Kids have always been a part of Burning Man. When Jerry James and Larry Harvey first burned a Man in 1986, they included their sons, Trey and Robin. Trey was six. Robin was seven years old. On that afternoon the boys worked alongside their fathers. With a little help and the aid of a glue gun, they produced the Burning Dog: the Man’s best friend. Since then, children have always participated in our community. Burning Man has become a gigantic playground for children as well as adults. Seen through a child’s eyes, Burning Man can be a wondrous experience. Playing alongside grownups and freely expressing one’s self in a world that’s so receptive is not only healthy—it is healing. Viewed in contrast with a world where children are routinely segregated from adults and parked in front of television sets, Burning Man can be revelation.

However, it is equally true that children have needs that are different from those of adults. They require special care and attention. In order to meet these needs, the first and most important requirement is that parents communicate with their children. Burning Man is like a kid’s cartoon. While its content is not nearly as violent as most children’s entertain- ment, it certainly is eye-jailed with novel images and new experiences. This is why we ask all parents to take the time to talk with their child about any day’s experience. Such daily debriefings can be very rewarding—for ease, in fact, than trying to discuss the more mundane world of schools or television. This is because Burning Man is an experience that both parent and child can actively share and create.

Our most important advice to parents is this: The single factor that most affects children at Burning Man is your willingness to communicate with your children in a way that allows them to express their own impressions of experience. In the spirit of radical self-reliance, it is your duty at our event to assume complete responsibility for your child at all times. At Burning Man, however, this duty can become a real delight. This is your chance to see your world as it is or as he perceives it. In other words, what children witness is very far less important than how they actually experience what they encounter. If something that is unexpected has disturbed your child—a “monster,” anything that’s incompletely under-

standing—your child should take time to discuss this with them. Pay close attention to how your child looks and imagines the world. Considering the way we lead our normal lives, you might never have a better opportunity.

Black Rock City houses a community and, as in any other community, its citizens also have a responsibility for the welfare of chil-
dren. This year, we plan to enhance Black Rock City’s family-based resources. Artists will be encouraged to perform in Kådiwelse, our partic-

ant-run village for families with children. Special art tours will be organized for Black Rock City’s youngest citizens. Families who wish to affiliate with Kådiwelse should contact this group in advance of our event. For more information about this village please contact kids@burningman.com.

As in previous years, Kådiwelse will be featured on our city map. We encourage other families to camp near them between streets 4:30 and 5:30 to create a family quarter. Adult oriented theme camps will be asked to camp at a distance from Kådiwelse, and all participants should show respect for both its purpose and its boundaries. This is the kind of geographic solution to the problem of potentially conflicting uses that we have employed in the past, skin to separating walk-in camping from autosizable travel or locating large- scale sound installations at the far ends of our city.

Likewise, in 2004, we will request that all adult oriented theme camps take responsibility for restricting the access of children to sexually explicit activity. These camps must employ doorknockers, sunscreen on duty to prevent minors from entering such environments. This follows models that are used in any city. Parents, however, must assume primary responsibility for the safety and well being of their children at all times, and families who do not behave responsibly will be asked to leave our event.

Burning Man has an exemplary record in regard to children’s welfare. Over the years, we have experienced no incidents of child abuse, molestations, abductions or serious injury. But every parent’s worst nightmare is losing track of a young child in a public setting. In order to prevent this from happening in 2004, we encourage parents to equip young children with identity bracelets that indicate who they are and where they live. Participants who encounter unaccompanied children are encouraged to ask them, “Where is your adult?” If a parent isn’t present, a Black Rock Ranger should be summoned. A commu-

nity that truly cares can make a difference. This has been our approach to other social concerns, to the problem of litter, to the problem of human waste disposal. In both of these instances, community-wide action has triumphed.

