

2014 Los Angeles Annual Regional Report

2014 was the year to keep the wheels going and gain a little speed. The train has left the station and as a cohesive unit the LALA board and the LA Regional Contacts are working together to build a stronger LA Burning Man community.

TOWNHALL MEETING: Our 6th Annual Town Hall Meeting and Ice Cream Social was again a huge hit. One of the biggest topics was what to do about LA Decom. The park where we hold the event was closed for renovation. We needed to know from the community what they wanted to do. We had two basic choices... move to a different location or take a year off. After much discussion with some wonderful suggestions, it was decided to create a survey for more of the community to participate in the decision making process. We also announced the 3 Newbie Orientation dates, the success of our neighborhood monthly burner meet-ups, the Souk project, the Santee Aquaponic Garden, and BEquinox theme. There were approximately 120 people in attendance.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARK: In April, the LA State Historical Park closed for renovations. We were told they would be done and reopen around the fall of 2015, just in time for Decom. They held their Earth Day celebration at another park and we were again invited to participate with our drum circle and to teach drumming. In December, we received a call from State Parks that they were behind schedule and would not be done in time for Decom 2015. Once again this will be a topic for discussion at our next Town Hall Meeting.

LA LEAGUE OF ARTS: We continued holding monthly board meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of every month. We created a combined board to include the RCs in all meetings. Each meeting is held at a different person's home where we have a pot luck dinner, then get down to business. In 2015, the community will be electing 3 additional board members to LALA for a total of 7 board members.

BEQUINOX: Our inaugural 2014 was our second event. Human Spirit in the 2013, Mythos in 2014 overnight camping event was a truly rousing success with a high level of community participation. We had almost 1,000 Burners present for the three night event that concluded with the burning of "Chronos", an hour glass. Artists, Performers, Art Cars, and Theme Camps all stepped up to make the event feel like we had transported six square blocks of Black Rock City 700 miles south and six months in time. "BEquinox" asks participants who they would like to BE, what they would like to BE, and allows them to BE. The planning is well underway for BEquinox 2015 "Imagine" March 19-22, 2015.

NEWBIE ORIENTATIONS: This year we again hosted 3 Newbie Orientations due to the large amount of Newbie's going to Burning Man and also the geographic size of Los Angeles. The first one was in May, then June, and July. Each one was in a different part of Los Angeles and each one had about 30 people in attendance. Our July Orientation was hosted by California State Parks at the Baldwin Hills Overlook (one of the most beautiful places in LA). We covered an amazing amount of information then opened it up to the veterans to add their best practices tips and tricks for making your playa stay more enjoyable. Even the old dogs learned new tricks.

LA BURNING MAN ARTS AND SOUK FUND RAISER: Since we were unsure about LA Decom at this point (still looking for venues) we used our summer fund raiser event to help artists get their pieces to Burning

Man and raise funds for our regional Souk project, “Burnerwood.” We coined this our Pre-Premiere Party complete with a photo opportunity on the red carpet as you walk in and attendees dressed up in burneresque red carpet attire. We had DJs in one room and 12 installations in another. About 320 people were in attendance. Here are pictures of our fun Step and Repeat wall.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152239448495547.1073741830.90089800546&type=3>

SOUK PROJECT – “BURNERWOOD”: (Cathleen) The regional souk projects were intended to elicit participation while providing a creative, interactive experience that was a reflection of the region. To this end, the Los Angeles project, “Burnerwood,” was a spoof on Hollywood movie-making. Participants were given a few lines from a classic movie and then were offered some basic costumes and props, and then acted out those lines. The parts were then picked up by the next participants, who enacted the next lines, and so on. We enlisted the help of volunteers in order to run the souk, so it was participatory on every level. We had a core group of approximately 50 people who participated in making the souk happen, and hundreds of participants from all walks of Burner life at the event. We finished shooting one movie and part of another. Our version of “The Princess Bride” is still in editing, but we were treated to a preview at the annual “Blissmas” fundraising event and it promises to be a funny, silly showcase featuring all kinds of Burners. The result was a glorious shit-show of impromptu creativity that delighted cast, crew, and onlookers on playa, and resulted in an amazing collaborative movie and bonus scenes for everyone to enjoy from our LABurningman.com website. The feedback from participants at the event was very positive, and the feedback from some members of the Org was also extremely positive.

