

The Western Sun



News from the Western Region of the American Association for Nude Recreation

February 2026



Love YOUR Body!

In this issue:

- **Ponderings of the President**
- **The anatomy of acceptance**
- **Starting the year with nothing to hide**

AND MORE!

Letter from the Editor

Love your body

by Dustin Cox, AANR West Director

Love your body. It sounds simple. It sounds like something you might see on a bumper sticker or stitched onto a throw pillow. And yet, for so many of us, those three words can feel complicated, loaded, or even uncomfortable.

Most of us did not grow up being taught to love our bodies just the way they are. We were taught to critique them. To compare them. To improve them. To hide parts of them. To apologize for them. Somewhere along the way, many of us learned that our bodies were projects instead of homes.

Naturism has a way of gently but firmly challenging that belief.

This month's theme is "Love Your Body," and I wanted to start by stripping away the clichés. Loving your body doesn't necessarily mean looking in the mirror and thinking you look perfect every single day. That is a high bar to clear.

When you first step into a clothes-free space, it is rarely about confidence. It is about vulnerability. It is about showing up exactly as you are, without filters, without costumes, without the ability to edit yourself into something more socially acceptable. And in that moment, something powerful happens. You realize you are not alone.

You see bodies of every shape, size, age, and ability. Bodies with scars and stretch marks. Bodies that have changed due to illness, injury, childbirth, aging, or simply living a full life. And what becomes clear very quickly is that there is no single way a body is supposed to look. There never was.

Loving your body does not mean pretending you love every part of it every day. It does not mean ignoring discomfort, health challenges, or complex feelings. Loving your body can be quiet. It can be gentle. Sometimes it simply means choosing not to hate it.

In this issue, we are challenging the noise. The world is very loud about what we should look like. It sells us insecurities so it can sell us solutions. But the most rebellious thing you can do is to decide that you are already enough.

As you read through these pages, I invite you to join me in a small practice. When you catch your reflection this week, resist the urge to critique. Instead, find one thing your body allows you to do that you are grateful for.

Let's step into the sunlight exactly as we are, unhidden, unapologetic, and alive.

With warmth and gratitude,

Dustin Cox, The Western Sun - Editor



Photo: Dustin Cox

"And I said to my body, softly. 'I want to be your friend.' it took a long breath, and replied, 'I have been waiting my whole life for this.'" — Nayyirah Waheed



Photo by Armin Rimoldi

The first deep breath

A poem about loving your body

by Dustin Cox, AANR West Director

For a long time, I apologized to the mirror. I pulled at the fabric, adjusting the waistbands, hiding the softness, tucking away the parts of me that didn't fit the silhouette I was told to want.

But here, where the treeline breaks and the river widens, I finally put the burden down.

It starts with the shoes, then the rest follows, a shedding of skin that isn't mine. And for a second, I hesitate. I brace myself for a criticism that never comes. Because the oak tree doesn't care about my stretch marks. The sun doesn't ask why I'm not smoother, or firmer, or younger. The sun just wants to warm me.

There is a shock of coolness, then a rush of absolute quiet. I feel the breeze on the small of my back, a sensation I forgot belonged to me. I look down and I don't see a project to be fixed. I see the legs that carried me up this hill. I see the belly that rises and falls with my own breath.

Suddenly, I am not a collection of flaws. I am just a mammal in the garden. I am texture and temperature and pulse.

This body is not an ornament for someone else's eyes. It is my vessel. It is my home. And standing here, with nothing between my skin and the sky, I finally forgive it. I finally let it breathe. I finally let it just be.

Rocky Mountain Naturist Club

February 1 - Hot Springs
February 9 - Big Nude Boat
February 15 - Nude Comedy
February 21 - Nude Improv
March 13 - Playa Sonrisa

Southern California Naturists Assn.

Feb. 8 - Superbowl Party
Feb. 15 - BITS Womens Party
Feb. 21. Mecca Hills
Mar. 15 - Oscars Viewing
Mar. 21 - Nude Hike

Shangri La Ranch

Feb. 14 - Valentine's Dance
Feb. 28 - Costume Dance
Mar. - 14 - St. Patricks Dance
Mar. 28 - Prom Night Dance
Apr. 25 - Boots & Buckles
Dance

Laguna Del Sol

Feb. 7 - Blacklight Dance
Feb. 8 - Football Party
Feb. 14 - Valentines Day Ball
Feb. 28 - 80's Dance
Mar. 14 - St. Patricks Dinner
Mar. 28 - Team Jersey Dance

Mountain Air Ranch

Feb. 8 - Super Bowl Party
Feb. 14 - Game Day
Mar. 14 - Game Day
Apr. 11 - Game Day

Glen Eden Sun Club

Feb. 6 - Plant-Based Potluck
Feb. 8 - Super Bowl Party
Feb. 13 - DJ Alicia
Feb. 14 Tennis Tournament
Feb. 14 - Valentines Dance
Feb. 19 - Paint & Sip

AANR Western Regional 2026 General Assembly & Convention

August 7-9, 2026

Come join us!

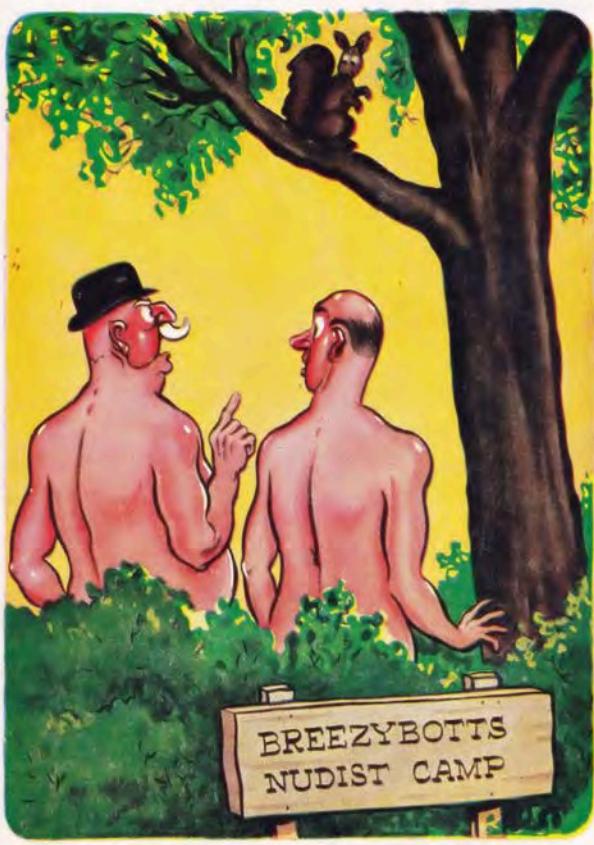


LAGUNA DEL SOL

8683 Rawhide Lane
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"I ALWAYS WEAR A HAT — THEY'RE NOT FUSSY WHOSE NUTS THEY PINCH !!"



