

The Continuous Revelation of BYM Camps

BYM Camps Annual Report, Presented to Interim Meeting - 11/5/22

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Introduction

The summer of 2022 was the 100th anniversary of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Camping Program, and it was a momentous one.

The summer of 2022 might've been the most successful season in the history of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Camping Program. The summer of 2022 might've also been the most challenging and difficult summer in the history of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Camping Program.

That those two statements can both be true is worthy of great and widespread celebration. It is a testament to the commitment and passion and skill of the staff and volunteers at Catoctin, Opequon, Shiloh, and Teen Adventure. It speaks to the joy and resilience of our campers, to the trust and faith of our families.

But the miraculous and contradictory nature of those two statements also highlights the tenuous state of this incredible program that we all love and treasure. It speaks to an underlying unsustainability that must be looked at honestly and dealt with seriously. Identifying and building off of the sources of our successes, while acknowledging and addressing the sources of our challenges, is the key to the BYM Camping Program's future.

Camper & Family Analysis

Overall, BYM Camps were at **95% capacity** in the summer of 2022. There were **507 families** that registered **620 individual campers** for **685 camper sessions**.

In 2022, there were **260 campers (42%) who were completely new to BYM Camps**. In 2021, there were 306 campers (46.5%) who were completely new to BYM Camps. Only 141 (46%) of those campers returned in 2022. We hope to have a much higher percentage of the new 2022 campers return in 2023.

In 2022, BYM Camps implemented an adjusted [Sliding Scale Tuition System](#). Of the 620 total campers, **35% registered at the Full Cost level** (\$1500/week), **24% registered at the Operating Cost level** (\$1250/week), and **41% registered on the Sliding Scale** (\$500-\$1000/week).

Through the Sliding Scale Tuition System, BYM Camps provided our families with **\$388,000 in tuition reduction**. In 2022, after accounting for that tuition reduction, BYM Camps received a total of **\$1,535,035 from camper tuition fees**.

In 2022, **17% of our campers came from BYM families** (107 out of 620). At the individual camps, it was **15%** at Catoctin, **25%** at Opequon, **12%** at Shiloh, and **21%** at Teen Adventure. Expanding our

lens a bit, including other Monthly Meetings and Yearly Meetings, **22% of our campers came from Quaker families** (136 out of 620). At the individual camps, it was **20%** at Catoclin, **27.5%** at Opequon, **17%** at Shiloh, and **28%** at Teen Adventure.

Who our campers are and where they're coming from is a question that could be asked and answered in many different ways, and I'm happy to provide as much additional information as possible.

Finally, looking at feedback and survey results from campers and families, it is clear that it was a successful summer. The average score that campers and families gave their experience was 9.34 out of 10. That's a VERY high score, even higher than last year, and one that all camp staff should be proud of. Generally speaking, the comments received were INCREDIBLY positive, which aligned with anecdotal reports from throughout the summer.

There were still negative experiences and responses, of course, which the Directors and I are taking seriously. Some of them were connected to divisive and emotional issues such as COVID policies or gender norms and structures. Some of them were rooted in persistent challenges such as mental health, behavior management, and both individual and structural racism. There is forever work to be done to improve as a program and manifest the full transformational potential of BYM Camps.

Staff & Program Analysis

It is widely known that 2022 was the most challenging staffing and hiring cycle in the history of BYM Camps. The Directors, Deputy Directors, and I all had to work outrageous hours, pulling out all of the stops, building systems and structures on the fly, in order to get our camps adequately staffed in time to open them in June.

Overall, we hired 157 staff members in 2022, which included many partial-season employees and specialized roles. Of those 157, 70 (44.5%) were first-time BYM Camps employees, and 89 (57%) didn't work for BYM Camps in 2021. Of our 2021 staff, only 56% returned to work in 2022.

This incredible staff was full of so many amazing staff members that we were only able to recruit and attract due to several staffing investments and innovations that we made heading into the summer of 2022. Some of those include:

- Increased base pay and increased experience bonus across the board;
- Increased salaries for Leadership Team positions (Directors and Deputy Directors);
- MESH (Mental, Emotional, and Social Health) Coordinators and a MESH Director;
- Health & Wellness Coordinators and a Health & Wellness Director;
- Teaching Artist positions at Opequon and Teen Adventure;
- Counselor-in-Training pilot program at Opequon.

Looking at the feedback and survey results from staff, it was clear that this was a challenging summer, but also that the investment and innovation had a meaningful impact. The average score that staff gave their experience was 7.9 out of 10, which is solid and notably higher than last year. The pay raises were VITAL to both recruitment and job satisfaction. The MESH positions were ESSENTIAL and highly valued.

That said, there is a clear need for more staff overall, more days off, more time off, more rest, more self-care. We need to better thread the needle on providing adequate training and on-boarding without burning out staff before campers even arrive. We need to provide more clarity over the roles and responsibilities of all positions. There are general concerns over the systems and staffing for Medical, Kitchen, and Facilities/Maintenance positions. And to make all of this happen there is a clear need for more year-round Director and Administrative work.

Conclusion

Looking back at all of the 2022 camp season, it is clear that demand is HIGH, for both summer camp generally and for what BYM Camps is providing, specifically.

Summer camps in general, and our camps in particular, are needed now more than ever. But because it's needed more than ever, that also means that camper and staff needs are higher than ever, and the job is harder than ever. Running these camps safely, effectively, and well requires more than ever, and staffing at all levels is becoming an increasing challenge.

Looking toward 2023, the fundamental and existential question is: How do we attract, develop, and retain high quality youth development professionals? How do we attract, develop, and retain high quality experiential educators?

We need to compete on compensation. We need to compete on facilities and amenities. We need to invest in professional development. We need to increase staffing levels so that the job is sustainable and attainable, so that it's not so brutally hard, so that it is FUN and joyous.

Camp is happening, and it's glorious and it's transformational, but only because of superhuman and heroic efforts. We can't assume that reality can be sustained indefinitely. The BYM Camping Program needs to continue evolving and growing and becoming – intentionally yet urgently – something new. Something that responds to the moment, meets the needs of the moment, addresses the challenges and risks of the moment, fulfills the mission and promise of the moment. This is the Continuous Revelation of BYM Camps, the joyous work that is ours to do together.