Black Rock City has grown into the magical and magical place it has become for three primary reasons. One is our steadfast support of the ideals of community. Another is our ban on commercialism and commerce. The third is our willingness to adapt to the changing needs of our citizens and the environment. In this respect, children are symbols of our city’s success. In the fourteen years since the founding of this city, people have come and gone, fallen in love, even married here, and now it follows that they would return with their kids. In fact, the fastest growing trend in Black Rock City has become family reunions in which three and even four generations are present. This more we, as a community, welcome these newest citizens and accommodate the needs of families, the more Black Rock will resemble an actual city. It will truly represent the attributes of life well lived. 
A Spreading Fire

Wherever Burning Man communities arise they tend to embody the unique characteristics of their organizers and their region. The motto of Burning Beach, the Santa Cruz Burning Man regional group, is “include yourself, include others,” and regional contacts Roxanne and Jim Graham have been practicing what they preach for more than three years. “We’ve got some amazingly creative people in the Santa Cruz area. Fostering a community that showcases their talents is a lot of what motivates us,” Jim said. “A lot of Burners, here and elsewhere, do amazing things, and one thing we do is help them get visibility for their work.”

Burning Beach’s first community event was showing a film at a local community center. 500 Burners and non-Burners showed up, some driving more than 80 miles to attend. That film showing has evolved into a dailying Burning Man film festival that drew 400 attendees in 2001. The event included art installations, miniatures, theme cars, and a talk by Burning Man Director Larry Harvey.

“It’s hard enough being an independent filmmaker, let alone doing a film about Burning Man,” Jim said. “We view the festival as a way for filmmakers to get visibility for their art while at the same time building community among Burners and people interested in learning more about Burning Man culture. We always schedule it about a month after the desert event when everyone is jonesing for a taste of the playa.”

The festival so well received that it’s now packaged as the Film Festival in a Box. The do-it-yourself kit includes a menu of short and feature length films, complete with instructions concerning promotion and event management.

The festival recently returned to London and is about to begin touring other regional communities. The goal, Jim and Roxanne say, is to publicize the work of filmmakers while providing regional communities with a way to raise funds for local projects. This year, in addition to raising funds to support regional activities, their regional group also donated $1000 to the Second Harvest Food Bank in the name of local Burners.

“One thing that’s important to us, in addition to building bonds within the Burner community, is connecting with other community groups,” Roxanne explains. “That was the genesis of the quilting project.” Santa Cruz County is building a women’s and children’s shelter. After talking with local Burners, Roxanne approached the shelter organizers and offered to make quilts to decorate the shelter when it opens at the end of this year. “We’ve got some remarkably talented tailors and costume makers in our community. They’ve all pulled together to contribute to the shelter,” Roxanne said. “We’ve even got people who don’t know how to sew but who want to help. Considering how much fabric there is to cut into squares, that’s a godsend.”

Other projects Jim and Roxanne have been involved in include developing a website for the local first performance groups, Nocturnal Sunshine, helping host “ET. Nemo” Larrieu find a home for the Art of the Americas, the former San Francisco city bus where submarines that has plied the seas for the past two years.

Some of the most popular regional projects are those that reside on the Burning Beach website (www.burningbeach.com). Local photographer Richard Jones donates a CD of his annual photo graphs of Black Rock City, Jim and Roxanne post photos as computer desktop images for people to download. Roxanne has also compiled a 96-page book of recipes for the playa that is hosted online. The “recipes are surprisingly popular,” Roxanne said. “Most of them are great tasting meals you prepare in advance of the event and reheat on the playa. Sotttess, who wants to cook out there?”

Over five years of growth and evolution, British Columbia’s Burning Man Vancouver (BMV) has embraced a diverse range of individuals and activities. Town hall meetings, art camps and crafts fairs, film screenings, fire spin jams and parties are just some of the happenings that keep fires of the Black Rock Desert burning. This community now hosts two large annual regional Burn events, Reconnection and Shine in the Forest.

Reconnection was the first large-scale event created by BMV. By two years of being hosted at urban indoor venues, Reconnection moved to a rural children’s camp on the Sunshine Coast in 2001. “We needed more diversity,” and reps collective member Judy Franklin.

“This environment allowed us to expand beyond offering just themes spaces and music.” Access to several buildings situated on a beautiful, forested ocean side property allowed a fuller blossoming of the community’s potential. Workshops, film performances, friendly “cabin crawlers,” an open mic stage, group rituals, communal meals and the burning of a large wooden art structure added more depth, intimacy and variety to the experience. “It’s an amazing show of community participation, just like on the playa, except effortless and lush,” enthused Squalline, a key organizer.