Excursion to Playa Sonrisa Nudist Resort

March 13-18, 2026

All inclusive rate of \$1,400 per room
plus airfare!

ONLY TWO ROOMS LEFT

Email RMNCDenver@gmail.com
for more info.



Shangri La Ranch Hosts Community Diaper Drive Supporting UMOM

Shangri La Ranch, in partnership with WINR, Women Helping Women Better Together, and AANR West, is hosting a community diaper drive to support families served by UMOM New Day Centers in Phoenix. Members and visitors are encouraged to donate urgently needed items including full-size hair conditioner, diapers in sizes NB, 6 and 7, 4T5T, pull-ups, pack and plays, toilet paper, baby wipes, and cash contributions.



Donations can be dropped off at the Shangri La Ranch office daily between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. Every item collected helps UMOM provide stability and care for families facing homelessness. The drive runs through January 31, 2026 through February 28, 2026, and even small contributions can make a big difference. If you cannot donate in person, you can donate by scanning the QR code below.



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FIRST TIME VISITORS

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GLEN EDEN SUN CLUB

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From the desk of the President

Ponderings of the President

The February Feels: Love

by Tom Stark, AANR West President

As February rolls around, we enter the month that tends to wave goodbye to winter and say hello to spring. And for some reason, especially for those who do not enjoy the winter weather, the shortest month can seem like the longest.

Right smack dab in the middle of the month, we set aside the one day of the year to celebrate something that tends to warm our hearts – Valentine's Day. It's the one day of the year we single out to celebrate love. For the past seven years, Americans have spent over \$20 billion dollars to buying gifts, dinners and experiences to celebrate our love for others.

I also think this is a great month to celebrate the three loves that are available to us through our numerous AANR organizations throughout the country: freedom, people, and experience.

There is truly something wonderful about having the freedom to spend time free from the confines of clothes. Feeling a fresh breeze or the warmth of the sunshine on our skin gives us a feeling of freedom like nothing else can. This freedom can be felt whether we are sitting on a chair poolside with our favorite beverage, hiking through nature with breathtaking views all around, or just spending time with friends, the freedom that comes through living life without clothes is exhilarating.

I have spent a fair amount of time at various AANR resorts and clubs across the country, mostly here in my home state of Arizona. While I love the places I have visited, what always stands out to me is the people. The people I have met while spending time at AANR resorts are amazing. They are honest, kind, generous, and, by far, the most real and authentic people I have had the privilege of being around. If there is one thing that I love about every AANR organization I have visited, it is the people.

Back in the early 90s, my wife and I were like many people in America, very busy raising our children, working two jobs, and living the hectic life. One year, we decided to try some things we had never done before, just to break out of the mundane and stressful life we were leading. We decided to visit Sunny Rest Resort in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. We loved the experience so much, that we decided to go back again that same year and celebrate our anniversary there. And while our lives took some turns throughout the years that prevented us from visiting another AANR Resort for many years, when we landed here in Arizona, it only took us a couple of months to visit Mira Vista Resort in Marana and we relived the experience again.

This February, as we celebrate Valentine's Day and those we love, let's also take some time to celebrate three of the things that are easy to love about being a nudist: the love of the freedom from clothes, the love of the people we meet, and the love of the experiences we have.

AANR West exists to serve you, our members. Your thoughts and concerns are always welcome, so if there is anything you would like to share, you can email me directly at president@aanrwest.org.



The anatomy of acceptance

De-programming the Instagram ideal

by *The Western Sun Staff*

When was the last time you saw a naked body that wasn't trying to sell you something?

If you are like most modern adults, your visual intake of the human form is dominated by the digital realm. We scroll through feeds of algorithmically favored bodies, tricking our brains into believing airbrushed perfection is the norm. But there is a remedy to this digital sickness. It requires stepping away from the screen and out of your clothes to finally make peace with the skin you're in.

The digital distortion

Our brains are pattern-recognition machines. When we feed them a steady diet of hyper-perfected images, we calibrate our expectations to an impossible standard. As Dr. Renee Engeln, author of *Beauty Sick*, points out, we have created a culture where we are constantly "monitoring" our bodies rather than living in them.

We are suffering from collective body dysmorphia driven by a lack of reality. We have forgotten what humans look like because we rarely see them.

The reality check

Entering a naturist resort or beach acts as immediate exposure therapy. Once the initial novelty wears off, you are left with the undeniable reality of the human animal. You see bellies that fold when people sit. You see scars, sun spots, and asymmetry. You see the topographical maps of living a life.

In a column for *The Guardian*, writer Emine Saner described her experience with social nudity, noting that "nobody cares what you look like" and describing the realization as "strangely liberating."

This environment resets your internal self-critic. When you see a stranger with varicose veins or love handles and recognize them as just another person enjoying the sun, you grant them permission to exist without judgment. Once you do that for others, it becomes significantly harder to withhold that permission from yourself.

Reclaiming your baseline

The antidote to social media dysmorphia is not toxic positivity. It is immersing yourself in the unedited world. We need to see how bodies actually jiggle, slouch, and wrinkle to realize that our own "flaws" are merely normal human variations.

So, consider a different kind of vacation. You might find that the perfect body you were looking for doesn't exist, and that the one you have is perfectly fine.

