



Bear Briefs

The Newsletter of the Heart Of Texas Bears

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FEBRUARY 2008

From the President's Den



HOT BEAR ELECTIONS

Nominees are now open for officers to serve the Heart Of Texas Bears membership. Elections will be held at the April quarterly meeting. The current board, will conclude their tenure in July. I have (and am) enjoying my time serving as your President. If you will have me for another year, I welcome the nomination. If you feel there is another person you would like in this office- that's OK too. I will continue to help out with this club in any capacity needed.

I know that Kelly Stephens has expressed an interest to continue as Vice President. He has (and is) doing an outstanding job of it- so I hope he will receive a nomination. Both Eric Miller and James Bryant have decided to end their time as officers. Each are expecting a busy year and feel it best to step down and give the opportunity for others to serve as Secretary and Treasurer. They have (and are) doing a great job of the behind the scenes paperwork and planning. Whoever takes over will have a good system set-up so it should be an easy transition.

We are also looking for someone to be the run coordinator for "Back to the Woods 4" (our annual campout at Texas Conference of Clubs). I have been informed by my husband, Eric, that I am unable to do it ☺. However, I do have a lot of records, contacts, and a "manual" of how to put n the event. Whoever takes this on will have the support of the board as well as the many volunteers needed to create an exciting

weekend. If you have the interest, please email me directly (president@HeartOfTexasBears.org).

Personally, I think being a member of Texas Conference of Clubs is one of the benefits of being a HOT Bear. If you have never been to an event there, I encourage you to check out our calendar as well as the TCC calendar here: texasconferenceofclubs.com There are weekend events year-around and its close to Austin.

THE UNRUN 2008

Speaking of runs, our annual Austin weekend called The UnRun is coming! Look for an invitation in the mail as well as on Evite. April 25-April 27 will be a fun-filled weekend with the HOT Bear Contest and Big Show on Saturday being the biggest night at our home bar - the Chain Drive. We are planning events and activities throughout the weekend to show off Austin. Open houses, parties, and unique Austin events (including Eeyore's Birthday) will all be part of the weekend.

10TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

On Sunday, April 27 from 4pm to 7pm, we will celebrate our 10 year anniversary. We have booked a boat for a cocktail party with food cruise on Lake Travis. It will be free to all current members and a small fee for your guests. Look for an invitation in snail mail as well as an Evite. When you get it, RVSP as we have to have a firm count for the caterers. The boat (the biggest on Lake Travis) has a capacity of 150 so there should be room for all.

My dog, Mook and I wish you all a Happy Valentines day!

-Peter

Sponsors

The HOT Bears are grateful for the continuing support of the following people and companies. Please support those who support us.

TapeLenders

TapeLenders Video — Outlines — Skivvies
1114 West 5th Street (78703)
(512) 472-0844
www.TapeLenders.com
10% discount with HOT Bear membership card (Sale items excluded)

Chain Drive

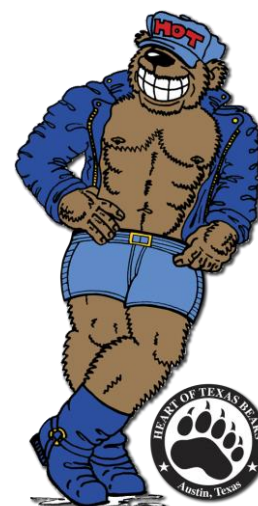
504 Willow Street (78701)
(512) 480-9017

Midtowne Spa of Austin

5815 Airport Blvd. (78752)
(512) 302-9696
www.midtowne-spa.com/austin

Phil Nelson

Registered Massage Therapist
(512) 301-3376



Nominations Open for Officers!



Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 2

Bears Day Out breakfast at 10am at **Trudy's North Star Restaurant & Bar**, 8820 Burnet Road, Austin, TX 78757, (512) 454-1474. Join us at Trudy's for their great breakfast buffet!

And, immediately following breakfast, join us for **Texas Pie Kitchen Volunteering** — The Texas Pie Kitchen has asked the bears once again to help them make pies. The Texas Pie Kitchen is part of a not-for-profit organization with the goal of training low-income residents of Austin and the surrounding community with barriers to employment. They raise money for their organization by making and selling pies. If you would like to volunteer, please contact the Secretary and he can give you all the information. No special baking skills are necessary and it's a lot of fun. If you can't help out, but you want to try one of their pies... that would be great too. Their website is TexasPieKitchen.com.

