



## Making Love Visible: Catoctin's Bathhouses and Finding Spirituality in Unexpected Places

Dyresha Harris, Catoctin Director

One of the things I have always loved most about Quakerism is the commitment to living our values in everyday life. Throughout my life I have seen this simple concept turn even the most mundane moments into opportunities for spiritual engagement. But I must admit, even I was surprised--back when David Hunter and the Camp Property Committee brought me into conversation around replacing the 56-year-old bathhouses at Catoctin a couple years ago—to discover that this process could even apply to toilets.

There are lots of things I could say about our practical need for a new bathhouse. I could talk about them being

troublesome, outdated, or hard to clean. But what I actually want to speak to is so much bigger than that. Because what has excited me and other community members most about the proposed new bathhouses are the myriad ways that they are a concrete expression of what we value.

**Collaborative Process:** It is not uncommon when reading feedback forms from Catoctin to see something like: "Camp was an amazing and growthful experience that changed my child's life...but is there any way we could do something about the bathhouses?" So the impetus for this change came as a way of honoring the requests of our community. Staff and camper families have been very

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## BYM Greening Campaign – Our Witness to the World

### 1st Capital Project: Catoctin Bath House Project

It is an exciting time at BYM. In the fall of 2016 we plan to begin construction of a new bath house at Camp Catoctin. By providing a safe, sustainable, and attractive environmentally sound new bath house, our community has an opportunity to strengthen, improve and enhance our camping program. This program continues to changes lives.

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## 2016 Camp Dates

**Catoctin, Shiloh, and Opequon Quaker Camps**

**June 25 - August 7**

**Teen Adventure**

**June 25 - July 17**

Listed are the members of the Camping Program and Camp Property Management Committees. Feel free to contact them if you have any thoughts or concerns. Call the Yearly Meeting office for contact information, or consult the 2015 Yearbook.

### Camping Program

Harry Scott and Betsy Krome  
co-clerks

Allegra Churchill	Charlottesville
Brooke Davis	Richmond
Natalie Finegar	Sandy Spring
Linda Garrettson	Sandy Spring
Gary Gillespie	Homewood
JoAnn Coates Hunter	Frederick
Alex Jadin	Washington
Roni Kingsley	Richmond
Elizabeth Krome	Williamsburg
Hannah Lord	Sandy Spring
Rachel Lord	Sandy Spring
Sam McCormally	Herndon
Joshua Riley	Hopewell Centre
Katy Schutz	Charlottesville
Harry Scott	York
Sarah Williamson	Annapolis
<b>Ex Officio:</b> Jane Megginson	Camp Program Manager
Dyresha Harris	Director, CQC
Elaine Brigham	Co-Director, OQC
Sara Brigham	Co-Director, OQC
Hope Swank	Director, SQC
Jesse Austell	Co-Director, TA
Jen Schneider	Co-Director, TA

### Camp Property Management

Alene Carteret and Gloria  
Victor-Dorr, co-clerks

Alene Carteret	Homewood
Lois Crawford	Valley
David Diller	Adelphi
Nick Funkhouser	Frederick
Kate Meaker	Sandy Spring
Avery Rain	Adelphi
Frannie Taylor	Goose Creek
Gloria Victor Dorr	Sandy Spring

#### Ex Officio:

David Hunter	Camp Property Manager
Linda Garrettson	Camping Program
Jim Lynn	Stewardship & Finance
Greg Tobin	Trustees

## TNT: Try New Things

Betsy Krome, Shiloh Kitchen Manager  
At Shiloh we have a motto: TNT, Try New Things. It applies to lots of situations: creating new trips, leading new activities, trying new foods, singing new songs, trying on new leadership roles. As kitchen manager it means I try to cook new things. It's a great attitude to have in camp. And I tried it myself this summer.