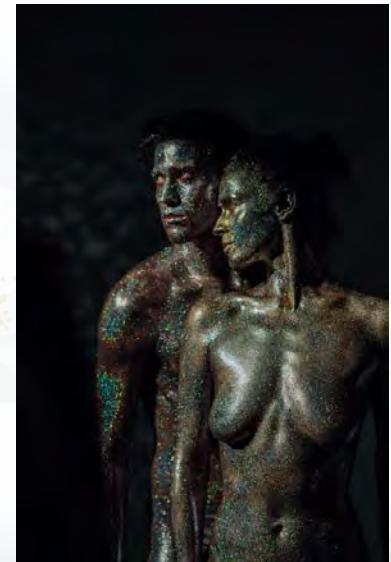


Photo by KoolShooters

This month, challenge yourself to spend one hour a day textile-free at home. Notice if your posture changes, if your breathing deepens, or if your inner critic gets a little quieter.

Superheroes, Strikes, and Skin

A Night of Nude Bowling Fun in Denver

by Jeff Jackson, AANR West Vice President / RMNC Founder

On the evening of January 18th, the Rocky Mountain Naturist Club (RMNC) hosted a lively Nude “Social” Bowling Party in Denver—one of three family-friendly nude bowling events the club proudly offers each year. These popular gatherings are designed to be welcoming, inclusive, and fun for nudists of all ages, and this event was no exception. With all 150 tickets sold, the lanes were filled with laughter, friendly competition, and a strong sense of community.

Each RMNC nude bowling event features a creative theme to add a festive twist, and past favorites have included Wacky Socks, Crazy Hats, Glow Party, Holiday-themed “Most Festive Nudist,” 1980s Neon, and 1970s Hippies. January’s theme, “Superheroes & Villains,” inspired attendees to transform themselves with capes, masks, body paint, and imaginative costume accessories. The creativity was on full display, making it a challenge for judges to choose the top costumes. First place went to “The Cat Lady,” a woman intricately body-painted to resemble a cat. Second place was awarded to “The Riddler” from the 1960s Batman TV series, featuring striking green body paint and question marks from head to toe. Third place honors went to the “King of Mayhem,” a man dressed in playful royal attire.

The event truly reflected the diversity of the nudist community, with participants ranging in age from 3 years old to well into their 80s. Families with young children bowled alongside singles and couples, representing a wide mix of ages, genders, nationalities, and orientations—all sharing the same respectful, body-positive space. RMNC’s next Nude Social Bowling event will take place in May and is open to everyone in the nudist community. For details, interested readers are encouraged to email RMNCDenver@gmail.com.



The NEW AANR Meet & Greet

Join our discussion groups every first and third Thursday via Zoom at:
8 pm. EST, 7 pm. CST, 6 pm. MST, 5 pm. PST.



Sign up at: <https://aanrwest.co/mgsu>

Attorneys Needed!

Expertise in...
Family Law?
Custody?
First Amendment?

Be part of our Legal Defence Network
to assist with nudity issues in the above
categories. May be pro bono or paid.

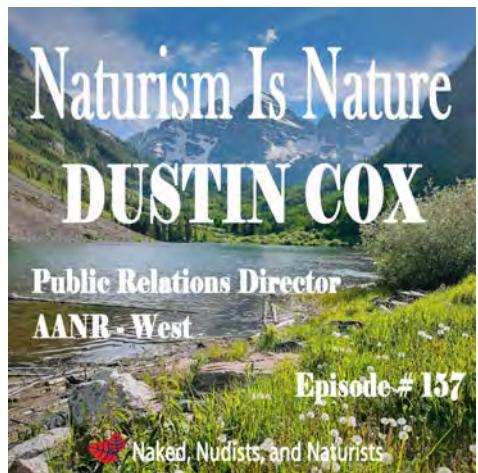
Email alowery@aanr.com



AANR West Director featured on naturist podcast

Dustin Cox Featured on 'Naked, Nudists, and Naturists'

by *The Western Sun Staff*



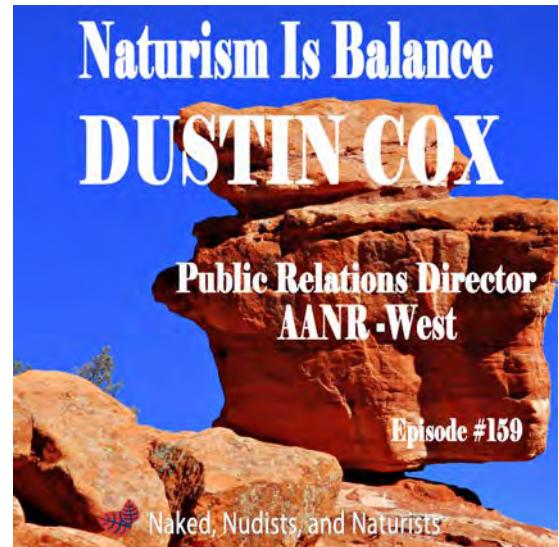
The "Naked, Nudists, and Naturists" podcast recently hosted Dustin Cox, a director for AANR West, in a two-part series discussing naturist advocacy and his blog, "1 Naturist Life".

In episodes 157 and 159, host Frank Stone spoke with Dustin Cox about his transition from a retired firefighter and EMT to a leader within the American Association for Nude Recreation. As part of the AANR Young Adult and Diversity Council, Cox detailed efforts to modernize the organization's outreach, including the use of Discord to build community among younger naturists.

Dustin also highlighted the authentic connections fostered by social nudity. "Once you've stripped all the clothes away, you're just left with personality," Cox said. "You start learning more about each other versus trying to make your own opinions based off of what you see clothing-wise."

The discussion also covered the rise of non-landed travel clubs and the importance of creating welcoming environments for all participants.

Listeners can find these episodes on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other platforms, or online at www.nakednudistsandnaturists.com.



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News from the Western Region of the American Association for Nude Recreation



Email us:

publicrelations@aanrwest.org

Official AANR Podcast



NAKED, NUDISTS, AND NATURISTS

www.nakednudistsandnaturists.com



2026 AANR Convention- The Willamettans

August 11, 2026 - August 16, 2026

The 2026 AANR convention will be at the Willamettans in Oregon. Convention takes place the second week of August, with assemblies the Wednesday and Thursday of the week, though there may be earlier social events.

