

*Read this invitation for details, then  
click the green button on the last page to register!*

"So...What's **Your** Story?"



## California Men's Gathering Spring 2024

Invitation for our gathering on May 24-27, 2024

A sweet Friday-Monday getaway with warm, wonderful men!  
AT PATHFINDER RANCH IN MOUNTAIN CENTER, CA - JUST OUTSIDE BEAUTIFUL IDYLLWILD

**This gathering's theme:**

# "So... What's Your Story?"

The phrases "What's your story?" and "What's his story?" developed a connotation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century of inquiring how out-of-the-closet someone is. Is he gay? Is he out? Is he on the down-low? But we are so much more than our coming out statuses, especially for those of us who have been out for decades!

We all have stories. Our stories include our youth. Our great loves. Our crazy interaction at the DMV. That vacation that went awry. Discoveries of joy and the pain throughout our lives and the lessons we've learned. Beyond all of the data facts we can share about ourselves, more often than not, ***it is when we share our stories that we feel connected...with one man's stories often reminding the next man of one of his.***



This exciting theme will be explored at the all-come-together assemblies over the weekend.

We'll play with what stories are, what makes a good one, and delve into remembering stories we haven't told in ages that can delight, touch, motivate and bring us closer.

We'll be ***working together in pairs and small groups uncovering stories we hadn't planned to tell.*** You'll even be given the opportunity, if you'd like, to ***share a story from your life that you bring to camp*** ready to tell. Both rehearsed stories and spontaneous ones will be encouraged. More details will be provided on what you *might* want to do before camp to prepare, but coming with a prepared story is not a pre-requisite for attending.

While sharing the stories is going to be a key component of those timeslots, no one will be required to step up in front of the group; it's okay to be a listener and just soak in the richness of our community. We want to encourage as many as are willing to share out which will make this a more powerful weekend; we are confident that, in the safe space we create, many of you will step forward and tell us about crazy Uncle Wilbur or the time you laughed inappropriately at a funeral or the dog who changed your life.

From your roughest days to your happily-ever-after moments...[what's your story?](#)

## ***Saturday and Sunday Assemblies, led by guest leader Milo Shapiro!***

Milo Shapiro's career is primarily as a motivational speaker and public speaking skills coach, helping people speak more effectively, including better storytelling as a part of that. He has been a four-time finalist in the [VAMP storytelling program](#) (Visual/Audio Monologue Performances) in San Diego and was active in two ToastMasters clubs for seven years. He has been an active CMG member since 1995, co-chairing several CMG Gatherings, and is excited to bring out and hear what stories we CMG men are sitting on (maybe even literally!) More on Milo and his coaching work at [MiloShapiro.com](#) .



### ***Where... and when...***

**Pathfinder Ranch in Mountain Center, CA** is a serene and picturesque retreat across the San Jacinto Mountains from Palm Springs and just outside the scenic town of Idyllwild. The camp is known for warm hospitality, environmental awareness, and hot, freshly-cooked food.

The Gathering is over Memorial Day Holiday weekend:

**FRI, MAY 24 (arrive between 3 p.m. & 5 p.m. if you can) through MON, MAY 27 at 12 p.m.**

If you can't arrive until late Friday or even Saturday, that's okay. Likewise, some may need to leave Sunday...just let us know if you leave early so we don't worry! Better to come for much of the event than none, right? But to answer that common question, the rate is the same even if you miss some of it.

### ***Housing Upgrade Options***

**For details on how to upgrade to more private accommodations** (hint, they go fast!), click to [thecmg.org/lodging](http://thecmg.org/lodging). NOTE: If you opt for the first timer discount or receive returnee financial aid, you may not also opt for upgraded housing.

### ***Registration***

Attendance is through an online registration process prior to the Gathering weekend; there will be no on-site registration or "day pass" option.

Registration will close on at the times shown below unless we sell out the Gathering sooner.

***RETURNEES: The next few sections with purple headers are primarily for first time attendees. Returnees can skim down to page 7, where blue headers start again.***

### ***What will I find at a gathering?***

The event spans Memorial Day weekend (Friday – Monday), including lots of activities and events for all:



- ♂ Workshops hosted by anyone with an idea
- ♂ Socials to meet old and new friends
- ♂ Open time for a little peace and quiet
- ♂ Variety show to see/show our talents
- ♂ Outside time for hikes, pool, and more
- ♂ Late night games and movies with snacks
- ♂ Massage room to get/give relaxation
- ♂ Late afternoon “tea party” in dining hall
- ♂ Cuddle with warm men in the puppy pile
- ♂ The evening “Wear Anything” dance
- ♂ A play space for the naughty boys

### ***Who comes and who is welcome?***

CMG’ers come from across California, other states, and even internationally. The men who attend CMG Gatherings (and our hundreds of local events state-wide) are a diverse group, varying in age, backgrounds, traditions, and spiritual practices. While CMG’ers are predominantly gay or bisexual men, ***all persons 18 years or older who self-identify as male are welcome***, including transgender and straight men. Most areas of Pathfinder Ranch are ADA-accessible so we gratefully encourage and welcome all!



