

2015 Annual Regional Recap Report

San Jose/Silicon Valley - South Bay, CA

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In 2015, our announce list grew by about 4% (to 1026), which is a much slower rate than the past few years. Our yahoo discussion list decreased to 251 (down from 254, and a pretty good indication that it's no longer relevant). The Facebook page has grown astronomically to 1,715 followers (a growth of 55% over last year). MeetUp now has 269 members (a 67% 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

When first joining Facebook, a South Bay Burner “person/profile” was created which had friends. Although the South Bay Burner “page” was official, many people still had a historical friendship with the South Bay Burner “person”. In early October, this was summarily deleted by Facebook. I received the message:

“Personal profiles are for individual people only and should include a real first and last name (ex: John Doe). Facebook Pages are similar to profiles, but offer more tools for an organization, business, brand or public figure to connect with people who might be interested in them.”

I immediately sent a message to the Regional Scoop/announce-subscribe list, and posted on the Facebook page:

“The page www.facebook.com/sbburners will continue. If you were friends with the profile, you should be getting a message from Facebook about how your “friend” has vanished and can now be found at our official Page at www.facebook.com/sbburners. Please feel free to post, chat, and commune with your fellow South Bay Burners, and be sure to subscribe, as well as like, to make sure you don't miss a post or an event!”

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.

Twenty-nine theme camps and their playa locations were included on our website for 2015 (although we know of over 50 theme camps with members who live in the South Bay):

8POD	7:55 & Geek
Alternative Energy Zone	3:30 & Ersatz
Black Rock Vineyards	7:45 & Esplanade (in French Quarter)
Burning Band	9:00 & Ersatz (in Snowflake Village)
Cabana Club	4:30 Portal
CAMP?(questionmark)	2:00 & Carny
Crossroads	9:00 Plaza
Dilated Peoples	7:15 & Donniker
Dragon Clan	5:15 & Geek
Dust Circus	7:45 & Carny
Dusty Bumm	6:30 & Geek (in Sizzleville Village)
Free Photography Zone	6:00 Center Camp
FreeStyle Palace	8:30 & Esplanade
Grateful Floyd	6:30 & Geek
Hardly	4:30 & Arcade
Iron Rose	3:00 & Esplanade
Kampersia	4:00 & Esplanade
Leopard Martini Lounge	6:30 & Ersatz
Nose Fish	6:30 & Rod's Road
Orphan/Endorphan	7:00 & Arcade
Playfully Yours	8:00 & Arcade
Primate Playground	6:30 & Geek(in Sizzleville Vilage)
Sextant Camp	6:30 & Esplanade (in Dustfish Village)
Silicon Village	6:00 & Ephesus
South Bay HardCORE Regional Camp	6:30 & Geek (in Sizzleville Village)
T-Shirt Factory	8:45 & Ersatz
The Last Word	5:45 & Hanky Pank
Twilight Spaghetti Theater	7:15 & Donniker
VR Camp	3:00 & Carny

Our ongoing challenge is to facilitate local burners' identity with the region, as well as with their campmates. Monthly meet & greets seem to be the most successful way to attract new people (either from unconnected theme camps, or new people planning to go to Burning Man for the first time.) I make a conscious effort to vary the location of meet & greets over the year, to geographically cover the many cities and areas of San Jose that make up the South Bay --- and bring events closer to burners' homes to increase the likelihood that they can (and will) attend.

Beginning in late 2014, I started meeting with a volunteer "planning committee" on a monthly basis. This group had responded to an online survey which invited South Bay Burners to be involved in creating a Board of Directors. This group of people decided that rather than join the LLC or be a formal Board, their preference was to work in the background. We meet for dinner monthly and they assist in planning upcoming events --- and also help me as a sounding board.

We made a conscious effort to develop more events, and more variety of events, so that our gatherings were not exclusively bar-focused. We decided to use one of the 10 Principles as a new theme each month. We wanted to launch a South Bay Burners Without Borders chapter, too, to develop Civic Responsibility.

Our roster of regional activities in 2015 included:

January – Venue Search Team Meeting, Santa Clara
January – South Bay Meet & Greet, South San Jose
January – Art Cars & Theme Camps Workshop, Los Altos
January – South Bay Burner Town Hall Meeting, West San Jose
February – “Radical Self-Expression” Costuming Workshop, Los Gatos
February – South Bay Burners Without Borders – Food Sorting @ Second Harvest Food Bank
February – South Bay Meet & Greet, Palo Alto (@ under-21 restaurant to be radically inclusive!)
February – South Bay Burners Without Borders – Food & Gift Bag Distribution
March – “Leave No Trace” – Graffiti Removal Workshop, San Jose
March – South Bay Burners Without Borders – Food Sorting @ Second Harvest Food Bank
March – South Bay Meet & Greet, Los Gatos
April – “Decommodification” – Burner Swap and Picnic, West San Jose
April – South Bay Meet & Greet, West San Jose
May – “Immediacy” – San Jose Bike Party Participation
May – South Bay Meet & Greet, Cupertino
May – South Bay Burners Without Borders – Food Sorting @ Second Harvest Food Bank
June – “Participation” – Ninth Annual SoulFire Regional Precompression Campout, Los Gatos
June – South Bay Meet & Greet, Sunnyvale
July – “Self-Reliance” – BBQ-A-Newbie picnic, Fremont
July – South Bay Meet & Greet, Mountain View
August – South Bay Meet & Greet, On-Playa
September – “Radical Inclusion” – Virgin Graduation Ceremony, Campbell
October – “Communal Effort” – SoulFire Regional Decompression & Campout, Los Gatos
November – South Bay Meet & Greet, San Jose

December – South Bay SantaCon – San Jose/Sunnyvale/Mountain View/Redwood City

This was a total of 25 South Bay Burner events in 2015, compared to 19 events in 2014. Three events per month seemed to be too many for people to want to attend, and in the end only the organizers showed up for the non-meet & greet events. The most obvious conclusion is that the Civic Responsibility and Burners Without Borders-oriented events are not where this community's interest lies. This has been a disappointing lesson for me personally, but as has been true historically, burners who live in the South Bay tend to identify most strongly with their own theme camps as their community. There are still some individuals who would like to continue with BWB-type efforts, but we don't have a critical mass to continue monthly efforts.

CONSENT, B.E.D., AND BANNING PARTICIPANTS

For the first time, we have had to take a stand to ban certain participants from our events. These decisions were not made lightly, individually, or without serious investigation. In each case, Rangers were consulted and participated in conversations with the accused before making a decision. Two participants were banned from future participation in SoulFire events, and two others were banned from attending any South Bay Burner events. One participant was banned due to a 3-strikes record of breaking the sound policy at SoulFire.

The two banned from attending South Bay Burner events were accused of sexual misconduct and in one case, there was a threat of a criminal complaint. As a result of these incidents, we launched a vigorous Consent/B.E.D. education campaign to highlight the topic in the community. Greeters at the gate at SoulFire Decompression reviewed a B.E.D. poster with each participant, and some of the theme camps also had B.E.D. posters to host “bed buddy” conversations.

Many people are drawn to Burning Man by stories of the freedom, experimentation, and sex-positive acceptance. Burners are a huggy, playful, and rowdy bunch. And, per the Radical Inclusion principle, we welcome the stranger. And we love to gift, but Self-Expression also states that “the giver should respect the rights and liberties of the recipient”.

How about if we add RADICAL RESPECT to the way we treat ourselves, and others? Consent and Respect are a foundation of our community, and sexual aggression is not an equivalent to “self-expression”. We exclude new people from our community and drive them away when all they see is sexual experimentation. Surely we have a lot more to offer to newcomers than that first impression?

REGIONAL BURNS

Historically there has been a very low percentage of volunteerism for SoulFire. SoulFire as an event cannot continue without a growing and dedicated base of people who make it happen. In

2016, there will be a call to form an Event Board of Directors to drive SoulFire moving forward. This BoD will need to include roles for people responsible for recruiting, treasurer, staffing, space planning, publicity, DPW, venue liaison, gate, LNT, art, music, and more. If you have an interest in an ongoing SoulFire regional event, stay tuned for an announcement to apply for the Board.

Our 9th annual Precompression event, SoulFire 2014, was a 3-day, 2-night camping event. This year, we had 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 33 rangers in attendance. Comps were kept to a minimum for staff and rangers only, and ticket prices remained at \$70/\$80 at the door, with the specific intent to create an art-grant fund and to develop a financial cushion for future venue deposits if needed.

Our ticket count was at 304 people this year (slightly down from 294 in 2014). The event, our main “fund-raiser” of the year, yielded \$4,494 which was applied to our regional operating expenses (see financial disclosure, below). We successfully implemented PayPalHere at the gate and were surprised to find that 45 people paid a \$10 premium to pay at the gate rather than pay in advance (advance ticket sales ended only 2 days before the event started.) In addition, 20 people paid the \$10 premium and also paid cash at the door. That means slightly over 20% of our attendees were “unplanned” and we didn’t have visibility to infrastructure or placement for them. In the future we might look at a tiered payment scale with a much higher “last-minute” cost to change this kind of behavior.

