

# CA Men's Gathering to Host Summer Gathering in Santa Rosa

By Dennis McMillan

The California Men's Gatherings (CMG) has announced that its Summer Gathering, "Connect @ CMG" – the 71st CMG Gathering -- will be held at beautiful Camp Newman in Santa Rosa over Labor Day weekend, September 2-5, just 60 miles north of San Francisco.

CMG ([www.thecmg.org](http://www.thecmg.org)) was founded in 1978, and has grown to be a statewide men's group of almost 4,000 gay, bi, trans, and straight men who gather for five weekend retreats and almost 200 local events every year. These events offer something for every man, including the unexpected, from the healing to the hilarious and the silly to the sacred. CMG is committed to creating safe, supportive spaces where men can find a new way to engage and connect in a drug and alcohol-free environment.

What is a CMG Gathering? Like many other retreats, a CMG Gathering is a rare chance to take a break from one's daily life to reflect; try something new; take a risk; meet new friends; and return refreshed and energized. "Unlike some other retreats, a CMG Gathering is what YOU make of it," says Gregg Cassin, organizer. "Choose from dozens of workshops, pool activities, a talent show, dances,



The CA Men's Gatherings attracted hundreds of men to a no-chemical space.

heart circles, CMG puppy piles ... or nothing at all ... it's your choice."

It has been called "summer camp for men." Some form lifelong relationships and have life changing experiences. And some just have fun.

The cost to attend this CMG Gathering is based on a sliding scale of income that ranges from \$209-467 with a \$50 "First Timer" discount plus limited financial aid available on request. This fee covers cabin lodging, all meals and snacks, and all events - with a few exceptions. For more info, call 877-984-3264 (Ext #1 for the Bay Area), or email [question@thecmg.org](mailto:question@thecmg.org).

According to the mission statement: The California Men's Gatherings creates and fosters a safe and supportive

community where we can take risks that not only educate, but also challenge, inspire, and revitalize our emotional, spiritual, social, and physical lives through local events, workshops, weekends, and CMG retreats called 'Gatherings.'

The California Men's Gatherings Inc. is incorporated as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational organization. Donations to the California Men's Gatherings Inc. are deductible to the fullest extent allowed by the IRS.

Over 200 men of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds ranging in age from 18-80 and above will attend this annual Summer Gathering.

Register now at [thecmg.org/V5/pdfs/71stCMG](http://thecmg.org/V5/pdfs/71stCMG).

## Grace and the Art of Leaving

### Parenting

Kelly Fondow

My daughter is a POET.

Through poetry she searches for herself: for her long-absent father – for the Latina deep within her – for the young woman falling into love for the first time. Through poetry she introduces me to myself, an unexpected result perhaps, but the truth just the same. Such a wonder it is, to see myself through her words.

She began this journey two years ago. Not the tentative whisper one would expect from a girl so young, but an explosive voice from the start. Today she is a POET.

And me? I have been her mother forever. Though I walked quite contentedly through life for my first twenty one years, I wasn't myself until she joined me here on earth.

From the beginning she has been my compass, my conscience, my source of energy and joy. Now, on the eve of her eighteenth birthday, I begin to brace myself. In mere moments she will leave this house. I tell myself that I will be ready. Together we have worked our way through college applications, essays and visits. We have daydreamed about life on campus, about studying abroad and writing and majors and minors. I have worked the numbers inside and out in an attempt to imagine how on earth I'll pay for it. What is all of this if not preparation for the inevitable? Of course, I know that it is time. She has been an adult her entire life, wise and strong and so full of insight. I have none of the worries that so many parents have. I need not fear for her ability to stand independently, or to make good decisions, whatever distance there may be between us.

These last few years have been, I know, a subtle form of preparation.



Kelly Fondow and RoiAnn Phillips are raising two daughters in Oak Park, Illinois.

We, thankfully, have been spared the indignity that so many mothers and daughters experience during the teenage years. There were seldom hints of that famous teenage resentment. Despite that, I know now that with great care and subtlety, she has been inching away from me. Little by little she has been focusing her energy inward. Our lives are no longer completely intertwined as they once were. Now I am grateful for the unexpected, unplanned-for moments. Our connections still come, but they are increasingly seldom. She has been leaving me slowly – so slowly that I hardly noticed at first. Her thoughts, her dreams, her worries, once so clear to me are masked today, protected.

I am a strong woman. I have had the great fortune of falling in love. Though for the first decade it was just my Grace and I, now we are a family of four. We are, as it happens, a deeply happy family. I will not be alone when she leaves for college. Far from it. And yet...

What am I without her?

I wrote these words three years ago. This morning, while the house sleeps around me, I marvel at how far we've come. Grace is home for two days, a brief interlude before she dives head-first into her Junior year. The distance that she carefully constructed between us during her late teen years has been slowly melting away. She is less guarded now, and much

more open with her trials and triumphs. She shares these things not only through her poetry these days, but through simple conversation. The child in her is still visible to the trained eye, but more and more difficult to recognize.

Our household was wobbly in the months after she left. I was an emotional wreck. My partner RoiAnn and our little Eva tiptoed around me, doing their best to be patient with me while dealing with their own sense of loss. Eventually each of us shifted and settled, in an attempt to fill the gap that Grace's absence left. Two years in, we're old pros. We just did a whirlwind 24-hour trip to Madison to move Grace from one decrepit apartment to another, bringing her back with us for a couple days of home cooking and late nights in Chicago. Eva is preparing for second grade. I'm selling houses. Roi is planning next year's conference for her organization. Life marches on – and yet, in these early morning moments before the house wakes, although my lovely poet is asleep in her room here at home, I sit here missing her. As I still do, every minute of every day.

- Write to Kelly Fondow and RoiAnn Phillips at [kellyandroiann@gmail.com](mailto:kellyandroiann@gmail.com).

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Sunday, August 28: CWO Season Opening BBQ Bash (Tilden Park, \$15 each, no limit)

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For more detailed information, visit [sistassteppin.org](http://sistassteppin.org).

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Baum has chosen to run as the Green Preat that you wouldn't need a car. "Busses every 10 minutes are not that radical when you think about it," she says. She wants free Muni busses every 10 minutes from 6 am to midnight, and every 30 minutes in the late night hours. She wants safe, dedicated bike lanes with protective barriers from car traffic, and she wants taxis with one central dispatch. How great would it be to have a city without cars, which take up so much space, Baum

imagined, picturing every garage offering up space for apartments, artist spaces and wide open streets.

Baum also wants truly affordable housing and supports the nascent squatters group "Homes not Jails," which occupied the Sierra Hotel on July 5 of this year. "I don't believe in the property owner's right to keep that building empty for 19 years," Baum said. This SRO has approximately 40 units, but has been empty

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at its core it skewered the banalities of her social circle.

Visiting the current exhibit on Gertrude Stein at the Contemporary Jewish Museum it's obvious that Gertrude and Alice understood that they were living their politics from their hand painted wall paper ("Pigeons on the grass, alas!") to their collection of gay male artists friends to the iconoclastic circular linguistics Stein favored.

Simply saying who I am—a lesbian, feminist of color who writes—is making a political statement; the power comes in saying it out loud so others can hear and come to terms with it. And one day, if the Na'vi have to fight for their culture again, Zoe Saldana will be the lead hero; but I'm happy as long as the blue people win.

Jewelle Gomez is a writer and activist and the author of the double Lambda Award-winning novel, *THE GILDA STORIES* from Firebrand Books.