Non-Landed Social Club Spotlight



Southern Utah Naturist Society (SUNS) is a welcoming, non-landed naturist group based in the St. George, Utah area that brings people together to enjoy the freedom and joy of social nudity in a safe, respectful, and non-sexual environment.

Members and guests aged 18+ from all backgrounds are invited to participate in clothing-optional events like skinny-dipping pool parties, movie and game nights, potlucks, hikes, camping trips, and travel to naturist resorts, all aimed at fostering body acceptance, relaxation, and community.

The Society emphasizes mutual respect, inclusion, and positive body image, creating opportunities for adults to connect and have fun “naturally” with like-minded people while exploring Southern Utah’s stunning landscapes.

Learn more by visiting <http://southernutahnaturistsociety.org/>

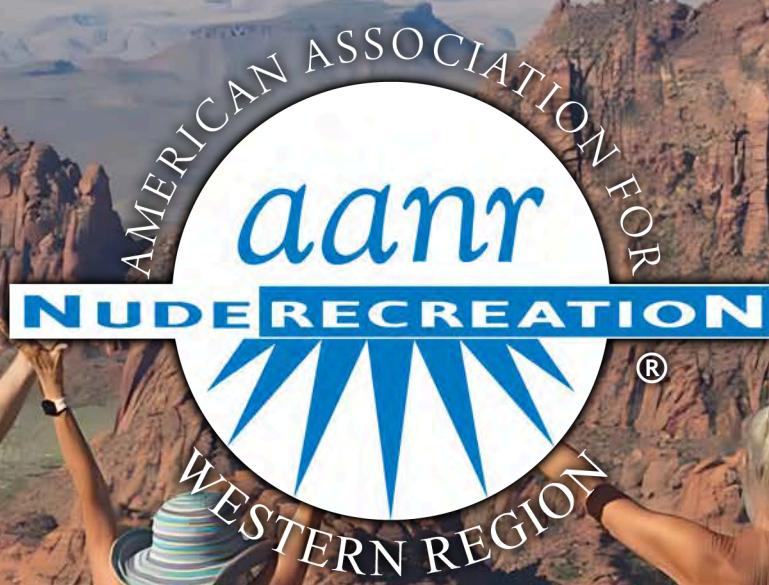


Golden Valley Sun Club is a welcoming, clothing-optional naturist club in scenic Golden Valley, Arizona, designed as a serene retreat where adults can enjoy social nudity in a relaxed, respectful, non-sexual environment. The club hosts casual gatherings and vibrant parties throughout the year centered around its pool, hot tub, fire pit, and outdoor social spaces, with amenities like games, BBQ facilities, camping, and boondocking options for members and guests.

The community emphasizes comfort and inclusivity for both newcomers and experienced naturists, offering a private outdoor setting where nude recreation can be enjoyed freely with like-minded individuals over 21. Membership is free with optional contributions to support events and site maintenance, helping foster friendships and shared experiences in tune with nature.

Learn more by visiting <https://goldenvaleysunclub.com/>

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!



Join AANR
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aanrwest.co/join

PROTECT YOUR FREEDOM

Tune in

Best podcasts for the naturist soul

by *Dustin Cox, AANR West Director*

As the seasons change, finding ways to stay connected to the naturist community becomes essential. Whether you are driving to work, enjoying a quiet morning coffee, or dreaming of your next resort visit, popping in your earbuds is one of the best ways to keep the naturist spirit alive year-round.

If you are looking to expand your playlist, here are the top recommendations to keep you informed, entertained, and inspired.

The Headliner: AANR's Official Podcast



Leading the pack is the Naked, Nudists & Naturists Podcast. As the official podcast of the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR), this long-running show is a staple for the community. Hosts Frank and Lisa create an atmosphere that feels like catching up with old friends at your favorite spot. They skillfully blend humor with serious topics, covering listener stories, community news, and interviews with guests from clubs and advocacy groups. It is the perfect pulse-check on the naturist world.

For History and Culture Buffs

If you are interested in the "why" and "how" of the movement, Naked Age offers a cinematic, documentary-style approach. Produced by Planet Nude and hosted by Evan Nix, it dives deep into forgotten histories and the pioneers who built the foundation of modern social nudity.

Similarly, The Naturist Living Show, produced by Bare Oaks Family Naturist Park and hosted by Stéphane Deschênes, remains one of the most comprehensive resources available. It tackles philosophy, policy, and health, encouraging a deeper exploration of naturism as a social movement.

Perspectives from Across the Pond

For an international angle, tune into Women in Focus, produced by British Naturism. This podcast offers unique insights into how the lifestyle is embraced in the UK, covering events, cultural differences, and the work of national organizations supporting the naturist way of life.

For Beginners and the Curious

New to naturism? The New Nudist Podcast with Scott Cline and Evan Nix is the perfect welcoming committee. It mixes personal storytelling with practical guidance to help those curious about naturism feel at ease.

Casual Conversation and Philosophy

For a more relaxed vibe, try BARE With Me, hosted by Jay Summers. It blends humor with genuine talk about body freedom, feeling much like a campfire chat after a long day outdoors. Finally, The Naturist Vibe features "The Crowned Nudi" (Gabby) and Dan Speers, diving into ethical naturism, society, and philosophy.

Whether you want a laugh, a history lesson, or a sense of community, these shows prove that while we may take our clothes off, we have plenty to say.

Perseverance

by Barbara

My wife, Marilyn, and I have been nudists for nearly fifty years, which amounts to a little over 70% of our lives. Many of our vacations over the years were spent at nudist resorts, both in America and in Canada and the Caribbean. However, I have been a transgender woman for only about nine of those years.

I have chosen “perseverance” as the sparkle word that guides me through life. It means to abide by something strictly. It means not giving up. It is persistence and tenacity, the effort needed to do something and keep doing it until the end, even if it’s hard. I persevered through many things in my life, including struggles with anxiety, depression, and near suicide an all-consuming career as an attorney, over forty-four years of marriage, alcoholism, and an exceedingly difficult and life-affirming transition.



