there is not a “pot” to use to make a

large deposit to secure another venue. A fundraiser, or higher income from ticket sales at the 2014 Precompression, would need to be used to generate this kind of cushion. Another Venue Search Team meeting will be set in January to determine if the community is ready to take this next step.

CIRCLE OF REGIONAL EFFIGIES - CORE

After two successful CORE projects (2011 Valley of Heart's Delight – effigy of wooden laptops surrounded by an orchard, and 2012 – the Water Tower which was also surrounded by an orchard), we were invited to submit a short documentary to Profiles In Dust (<http://vimeo.com/63406948>). The majority of the “hard-CORE” crew re-enlisted for 2013. I also posted meeting dates on the southbay-announce list and on our CORE Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/SouthBayCORE>) as we formed the team, and we had 6 new people join us for the 2013 effigy. During those meetings, we democratically voted on ideas submitted by the team to select the final winner --- a model based on one of the missions that helped to found San Jose. The design was based on a “see-through church” from Belgium, using an architectural style that looks either solid or transparent based on the perspective of the viewer. As a South Bay touch, we did plant one plywood tree at the perimeter of the final on-playa construction, to echo our prior years' effigies.

We began bi-monthly build days in April, while continuing bi-monthly meetings to finalize logistics. We included an interactive CORE decorating activity at our Precompression, and invited the community to volunteer for perimeter for the CORE on-playa burn night Thursday night. We had a full complement of 22 for our perimeter crew, many of whom happily joined the LNT effort Friday morning as well. Many hands make light work, and we finished cleaning our burn site quickly enough that we were able to make a tail-gate breakfast for our own crew, then invited members from the other five CORE projects that were in our circle and who were still working on their own clean-up. It was the highlight of our week, as some of the people standing in line for breakfast burritos commented on the “Mission miracle ... I heard when they started out this morning they only had 2 eggs and 1 piece of bacon!”

South Bay CORE was self-funding as much as possible, with the exception of the Burning Man honorarium, but also did some light fundraising through yard sales. The project cost about \$4000 and we are left with about \$1150 to carry over into 2014. We're looking forward to hearing both the 2014 theme, and the requirements to submit an application for a 2014 CORE project. We are solid evidence of the community building impact of CORE!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH –

CITYCAMP PALO ALTO/AURORA PALO ALTO

We were contacted in April by the Hacker Dojo community in Mountain View about the National Day of Hacking/Hack for Change on June 1st. Some hackers who were also burners joined our announce list in 2011, and this connection set into motion two major public events in 2013.

The City of Palo Alto had already committed to participating in Hack for Change and had planned a street fair with four major themes: Connectedness, Sustainability, Resilience, and Health. This event was sponsored by major corporations but was also intended to inspire the City residents towards civic innovation, so it was a great match. The City was thrilled to include South Bay Burners and provided us with four booth spaces (out of a total of only 34 booths) at the center of the fair. We set up the booths to represent BRAF and Burners Without Borders, had a LNT interactive game, played an endless loop of our CORE project's Profiles In Dust documentary, displayed a Tri-Chromatic Vibraphone courtesy of Roy Pertchik, and provided hula hoops for children to play with as they were walking by (they were a HUGE hit!) We have a local burner who had just coached a high-school robotics team to the National Championship, who brought that remote-controlled robot to the street too ---- to the delight of many of the Palo Alto families in attendance. It was also a fantastic opportunity to meet Burners living in the South Bay who were not aware of our regional presence, and to invite them to our SoulFire Precompression event.

We got a thank-you note for participating from the Chief Information Officer of the City of Palo Alto, and another one from the City's Special Event Planner. She was so delighted at the response of the community to the South Bay Burners that she invited us to participate in an Annual Chili Cookoff (and specifically asked that we bring the Vibraphone and hula hoops) but alas, we did not get any volunteers to participate in this. But, we do have a warm and ongoing relationship with Palo Alto.

