

BYM Camps Annual Report

Presented to Interim Meeting: November 11, 2023

Task #1: Stabilize

After a half-decade or more of tumult and change – some of it within our camping program, some of it within our yearly meeting, and some of it in the broader society and world – I'm happy to report that Summer 2023 at BYM Camps had a quality that I had yet to feel in my three years of service as Program Manager: stability.

We had six talented, dedicated, and returning Directors leading the way: Dyresha Harris, Lyd Hanson, Jared Wood, Hope Swank, Rosie Eck, and Jesse Austell. We had no unexpected Director turnover from 2022 to 2023, and do not foresee any happening from 2023 to 2024 as well. The Director position is the *most important* position in the program, and the strength of our current Director team should be celebrated and valued and nurtured by all BYM Camps stakeholders.

The retention of such high-quality Directors would not be possible without the salary increases that Interim Meeting approved during the 2021-22 offseason. It also would not be possible without the substantial tuition increase that allowed for the continued investment in professional development, in outside trainers and consultants, and in new seasonal support positions. We have been able to hire and retain high-quality staff to fill new seasonal roles that have proven to be valuable and essential: Director of Mental, Emotional, and Social Health; Assistant Program Manager; Camper Support Specialists; Deputy Directors; and Health & Wellness Managers.

All of these investments have enabled us to continue innovating and improving our programmatic offerings in response to camper interest and parent demand and staff inspiration. We have improved our customer service and our family engagement, through a rebuilt and redesigned website, through new newsletters and weekly updates, through a cultural emphasis on valuing and listening to caregiver input and concerns.

The summers at Catoclin, Opequon, Shiloh, and Teen Adventure were solid and good, an evaluation both anecdotal and rooted in data. There were still challenges, of course, and the work was both joyous and hard, but the Program Staff at all levels were increasingly equipped to handle and transcend those challenges, working on top of the stronger and deeper and more stable foundation that we've been building these last few years.

Task #2: Catalyze

Now comes the more difficult task of catalyzing institutional change so that we're prepared for the continuous tumult that seems an inextricable part of the modern world.

BYM Camps must catalyze change in order to be nimble and responsive, so that we can engage with and serve the world as it is right now, not necessarily as we wish it were, or as it used to be. In order to be sustainable, financially and operationally, we need to attract and retain high-quality staff, and we need to appeal to more families outside of our Quaker and Quaker Camp networks so that our enrollment is consistently at or near 100%.

Due to high levels of staff churn – both from one summer to the next and during the summer itself – hiring the 150+ seasonal staff is now a year-round task, requiring broad and nationwide job postings far outside of our existing camp community, with 1000+ applications received and 300+ interviews conducted.

There are also persistently high levels of camper & family churn: ~35% of our families have been new to BYM Camps each of the last three summers, and only 13% of our families in 2023 are members of BYM, down from 17% in 2022 and 21% in 2021. To adjust to and engage with this new reality we need to constantly improve (and articulate the benefits of) our program, and we need to increase our level and quality of communication, marketing, and family engagement.

All of that requires efficient and high-quality work done by a robust and dynamic team. It requires increased investment in programmatic offerings, staff, and facilities. It requires an increased investment in culinary and medical staff. It requires increased investment in administrative and managerial staff. It requires that we fully embrace the [BYM Camps Strategic Plan](#), and that we make the hard choices that are necessary for it to be fully implemented.

We are unequivocally operating in the marketplace for both staff and campers, and if we're going to sustain this ambitious and magical camp program, we need to accept and embrace that challenge at every level of the organization, from first-year counselors and work granters, all the way up to the BYM Trustees. We need to be a modern and highly-functioning organization. We need to let go of traditions and structures if they no longer serve our mission, if they no longer serve our community. We need to all be on the same page, to all row in the same direction, to all sing from the same hymnal.

Change is not easy, but it is necessary. We ask it every year of our campers and staff, and they consistently amaze and surprise us. With a newly stable foundation at BYM Camps, we must now ask it of ourselves, of the organization that has nurtured and supported the ever evolving BYM Camping Program for the last 101 years.

Brian Massey
Program Manager, BYM Camps

BYM Camps 2023, by the numbers:

- Capacity across all four camps: 89.15%
 - Catoctin: 87.5%
 - Opequon: 73.7%
 - Shiloh: 100%
 - Teen Adventure: 100%
- % Campers new to BYM: 37%
- % Campers whose families are members of BYM or a BYM Monthly Meeting: 13%
- % Campers whose families are members of *any* Quaker meeting: 17%

- % Families paying the Full Cost: 38.23%
- % Families paying the Operating Cost: 23.21%
- % Families paying on the Sliding Scale: 38.57%

- Total Tuition Revenue Received: \$1,421,418

- Camper & Family Survey:
 - Recommendation Score Average: 9.14
 - That's good!
 - Main areas for improvement:
 - Communication - more photos, updates, news from camp, camper contact.
 - Food - more quality, quantity, and options.
 - Activities - more structured and engaging options throughout the session.

- Staff Survey
 - Recommendation Score Average: 8.61
 - That's good! It also represents a positive trend from 2021 and 2022.
 - Main areas for improvement:
 - Better and more robust orientation / onboarding / training for new staff
 - Clearer and more detailed job descriptions and expectations
 - More rest, more time off, clearer "on/off" schedule, less burnout