### ***What happens at the Gathering?***

The weekend features concurrent elective workshops on a variety of topics as well as social events (which include a variety show, a dance, heart circles, puppy piles, yoga/meditation, massage exchange, and much more.) The wide choice of activities allows each man to create his own personal experience. It’s a weekend to try new things, make new friends and reconnect with old friends.

For some, a Gathering is like the fun of going to Summer Camp, especially for those who may not have had a chance to go as a kid, or who would like to do it all over again in a safer, more

supportive space. For others, it is more about personal growth and self-exploration in our workshops and assemblies. It's your Gathering!

In addition, we all come together four times through the weekend (besides meals). Friday night's welcome, Saturday, and Sunday assemblies, and closing ceremonies Monday morning.

The environment of a Gathering allows for deeper connections with other men. It is a special and safe place where men can let down their guard, open their hearts, and just have fun in an alcohol- and drug-free environment.

CMG reaches out to and creates a space where all men, regardless of sexual orientation, age, race, religion, or background can find different ways to connect – more openly, more honestly, with less fear – and with a lot more fun.

We are committed to offering the opportunity for all men to learn, grow, connect, and support one another in "Connecting Men at the Heart."

### *The Buddy program*



We know that it can be intimidating to come to CMG for the very first time.

The **buddy program** gives first timers someone they can reach out to if they have any questions, concerns, or just need to talk.

There will be a **newcomer video** (sent after you register to help you prepare for the weekend) AND a **first-timer orientation** (following dinner on Friday) for you and, if you like, your buddy.

### *How do I get to camp? What should I bring?*

Information about Pathfinder Ranch will be included in your "Final Confirmation" email. For those immediately curious, here's a link to the Ranch's website: [PathfinderRanch.com](http://PathfinderRanch.com).

Around two weeks before the Gathering, you will receive a "Welcome Letter" email with necessary information about the Gathering, including a program guide of all activities, directions to Pathfinder Ranch, and a recommended list of what to bring (and not bring). If you have questions, please e-mail [Question@thecmg.org](mailto:Question@thecmg.org).

Oh, and if you need (or can offer) a ride, there's a place to say so during registration.

### *Cell Phone & Internet Service*

Cell phone service may be spotty, depending on which provider you have. The camp has Wi-Fi available in some areas, but it's not super reliable. Electronic devices are welcome, but please be present to the weekend, and primarily leave the rest of life out in 'that other world.'

### *Accommodations and meals*



The base registration fee includes a bed in a shared, heated bunkroom, with shared bathroom/showers.

Eight meals are served from Friday Dinner to Monday Breakfast, with vegetarian and vegan options always available. If you want to bring more for yourself (non-refrigerated), feel free! In addition, snacks are available 24/7. Want to add to our snack? We'd love that! Regardless, you will not go hungry! :-)

### *Smoking Policy*

Smoking, including medical marijuana, is allowed only on the patio behind the dining hall. The issue isn't so much your smoke; it's the potential for fire. Gummies and gum are safer!

### *Will I get a camp map?*

Yes. The cabin names given by the camp are illogical and confusing, so we're bringing back something that worked well in the last few years. We're renaming them! **A-B-C order names**, going around the mostly circular camp center, makes it way easy to figure out where you're going. **If you haven't been to Pathfinder since we implemented this**, please click the image on the next page to watch a two-minute video that should give you a great orientation to the camp layout.



### *The Body Shop*

Since we certainly don't want guys getting it on in the public cabins, our play zone is the place to go. The "Body Shop" cabin will most likely be in Cabin B again; we'll let you know, of course, if that changes. Late night is likely to be its prime time (rumor has it that 10:45pm is a good time to cruise in), but you can hang there any time to see who else is feeling the vibe.

Our coordination team has a lot on our plate, so if you love the idea of us having a great looking Play Zone, what could you contribute? Erotic décor? Lighting? A portable glory hole? As of now, we don't have someone stepping up to help coordinate turning a camp room into something more...unseemly. The room will exist, décor or not, but if you would enjoy that role, drop a note saying so to [question@theCMG.org](mailto:question@theCMG.org). Coordinator or not, if you have ideas or items to bring; you can also add your touches at the last moment!