One of the other significant outcomes from CityCamp Palo Alto was the opportunity to meet Harry Hirschman and first hear about the Aurora Palo Alto project, Charlie Gadakans' 2001 playa tree (<http://www.aurorapaloalto.com>). Harry, a 2011 first-time burner, had returned from the playa and told his children about the amazing LED willow tree he had seen. The children fell in love with it, and started a grass-roots campaign at their school to raise the permits and financial backing to place Aurora in front of Palo Alto City Hall for a year. The effort also obtained support from the Black Rock Arts Foundation, and funds were raised through a massive Kickstarter campaign.

South Bay Burners were invited to participate in the unveiling of Aurora Palo Alto, and I was invited to produce the grand unveiling event on November 16th in front of City Hall. The event included a street closure to make room for a street-fair atmosphere: leaf-making and face-painting activities for families, two art cars, food booths, and an LED light-bulb giveaway booth sponsored by the Palo Alto Utilities Commission. An estimated 300 residents of the City of Palo Alto were in attendance, and about 40 burners. Speeches by the Mayor of Palo Alto, the Superintendent of Schools, the Public Arts Commissioner, BRAF, and Charlie Gadakan were delivered from the second story of the Kazbus art car. LED poi spinners and hoopers were recruited from the South Bay Burner and South Bay Circus Arts communities, and they cleared a pathway along the red carpet for the magic moment when the “switch was flipped” at dusk. More hooping and playa-style music closed out the evening. More details can be found on Aurora’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AuroraPaloAlto>.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

We started the year 2013 with \$20.25 in the LLC bank account and ended the year with \$35.38, with a debt to the Regional of \$586.89 (CORE funds were accounted for separately). Significant expenses include LLC annual filing fees, bank fees, and web hosting/domain and subscription fees. As the South Bay is an LLC with me as the sole managing member, I realize a small benefit from this on my personal tax return. But, I still have a goal of establishing some reserves for art funding and in case we need to find a new venue for our SoulFire events.

Specifics are as follows:

SoulFire Precompression – Ticket Sales	\$10,920.00		
SoulFire Precompression - Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$9,100.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Event Insurance		\$ 624.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Paypal Ticketing fees		\$ 247.98	
SoulFire Precompression – Printing Expenses		\$ 282.63	
NET FROM PRECOMPRESSION			\$ 665.49
SoulFire Decompression – Ticket Sales	\$ 3,840.00		
SoulFire Decompression – Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$3,200.00	
SoulFire Decompression – Event Insurance		\$ 658.00	
SoulFire Decompression – PayPal Ticketing Fees		\$ 68.16	
SoulFire Decompression – Printing Expenses		\$ 119.01	
NET LOSS FROM DECOMPRESSION			(\$ 205.17)
SOUTH BAY BURNER OPERATING EXPENSES:			
Semi-annual MeetUp Fees		\$ 114.00	
Bank Service Charges		\$ 116.00	
Internet Domain and Hosting Fees		\$ 95.13	
Annual LLC Dues		\$ 449.00	
BBQ-A-Newbie Picnic – Payment to venue (Lupin) / equivalent to City Park Permits paid in prior years		\$ 200.00	
Printing and Office Supplies – CityCamp Palo Alto		\$ 73.08	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES			(\$1,047.21)
TOTAL UNRECOVERED OPERATING LOSS			(\$ 586.89)

SUMMARY

This year marked my 9th year as Regional Contact and also my 7th year attending the Regional Summit. The demographics of the South Bay Burner community are unique, in its proximity to the “mother ship”, major theme camp tribes in San Francisco and Oakland, huge art building cooperatives in the area (The Box Shop, The Crucible, American Steel, etc.) and a very active creative/cultural scene in SF (Makers Faire, Anon Salon, Howeird Street Fair, and other traditional monthly events). It’s a challenge to create an identification with the South Bay as the home base for burner activities, but both through frequency and variety of outreach our numbers continue to grow.

I’d like to make sure that we focus equally on having fun and on community-facing events, with interactive and imaginative public art (such as Aurora), and to connect the burner community with a way to manifest the 10 Principles in daily life. I look forward to seeing how the Burning Man Project helps set an example in this arena, and I’m committed personally to finding a way to steer the South Bay beyond the “event mentality”. I still believe we can change the world!