Shine in the Forest (SITF), BMV’s annual family camp, holds place deep in a coastal forest valley, alongside a glistening river, under snow-capped peaks. This rustic gathering is under the visionary direction of Divine Krele. The site is home to a sacred Squamish totem circle, a congregation point for shared experiences. The EmoDome and a homemade wood-burning hot tub are two popular temporary additions to the campsite. Ecological sensitivity means that Leaves No Trace principles are paramount at SITF. In interests of conservation, BMV clean-up crews visit the site in the weeks and months before and after the event, to ensure the integrity of the land is maintained.

The three-person Regional Contact Group, formed in 2001, plans events that encourage community participation. Several other groups provide important contributions to each event. The Parallels collaborative exchanges ideas and resources for community projects. Fire performers from the Wet Rock Fireflies create host regular spout sessions and workshops that attract participants from all over the Northwest.

Braving Billy and the Spider Shining Eye (David Chase) - photo by Gabe Berliner

It’s a good bet that most Burning Man participants would object to be intrusion of political ideas on their enjoyment of liberated time on the playa. Life is being lived on such a grand scale in Black Rock City that to breach the subject of social strife in our “real” lives back home can feel like a drag. For the majority of the honest and introspective towards a moment of calculus and transcendence occur. What could be worse than to be ruling an enormous, glowing white castle of postapocalyptic lack, surrounded by fascinating, beautiful, hell-baked people, only to be asked what one thinks of Nader’s latest run for office?

The hospitality of many Burners to political thought at Burning Man is born of a healthy desire to prevent their vibrant cultural scene from being bypassed by opportunists with narrow agendas of one sort or another. Who knows—had the participants and organizers of Burning Man been less savvy from the start, the event might have degenerated long ago into a political rally that would have left everyone feeling righteous and morally superior, but culturally and spiritually bereft.

If “politics” consists only of the uninspiring platitudes of career politicians and the droning of media commentators, let’s leave it behind when we pack up our trucks and head into the desert, along with the excessive packaging we remove from our consumables.

On the other hand, if “politics” has another meaning, in words often do, we don’t want to lose the baby when we dispose of the dirty bath water. “Politics”—“from ‘polis’, the Greek word for city—is also the word we use to describe the ongoing debate about what kind of world we want to live in, and the various strategies for how to get there. Rather than a medical term for a distant, remote, but the ripples of energy it sets in motion are felt all over the world, beyond the boundary of our own boundaries. First-time visitors to Black Rock City often report odd feelings of disorientation on returning to the so-called “real world.” Our intense experience as active participants in a city organized around social pleasure, artistic creativity and the exchange of gifts makes for a glancing, uncomfortable contrast with our lives at home or as mere passersby or consumers. To visit Black Rock City and enjoy it is also to ask, on some level, why can’t our life he like this all the time? What can be changed to bring our lives into line with our dreams, hopes, desires, and expectations? To ask these questions is to think politically, in a particularly radical way.

Many people make more or less drastic changes in their own lives after attending Burning Man—we eventually find some way to bring the wilderness and spontaneity home with us as we work with friends to stage performances, create guerrilla art installations, organize benefits, and create many other kinds of social projects. Essentially, we end up plugging into a wider community, and just in the Nevada desert, but at home where we live. Some of us drift away from Burning Man itself, but we keep the fires of Black Rock City burning in our back yards.

When you consider the sheer volume of inter-connectedness and socialization growing out of Burning Man, all of it centered not on generating wealth for corporations or power for politicians,
BICYCLE CITY

What does Black Rock City have in common with San Francisco, and Portland, Oregon? They're all top-rated cities for bicycling! If you're already a regular biker, welcome comrades. BRC is your city! What? You don’t ride a bike in your off-playa life? Friend, you’re in for a treat. Now is your chance to immerse yourself in the joys of bike culture in the world’s most interesting pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city!

In 2004, BRC will encompass streets stretching 15 miles, and it will be a 200 feet in diameter. The Man itself will be almost half a mile from Center Camp. BRC is large enough, the experience vast enough, and the desert environment just pain enough to make biking an ideal pursuit. A bicycle offers the perfect combination of mobility and sustainability. Marvelously, at the glittering social heart. Burning Man is about direct experiences and immediate, participatory and interactive, being in touch with other people, and, don’t I say it, being in touch with one’s soul. This space is where your bike and sweat can take you.