---

### ***The CMG Variety Show!***

This is your opportunity to step out on stage and show us your talent(s), which might be singing, dance, poetry or...? As with everything else at the Gathering, the audience is supportive, so think about fulfilling that stage dream. If you wish to perform, [create your Variety Show submission form here](#). Otherwise have a seat in the audience and enjoy the show! Questions? We'll ask our show coordinator if you write us at [Question@thecmg.org](mailto:Question@thecmg.org).

### ***Present a workshop!***

Do you have a passion, gifts, wisdom, experience, or interest you'd like to share with us?



Workshops are led by you all - the men who come to the weekend on a volunteer basis. It could be a presentation. Or a group discussion. Or an activity you want to lead. This creates variety for the event and a wonderful sense of community.

Workshops can be almost anything! Consider ideas like interests, exploring new subcultures, meditation, discussing lessons learned from a recent experience/book/class, dance, outdoor/active fun, art exploration, storytelling, fantasy, and more.

Submit a proposal at check-in or, even better, [create a neat, pre-printed workshop form by clicking here](#). Spending time now will allow for more thoughtful, accurate descriptions, make it more legible, and allow us to plan ahead.

You needn't feel that you must have a mastery of something to create a workshop; if you have an interest enough to give something a try, no matter how basic, CMG is a great place to give it a whirl! Some of the most requested repeat workshops came from people who initially didn't feel totally sure about leading it. If you have questions: [question@theCMG.org](mailto:question@theCMG.org)

### **The Sing-Along Movie**

Can't legally say what it's gonna be, but if you can link the words Maria, Edelweiss, and Hills...

### **The Tea Party**

Admittedly, this idea is still in the works, and we'd love to have someone step up to make it more fabulous and coordinate, but not every aspect of a gathering is set-in-stone when registration opens. But it's our hope to have some fun tea party ideas that will be announced to registrants as we know more. Costumes? Perhaps!

### **The "Wear ANYthing" Dance!**

What sounds like fun to you? Drag? Leather? Jockstrap? Toga? A giant panda? Whatever feels fun to wear is welcome. And for those who crave some **clothing-optional** events, remember that this party is fully indoors! So-o-o, while the *theme* does say to "Wear Anything," that *could* mean just a bow tie, cat paws, or go-go boots! Just remember a robe for the trip from your cabin!

### **What does it cost to attend?**

We've changed from the complicated sliding-scale structure some of you will remember to this simpler, flat-rate structure (click [here](#) if you'd like to know why):



- **Early-bird rate (\$355)** will apply **through April 9 at 11:59pm** to encourage you to commit early!
- **Standard rate (\$380)** will be available from **April 10 through May 9 at 11:59pm** for those who do not commit during early-bird.
- **Late registration rate (\$405)** is **no longer an option** because the camp now requires a firm headcount on May 10. However, we do have a minimum number we must hit. If, for some reason (which would be rare for a Spring Gathering), we have not hit that number yet, we'll allow registration at the standard rate beyond that. If we've exceeded the camp minimum, May 9 will indeed be the cut-off.

### **Financial Aid**

Financial Aid is available for those for whom the rates are still challenging; It is our intent that every man who wants to attend be able to. As such, limited financial aid is available. Note that **early/standard/late rates apply to all**, so if you're applying for financial aid, we REALLY encourage you to jump on the earliest possible rate!



**First-timers:** we offer you up to a **\$150** discount if that would help you make the choice to come to this gathering. This option is built into the registration form so **first timers needn't fill out an additional Financial Aid form.**

**Returnees:** Limited financial aid of **\$100** is available, while funds remain. Click [here](#) to request.

**NOTE:** Housing upgrades not available to those requesting a first-timer discount or applying for Financial Aid.

In return for this grant, recipients are encouraged to volunteer a little more during the weekend than others might, as a way of giving back and supporting our efforts to include all.

### ***Donations to Financial Aid***

Please consider making an additional, tax-deductible contribution to the Financial Aid Fund. Your donation helps make the gathering available and affordable to men from all walks of life.

### ***Refund policy***

Until noon on **May 13**, you can apply for a refund; all will be returned, minus a \$50 cancellation fee. After that, you may make a plea regarding your reason for cancelling and often, if possible, we work with you on that.

### ***Ready to sign up???***

Great! If you've already created a profile with us, click the green button below to sign in to register for the event (if you've forgotten your password, it's easy to reset there).

If you HAVEN'T yet created a profile with us, you'll still use this green button, but you'll need to do that one-time step first and *then* sign in.

On your mark, get set, click:

**I'm clicking here to register!!!**

**We can't wait to see you there for the fun!**



California  
**Men's Gatherings**  
Connecting Men at the Heart