There's a time of day at camp called Chocolate Cake. Normally it involves no chocolate cake at all. It's the second set of afternoon activities, following the first set called, get ready for it, Afternoon Activities. Between the two activity periods there's mail call and a snack. I can't explain why this time of day has this name, but there it is.

Every once in a while I surprise the campers by actually serving chocolate cake for snack. This summer I had an extra incentive—I had just made a new cake for the first time, as a wedding cake: chocolate beet cake. Despite my considerable skepticism about this recipe, the bride (former Shiloh director Dana Foster) had assured me it was delicious. This proved to be true, and the cake was a big hit with the wedding guests. (Lenna's recipe for Mystery Chocolate Cake on allrecipes.com, if you are interested.) So I bought beets, chopped them fine, and

made 96 servings of beet cake and frosted it with chocolate butter cream.

And then came the real TNT. Our brilliant director Hope was struggling with the appalling flow of candy that arrives in care packages despite her asking, begging, pleading, reminding, and hounding parents: "Please don't send candy to camp; the campers can't take it to their cabins and we have no place to store it." The day the campers returned from their trips, the candy flood was worse than ever. So Hope gave everyone a few minutes to eat their candy and share it, and then asked everyone to donate the rest to the kitchen. The next day the cooks and I used some of the sweets to decorate the cake. Chocolate kisses, peanut butter cups, licorice, M&Ms, Skittles... It was not beautiful, but it was quite colorful.

After the campers had demolished the cake and its gaudy topping, they were asked if they could guess the secret ingredient. Zucchini was the popular first answer. Another popular answer: love. Can't say that answer was exactly wrong. Nobody guessed the real mystery ingredient until significant hints were given—it's a root vegetable and it's red. Then they got it, and realized they had just Tried a New Thing.





## Training our Fabulous Camp Staff

Linda Garrettson

One of the most important parts of each summer is getting our camp staff ready to create vibrant, safe, spiritual communities of growth. In Pre Camp, directors and their staff work to create a strong community where everyone feels that his or her voice and contributions are crucial for the summer's success. They also need to have many skills in conflict resolution, behavior management and creative program planning. We help them plan to meet the physical, emotional, social and spiritual sides of all the campers. Important diversity training and understanding is also crucial for this work. This happens with many meetings, games, trips (to bond and practice skills), the physical act of setting up camp and time for meeting for worship and reflection. By the end of pre-camp, the new folks feel much more connected and everyone is excited for campers to arrive.

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*"It was really a huge growth experience for me in both group leadership and personal comfort zone expansion that I came to through the strong teen adventure community."*

*Beatrice Kennison TALT 2015*

Over the years we have honed Skills Week, which happens just prior to Pre Camp. It has proved a real gift as it brings the staff of all camps together to learn hard skills, and grow as a greater camping community. We rotate between certifying our staff in Red Cross Lifeguarding, American Canoe Association Whitewater Instructor training, and SOLO Wilderness First Aid. We offer CPR and First Aid every year as well. In addition, all of our Rock Climbing Instructors

must attend EarthTrek's Instructor Trainings and pass very difficult exams every 3 years.

As someone who helped train our staff in CPR and lifeguarding for many years, I can attest to the power of these trainings. Our counselors take their jobs so seriously that it is never a problem for them to take these certifications seriously as well. They often want to go more in depth than the actual program requires.

We appreciate all the counselors and staff who put in this extra time each summer to make certain that every unit which hits the trail has staff trained in a myriad of ways to keep the whole group safe. We have done a great job balancing the serious and sometimes stressful atmosphere of passing certifications with a warm, Quaker environment where we are building community as we learn. Everyone should be so lucky to get these important certifications in such a loving environment!