Tuesday, February 5

HOT Bear Board Meeting. Join the officers for their monthly board meeting at 7:15pm. Your input will help make the Club better!

Thursday—Sunday, Feb. 7 — 10

LUEY Weekend in Houston. Visit lueyweekend.com to learn more about this annual event.

Friday, February 8

Guerilla Queer Bar from 6pm to 9pm. See SmokingBanana.com for details.

Sunday, February 10

Monthly Bear Beer Bust at the **Chain Drive** (504 Willow Drive, Austin, TX 78701) from **4pm — 8pm**. Join the Bears for **\$0.50** draft beer. Come on down and end your weekend enjoying the afternoon with your Bear Brothers.

Friday, February 15

Bear Bar Crawl. Join us at **'Bout Time** at **7pm** for some Bear Brotherhood, good drinks, and enjoy hanging out in a bar that's not downtown. [9601 North IH-35, Austin, 78753 (512) 832-5339]

Friday — Sunday, Feb. 15 — 17

Activity Weekend at the TCC Landsite. Camp out and help work on some improvements for the Landsite.

Wednesday, February 20

Coffee With Da' Bears! Join your Bear Brothers for some friendship, fun,

and caffeine (if you like). This month Bear Coffee is at **Café Mundi**. See you there! [1704 East 5th Street, 78702, 236-8634].

Friday, February 22

Bear Movie Night. Join us at Trey and Richard's house at **7pm** for a Friday night movie adventure. Bring a pot-luck or snack item. If you've got a comfy pillow to sit on, bring that too! See your Member's Only calendar for location. The movie starts at **8pm**.

Saturday, February 23

2nd Bear Breakfast (*new location!*) at **10am** at **The Bakehouse Restaurant & Bar**, 5404 Manchaca Road, Austin 78745, (512) 443-5167. Join us for some great breakfast cooking and lots of Bear Brotherhood! (austinbakehouse.com)

Thursday, February 28

Bears Night Out dinner this month is another Bear favorite... **Hill's Café** on South Congress. See you at **7pm** (Bear Time) for some very tasty, down-home cooking. [4700 South Congress, Austin, 78745 (512) 851-9300]

Saturday, March 1

Bears Day Out breakfast at 10am at **Trudy's North Star Restaurant & Bar**.

Future Events

BearTender Certification

If you would like to serve cold, cold beer to hot, HOT Bears and at the same time help out the club... then join us in **March** as we host a TABC Certification event. This is a 4-hour, internet based class costing around \$20-\$25 where, upon completion, you will receive a 2 year certification from the state. We will be immediately following that up with a fun time afterward. Details to follow in the March Briefs and future emails.

Officer Nominations Due

March 21st — If you would like to run for office or know someone who would, have your nominations into the Secretary by March 21st. Nominations can be submitted personally (in writing), by postal service, or by email. Election of officers will be held at the Quarterly meeting on April 20th. Serving on the board is a great way to help keep the club fresh, energetic, and focused on living up to our mission statement

UnRun Weekend

April 25-27th — UnRun weekend is quickly approaching and we are looking at making this one the best one yet! We are currently looking for volunteers to help set-up, host, play tour-guide, etc. throughout the weekend to make this a great success.

If you would like to help out, or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact Kelly (vp@HeartOfTexasBears.org) or Peter (president@HeartOfTexasBears.org).

Don't forget we are also looking for contestants for the HOT Bear contest Saturday evening. If you would like to run, or know someone who would, please let us know so that we can get you more information. The contest is open to everyone (club membership is not a requirement) and is a great time celebrating our 'bearness' while at the same time raising money for some really hard working charities.

HOT Bears 10 Year Anniversary

April 27th — Can you believe it? Ten years already? My how the time passes when you are having fun! The club celebrates our 10th anniversary, and we are doing it up in style.

How does wine, cocktails, and hors d'oeuvres being served to you while you gracefully float on Lake Travis sound?

Details are in the works. Be sure to mark your calendars!



