

2014 Annual Regional Recap Report

San Jose/Silicon Valley - South Bay, CA

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In 2014, our announce list grew by almost 9% (to 990), a consistent rate with last year, while our yahoo discussion list grew by about 5% (to 254). The Facebook page now has 1,105 followers (a growth of 32% over last year). The second year of our MeetUp group has already attracted 161 members (an amazing 110% growth over last year). People can find us on-line in multiple ways:

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

Web page: www.southbayburners.org (which was completely revamped in early 2014)

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

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.

Thirty theme camps and their playa locations were included on our website for 2014 (although we know of over 40 theme camps with members who live in the South Bay):

8POD

Alternative Energy Zone

BAAAHS Station

Black Rock Kwoon and Dojo

Black Rock Vineyards

Burning Band

Cabana Club

Burning Man T-Shirt Factory

CAMP?(questionmark)

Camp Illuminaughty!

Camp Nice Nice

Camp Mini Man (inside Camp Walter)

Catch and Release

Darwin Fish Tank
DiscoFish Landing Strip
Dust Circus
Dusty Bumm
Edison's Electric Bicycle Gang
Free Photography Zone
FreeStyle Palace
Hardly Davidson Café
HOTD
Hiney Hygiene Station
I'm OK, You're OK Corral
Iron Rose
Leopard Martini Lounge
Love Puddle
Moon Cheese
Noctorno Lounge
Nose Fish
Orphan/Endorphin
Petting Zoo
Poly Paradise
Primate Playground
Radio Free Burning Man
Sextant Camp
Silicon Village
South Bay HardCORE Regional Camp
The Last Word
Twilight Spaghetti Theater
Vines Without Borders

Our ongoing challenge is to facilitate local burners' identity with the region, as well as with their campmates. 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 2014 included:

January – Venue Search Team Meeting, Santa Clara
January – South Bay Meet & Greet, Sunnyvale
February – South Bay Meet & Greet, Los Gatos
February – Costuming Workshop, Los Gatos
March - South Bay Meet & Greet, Palo Alto
April – South Bay Meet & Greet, Campbell
May – South Bay Meet & Greet, San Jose
June – 8th Annual SoulFire Precompression Regional Campout in Los Gatos
June – Virgin Workshop, San Jose
June – Evapotron Workshops, Palo Alto

June - Impossible Light (Burner Movie Screening) in San Jose
July – South Bay Meet & Greet, Mountain View
July – BBQ-A-Newbie Picnic, San Jose
Aug – On-playa Regional Happy Hour at South Bay HardCORE Camp
Sept – Virgin-No-More Graduation Meet & Greet, Campbell
Oct - SoulFire Annual Decompression Regional Campout in Los Gatos
Nov – South Bay Meet & Greet, Sunnyvale
Dec – South Bay Meet & Greet, Santa Clara
Dec - South Bay Santa Con
(in addition to regular Souk team meetings to which the community was invited)

REGIONAL BURNS

Our 8th annual Precompression event, SoulFire 2014, was a 3-day, 2-night camping event. This year, we had rock-solid volunteer leads for Placement, Greeters, Music, LNT, and Rangers who have been participating in prior regional burns. We also hosted a ranger training during our event which had 39 rangers in attendance. Comps were kept to a minimum for staff and rangers only, with the specific intent to create an art-grant fund and to develop a financial cushion for future venue deposits if needed. Ticket prices were raised by \$10 over last year (which had been announced in last year’s Afterburn and ARRR).

Our ticket count was at 294 people this year (up from 220 people in 2013). The event, our main “fund-raiser” of the year, yielded \$1406 which was applied to our regional operating expenses (see financial disclosure, below). Despite our best intentions, our venue permitted 35 attendees to pay a “day rate” and they were not charged our share of the ticket price. Another failure of the venue’s office was a catastrophic wipe of their accounting database. As a result we had to wait several weeks to get them to manually recreate their final accounting, in which we did not have full confidence (attendance may have actually been higher than 294). For this reason, we agreed that in future all ticketing will be handled exclusively by South Bay Burners (via PayPal in advance or PayPayHere at the gate), to ensure that we have visibility and backup for the full roster of attendees.

“Day rate” admissions have been discussed among the volunteer leads, and although there is not a consensus the preference is a one-price approach, like BRC, which encourages full event participation rather than “sight-seeing”.

For the first time, Placement reached capacity for RV’s and for people sleeping in vehicles rather than tent-camping. Flat land is at a premium at our venue, and every available spot was assigned prior to the gates opening. We had 26 vehicles pre-registered and were able to squeeze in just two more who emailed after Placement closed. All others had to park on a very hilly and uneven parking lot, and in the future we will have to communicate in advance that RV parking must be assigned through advanced Placement by the deadline, and may not be guaranteed otherwise.