I've lived two lifetimes. The first sixty years of my life were lived as someone that I wasn't. Now, I'm living as the person that I was always truly meant to be. The only consistency between the two lifetimes was being a nudist.

Maybe that was enough to allow me to persevere.



Joyful

by Ginny



I am joyful when I am with the friends that I've made on my naturist journey, both at my local club and online at A Naturist Hub.

I have found my people!!

My home club has become my oasis. It's where I go to meet friends for yoga, book club and water aerobics. We go for walks, relax in the sun by the pool, enjoy a meal at the cafe, and soak in the hot tub.

Doing it all nude or mostly nude, fills me with joy!

The mission of Women In Nude Recreation (WINR) is to inspire women to embrace nudism through community, camaraderie and connection. WINR passionately promotes the many benefits of nudism by encouraging and supporting women through body acceptance and empowerment.

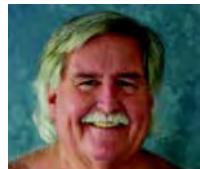


[Learn more: aanrwest.co/WINR](http://aanrwest.co/WINR)

Balancing differences, preserving freedom

A nudist perspective on the new year

by Tim Mullins, AANR GAT Chair



I hope 2026 is a banner year for all of you. I plan to stay involved in local politics as California enters an exciting year, with Congressional maps redrawn mid-decade for the first time, with the goal of countering the president's efforts to block his opposition and silence opposing voices. This is an unhealthy way for our democracy to act.

In 2008, California voted to create a commission to take redistricting out of the hands of legislators in favor of a system that offered community continuity rather than political expediency to dictate the borders of the representative districts for the state and federal legislative representatives. This system works and was used following the 2010 and 2020 census counts. Democracy demands that the voices of all the people are given weight in the decision-making process.

It is usually the case that the president's party loses support in the midterm election. Compromise is part of the governing process in a democracy if all voices are to be given credibility. Bullying is in vogue in this administration. The thought of having to share power with Congress, an equal branch of—with a majority from the opposing party, is a challenge too great for this president to even want to consider.

The true work to counter that would be to listen to what the people want and try to mold your actions to meet the people's needs. That is not the case with this white house. The effort to change districts so your party can't lose is the antithesis of rule by the people. It's a power grab to thwart the will of the people who have chafed under the direction of the administration and want change.

Nudists support the right of others to be clothed and expect them to support nudists to be naked. Nudists' political views run the gamut from left to right. We share freedom and space with fellow nudists and look past the differences that divide us to focus on the things we have in common. When one group pushes to block nudists from exercising those rights, we move to counter their protest. We've civilly done that and used the law to protect nudists' rights.

Nudists need to continue to fight for a dialogue on our differences and compromise, if possible, to protect our freedoms, while acknowledging the concerns of those opposing us. 2026 will be a year of fighting to protect our hard-fought freedoms and protect our rights to be nude, just like we have been up to today. Happy New Year.



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Starting the year with nothing to hide

A New Year reflection on presence and authenticity

by Dustin Cox, AANR West Director

The first morning of the year always arrives quietly for me. No fireworks. No countdown replaying in my head. Just light moving across a room and the feeling of being awake before the rest of the world asks anything of me. I wake up nude, not as a statement, but because that is how I sleep now. That alone says something about how far I have come.

There was a time when the idea of greeting a new year without clothes would have felt exposed, even reckless. Now it feels honest. Necessary, even. Over the years, naturism has stopped being something I did and started being the way I live. When January arrives, I do not reach for resolutions. I reach for clarity. And clarity, for me, begins with having nothing to hide.

I did not come to naturism looking for a movement. I came to it looking for relief. Relief from expectations. From the constant negotiation with my own body. From the pressure to perform comfort instead of actually feeling it. What I found instead was a way of life that asked me to slow down, to listen, and to stop editing myself for an imagined audience.

As the naturist writer Ilsa Franz once observed, “Nudity does not make us vulnerable. Vulnerability already exists. Nudity simply removes the distractions.” That idea stayed with me long after I first encountered it because it put language to something I felt but could not yet articulate.

Starting a new year nude is not about optimism or self-improvement. It is about presence. It is about acknowledging where I am, how I feel, and who I have become without rushing to reinvent any of it.

The weight of hiding

Most of us spend years learning how to hide long before we ever learn how to be seen. We hide our bodies behind clothes that promise confidence. We hide our insecurities behind humor or silence. We hide our fears behind productivity. Even when we think we are being honest, there is often a layer of protection between who we are and who the world gets to see.

Before naturism, I carried that weight everywhere. I knew how to stand so my stomach looked flatter. I knew which angles worked best in photos, which is ironic considering photography is my profession. I knew how to talk about body acceptance without fully practicing it myself. I was good at presenting an image. I was less practiced at inhabiting my body without critique.

As photographer Nan Goldin famously said, “I want people to see exactly what I see.” That desire has always resonated with me, not just in my work behind the camera, but in how I wanted to live. Naturism eventually became the place where that honesty was no longer optional.

Standing naked among others made it impossible to maintain the illusion that everyone else had it figured out. Bodies varied. Comfort varied. Confidence came and went. What surprised me most was how quickly the pressure dissolved when comparison lost its power. Without clothes to signal status, style, or belonging, what remained was humanity.

The first year I truly committed to naturism taught me that hiding is exhausting. It also taught me that vulnerability does not require explanation. You can simply exist.



Photo by Dustin Cox

What nudity reveals over time

There is a misconception that naturism is about becoming fearless. It is not. It is about becoming familiar. Familiar with your body as it changes. Familiar with discomfort when it arises. Familiar with the way confidence ebbs and flows depending on the day.

Over time, nudity stopped being something I noticed. It became a baseline. What I began to notice instead were the thoughts that surfaced once the distraction of clothing was gone. Old narratives about worth. About desirability. About who gets to take up space. Naturism did not erase those narratives, but it gave me room to question them.

As author and cultural critic Susie Orbach wrote, “Bodies are not projects. They are places where we live.” That sentence could serve as a thesis for my entire naturist journey. Once I stopped treating my body as something to fix, manage, or improve, I began to experience it as a home.