Have you experienced the joy of performing endless figures spins on the deep playa in theink of night? Away from the hubbub, the event site is easy quiet and the stars hang in plum little galaxies. Some say that nothing could be moister than a morning breeze blowing up your skirt as you pedal calmly toward Center Camp for a cool coffee. Unexpected art will materialize out of the dust. Godzilla Shines! Have a fabulous conversation with a friendly person, leave an offering, stroll BRC for a while. On a bike, you’ll avoid heatstroke, a bathroom is never more than a few minutes away, ice runs are a breeze, and your camp is closer than you think. You’re cut off from nothing and no one.

Riding on the playa is a magical experience. However, the playa will not magically fix your bike, nor will the Burning Man Project. Before you leave for the desert, make sure your bike is in good working order. In preparation, ride that thing! If there’s a problem in your home town, it easily will in Black Rock City. Is something going swish? Are the tires getting flatter at the minute? Do rusty and sanded cables murmur “stamina” in the wind? Who would you call a junkie, does the bike keep going straight? If you can answer “yes” (and I don’t know in acceptable exam) then you have some work to do.

You are responsible for fixing and maintaining your bike before and during the event. At Burning Man, this practice is called radical self-reliance! If you can’t fix it yourself, your home town bike shop can, usually for a very reasonable fee. Don’t wait! Better yet, remember that Burning Man is also a self-sufficient effort. Someone must know someone who is a bike mechanic. How about a home town bike-tuning picnic, a party, a fund-raiser, or an ice cream social?

Once your bike is properly tuned up, you can begin to decorate it. Reduce your chances of collision and increase your chances of easily finding our in the dark of night: Cover it with reflectors, put LED light on it, install a lamp and a warning device that sounds or pulses. “Yelling? Hey! Look Out!” doesn’t work. Bring a lock to deter theft and accidental bike appropriation. Bring basic tools and parts such as an air pump, tires, and two extra inner tubes per bike. If you’re part of a large camp, bring a designated bike mechanic or come prepared to adopt one.

Here are some pre-playa tune up tips:

- Wheels Prepares for tales and tire troubles; inflate the tires well before you go, and bring a patch kit, tire pump, and spare tubes.
- Chains If yours is merely rusty, use a “dry” style lube. (Ask at your local bike shop). If it’s frizzed (with completely meaningless lubrication), then you’ll need to get a new chain.
- Brakes & Shifters Do they work? Does the bike change gears well? Does it brake well?
- Nuts/Bolts/Screws Is anything loose? Tighten everything you can, with a firm twist.

CARS, CONTINUED FROM P1

and one another. Burning Man organizers were justifiably proud of this change. They had triumphed over the tyranny of the automobile. This accomplishment, however, must be viewed in relation to one of the fundamental facts of modern life: people always want a ride. And Americans, in particular, always seem to want a ride, whether in a car, truck, or bus. The automobile is a great national myth. Liberty and convenience, freedom and ease—these values could, with justice, be imprinted on the money. Remember, these are our inheritances to the generations of consumers a culture.

Because of this almost irresistible impulse to employ motorized transportation, we face a new and serious challenges in 2004. Having once stopped the onslaught of cars that beset our great in the future, having introduced participants to the profound values of unadulterated experience based on one’s own strenuous efforts, we now confront a renewed thrust to both the safety and our rules or the safety of others, will be lowered and impounded. For an explanation of our general poli-

cation concerning vehicles, consult http://dmv.burningman.com/ at Burning Man. All vehicles must be registered with the DMV in advance of the event, and they must be inspected and licensed at DMV headquarters before they are allowed to operate. Applicants should be aware that it is not enough to do a chop job on aProcedure, decorate it with paint and tint, and call it art in order to obtain a ride for the duration of the event. This year Burning Man’s Art Department will join with the DMV in evaluating applications.