Placement was again at full capacity for RV’s and for people sleeping in vehicles on flat areas. This is the major constraint of our venue, which we will not be able to expand. A consistent approach to Placement means that we have to manage this on a first-registered/first-accommodated basis, and we probably have to turn away people who don’t make an immediate decision to register. We have not yet reached full capacity for tent campers.

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 Israel, Ukraine, and Colorado, Utah, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, New York and Florida! Activities at the burn included:

Art: Cool Cube Conundrum * Dream Machine * The Love Mirage * Giant Scrabble

Activities and Workshops: Open Mic * Virgin Workshop * Prayer Flag Making Workshop * Acupuncture Workshop * Reiki Workshop * Parachute Play

Music: DJ Andrew Alive * DJ Scott Rich * DJ Dark Cherub * Hibidome

We decided last year that 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.

However, we want to encourage art at our event and in keeping with last year's decision to provide art grants, two artists were each funded \$200 to bring art to SoulFire Precompression. We'd like this tradition to continue ... so watch for the announcement about 2016 SoulFire art grants!

The sixth SoulFire regional Decompression campout was held in October and drew 153 (up from 113 in 2014). This event is traditionally much smaller than the summer Precompression. We had mostly the same team leads join us in the critical positions of Greeters and LNT and had a fantastic Ranger team, and an experienced DJ Wrangler.

Interactive Theme Camps: Ali Bar Bar * Game of Burns * Hiney Hygiene Station * Club Meh * Pornj Palace * Camp S{ha(w)(ea)n(a)} * Pornj Palace * 8-bit Bunny Bar * Club Meh! *

Art & Activities: The Love Mirage * Smoke n Mirrors: Moai + Sphinx * Chalk Art Car

Music: DJ Zen * DJ Scott Rich * DJ Stuart * DJ Test

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

In 2014 we had a surplus in our operating fund for the first time, and applied approximately 10% (\$125) to donate rain ponchos to the homeless in San Jose. Inspired by Detroit's Burners Without Borders backpack donation program (<http://tinyurl.com/ExampleBWB>), we wanted to keep this momentum, and to plan regular giving campaigns. As mentioned above, a South Bay Burners Without Borders group never gained momentum, but we'd still like to support Burners Without Borders with our 10% donation this year. We've got \$610 to spend, and it is being sent to the Lake County (Middleton, CA) Tool Library to provide a communal resource for people trying to rebuild after this year's disastrous fire. If you would also like to make a contribution to the BWB Tool Library, follow this

link: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/?ie=UTF8&cid=AK73SUJ9WHNZY> and read more information

here: <http://burnerswithoutborders.cmail20.com/t/ViewEmail/t/9487A4DC8E0560AC/AB7B3263C5FB63600F8C96E86323F7F9>

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.

We will continue to search for alternate venues, but at present Lupin mostly meets our physical needs. While this means we are able to hold events there without major infrastructure costs, it is not entirely ideal for us. 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. After increasing the prices for SoulFire, we do have a major surplus this year which will be put into savings for a deposit or other advance payment when and if we need it for a future Precompression or Decompression event.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

We started the year 2014 with \$918.02 in the LLC bank account and ended the year with \$5,110.13, with no debt. We were successful in establishing some reserves for art funding for our regional burns, and to use as a down payment or advance if/when we use a new venue for Precompression or Decompression.

Specifics are as follows:

Total Carryover from 2014			\$ 918.02
SoulFire Precompression – Ticket Sales	\$19,880.00		
SoulFire Precompression - Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$13,000.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Event Insurance		\$952.00	
SoulFire Precompression – Paypal Ticketing fees		\$567.25	
SoulFire Precompression – Printing Exp + Ofc Supplies		\$466.83	
SoulFire Precompression – Art Grants		\$400.00	
NET FROM PRECOMPRESSION			\$4,493.92
SoulFire Decompression – Ticket Sales	\$9,940.00		
SoulFire Decompression – Payment to venue (Lupin)		\$6,893.75	

SoulFire Decompression – Event Insurance		\$893.00	
SoulFire Decompression – PayPal Ticketing Fees		\$290.76	
SoulFire Decompression – Printing Expenses		\$223.36	
NET FROM DECOMPRESSION			\$1,639.13
SOUTH BAY BURNER OPERATING EXPENSES:			
Semi-annual MeetUp Fees		\$179.88	
Bank Service Charges		\$ 60.00	
Internet Domain and Hosting Fees		\$ 99.27	
Annual LLC Dues		\$449.00	
Burner Swap Picnic + BBQ-A-Newbie Picnic - Park dues		\$360.00	
Printing & Office Supplies		\$131.43	
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES			(\$1,279.58)
South Bay Burners BWB Donation (see Civic Responsibility notes)			(\$661.36)
TOTAL CARRYOVER TO 2016			\$5,110.13

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!