H.O.T. B.S. (Survey) Results

Pinch of concern, a dab of dialog, and an overwhelmingly cohesive club!

This is the last of the planned articles to discuss the HOTB Survey. We have so far seen that a large proportion of the membership took considerable time to express their opinions and wishes for their club. About 50% of the current membership participated in the survey, which had 72 responses. In the last two articles we reviewed the tangible results of the survey. In this article we will address respondents feelings about their club and wishes for the future development of the group. I will also address a number of concerns which were raised by the survey respondents and will offer some of my personal views regarding these concerns.

Previously we saw that members attend on average 1.3 events per month, with weekend events currently being the most popular offerings of the club; with 90% of survey responders expressing an interest in these events. The beer busts were by far the most popular event which is currently offered, these are attended by 74% of survey responders. Bear breakfast were the second most popular event, with 60% of survey responders attending. Back to the Woods and UnRuns were the third most popular events, with 50% of survey responders attending these.

The tangible views of the survey responders can certainly provide immediate guidance to both the current and future boards, with scheduling and planning of events. It is apparent that the longer running events are by far the most popular and most well known of the events, with survey responders. Therefore, it may be prudent to initially organize new events or less well attended events initially at a consistent venue and time, with broad methods of advertising, in order to allow these events to reach the full awareness of the membership as a whole.

This month we will explore the views of the survey responders regarding their feelings about their club and their wishes for their club's future development. We will view both the responders comments on the factors which unite the group as a whole and concerns that survey responders expressed. At the end of the article I will provide my personal views regarding the small number of persistent concerns which were expressed throughout the free response sections of the survey. In addition I will discuss how these concerns may be used to positively help the current and future boards and membership to continue to maintain and enrich what is currently a highly vibrant and great club. So lets first look at survey responders views on how their membership fees are spent.

Membership Fees

As can be seen from figure 1, 75% of survey responders felt that their membership fees had been well or very well spent. In fact only 1.4% of responders felt that their membership fees had not been well spent. In addition, survey respondents expressed their positive views regarding the breadth of social offerings and worthy courses supported by the club, of which their fees and individual member contributions provide.

However, a couple of survey responders commented that they did not know where their membership fees actually went. Any lack of knowledge where membership fees go, can be rectified. If there is sufficient interest by the membership, we can find a venue to publicize the monthly expenses and income of the

club. As a board we have discussed whether the Bear Briefs would be suitable venue, but it was felt that as this was a public document that this may not be the best approach. Please let us know whether you feel if it would be helpful and of interest to you to regularly see the expenditure of the club and where your investment goes. In additional, all members can view the budget and costs of the club, at the quarterly and monthly meetings.

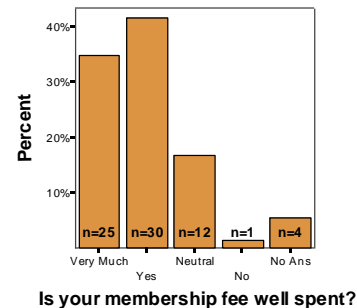


Figure 1

Reasons For Joining The Club Been Met?

In addition to the majority of survey responders feeling that their fees had been well spent, 76% of survey responders felt that their reasons for joining the club had been met (figure 2). However, 8% of survey responders felt that their reasons for joining the club had not been met. Further analysis of these respondents indicated that most of these respondents either were not current members of the group, had not currently been to any events or, in the case of a single responder, did not care for the board and its views.

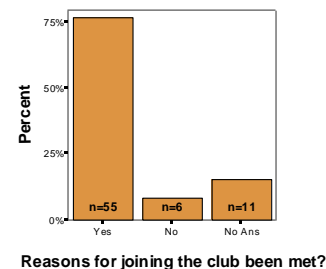


Figure 2

The views of survey responders regarding whether their 'reasons for joining the club had been met', begs the question of 'what were the members reasons for joining the club?' This was assessed through free response questions. I was both delighted and surprised with the comments, which highlighted a strong sense unity among respondents and a consistent motivation for joining the group. There was also an equally strong sense of rewards achieved through membership of the group.