The art car movement in this country has a long and venerable history. Many brilliant works have appeared on the plays, and most serious art car creators are members of a very responsible community. Burning Man, we like to think, has helped to make real contributions to this genre. We welcome mobile art of every kind, and we hope to see more examples of this unique form of self-expression in the future. But we are asking everyone who contemplates the creation of a mutant vehicle in 2004 to first ask themselves a few questions. Am I creating this vehicle just to have a rode or give a group of friends a ride? Am I willing to make my artwork more visible in some way that contributes to our community? Will I endeavor to create the most beautiful and visionary movement to? What art car movement in this country has a long and venerable history. Many brilliant works have appeared on the plays, and most serious art car creators are members of a very responsible community. 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There is a size at which dignity begins; further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe. —Thomas Hardy

The Ancients thought that the trajectories of the stars described a cosmic dome. Lights that moved erratically within this vaulted space were labeled deities. Today we know that these are planets, like our earth. They whirl around the sun, a yellow star belonging to a galaxy we call the Milky Way. A well-known scientist … once gave a public lecture on astronomy … At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: “What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.” The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, “What is the tortoise standing on?” “You’re very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady. “But it’s turtles all the way down.” —Stephen Hawking

A wandering Muslim merchant stopped a Hindu Brahmin who was lecturing on the structure of the universe. It was, said the Brahmin, supported on the back of an elephant. What supported the elephant, asked the merchant. A turtle, answered the Brahmin. What supported the turtle, asked the merchant. Another turtle, answered the Brahmin. What supported that turtle, asked the merchant. Suppose we stop asking questions, suggested the Brahmin. Scientific theory tells us that the energy that now pervades the universe was once compressed into a single point with no discernable dimension. Time and space did not exist; no then was there, no there was there. This means that once this “singularity” began to grow it happened everywhere and nowhere all at once. The density and temperature of this extraordinary state, we’ve been informed, were infinite. But recent theories now suggest that this may not be true, and very different states may have preceded this event. Hidden beneath its “event horizon,” a world may once have existed in which space was infinite, matter scarce, and temperatures extremely cold. Yet, whether we choose to believe it or not, some scientists agree that it is possible to trace things backward to a kind of initial point, an instant out of which all time and space sprang into being. Evidence makes clear this was a very violent birth. We call it the Big Bang.

According to recent estimates, within one trillionth of a second, this proto-universe expanded to approximately the size of a turtle. This represents an increase in the size of the observable universe one thousand times greater, if measured by percentage, than its expansion during all ensuing history. This follows from the fact that inner space, the microcosmic world of quarks, electrons, and neutrinos, is even deeper than the universe we see at large. Considered on the scale of the infinitesimally small, even-solids objects are analogous to outer space. This world and all those who inhabit it are mostly made from emptiness.

Within one second ATB (After the Bang) nucleosynthesis—the beginning of a process that produces atoms—had commenced. A few hundred thousand years after that, photons freely moved through space. In earthly terms, the universe has expanded. Within five hundred million years, the first amorphous galaxies had condensed. Today, astronomers detect these storms of stars across a span of nearly 34 billion light years. Between these distant smudges and ourselves, they count at least one hundred billion galaxies, a multitude that is equal to the stars within our Milky Way.

The farthest objects we observe are alarmingly bright light sources called quasars. They radiate more energy than a hundred normal galaxies combined. This curiously bright light is caused by friction. Great Niques of matter—at gas and dust and floating space debris—are pouring toward the densest objects in the universe. The mass of those colliding entities is thought to be millions of times that of our sun. Each generates a field of gravity that captures photons—not even light escapes them. This action reproduces a drastic warping of the fabric that comprises space and time. Anything that enters the event horizon of a “black hole” crosses into oblivion; matter stretches till it discombobulates, time slows down until it’s nearly standing still. Beyond the distant realms of quasars, we encounter a uniform wall of absolute darkness. All we can detect there is a vast field of invisible radiation. Pulsing out of this abyss as microwaves, it permeates the universe.

Yet even this enormous panorama represents a very partial glimpse of the created universe. Our view is limited by the speed of light (a light beam travels 5,880,000,000,000 miles in one year). The pages you are currently reading, for example, actually existed about a nanosecond in the past. The image of the moon you see from Earth is really history. It is one and a half seconds old by the time it appears on your retina. This means that the farthest objects we are able to detect, located nearly 15 billion light years from our planet, are really light-years miles of a very ancient past. We stay at speckled ghosts that heir the origin of things. This so-called background radiation that assaults our universe is a giant host signature. It’s all that’s left of the corollation that created time and space. It is the last blush of the Big Bang.