We continue to draw burners who have never been to a local event before, and 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, Nevada, Florida and Canada! Activities at the burn included:

Art: 2014 Souk Project elements (Occidental Oasis)

Activities and Workshops: Open Mic * Finding Your Inner Elf * Parachute Play * Aerial Acrobatics

Music: DJ SMZL * DJ Andrew Alive * DJ Scott Rich * Wit (Live Performance) * DJ Lu de Man * Hydrah (Live Performance)

We had scheduled another additional live performance by “Louis Wain & the Cats”. However, they kept demanding additional comps which we could not afford to provide, and in the end their ultimatum to “give us 5 additional comps or we’ll walk” was accepted --- we asked them to leave. We later discovered that they had gate-jumped the event to party and drink at one of the burner bars, and they were evicted from the event. One lesson here is that in the future we will not solicit non-burner musicians and we will not comp musicians. There is always plenty of music for an event of our size, whether it is for the dance floor, the pool, or camp-based music, and music does not define our event. We would prefer to provide grants and comps to artists who want to be a part of our community and participate through gifting, as the rest of us do.

The fifth SoulFire regional Decompression campout was held in October and drew 113 (up from 85 in 2013). This event is traditionally much smaller than the summer Precompression, and historically ticket prices haven’t covered expenses. This event generated a surplus for the first time ever (included in final accounting, below). In addition, we the same team leads join us in the critical positions of Placement, Greeters, and LNT and had a fantastic Ranger team. However, we continue to have an incredibly hard time getting people to help staff the greeter station/gate. As this is now a critical role (because we are handling on-site payments), we need to ask the community to step up and contribute 2 hours in one way or another to the event in the future. We happily had a better balance of activities vs. theme camps for decom:

Interactive Theme Camps: Dusty Bumm * Hiney Hygiene Station * Club Meh * Pornj Palace * Tomfoolery * South Bay HardCORE * Noctorno Lounge

Activities & Events: Hawaiian Opening Reception * Open Mic (just like Center Camp!) * Hibidome * Bubbletron 3000 * Occidental Oasis * “Before I Die” chalkboard (all weekend) * Frankenanimals * Wishing Tree (all weekend) * Charms & Potions Shoppe * Shibari Performance * Crowd-Sourced Screenwriting * Origami Cranes * Costume Exchange * Animal

Movement Workshop * Parachute Play * Midnight Grilled Cheeses * Yoga by Taissia * High Tea * Gods, Goddesses & Warriors Costume Creation * Yoga by Lorna * Bocce * Nature Hike

Music: DJ Chromie * DJ Nation

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

In November, a group of South Bay Burners volunteered at a food sorting night at the Second Harvest Food Bank and helped to sort 13,500 pounds of fresh pears for distribution to those in need in Santa Clara County. In December, we sorted 10,400 pounds of apples! It has been both fun and enlightening, so we're going to continue to make this a monthly volunteer opportunity. We'll also keep asking for canned food donations at our monthly meet & greets.

We learned that 1 in 10 people in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties receives food from Second Harvest, an astounding fact. Due to the high housing costs in Silicon Valley, there are many working poor who can't afford food. Alternatively, there are many people who get food but can't afford housing, living in their car or in tent communities such as the recently-demolished Jungle: http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_27194702/aftermath-jungle-city-is-trying-keep-other-encampments

We had a surplus in our operating fund for the first time EVER this year, and applied approximately 10% to donate rain ponchos to the homeless in San Jose (special thanks to South Bay Burner Torroid, who made an additional contribution of hygiene items, toothbrushes, and more canned food). Inspired by Detroit's Burners Without Borders backpack donation program (<http://tinyurl.com/ExampleBWB>), we would like to keep this momentum and plan quarterly giving campaigns.

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. Lupin has been granted a permanent county fire permit for a 4-foot burn barrel but due to severe drought conditions this year we were not able to burn an effigy at our event.

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. Many on the Lupin staff truly enjoy the burner presence and have gone to Burning Man themselves. This year we had a consistent contact and office workers whom we dealt with, and we met with them in advance of our events to create a "punch list" and make sure they understood our requirements.

Once again, at our Decompression a Lupin resident intern invited his 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. At the risk of appearing non-inclusive, we have had 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. This is not ideal, and we’d like to have an event with just as much of an “open door” as BRC.

We will continue to search for alternate venues, but at present Lupin mostly meets our physical needs. We had a Venue Search Team meeting in November 2013 and again in January 2014, but only two people responded to the call for participation and no progress was made. Further, with the region’s finances historically at break-even (or less) there has not been a “pot” to use to make a large deposit to secure another venue. We have taken a first step now that we are ending 2014 with a surplus, but have no alternate venues identified.

