

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

“Baltimore Yearly Meeting's camping programs provide opportunities for spending extended time living in functioning Quaker communities that encourage tenderness, loving concern, dynamic activity, laughter, respect, work, honesty, silence, and joyful noise.

Our goal is to foster the kind of self-esteem that facilitates spiritual growth. Opportunities for such growth are created by supporting campers through challenging experiences. Success in negotiating rapids or exploring artistic creativity offers a deeper strength from which to accept the challenge and risk of turning inward toward the Light. Typically, a camper goes home a more competent, confident person whose spiritual roots have deepened and whose ties to the broader Quaker community have strengthened.”

--from the BYM Camp Staff Handbook, 2016

The Camping Program Committee (CPC) oversees this program, which is perhaps the one Yearly Meeting ministry that touches the largest number of people – adults, young Friends, and youth. We minister to Friends and friends from a large geographical area that extends beyond the physical boundaries of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Our camps are grounded in our Quaker values and testimonies: simplicity, peacemaking, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. The Committee feels responsible for maintaining this ministry that was started in 1923, has continued in various forms, and has developed through the hard work and Guiding Light as discerned by several generations of Friends.

This year the camping program overall has continued to see two encouraging trends: increasing enrollment, and increasing diversity in campers and staff. This summer we had a record number of campers enrolled, topping 600 campers by the end of May, and over 125 adult work grant participants. The STRIDE Program (formerly the Camp Diversity Working Group) is bringing over 20 children to camp. For the first time, this program has campers at all four of our programs, Catoctin, Opequon, and Shiloh Quaker Camps and Teen Adventure. We have our first camp staff members who are former campers brought to camp through the diversity initiatives.

Our Camp Program Manager, Jane Megginson, continues to provide professional, Quaker leadership to our camping program. Her attention to detail, financial savvy, knowledge of camping “best practices,” and continuous monitoring of applicable

state laws in Virginia and Maryland are some of the essential skills that help the CPC guide the camping program. She is responsible for both the bymcamps.org webpage and our registration and database program, both of which require a great deal of time and attention. She has encouraged the committee to conduct our outreach open houses earlier in the winter, in keeping with trends toward earlier registrations in camps nationwide.

Two new co-directors have joined our camp leadership: Rosie Eck at Teen Adventure and Jesse Miller at Catoctin. It's worth noting that Rosie came up through the BYM camping program, and Jesse has worked on staff for a number of years. Also, Jesse's hiring at Catoctin is a real-life example of our One Camp philosophy, as all his previous camp experience has been at Opequon. The retiring co-director of Teen Adventure, Jen Schneider, has our admiration, respect, affection, and enormous gratitude.

Each year we ask our camp families to complete a survey about their experiences with the camping program. These responses help the committee identify areas of strength and weakness. Out of these survey responses, the CPC has undertaken the task of calling all the registered families who are new to camp each summer. This entails calls to over one hundred families, but it is pleasant work, as families appreciate the contact even if they do not have questions.

We have united with Camping Property Management Committee to sponsor our Family Camp Weekends and make them exciting times for community-building as well as more physical building, painting, etc. Six times a year, these weekends are an opportunity for BYM families to enjoy our camp properties, engage in planned activities, and perform work projects. All ages of Friends are invited to join us for fun, fellowship, work and worship.

Membership on the Camping Program Committee itself has included an unusual number of people with long experience in the camping program, and simultaneously has added some 20-something members with fresh outlooks. The combination has made a very productive committee. Among the most important achievements of CPC this past year has been producing a finished Camp Staff Handbook – a project that was first tackled at least 13 years ago but that had never seen completion. The completed handbook is in use this summer, and we expect to consider feedback from our summer staff as part of our fall agenda. The committee has a vigorous work schedule, meeting monthly nine times a year, with three or four sub-committees, as well as sponsoring the Camp Diversity Working Group (now the STRIDE Program). Our committee membership sometimes struggles to

fulfill all of the tasks and obligations that are on our agendas. Friends eager to be actively involved, with time to volunteer both from home and at our camps, are asked to contact the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee to discern if they would be a good match for the work of our committee.

The ministry that is our camping program is both a responsibility and an honor, as we work to put our faith into practice in community each day.

Betsy Krome (Williamsburg) and Harry Scott (York), co-clerks