The observable universe is really only an infinitesimal part of the actual universe. The original bubble of self-contained spacetime, beginning as a microscopic speck, has continued to expand beyond the hypothetical “now” in which we remain stranded. Current observations tell us that the rate of this expansion is accelerating. Recent theories also indicate that, beyond this greater cosmos that we cannot see, other and very different universes may actually exist. In the words of string theorist Brian Greene, “… our universe may merely be one of the innumerable frothing bubbles on the surface of a vast and turbulent cosmic ocean called the multiverse.”

Image courtesy of NASA

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The farthest objects we observe are alarmingly bright light sources called quasars. They radiate more energy than a hundred normal galaxies combined. This curiously bright light is caused by friction. Great Niques of matter—at gas and dust and floating space debris—are pouring toward the densest objects in the universe. The mass of those colliding entities is thought to be millions of times that of our sun. Each generates a field of gravity that captures photons—not even light escapes them. This action reproduces a drastic warping of the fabric that comprises space and time. Anything that enters the event horizon of a “black hole” crosses into oblivion; matter stretches till it discombobulates, time slows down until it’s nearly standing still. Beyond the distant realms of quasars, we encounter a uniform wall of absolute darkness. All we can detect there is a vast field of invisible radiation. Pulsing out of this abyss as microwaves, it permeates the universe.

Yet even this enormous panorama represents a very partial glimpse of the created universe. Our view is limited by the speed of light (a light beam travels 5,880,000,000,000 miles in one year). The pages you are currently reading, for example, actually existed about a nanosecond in the past. The image of the moon you see from Earth is really history. It is one and a half seconds old by the time it appears on your retina. This means that the farthest objects we are able to detect, located nearly 15 billion light years from our planet, are really light-years miles of a very ancient past. We stay at speckled ghosts that heir the origin of things. This so-called background radiation that assaults our universe is a giant host signature. It’s all that’s left of the corollation that created time and space. It is the last blush of the Big Bang.

The observable universe is really only an infinitesimal part of the actual universe. The original bubble of self-contained spacetime, beginning as a microscopic speck, has continued to expand beyond the hypothetical “now” in which we remain stranded. Current observations tell us that the rate of this expansion is accelerating. Recent theories also indicate that, beyond this greater cosmos that we cannot see, other and very different universes may actually exist. In the words of string theorist Brian Greene, “… our universe may merely be one of the innumerable frothing bubbles on the surface of a vast and turbulent cosmic ocean called the multiverse.”
The shining metal cylinder at the center of the observatory will form a podium. From this elevated platform, artist-scientists will launch experiments. These performances should in some way interact with the universe, no message will be sent without approval. Participants will vote by jumping up and down upon a supercharged light beam through the observatory’s open canopy. Precise calibration will carefully aim this light beam directly at stars and their possible planetary systems. All participants will be invited to transmit encoded messages. This information will be visible as a vibrational signature along the length of the beam. Since caution is advisable when speaking to the universe, no message will be sent without approval. Participants will vote by jumping up and down upon a special measuring device.

Burning Man’s 2004 art great cycle has concluded. However, everyone is always welcome to: create and display his or her art at the event. If you wish to install theme-related art on the open play, please contact thethemeart@burningman.com. We are ready to dedicate your artwork and any that is given by all participants, and we will help you to accurately site your piece in the desert.

It is obvious that we must regard the universe as extending infinitely, forever ... or that we must regard it as not extending.

Both possibilities go beyond us.

—Scientific American  March 13, 1921

The location of the observatory will correspond to the position of the Sun within our solar system. The concentric streets of Black Rock City, whose courses seem to orbit it, will assume the names of planetary bodies. After the Esplanade, those will consist of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus and Pluto. The farthest street at the back of our city will be called Sedna—the most distant object known to orbit our sun. With a surface temperature of minus 400 degrees Fahrenheit, this icy planetoid is known after an Inuit goddess who is said to have created all the life forms of the Arctic Ocean. Black Rock City’s radiating streets will be named as in previous years, after the hours and half-hours as indicated on a clock.