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*"In my normal life I don't really get to go outside, so to be completely outside for these three weeks is just amazing."*  
*Jordan Keller, TALT 2015*



# Growth: A Balance of Challenge Circles

"If you aren't in over your head,  
how do you know how tall you are?"  
-T.S. Eliot

Nikki Richards

I spent this summer working at Teen Adventure, (TA for short), the camp Shiloh, Catocin, and Opequon feed into once the eldest campers have graduated. This summer at TA I led twelve 15-year-olds on a twenty-one day trip along the Appalachian trail complete with bears, bee stings, and even a bit of bushwhacking. I entered the summer quite out of shape and reeling from a particularly hard year, so I wasn't sure I could even complete the trip. But my friends told me I should stay and that I would grow from it, so on Day One I found myself about to hike six miles uphill with a fifty pound pack on my back and twelve kids staring at me and waiting for directions. I decided I would start as the designated counselor in the back (for what seemed to me to be legitimate reasons). After introductions and icebreaker games over a smooshed trail lunch, we began the ascent. One minute in I found myself alone in the woods with sweat pouring down my face and a crying camper in front of me. Annie collapsed onto the ground and pleaded with me to let her go home because she'd "never make it." Secretly I wanted to do the same thing with her, but I knew I would probably lose my job if I did (so I kept standing up).

What followed was a conversation about Annie's hardest year yet. She had jumped many hurdles in the past ten months: some of these jumps were higher than others; some of the hurdles were cleared successfully with a few inches to spare; others clipped the tip of her shoe before she soared over them towards the finish line. Annie knew a lot about struggle and trauma, but what she didn't know was that I had gone through a similar experience (although I'd never tell her).

Knowing all of this prompted me to push Annie harder than I would have before our intimate conversation. I knew we both needed the growth following extremely paralleled difficult years stuck in our own identical ruts. So we continued up the mountain. We hiked slower than I've ever hiked with a camper before, but we hiked nonetheless. When we finally rejoined the group at the top of the mountain, Annie looked at me and thanked me. About a half hour later she threw up; I'm guessing she wasn't feeling so thankful in that moment! But every day of the trip following our first, Annie hiked with me. She told me about her friends, her schoolwork, and her pursuit of music. And every day of the trip following our first, I continued to push Annie up new mountains. I pushed her because I knew she needed it. I pushed her because I knew I needed it. And I pushed us both because I knew we would grow.

A major tenet of Teen Adventure is challenge; we seek to challenge our campers physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Sometimes when the timing is right and the setting is "just so" we encounter the perfect storm, prompting campers to grow in all three ways at once. The challenges we push TA campers toward help them to grow through safe methods where they can actually experience growth rather than hindrance. However there are some calculated risks that we do not take at TA. I believe those risks that we do not pursue would obstruct campers' growth; they may begin to feel unsafe or as if they are being pushed too hard too quickly, and will thus enter their panic zones. Once in the panic zone, all hopes of self re-



flection and growth are futile. As a staff, we often reflect on the concept of challenge: which methods of challenge will be safest while still providing some sense of risk and growth for our campers? My favorite conclusion we've come to is the idea of "Challenge Circles."

Challenge Circles provide an easy way to quantify risk and its attached level of growth. The idea is simple: There are three circles in which we might find ourselves. The first circle is the "Comfort Zone." Those of us who frequently find ourselves in the Comfort Zone are typically experiencing very little growth. The Comfort Zone includes our couches, beds, and homes as well as relationships in which we feel extremely comfortable and classes in which we already understand most of the material. It is sometimes good to take a breather in the Comfort Zone--rest is important.

The second circle is the "Discomfort Zone." At TA we hope to find ourselves and our campers in the Discomfort Zone at most times during the summer. The Discomfort Zone might include a rock climb set up on a 50 foot cliff; a wall-less tarp full of critters under which we sleep each night; a class IV rapid that we might navigate in canoes; and even new foods we may have never tried before. These types of challenges can provide growth--we are trying new things, but in a safe and calculated way so that our biggest fears during

these new experiences aren't death and incapacitation, but rather failure or mild injury.