Survey responders consistently and resoundingly expressed their views that they valued and obtained: camaraderie, a sense of family and brotherhood, closeness, generosity and belonging; by 'being a member of an established social group with a large membership of handsome bears'. Members also, overwhelmingly, stated that they joined the club and received from the club a social outlet, made new friends from the bear

(Continued on page 4)

H.O.T. B.S. (Survey) Results

(Continued from page 3)

community; who were welcoming, accepting, unpretentious and supportive. Survey responders appreciated and felt that the club organized a large number of venues and 'events in addition to just bars', provided parties at members homes and offered and supported charity work.

How Would You Like To See The Club Grow?

When asked how responders would like to see the club grow and develop, responders expressed a desire to see more numerous and a wider array of activities. The activities which were requested included, more private parties at peoples homes, games nights, concerts and festivals, out of town events, support of more TCC events, and more diverse events' such as 'leather and biker events'.

Respondents also expressed a desire to see more voluntary & charitable events; such as Aids Services of Austin or Habitats for Humanity. In addition to promoting charitable contributions and events, survey responders felt it was important for the group to receive recognition for its contributions and to more actively promote the club and its objectives to the public as a whole.

It was also proposed that the club grow through its offerings of activities and for more of the current membership to actively participate in events. It was also suggested that the board attend all scheduled events.

Survey respondents also proposed that the group grow by increasing its membership and the diversity of the membership; through active recruitment. However, a number of respondents stressed that the group should be mindful of both its size and of supporting its current membership.

Other Respondent Comments

Before we discuss the concerns which were expressed by survey respondents, throughout the survey, I would like to review some of the other general comments offered by respondents. Survey responders were consistently very positive and supportive of the current and previous boards. Respondents appreciated the board for both conducting the survey and admired the previous and current boards' contributions and work for the membership. In addition, respondents offered special thanks to Ed, Jack, Mickey, John, Marcus, Mike and Peter for their contributions and work for the group.

Respondent Concerns

As mentioned survey respondents expressed a number of concerns about the club, throughout the survey. These included:

- the 'hope that the group was more friendly a open than what was heard in community about the club'
- that the club was 'cliquey and elitist'
- the 'risk that the club grows too large & would break up'



Commentary

I would like to preface my commentary by stating that my *comments represent my own personal views* and *I am not speaking for the board as a whole*. My commentary is meant to provide my perspective of the survey, the club and some of my own personal concerns. I believe that the commentary can be used to promote thought and dialogue from the membership, in order for us to come together and positively shape the club and its future direction. It is my belief that only when we accomplish this as a whole, do we have a strong and long term successful club. I don't personally believe that a club can flourish without the consent and participation of a significant proportion of its membership.

Over the past several years of membership, I have felt an increasing desire to help to address a number of concerns which I had developed or observed. Initially, in part, I conceived the survey in order to determine if my concerns were those of just a single individual or if they were shared by the group as a whole. From the survey, it appears that my concerns are at least in part shared by survey respondents.

I was delighted and awed by the response to the survey and the overwhelming positive feeling that respondents expressed for the club. I was also ecstatic by the feelings of the respondents toward the club, feelings which had prompted me to join the group and which unite us as a club. I have now been a member of the group for about 3 years and joined the group when I returned to Austin and the US.

I have been fortunate to join the club without having heard any negative comments regarding the club. However, I have heard a number of comments over the years about the club, which originate from outside of the club. These include negative perceptions of the club, such as the club is a sex club and that the club is elitist or cliquey. As a member I have personally found these perceptions to be completely unfounded and am reassured that my views are resoundingly supported by the membership, through the survey.

However, I believe these concerns, and views from outside of the club, should be addressed by the group as a whole. I believe that these perceptions may have originated in the past, when the group was much smaller and had a different social agenda. In the past the group has had a more overt sexual orientation and has been more un-accepting of the broader community. It has been through the efforts and hard work of the past board, that these miss-perceptions have been indirectly addressed. This was achieved by promoting membership into the group, encouraging well attended social activities and promoting a sense of welcoming community, all of which have seen the group flourish.

The current board, are seeking to further dispel any miss-perceptions that the public may have of our community. We are seeking to accomplish this by promoting social and voluntary outreach and by cultivating an atmosphere which is both welcoming within and outside the group. In addition individual members can help dispel misconceptions from outside of the club, by positively emphasizing the club and encouraging non-members to join our events and get to know us.