LA DECOM: We conducted a survey right after the Town Hall Meeting and asked the community 3 questions. We take the year off and come back rocking in 2015 – 165 votes

We do a smaller event at a location similar to where Blissmas was held this past December - 159 votes

Go back to the streets for one year – 52 votes

According to the answers it seemed like the majority of those who took the survey wanted something, so we started looking for a location to hold LA Decom. We found 3 different locations that each fell through for one reason or another. The last one was a wonderful warehouse that really wanted us to do our event there. It would have been perfect but there was a TV show shooting and if they ran even one day late it would run into our event. Neither us nor the warehouse wanted to take that chance. With one month from our event date we pulled the plug and postponed the event till 2015. You cannot say we did not try. And ultimately the community was happy to have the year off too.

AQUAPONICS AT SANTEE HIGH SCHOOL: Now in our 3rd year of planning, this project has proven to be very ambitious. This is a very large garden which will be incorporated into the curriculum of every class at the school. 2014 was spent figuring out which departments at LAUSD needed to approve our plans. There was quite a bit of confusion but now with members of the school board working with us we are on track for a build in 2015. <http://laleagueofarts.org/what-we-do/school-gardens/>

MONTHLY BURNER MEETUP: Seeking a way for our region to get to know each other between major events, we followed San Diego's successful lead and created meetups at a local burner-owned bar, The Other Door. Our first meetup was in July of 2013, and we've seen a steady increase in attendance as word gets out about their existence. The demand was high enough for multiple LA Meetups, so we have expanded to 5 locations around the region (and growing!). They are spearheaded by our regional representatives and LALA

board members who have claimed the meetup nearest their homes and actively welcome all who come. We seek out Burning Man related photos, video, and music to show and play at the meetups to help add to the playa vibe, and the local burners are taking on larger roles to keep up with the popularity. Our West Side meetup recently outgrew it's first location and thanks to enthusiastic burner DJs (who act as liaisons to the venue and recruit musical talent) it's become The Place To Be on the second Sunday of the month. All locations bring videos and visuals to liven things up (several nights we've broken out the VCR to play video filmed on the playa in 1997-98!). We have found a delightful mix of virgin and veteran attendees; all seem to enjoy the new connections they make at the meetups, as they cross the usual friend/camp/BM Organizational boundaries. Future plans for additional meetup locations throughout the LA region are in the works.

WHITE BLISSMAS CHARITY BALL: We ended 2014 with the 3rd Annual "White Blissmas" Charity Ball raising and distributing funds for "BEquinox" participation. The event again was a huge success. It was held at a burner owned establishment called The Other Door. We fenced in the parking lot and filled it with 20 participation installations and 2 effigy possibilities. All attendees were given 10 tokens to vote on their favorite projects. According to the percentage of votes each installation received, they each were awarded that percentage of our \$15,000 grant pool. And they also voted on which of the two effigies would receive the \$4000 build grant. We called the grants, "participation grants" because anyone who was creating something for "BEquinox" could participate in this fund raiser; whether it was a performer, a troupe, a single art installation, a theme camp, a sound camp, a dinner, an art car...you name it, as long as it was participatory and for "BEquinox". Grant requests ranged from \$200 - \$3,100. Everyone received at least 50-75% of the amount they requested and six received full grants. Everyone dressed in their white holiday finest and celebrated the endless possibilities we create as a community. 200+ community members attended. Much like last year, the best part was watching artists gain new members of their teams, finding engineers to help, and working with other artists with similar goals to join forces and funds to create something even bigger and better for "BEquinox". Very inspiring. <http://www.ohtony.com/3rd-annual-white-blissmas-charity-ball/>