The third circle is the "Panic Zone." At TA we try to avoid this zone at all costs. Within the Panic Zone are experiences such as venomous snakes in the middle of our paths; getting lost (or losing a camper!) in the middle of the woods at dusk; life-threatening injuries; and running out of water or food, among other necessities for camping. While in the Panic Zone, we do not grow. Once we have entered the Panic Zone our brains begin to process the fight or flight response. We freeze up, our minds and bodies stop functioning, and we are unable

to complete tasks until we feel we have reached safety and have exited the Panic Zone. These three zones are a counselor's guide to facilitating the perfect summer; finding the balance within each is a key part of leading a TA trip.

Following the end of our summer at Teen Adventure, Annie texted me a link to her YouTube page. "I wrote a song about our trip. I hope you like it :)." After listening three times and crying through the entirety of each, I committed a specific lyric to memory: "You taught me how to love myself/ and persevere through literal hell/I'm stronger now than I ever thought I could be." Annie had nailed it. She

knew she'd grown from all of her pain on our trip and essentially become a new person by the end. She had entered her Discomfort Zone (after briefly flitting in and out of her Panic Zone) and through the process had learned about herself, her strengths, and her goals. Thus, as T.S. Eliot says so perfectly in the above quote, Annie had gotten in over her head this summer at TA. And through that process, she learned how tall she was and how tall she could be.

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*"It was really difficult, but it was the best thing I've ever done. And I've never felt stronger."*  
*Lucie McCarthy, TA 2015*

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## Catoctin Bath Houses Were Built in 1959

Greening Campaign continued from page 1  
The current bath houses at Catoctin were built in 1959. They have served Camp Catoctin and Baltimore Yearly Meeting well for the last 56 years. The time has come for a new bath house. Few would disagree that the current bath houses are in need of replacement. Many have described them as "disgusting", "gross" and "in desperate need of replacement."

### Our current bath houses:

1. Create health concerns for campers, staff and work grant volunteers.
2. Are moldy and damp- never fully drying due to a significant lack of ventilation and moisture.



3. Are subject to ground settling, creating cracks which allow critters and mold to get into the building.
4. Continue to add stress to the current septic system, possibly requiring costly repair/replacement decision sooner rather than later.
5. Create a significant environmental impact.

### Our new bath house will include:

1. Two family-style handicapped accessible bathrooms.
2. Nine modern style Clivus Multrum composting toilets, significantly lessening the load on the current septic system.
3. Two waterless urinals which also help with yearly winterization costs.
4. Needed ventilation and drain flow to prevent a mold problem.
5. Solar panels to heat the water.
6. Changing area for each shower stall.
7. Lots of cubbies for camper's supplies.
8. Two ADA compliant/family style units, making camp more accessible.
9. A single building instead of two, making for much easier maintenance.



The current 2015 cost to build the new Camp Catoctin Bath House shown below is \$297,000. Approximately one third of this is direct and indirect costs associated with the composting toilet system. We currently have **\$121,103.64** in pledges and gifts toward this project.

The existing bath houses have served the camp well for 56 years. Building a new structure will enable us to embrace our Witness to the World by reducing our carbon footprint by being more environmentally responsible at our Quaker Camps.

The time is now and the price tag is high. But if we work together we can continue to provide a life-changing experience for campers and all who are exposed to our extraordinary camps. Please join in and give now. Let's continue our journey to a Greener BYM. Let's Witness to the World.

## Camp Generations

Brooke Davis  
"Quaker camp changed my life" is more than just a bumper sticker. It is a central truth in my life as a BYM Quaker. My best friend in second and third grade, Linda Garrettson, introduced me to a new way of living as part of a Quaker family. The Garrettsons taught me to make pizza from scratch, sang silly songs together as they worked and asked me to participate in moment of silence before each meal at their home. Almost the second I began to visit their home, Linda and her parents talked to me about the fun they had at Camp Catocin each summer, and they began to work on my parents to send me there. Finally, in 1979, my parents agreed to send me for two weeks. I was hooked immediately! Never before had I felt such acceptance and unconditional love. As an awkward 12 year old, I felt challenged spiritually and physically to do unfamiliar and sometimes scary things like hiking 10 miles with a full pack, rock climbing and sitting in silence daily at the fire circle.