I write often about how body acceptance is not a destination. It is a practice. Some days that practice is gentle. Other days it is deliberate. The new year has become a checkpoint not for measuring progress, but for checking in with my relationship to myself.

- *Am I listening to my body or managing it?*
- *Am I present or performing?*
- *Am I honest about what feels good and what does not?*

Starting the year nude gives me a clear answer to those questions. There is no costume to hide behind. No role to play. Just skin, breath, and awareness.

January light and quiet intentions



Photo by Dustin Cox

There is something about January light that feels honest. It is thinner, cooler, less forgiving. It does not flatter. It reveals. Sitting nude in that light, hot cocoa cooling in my hands, I am reminded that intention does not have to be loud to be meaningful.

I no longer make resolutions to change my body or my habits. Naturism has taught me that chasing an ideal version of myself only reinforces the idea that who I am now is not enough. Instead, I set intentions rooted in presence.

This year, my intention is simple. Continue living with nothing to hide.

That means showing up authentically in naturist spaces without needing to prove belonging. It means writing honestly, even when the truth feels quieter than outrage or celebration. It means allowing my body to age, soften, strengthen, and change without narrating every shift as a problem to solve.

The philosopher Alan Watts once said, “The meaning of life is just to be alive. It is so plain and so obvious and so simple. And yet, everybody rushes around in a great panic as if it were necessary to achieve something beyond themselves.” Naturism has helped me resist that panic, especially at the turn of the year.

In my work as a photographer, I have always been drawn to unfiltered moments. Real light. Real skin. Real life. Naturism aligns with that instinct. It asks me to trust what is already there instead of manufacturing something more acceptable.

Community without costumes



One of the most profound shifts in my naturist journey has been my understanding of community. Without clothes, there is less room for posturing. Conversations tend to move quickly past small talk and into something more grounded. Not because nudity is intimate by default, but because it removes many of the usual barriers.

Sociologist Erving Goffman wrote extensively about the roles we play in everyday life, noting that much of social interaction is performance. Naturism disrupts that performance in subtle but powerful ways. When the costume is gone, what remains feels more real.

Community, in this context, is not about uniformity. It is about coexistence. Different bodies. Different stories. Different levels of comfort, all sharing space without hierarchy. That experience reshaped how I think about belonging.

Photo by Dustin Cox

As the new year begins, I think about how the naturist community supports living with nothing to hide. Not through agreement, but through presence. Through allowing others to be where they are without judgment. Through recognizing that confidence looks different on everyone and that discomfort does not mean failure.

Naturism has given me a space where showing up as myself is enough. I don't have to hide my scars or who I am as a gay married man. That alone feels like a radical way to start a year.

What I am no longer hiding

Living with nothing to hide does not mean living without boundaries. It means being honest about where those boundaries are. This year, I am no longer hiding my need for rest. I am no longer hiding my discomfort when conversations turn performative or exclusionary. I am no longer hiding behind the idea that advocacy must always be loud to be effective.

Writer Audre Lorde reminded us that "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation." That truth applies just as much to how we inhabit our bodies as it does to how we use our voices. Naturism has taught me that care and courage are not opposites.

Shame does not exist in isolation. It is taught. Reinforced. Monetized. Choosing to live nude challenges that system in small but meaningful ways. Not through confrontation, but through consistency. Through showing that another way of relating to the body is possible.

Starting the year with nothing to hide means acknowledging that my relationship with my body is ongoing. Some days I feel deeply at home in my skin. Other days I feel self-conscious for reasons I cannot always articulate. Both experiences are valid. Neither disqualifies me from this way of life.

Looking forward without reinvention

The pressure to reinvent ourselves at the start of a new year is relentless. New body. New habits. New identity. Naturism has taught me that reinvention is often another form of rejection. It implies that who we were was not acceptable.

I am not interested in becoming someone else in 2026. I am interested in continuing to become more present as myself. That includes honoring the work I have already done and recognizing where growth still feels possible.

Living with nothing to hide is not about perfection. It is about alignment. When my actions match my values. When my words match my lived experience. When my body is not treated as a project, but as a home.

As I step into this new year, nude and unguarded, I am reminded that the most radical thing I can do is stay. Stay with discomfort long enough to understand it. Stay with joy long enough to trust it. Stay with myself without asking to be different first.

The year will unfold as it always does. With challenges. With beauty. With moments that test my patience and others that remind me why this path matters. Starting it with nothing to hide does not guarantee ease, but it does offer clarity.

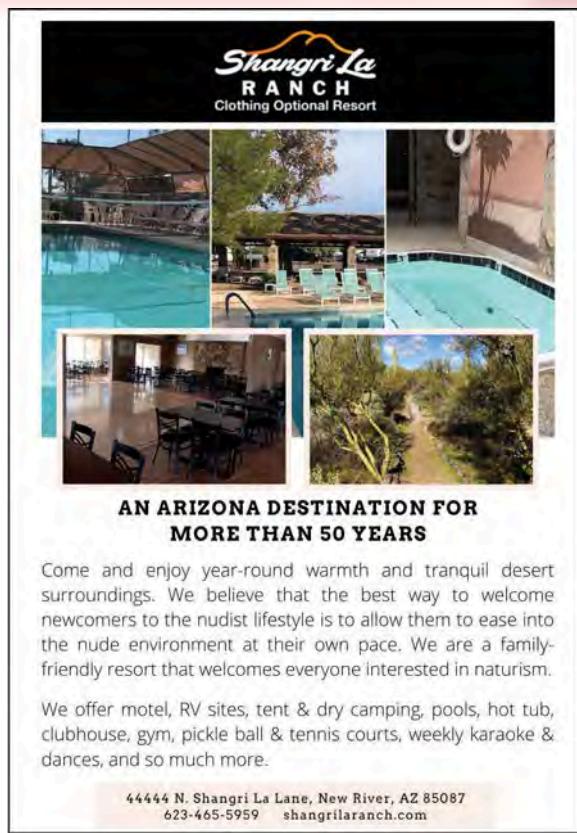
And clarity, I have learned, is more valuable than any resolution.

I begin this year the same way I intend to live it. Present. Honest. Uncovered.



Editors note: This article has appeared on Planet Nude prior to publication here.