CIRCLE OF REGIONAL EFFIGIES - SOUK

The South Bay participated for all three years in the CORE project – 2011 was the Valley of Heart’s Delight “Laptop Man”, 2012 was the Water Tower surrounded by an orchard, and 2013 was Mission Umbrae. These projects really brought the community together, in the build teams (spanning 9 South Bay camps) and during the on-playa burn nights. We truly saw the Region respond to both the calls for burn perimeter volunteers, and when they surrounded us with excitement and cheers on Thursday night when the effigies were lit.

2014’s Souk did not attract the same kind of community support or involvement. We had a fun concept (“Occidental Oasis”, a wink-wink time share opportunity <http://www.occidentaloasis.com/>), but the abstract “performance art” nature of the Souk did not draw as many community volunteers as prior years. We weren’t able to staff the Souk 24/7 and often only had two people to work through the entire day. It was disappointing that the community didn’t respond to participate in the Souk, although the BRC population at large really enjoyed it. However, we don’t feel that it provided as much of an opportunity to expand on our Regional identity as the CORE projects had, and without a burn to draw people together, we didn’t see a lot of our community visit our “stall” in the Souk.

A subset of our CORE team built a small effigy to be burned at the airport in 2014, and would like to continue with that. Also for 2015, one of our CORE members submitted a Letter of Intent for a burnable piece in keeping with the theme, and there is interest from the CORE team to get building! Once we hear the process to participate in the Man Base (repurposed souk tent), I will put a call out to the community to gauge the interest in creating another interactive community

environment on-playa. We will have to at least double the size of our participants to support this, if it is to happen.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

We started the year 2014 with \$101.28 in the LLC bank account and ended the year with \$918.02, with no debt to the Regional (CORE funds were accounted for separately). Significant expenses include LLC annual filing fees, bank fees, and web hosting/domain and subscription fees. We were successful in establishing some reserves for art funding for our regional burns, and in case we need to find a new venue for our SoulFire events.

Specifics are as follows:

SoulFire Precompression – Ticket Sales	\$13,440.00		
SoulFire Precompression - Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$10,560.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Event Insurance		\$679.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Paypal Ticketing fees		\$340.91	
SoulFire Precompression – Printing Expenses		\$330.92	
SoulFire Precompression - Event Radios and Flagging		\$122.70	
NET FROM PRECOMPRESSION			\$1,406.47
SoulFire Decompression – Ticket Sales	\$6,755.00		
SoulFire Decompression – Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$4,825.00	
SoulFire Decompression – Event Insurance		\$787.00	
SoulFire Decompression – PayPal Ticketing Fees		\$183.90	
SoulFire Decompression – Printing Expenses		\$98.22	
NET FROM DECOMPRESSION			\$860.88
SOUTH BAY BURNER OPERATING EXPENSES:			
Semi-annual MeetUp Fees		\$144.00	
Bank Service Charges		\$126.00	
Internet Domain and Hosting Fees		\$98.47	
Promotions		\$20.00	
Annual LLC Dues		\$449.00	
BBQ-A-Newbie Picnic - Park dues + food		\$249.42	
Printing - South Bay Burner promotional postcards + other		\$137.64	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES			(\$1,224.53)

South Bay Burners BWB Donation (see Civic Responsibility notes)			(\$124.80)
TOTAL CARRYOVER TO 2015			\$918.02

LOOKING FORWARD

This year marked my 10th year as Regional Contact and also my 8th 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.

Returning from the Burning Man Global Leadership Conference this year, I was inspired to create a survey to poll the community on demographics and to offer an opportunity to plug in locally. Five people responded with interest in creating a Board of Directors/Advisors, and four have been participating in monthly meetings since July. We really want to host monthly activities that the supplement our “bar-based” meet and greets, and decided to use the 10 Principles to guide our efforts. We’ve set the following schedule for the 2015 Burner Year, but invite more input during our Town Hall meeting scheduled for the end of January.

Month	Meet & Greet Activity	Follow-up to Meet & Greet	Burning Man Principle
Nov	Food drive – bring a can	Food sorting at Second Harvest	Civic responsibility
Dec	Toy drive	Santa Con	Gifting
Jan	Tbd	Art Cars, Artists & Theme Camps Presentation	Radical Self-Expression
Feb	Tbd	Playa Gift Making & Costume Workshop	Radical Self-Expression & Gifting

Mar	Tbd	Graffiti Clean-Up	Leave No Trace
Apr	Tbd	Burner Swap	Decommodification
May	Tbd	SJ Bike Party participation	Immediacy
Jun	SoulFire		Participation
Jul	Tbd	BBQ-A-Newbie combined with workshops in the park such as Evapatron	Self-Reliance
Aug	Tbd	Tbd	11 th Principle???
Sept	Virgin Graduation		Radical Inclusion
Oct	SoulFire		Communal Effort

I have been putting out the call for at least one member from each theme camp to attend our January Town Hall, and invite representation on our nascent Board. Looking forward to seeing you in 2015!