The decision to attend camp that summer influenced the rest of my life. I came back the next summer for Unit 1 and signed up for the inaugural year for Teen Adventure the following year. Later, I worked as a counselor at Catocin. Each of the 7 summers I had at camp helped me to define my values and become a stronger person. My family was vaguely Christian and was not active in a church when I first came to camp, and the gentle spiritual teachings of Barry Morley had a

profound impact on me. I became an active attender of Richmond Friends Meeting as an 8th grader and participated in BYM Young Friends Conferences for most of high school and college. My love of nature, camping and nurturing children sprang from my experiences as a BYM camper, counselor and Young Friend. Not surprisingly, I chose to become an educator for my career and I became an active member of Richmond Friends Meeting. Thanks to Linda Garrettson and her fantastic family, I was given a glimpse of what Quakerism is all about. Camp gave me a place to see Quakerism in action in the world. I learned to see that of God in everyone, to work together with others to get chores done and to try things that may seem hard with the encouragement of Friends. Many years later, when I became a parent, I sent my sons to camp as soon as they were old enough to attend. Being a good Quaker mother, I let them decide which of the residential camps they wanted to attend and both chose Shiloh Quaker Camp, like many of their friends from Richmond Meeting. Alex loved camp immediately and not only attended Shiloh for 6 summers and did Teen Adventure. Then he applied to become a counselor. Last summer he completed his second summer at Shiloh as a Unit 5 counselor. My younger son Andrew attended as a "staff brat" for a week each summer as I cooked and then, he too was a camper for 6 summers. After 10 years at Shiloh, Andrew plans to attend Teen Adventure next summer.



hood. The time living in community helped me to heal and refocus on my life goals. The silence, the songs and the marvelous food helped me to return home stronger each summer. My memory was jogged about how much young children can do to be helpful, after seeing the campers in work crews. So, I learned to have my children help with dishes, cleaning bathrooms and other chores I saw them do at camp.

Later, when my boyfriend Nick joined me to cook in the kitchen to help defer my boys' tuition, I knew that he was a keeper. I also got a chance to see how he functioned in the offbeat realm of camp. Making pancakes for 100 was a pretty good test to see if he was ready for a Quaker family. He passed with flying colors and has come back each year since as my husband.

Much to my delight, camp also gave me a chance to see the next generation of my family and Linda Garrettson's family interact. This summer Linda's son, Terran, was a counselor at Shiloh with my son Alex. Terran was also my son Andrew's counselor for Unit 1. It felt like the whole universe was aligned the evening that Linda came to help out in the kitchen at Shiloh, and we got to see our sons in action together playing games at evening activity. Linda and I even got to share a stolen evening of "girl talk" and catching up like we might have had 30 years ago when we were counselors together.



What I had not counted on when I sent my boys to Shiloh was the importance that camp would again take in my life. I began doing work grants in the kitchen mostly at Shiloh, but also at Opequon and Catocin as needed. Camp came back in to my life after 20 years on the "long overnight," just as my first marriage ended and I was faced with single parent-

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Most importantly, camp began the process of teaching Alex and Andrew to become independent young men. At camp their counselors taught Alex and Andrew life skills like how to work as a team, how to overcome obstacles and to become more self-reliant. When I dropped Alex off at college for the first time this year, I had no doubt that he was ready to live away from

home and had the self-confidence to face challenging decisions on his own.

Who knows how camp will impact all of our children's lives in the long run? I know that my life and my family members' lives have been greatly enriched by our participation in BYM camps. I am hopeful that one day my sons will see the life changing impact

camp has had on their lives. I know already that they can see value of the fun, friendships and time in the woods they get each summer. I can see how two generations of my family have grown dramatically thanks to BYM camps. Perhaps in another 20 years my grand-children will be playing jugs and hiking in Shenandoah National Park with their counselors.