At the opposite end of our city, far out behind the Burning Man and the observatory, an enormous crescent-shaped temple will float within the space beyond our solar system. This quarter-mile-long sculpture, entitled the Temple of Stars, will correspond to the centering edge of our galaxy. Designed by artist David Boat, it will feature a forest of lamp-bearing spires. By night, these lights will gleam like stellar bodies in this outer gulch of space. As in previous years, this intricately crafted temple will be a repository of remembrance. Participants are invited to etch the names of friends, lovers, and family members, mourned for and lost, who have departed earth. A monumental gateway at the center this Temple of Stars will form a coronal portal, an entrance to the realm beyond our local neighborhood in space.

We invite you to explore this open-air gallery. Scattered about this great arena, many of Black Rock City’s largest and most impressive artworks can be found. At night, you may wander past on enormous semblances of giant space-time bubbles or pass within the vicinity of a mile-high tetrahedron designed to measure the exact position of the sub-business corner of outer space. Finally, if you journey far enough, you will encounter the pentagonal boundary of the 5 square miles that comprise our city. Beyond this frontier, you will face the 400-square-mile void that is the Black Rock Desert. Here, peering in the stillness of the desert night, far from crowded streets and glaring lights, accompanied only by the moon and stars and the great shining arc of the Milky Way, you will confront a space that may go on forever—or may not. #

The Temple of Gravity by Zachary Coffin — photo by Gabe Kirchheimer

The Temple of Transformation by Ben Cohn & David Mitty — photo by Billy Munk

Pyrotechnic prelude to the Burn — photo by Marype Peat

The vaults to the Plan as seen from the Bayou of Transformation — photo by Rick Reyes

TheXdreams by Celder Daniel — photo by David Huang

Life of Stars by Brian Laidlaw — photo by Marype Peat
Art and participation are the life and breath of the Burning Man experience. When we have walked even a few feet on the cracked, dry lakebed many of us call home or helped erect the ever-morphing, definition-defying mirage that is Black Rock City, we know that many of our memories are shaped by these artistic visions.

Larry Harvey sees the Black Rock Arts Foundation and the Burning Man Network as working in close coordination. “Our Regional Contacts automatically becomes members of BRAF, and a representa- tive group of contacts will serve on the network’s grant advisory committee. We want to learn from them firsthand about what the greater community needs. When we first launched the idea of a Network, some folks thought we were creating a franchise or a means to tax local event revenue. Others and we thrilled self-expression. We haven’t done these things. I think people were speaking from their fear of losing what we’ve all created together. Frequently, they find themselves in conflict. Resources went unshared, and plans were not coordinated. He urged his fellow Burners to consider all the possibilities, no one’s fund-raiser or anything large & solid enough to prevent the sound from traveling backwards. The maximum power amplification is 300 watts. If a problem with

Johnny on the Spot by Saul Melman - photo by Gabe Kirchheimer

The Labyrinth by Todd Overman - photo by Robert Burnett

Bikes on the Beat by David Melman - photo by Luke Richardson

There will be no Bike Camp in Center Camp this year. We are encouraging all bikes in Black Rock City to share resources and information among themselves to help pedal powered creatures to be self reliant with minimal needs. To this end we have created the Bike Mechanic’s Guild, anyone with expertise on bike repairs is automatically a part of an informal network. There will be a special meet and greet early in the event for all participating bike mechanics to help kick start the Guild. We will be spread out in the Washoe Wash. If you are interested in being a part of the Guild, or would like to join our bike list, please contact bikes@burningman.com.
but on cooperatively creating a better life for thousands of people, it becomes clear that the world is being changed—incrementally, in ways that are difficult to quantify, but changed for the better.

This tendency within the Burning Man community towards inter-connectedness, mutual aid, the forging of life-long alliances—runs counter to one of the most disturbing patterns of social life in contemporary societies. In the United States and elsewhere, a quiet breakdown in civil society is taking place, with fewer and fewer people belonging to any sort of social organization (other than their places of employment—which more often than not are temporary, alien environments). Neighborhood organizations, unions, PTAs, and church groups all have suffered a decline in numbers over the past thirty years. Even bowling leagues are falling by the wayside, as Robert Putnam noted in his excellent study of this problem, Bowling Alone.