Photos by Dustin Cox

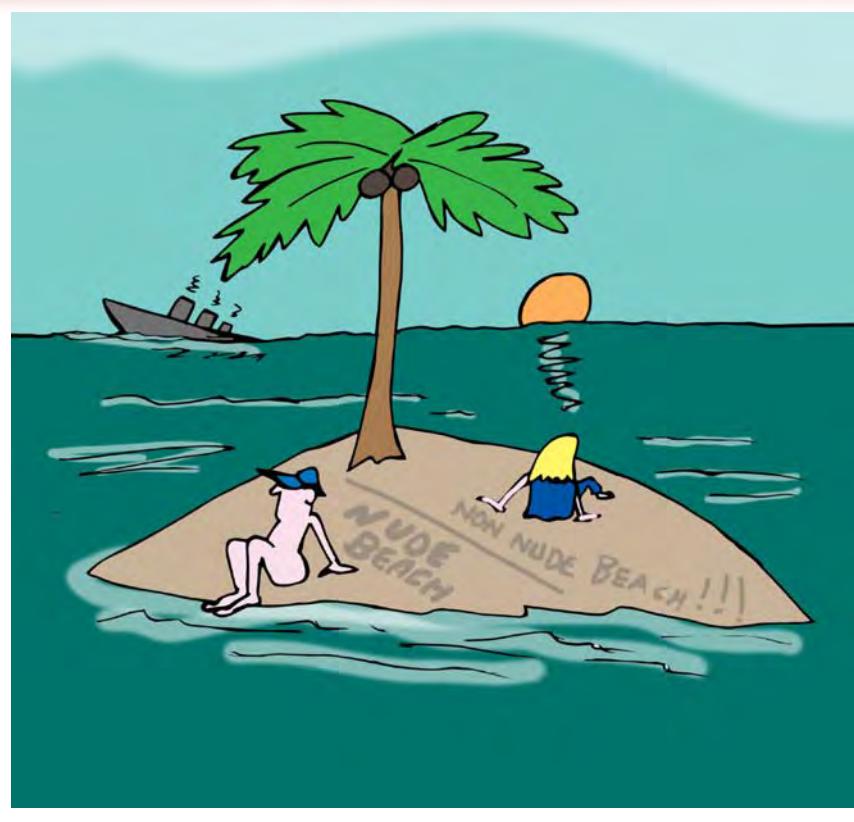


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The skin is more than just a wrapper

How focusing on physical sensation can quiet a busy mind.

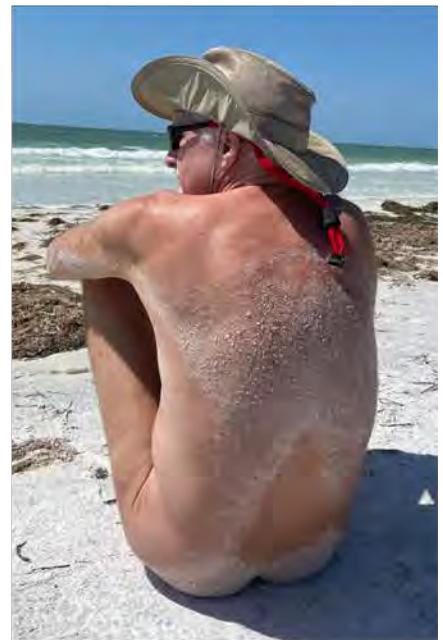
by *The Western Sun Staff*

When was the last time you noticed your skin without checking a mirror or worrying about a blemish? We spend an inordinate amount of time critiquing the surface of our bodies, yet we rarely inhabit them. We treat our skin as a billboard rather than a boundary. But by shifting our attention from how we look to how we feel, we unlock a powerful method for escaping the anxiety of the modern world.

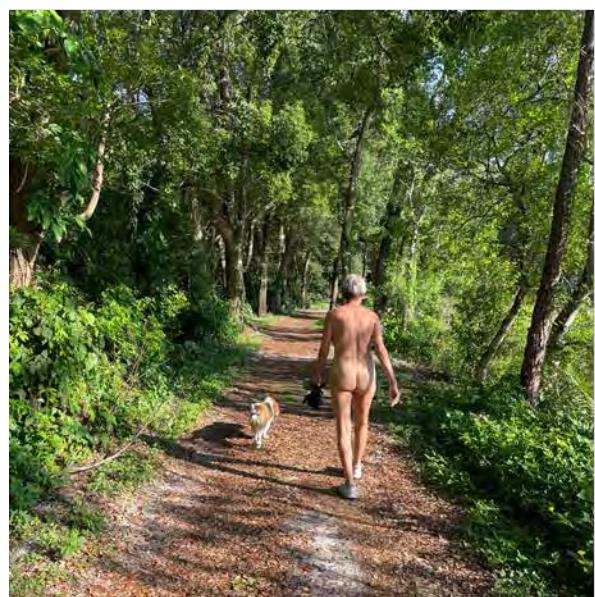
The science of sensory grounding

Our skin is our largest organ, yet we often numb ourselves to the constant stream of data it provides. Reconnecting with these inputs is a practice known as somatic awareness. It is not just poetic; it is physiological.

Consider the sensation of swimming. When you submerge yourself, the water exerts hydrostatic pressure on every inch of you simultaneously. It is a feeling of being held. This specific sensory input signals safety to the autonomic nervous system. As naturalist Diane Ackerman noted in *A Natural History of the Senses*, "Touch is the oldest sense, and the most urgent." When we focus on that urgency, the noise in our heads begins to fade.



Finding stillness in wind and warmth



You do not need a pool to access this grounding. It can be as simple as stepping outside.

Focus on the feeling of a breeze against your back. It is easy to ignore the wind as just "weather," but try to isolate the sensation of the air moving the fine hairs on your arms. Notice the temperature contrast between the air and your body heat.