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## Catoctin Bath Houses Were Built in 1959

Visible Love continued from page 1 excited about it, donating over \$300 across registrations and visiting days, including a gift to which all staff contributed. And from the beginning, David invited directors, staff, committee members and numerous other community members into conversation with contractors and architects about our vision for the new design. As such, the planning and fundraising for this project has already been infused with so many different voices and hands.

**Supporting Community:** Directors do everything we can to try to ensure that the camps are inclusive and supportive places for all of our community members. As such, we know that guarding against bullying and harassment takes ongoing thought and vigilance. Group bathrooms are a common site of bullying in the wider world, with over 50% of students reporting that they are afraid to go to the bathroom at school. Studies show that physical environment can have a big impact on statistics like these. The architects we have been working with have kept these links at the forefront of their minds working with us to design a beautiful and open space that can truly be an extension of the community we try to create at all the camps.

**Environmental Responsibility:** The bathhouses would be created with a number of eco-friendly features that will have an impact on our environmental footprint, such as composting toilets, waterless urinals, locally sourced building materials, and be-

ing built to last a century rather than needing to be replaced after 30 of 40 years. This is a bold way of living our values as a community that believes in responsible stewardship of the earth. It would also serve as an important teaching tool for our next generation, giving every camper and visitor who comes there experiential knowledge of a system that can save 50 gallons of water per person per day in a community of over 100.

**Inclusion:** A number of features planned for the new bathhouse would allow the Catoctin site to be more accessible to people with a variety of needs. These additions more fully recognize and affirm the experiences of people who are already an integral part of our community, while at the same time, sending an important message to people who might be considering joining us.

- The plans include ramps, ADA compliant stalls, and other features that would make the location more accessible to people with disabilities.
- The plans include two non-gendered - family stalls, which serve to make camp more accessible to people with young families, and to people who are transgender or gender non-conforming.
- The plan includes open and closed changing spaces so there are options for people with different comfort levels around privacy. This is particularly significant when we con-



sider that norms and comfort around privacy can often be linked to different cultural and life-experiences.

For many years there was an image in the kitchen at Catoctin that says "Food is love made visible." This sentiment is definitely born out in the heaping helpings of wholesome food that come through the pass-through into the dining hall and I think it is born out in a great many other places too. It's born out anywhere we live our values not just in the lofty things, but in the everyday actions and items that make up the majority of our life experience, even ones as mundane as our bathrooms.

I am a person who loves dialogue. But so often when we have dialogue about big ideals--like actively listening to constituents, like youth safety and empowerment, like environmentalism, like inclusion--we can feel stuck around how to put these into practice. But right now, in building this bathhouse, we have an amazing opportunity to make our love, our inclusion, our responsibility and our values really visible and really tangible. I hope that each of you join us in letting our light shine in this way.

# Camp Property Manager Looking Toward the Future

“Quaker Faith is placed not in the achievements of the past...

but in the promise of what is to come”

Joshua Valle, Friends Journal, April 2014

David Hunter, Camp Property Manager  
It is easy for me to fall into the trap of thinking about my effectiveness in this position by looking at what has been accomplished over the last year. Have we replaced enough cabins to know that the campers will be safe and dry for the summer? Will there be enough benches for everyone to sit at in the dining hall? Are our buses going to make it through another summer? But this is a backwards looking approach and it can only tell us where we have been and if we have done well enough. It is good to acknowledge and celebrate our accomplishments but their worth is in the promise of what is to come.

