

## 2019 CAMPING PROGRAM COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

As we prepare our annual report, the series of Spring Family Camps has just ended and we are gearing up for the beginning of the summer camp season. The trees have leafed out, birds, bees and insects have begun their spring routines, and the sounds of children and adults echo through the woods. Our ponds and streams are brimming with life, providing entertainment and discovery for the curious. And our firecircles once again ring with the sounds of song, silent worship, and spoken ministry. Our Baltimore Yearly Meeting camps provide an opportunity to experience community, recreation, meaningful service, and worshipful appreciation of God's creation. In the context of the community that we create at camp, we teach and try to live up to our Quaker Testimonies.

The work of the Camping Program Committee (CPC) falls into five areas: policy decision making for the summer camping program, collaborating with the Camp Property Management Committee to run the Spring and Fall Family Camps, creating and maintaining camp alumni networks, recruitment of campers, and supporting the work of the Camp Program Manager. We meet 9 or 10 times a year to accomplish these tasks. Twice a year we meet with the directors of our four camps, and we have liaisons with a number of BYM committees.

Last September we held a 40/20 year alumni reunion at Opequon Quaker Camp, welcoming Friends from both the "old" Opequon (1970s era in the floodplain) and the current era (on the hill, "arts" emphasis). Over sixty alumni attended the weekend. The highlights of the weekend were the evening firecircles with singing and worship-sharing. A unique event was the planting of a Peace Pole in memory of a deceased alumnus. We are planning to hold a reunion at each of the residential camps every five years, and work to build and maintain our alumni networks in between these reunions.

We are happy to report that our search for a new director for Opequon Quaker Camp resulted in the hiring of Sean Hickey. Sean is a BYM camps alumnus and staff member, having grown up in Frederick Friends Meeting. Friends can look forward to meeting and greeting Sean during Annual Session this summer. While preparing to hire a new director, the CPC took the opportunity to update the job description for camp directors. We also decided to revise the annual evaluation instrument used by the Camp Program Manager with our camp directors, and will be testing out a new format after the 2019 camping season.

As part of our policy making responsibilities, the CPC made one addition to the staff handbook concerning staff children at camp. We also revised/clarified our policy concerning tobacco use and "vaping". The committee is also responsible for the camper handbook, and we clarified some parent concerns about how we handle

challenging behaviors at camp. In March of 2018, the directors participated in a training and discussion about techniques for approaching various behavior challenges at camp.

Our camper recruitment efforts include holding events in several locations, helping Monthly Meetings encourage their young Friends to come to camp, and contacting families who are referred to us. This is an area where we can always use more help. Several BYM Monthly Meetings routinely send their young people to camp. We are happy to go to other Meetings who would like to hold events to learn about our camps. Please contact our committee clerk or Jane Megginson, the Camp Program Manager.

The committee spent a lot of time discussing the STRIDE program and how we can best support it. We feel this is an important program of the Yearly Meeting, which requires a lot of time and energy. After participating in many meetings and discussions, we are happy that the STRIDE program will be directed and supported by the Growing Diverse Leadership Committee. Of course, the CPC will continue to collaborate with this project, as it is part of our overall efforts to be more inclusive at the camps. We look forward to working with the new STRIDE coordinator.

The challenges of operating Opequon Quaker Camp on the Pigeon farm in Brucetown, VA continue. This spring we learned that the swimming pool will no longer be operational due to old age, and therefore not available for camper use. Flooding concerns continue as the wet spring weather raised the water level of the local stream. We expanded our property search committee to include a representative from Trustees and the Stewardship and Finance Committee. A way forward has not been made clear, yet, but we are doing our research, evaluating our needs, and examining possibilities within the BYM area.

The CPC takes seriously its responsibility to evaluate our programs and look for ways to improve them and make adjustments to meet the needs of our camp families. We try to make sense of the ebbs and flows of camper enrollment. Most importantly, we reaffirm our commitment to our Quaker values by making our camps more diverse and inclusive, earth-friendly, "unplugged", and loving communities. Campers, staff, and parents tell us that their lives are enriched by the BYM camp experience. It is the work of the "Fire at the Center", The Inner Light, God Within. That is why we remain so dedicated to the work of the BYM Camping Program.