This rapid decline in the form of communities that past generations enjoyed has created a vacuum, a void that powerful forces are rushing to fill, with ominous implications for the future.

Individuals that are cut off from any face-to-face community, housed in lonely neighborhoods that are hardly neighborly, transport alone in minivans, munificent vehicles to add even from increasingly anonymous workplaces and shopping centers, are vulnerable to the manipulation of powerful voices piped into their tiny cocoon by the corporate media. We already know too well what these voices have to say: fear your neighbors! Buy more stuff!

In this world of diminished communal connectivity, political agendas based on fear and greed can spread and flourish.

The common use of the label "conser-
vatives" to describe the tendency, which thrives on keeping an isolated populate in a constant state of agitation and restlessness, is a misnomer. Nothing truly divisive is a vacuum that powerful forces are rushing to fill, with ominous implications for the future.

Bill Monroe March - photo by Lady Bee

As the radicals of Paris put in during the events of May 1968: “The only truly certain thing we know about our culture and community is that it will always resist the reduction of life to the dull, the banal, the passive and the ordinary.

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A SPREADING FIRE, continued from p2

Community is reviving these practices in a post-modern setting. Indeed, some of the earliest BM gatherings were potluck feasts. Seattle approaches community building in a slightly different way. The area has long sent a strong presence to the playa each year, with a couple thousand other participants with varying affiliations. But even this exceptionally strong showing in Black Rock City almost pales in comparison to what this community does the other 51 weeks of the year.

Critical Massie followed its debut in 2001 with a return engagement June 25 through 27 this year. This Washington state regional burn takes place on the gorgeous 80-acre property of the Lake Brunson Family Nudist Resort, with guidance from Dave Martinez, co-regional contact since November 2005. Then, after this year’s Burning Man event, SeaCompression will bring back the region’s own take on the traditional decompression party for its third installment. This event is genuinely a community undertaking, rather than a project of any one group or theme camp. The 900 attendees in 2005 helped generate a donation to the Black Rock Arts Foundation of over $6,000 in thanks for the work BRAF has done benefiting artists from Seattle and around the world. Beyond Critical Massie and SeaCompression, many major theme camps conduct year-round fundraising activities, so the community really waits more than a couple weeks for an excuse to gather. David Peterson, a regional contact since April 2002, has focused his organizing on events and activities that draw out and educates new participants, such as Burning Man 101, an informal information-sharing workshop, and the annual Newbie Picnic. In addition to all this activity, every Monday is Burn Night at the Lower Level, a local watering hole owned and operated by a group of veteran participants. In sponsoring events over the last two years, the Seattle community has steadily grown. This movement seems destined to become even stronger in the coming months and years. For example, Massie is morphing into a fully structured LLC that will provide support for local talent while working to keep the burning spirit alive throughout the year.

Although every Burning Man community is unique, successful communities appear to exhibit certain characteristics. The regional contact groups who help to organize and coordinate community activities are typically composed of individuals with different and complimentary talents. Those are people who enjoy working cooperatively with others. Like the organizers of the Burning Man event, they see themselves as facilitators of a culture that derives from the efforts of every community member. Their approach is radically inclusive. They form alliances with other Burning Man communities, as well as presenting local groups whose members may have no direct relationship with Burning Man. Their mission is to cultivate the here and the now in the communities they find themselves. They understand that Burning Man exists wherever it’s created and that its ethos can be translated into many different types of activity and experience. More than a party, more than a one-time peak experience, the culture that is generated on the playa has become the fabric of way of life.

This year, at the Burning Man event, Burning Man’s regional contacts will host a camp in Black Rock City’s civic center, Center Camp. Participants are invited to stop by and learn more about the more than 70 regional contacts and their communities. Although it’s often said that Burning Man arises out of emptiness, a year-round network of affiliated contacts now connects a majority of Black Rock City’s theme camps, artist groups and public service projects. This ever-growing world of Burning Man communities, as well as preexisting efforts, keep the burning spirit alive throughout the year.