NEWSLETTER: Regional representatives Plaid and Gloria took over and revamped the sporadically-sent newsletter in January of 2013. The newsletter is now a weekly resource for the LA burner community, giving the Los Angeles area both an outlet and a resource much as the JRS has done for Burning Man community. The weekly newsletter, modeled in part from the old text JRS, serves both local and playa-centric burner news, entertainment, participatory opportunities, projects to support, event listings and even a fun tips, tricks and wisdom section. We encourage community members to submit their news, projects, writing/videos, events (and more!) with a handy-dandy submission form. Thanks to community input, we've taken a special effort to include more than just thump-thump dance nights in the newsletter, and are proud to share our community's wide variety of events that reflect the variety that is L.A. Once our website is revamped, our goal is to follow the BM Org's lead and send an HTML-based newsletter that is automatically populated from the submission form, rather than hand-made from our form-populated spreadsheet.

WEBSITE: We are still in the process of redesigning laburningman.com to become a central location for all things LA Burning Man. Gloria & Plaid have developed a detailed outline of the new site from the ground up (the old site will still remain as an archive/time machine), and have recruited information architects, designers, and programmers to make their ideas into reality. We now have wireframes and the main design done, and the project is in the hands of a coding team. The new site will be a learning tool for those new to Burning Man AND those new to the Los Angeles Burning Man region. The site will be a hub of connection, with links to theme camps, art projects, performers, all social media connections, and official events such as Decom, "BEquinox", "LA Meetups", and "Newbie Orientations". Soon, we will be reaching out to editors, blog contributors, and more to help create an informational hub for both the Los Angeles community and beyond.

SOCIAL MEDIA: A Burning Man's main social media outlet is our rapidly growing Facebook page, with more than 17,000+ likes. The LA regionals, with the help of two very enthusiastic burners (CuriousJosh and Media Mecca maven Cathleen Cotter), update the page frequently with content from the weekly newsletter and topics to spark conversation. There is also a lively LA Burners discussion group on Facebook: LA Burners, which, thanks to being rescued from spammers and maintained by CuriousJosh and a team of caring burners, has grown to almost 5,000 members. This year we set up several neighborhood-based burner pages that have proven very successful. Because Los Angeles is so spread out it is helpful to organize burners based on where they spend most of their time. We also utilize several other social media outlets, such as Twitter, Flickr, and Instagram which are gaining popularity.

WEBSITE: <http://www.laburningman.com>

OFFICIAL LA BM FACEBOOK PAGE: <https://www.facebook.com/laburningman>

LA BM DISCUSSION GROUP: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/laburners/>

LA BM CLASSIFIEDS ON FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/laburnersclassifieds/>

NEIGHBORHOOD PAGES:

LA Westside Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/257235737806589/>

Marina Del Rey Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/mdrburners/>

Mid-LA Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/821130194646902/>

LA Eastside Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/585233488252295/>

Sherman Oaks Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/424135387705289/>

Ventura Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/213251618712595/>

SFV Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1427582770841884/>

SGV Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/737952119603850/>

Shadow Hills Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/737734156266217/>

Inland Empire Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/504880352976923/>

Long Beach Burners ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1375456069381889/>

LA Burners Over 60 ~ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/694995190616079/>

INSTAGRAM: <http://instagram.com/laburningman>

TWITTER: <https://twitter.com/laburningman>

FLICKER: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/laburningman/>

ON-TOPIC EMAIL DISCUSSION LIST:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LABM-Discussion>

OFF-TOPIC EMAIL DISCUSSION LIST:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LABM-OffTopic>

MORE INFORMATION:

For questions: la@burningman.com

Now to look towards 2015 and all that we can accomplish together as one.

Respectfully Submitted,

LA RCs: Athena Demos, David Wedeen, Jenn Ramsey, Gloria Lamb, John Simmons

LALA Board of Directors: Athena Demos, Deb Stiers, David Wedeen, Esquire Jauchem