

Two Thousand and Nine, the Year that Was

Well, dear friends and colleagues, the year draws to a close. Los Angeles had a dynamic year of growth and change; or, more to the point, the Los Angeles Regionals had a dynamic year of growth and change. Los Angeles just kept doing its thing, and continues to.

We however had an almost complete personnel shift, with 2 Regional Contacts departing for greener pastures, 3 new ones coming on board, and the sole remaining original Regional remaining on for a period of 18 months. We also have 2 titled Steering Committee positions, with more to follow.

A large part of this year has been defining our roles, establishing our procedures, guidelines, and institutions, and determining our relationship and responsibilities to the community.

We've quite successfully and painlessly settled into our roles in terms of our areas of interest and expertise, and our personal interactions. We've at long last severed our accounting from the main Project accounts (although we're still friends) and established our bona fide Regional entity (The Los Angeles League of Arts) and accounting. We do have a small matter of some long-ago Dark Skies owed by Vegas Artists LLC that we continue to deal with cordially, as time and interest permits; we are not worried.

We are gradually coming to grips with the unique nature of our beloved city; Los Angeles County is rumored (by the amazing and illuminating but unscientific Black Rock Census) to be the largest community of Burners off-Playa, but it also approximately 10 million individuals in 88 incorporated cities. Even when we just talk about our dear city (although one of us lives in one of the other 87) it is a huge and sprawling metropolis of 3.8 million and almost 500 square miles.

The nature of service to such a large and varied community remains a matter of some debate; our opinions are not fully formed, and not unified. We seem to be settling on a two-tiered approach, doing a few large Region-wide events such as Decompression, and a shotgun approach of small and free happenings. In addition, the burn community (loosely defined) throws lots of events of all sorts and size which we promote.

As for the large:

Los Angeles Decompression 2009 had an incident-free year due to at least in-part better relations with law enforcement and new safety procedures. Venue pressures and increasing budgets forced us with a heavy heart to raise ticket prices and attendance fell, however. We did manage to put 100% in the bank and send \$171 to Burners Without Borders, showcase a great amount of community art, performance, and costume, successfully manage 200+ volunteers, and strengthen our relations with LAPD and our local City Council district. Goals here are to either drive down venue costs at either the existing venue, or prior one (the mean streets of LA), or a new one to enable us to raise

funds, while continuing to have a safe, family-friendly showcase and meeting point for our community.

An unofficial test-run of a Untitled Area Regional Event, held during Burning Man 2009, went very well (it was produced on a shoestring and was incident-free), offering a home away from home for those unable to make BRC this year for period ranging from a few hours to a full week about 3 hours from LA. Plans were to also build a core of volunteers, strengthen relations, source local vendors, build ties with the local community, and troubleshoot a large0scale (1000 person plus) event in 202. Unfortunately, we've lost this Burner-owned venue, as well as a backup State Beach and associated campground, so we've shelved plans for an April 2010 Regional Event at this point while the venue hunt continues.

As for the small:

We held a series of small events in 2009. Underlying goals were to strengthen our core of activists and volunteers (lovingly referred to as Nerd Outreach), offer opportunities for interaction, and have fun. These included a series of pre-event Tent Shakedowns in a park, a Town Hall Meeting (with ice cream social), Newbie Orientation, bowling, film trips and a series of SWAPs(Stuff with a past) where community members exchanged gear, costumes, fabric, and such. These were all produced on a budget of zero, with the exception of the aforementioned ice cream. These small events will continue in the New Year, expanding to bi-monthly or possibly rotating pub night, among other things. Long term goal is that one of these will really catch on and then be spun-off within the community, as someone decides to start a pub night (for instance) on the Westside on the alternating week or some such.

Our communication strategy is also solidifying. We continue to develop our own website, while maintaining the 4000+ subscriber Announce list. We've started an official Facebook page and Twitter stream (2400 and 550 members, respectively), and welcome the efforts of a few unofficial LA Burners Facebook pages (350 and 850 members) whom we don't see as competitors. The rough master plan is to create a central destination for discussion and events on our official website as an option for community, while also using platforms such as Facebook.

Cheers and best wishes for the New Year.

LA Regional Website – <http://laburningman.com>

Facebook page – <http://facebook.com/laburningman>

Twitter – <http://twiter.com/laburningman>

To have your event added to the announce – send an email to:
<mailto:la-townmail@burningman.com>

To subscribe or unsubscribe to the announce:
<https://lists.burningman.com/mailman/listinfo/la-announce>