As we are now a group of about 150 members, have an annual cash flow of about \$15,000 and have increased legal

(Continued on page 5)

H.O.T. B.S. (Survey) Results

(Continued from page 4)

obligations, I believe it is important that we think and open dialogue about how the group is to sustain itself and develop in the future. The group has grown considerable over the recent years, which has been due to the considerable efforts and work of the previous board. However, it is my belief that this growth has potentially generated a number of problems for our future.

I believe it is vital that we continue to support our current membership and that we continue to promote close social interaction within the membership. I also believe that if we continue to increase in size, that we must address how we are to manage an increased membership and calendar effectively. The previous board invested considerable time and effort into managing the club, promoting events and membership. However, I believe, the resulting increase in size and number of events has created additional responsibilities and time constraints for individual board members. Unfortunately I question whether this level of effort by any individual current or future board member is sustainable or even desirable. I, therefore, would recommend that we consider diversifying the number of positions on the board, so that no one board member is over burden. I also recommend that we continue to create committees to oversee our larger events and that we strongly promote individual member contributions of time and involvement in their club. I believe that is apparent from the survey that members value their club and that many members have expressed a desire to volunteer both within and outside the club. I would encourage volunteering within the club and outside.

I believe that the more members that are actively involved with managing the club, the closer and stronger our community becomes. I also feel that having more active involvement of members will help to place less time constraints upon individual members and also aid members understanding of the work that goes on behind the scenes to make this club vibrant and fun. I believe that this approach also champions democracy in our club, by increasing the number of voices who are actively involved in decision making. Ultimately, it is my belief that the group is in the hands of the membership and is ultimately the membership. And that the membership should play an active part in the direction of their group. I believe that this can represent the wishes of most members to be a part of a welcoming community of close friends.

Please don't hesitate to offer any comments or feedback to me at treasurer@heartoftexasbears.org.

—James



Hey! This is the biggest Bear event in central Texas! Last year there was a line to get in the contest doors- so, come early. We sure can pack em in!!!

HOT Bears UnRun4

April 25 & 26

On Friday, check in and pick up your run schedule. Activities planned all day on Saturday around Austin. Then join us at the Chain Drive for...

MR. HOT BEAR CONTEST

Mr. HOT Bear, Mr. HOT Grizzly, Mr. HOT Polar and Mr. HOT Cub

Details will be posted here.

We have special rates at Hotels around town. Email treasurer@heartoftexasbears.org for details

For more information: info@heartoftexasbears.org



February

www.HeartOfTexasBears.org

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 10a: Bears Day Out Breakfast Trudy's North Star, 8820 Burnet Road, Austin, TX, 78757 (512) 454-1474 11a: Pie Kitchen
3	4	5 7:15p: HOT Board Meeting North See your Members Only Calendar for location.	6	7 LUEY 35	8 LUEY 35 6-9p: Guerilla Queer Bar Location TBA See HOT Bears Web Calendar for more info	9 LUEY 35
10 LUEY 35 4-8p: Bear Bust The Chain Drive 504 Willow Street Austin, TX 78701 (512) 480-9017	11	12	13	14 Valentines Day	15 TCC Activity Weekend 7p: Bear Bar Crawl 'Bout Time 9601 N. I-H 35, Austin, TX 78753 (512) 832-5539	16 TCC Activity Weekend
17 TCC Activity Weekend	18	19	20 7p: Bear Coffee Café Mundi 1704 East 5 th St. #100 Austin, TX, 78702 (512) 236-8634	21	22 7p: Bear Movie Night Trey & Richard's Home See the Members Only Calendar for location and directions.	23 10a: 2nd Breakfast Bakehouse Restaurant & Bar 5404 Manchaca Road Austin, TX 78745 (512) 443-5167
24	25	26	27	28 7p: Bears Night Out Hills Café 4700 S. Congress Austin, TX 78745 (512) 851-9300	29	Pie Kitchen – See your Bear Briefs for more info on volunteering after Bear Breakfast
View the latest calendar information for this month and future months on the HOT Bears web site - www.HeartOfTexasBears.org						

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