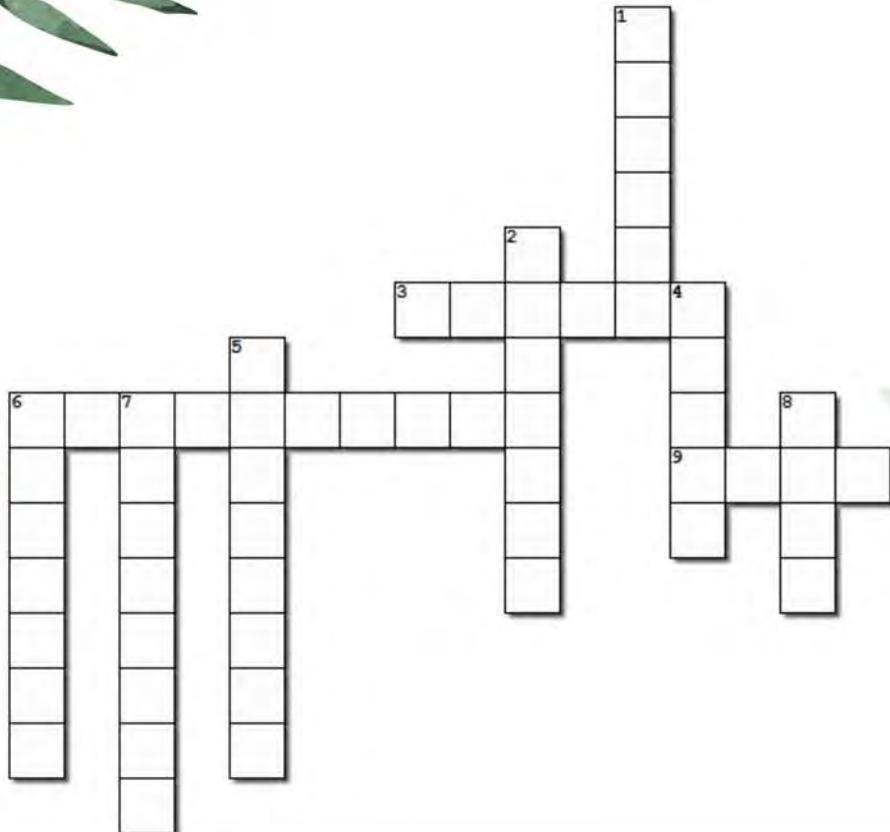
Alternatively, seek out the sun. Close your eyes and let the light hit your face. Instead of thinking about the heat, feel the radiation warming the skin, penetrating the surface. This is mindfulness in its rawest form. It anchors you in the "now" because physical sensation only happens in the present tense. You cannot feel the sun on your face yesterday, and you cannot feel the water gliding over your shoulders tomorrow.

By turning your attention outward to these elemental feelings, you turn the volume down on your internal monologue. You stop viewing your body as an object to be improved and start respecting it as the vessel through which you experience the world.

Tomorrow morning, before you look at a screen, step outside for sixty seconds and focus exclusively on the physical sensation of the air or sun against your skin to ground yourself for the day ahead.

LOVE YOUR BODY

Complete the crossword puzzle below for fun.



Across

- 3. Body contours to be celebrated, not hidden.
- 6. The most attractive thing you can 'wear.'
- 9. Authentic; unfiltered; not photoshopped.



Answers in next months newsletter.

Down

- 1. One of a kind; no two bodies are exactly alike.
- 2. The feeling often associated with taking off restrictive clothing.
- 4. Marks that tell a life story and show healing.
- 5. Absorbed through the skin and taken in tablet form sometimes.
- 6. The ultimate goal of self-acceptance.
- 7. One who practices nonsexual social nudity.
- 8. Uncovered; exposed to the elements.

AANR GAT Fundraising Campaign

You know them as the little coin that most people toss into a change jar, test your tire tread with, or toss them into a fountain and hope your wish comes true. Now that the US Government has stopped minting pennies, they are no doubt doomed to be thrown into a change drawer and forgotten.

Your **one cent** can help fund the Government Affairs Team (GAT) as they protect body freedom, support legislative advocacy, and ensure AANR voices are heard where and when it matters most.

Every penny will help fund:

- Legislative monitoring
- Advocacy efforts
- Public education
- Protection of nudist privileges and access
- Strengthening GAT's ability to respond quickly when issues arise



Look for a jar at your local clubs to donate!
January 2026 through the end of November 2026

*Turn your small change
into real change!*



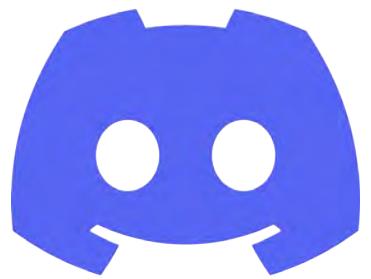
The campfire never has to go out!

Connect with your AANR West family year-round.

We know the best part of AANR West events isn't just the sun and the swimming—it's the community. It's the conversations by the pool, the laughter at the potlucks, and the friendships that span across states.

But why wait for the next festival or convention to catch up?

We are thrilled to announce the launch of the Official AANR West Discord Server! This is a modern, real-time space for our members to stay connected, share news, and support one another 24/7.



What you'll find inside:

- **General Chat:** Say hello, share your morning coffee, or just hang out.
- **Club Corners:** Discuss news and events specific to your favorite clubs.
- **Event Updates:** Be the first to know about upcoming conventions and festivals.
- **Advocacy Alerts:** Stay informed on legislative updates affecting our lifestyle.
- **Safe Space:** A moderated environment that upholds AANR's values of body acceptance and wholesome family recreation.

How to Join: Click the link below to accept your invite. If you are new to Discord, don't worry—it's free and easy to set up!

👉 <https://discord.gg/KAgsKd8VQa>

Let's keep the conversation going!



NEW Photo Guidelines

The Western Sun would love to have your photos so we can have more diverse pictures for our publication. All photos must be 300 DPI or larger. Please keep in mind that we must have a photo release for all parties in the photos. The release can be found at the URL below or by emailing us. Photos may be submitted to social@aanrwest.org.

Photo Release: aanrwest.co/release

We will no longer accept photos that do not meet the new criteria.



For questions, advertising or to submit an article for a future publication of The Western Sun, please send an email to publicrelations@aanrwest.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Western Sun

News from the Western Region of the American Association for Nude Recreation



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The American Association for Nude Recreation - Western Region