It is easy to forget to look forward toward the promise of what the camping program and the camp properties will offer the Yearly Meeting and the world around us in the years to come. I am happy to be reminded that how we do what we do and why we choose to do it that way is as important as getting it all done. When we practice our faith effectively we move forward, guided by faithful discernment, and we find paths forward that reflect our values and ensure that the promise is realized. Some of the forward looking things we have done this year include:

## Family Camp Weekends

In 2015, we tried something new: Friends Service Weekends became Family Camp weekends. One weekend was scheduled at each of the residential camps in the spring and another in the fall. Staff with experience in the camping programs were hired to plan and coordinate activities and food coordinators were scheduled so that all would be well fed and the weekend would run smoothly. Activities were offered that appealed to all ages including exploring the camp, ponds and creeks; group games; forest walks; fairy house building; cooking; board games; singing; firecircle; and much,

much more. Work projects were included among the activities as well.

The new approach to the weekends was a resounding success! Not only did lots of work get done but new camp families got a taste of what camp is like and were introduced to the properties. Old friends had a chance to get together and reminisce and catch up, and others had the opportunity to enjoy the weekend and be rejuvenated! We are looking forward to continuing to expand the camp circle, have old friends enjoy the properties, and introduce new friends to all that the Yearly Meeting and the camping programs have to offer.

## New cabin at Catoctin

Due to the weather, we got a late start on the new cabin at Catoctin this spring but it was completed in September and it is beautiful. Thanks again to Peter Bugler for all the care and remarkable craftsmanship that he puts into each cabin. The traditional timber frame technique used to build these cabins uses accumulated wisdom of our forebearers for design and construction and locally sourced materials to create structures that pose a simple elegance and are built to last. They will serve campers at Catoctin for many decades to come.

## Logging, Tree Planting and American Chestnuts

The logging project at Catoctin is complete. Our management objectives were carried out beautifully and the forest is lush and thriving. On



a walk at one of the Family Camp Weekends we learned to identify some of the trees in the forest. As we walked near a particularly dense stand of new seedlings I heard a voice (whose owner I could not see through all the young trees) coming out of the lush growth. “Man, this is a Tulip Poplar jungle,” my 5 year old friend said, trying out his new skills.

Several large openings in the forest canopy were created and early this spring over 460 trees were planted. The varieties of trees we used were chosen to increase the diversity of species in the forest, provide food and shelter for wildlife, and to help protect the forest soils. Many of the trees planted were evergreens that will play a temporary role in the forest and we look forward to having some of our own Catoctin grown Christmas trees in 8 to 10 years.

Thirteen of the trees we planted are quite special. In the late 1800s blight swept through the forests of the Eastern United States and by the early 1900s nearly all of the mature American Chestnuts were gone. Since this tree played such an important role in our forests, the American Chestnut Society began working on breeding

a new American Chestnut that would be resistant to the blight. The first fruits of their work are just now becoming available.

The new American Chestnuts are not commonly available because the trees are just now old enough to begin producing quantities of nuts. Nevertheless, the



American Chestnut Foundation agreed to plant some of these new chestnuts at Catoctin. This is the first time that Restoration Chestnuts have been introduced into Maryland forests. Isn't it exciting to think that the naturalization of the American Chestnut in the region is beginning at Catoctin Quaker Camp? What a joy to be a part of seeing what has been called one of the most serious environmental disasters in American history begin to be reversed.

### Managing Invasive Species

We have begun looking at the health of our forests, and have become aware of the effects of invasive species. Invasive species are organisms which humans have moved to another part of the world. Some of these trans-located species have a formidable competitive advantage over native species. We call them invasive species since they are capable of out competing the desirable, native species and usually have a serious negative environmental impact. Sometimes several invasive species can act on a forest at the same time creating effects that are exponentially severe. For example, at Shiloh we have a confluence of invasive species that will have a significant negative impact on part of the property.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an insect that is having a devastating impact on all of the varieties of ash trees in our area. Studies have found that once EAB is established, mortality rates are around 99%. It is devastating to think that we may lose all of the ash on the camp properties. They are tall, supple giants reaching for the sky at all of the residential camps. However, they do not occupy a unique role in forest. Given time and opportunity other giants will rise in their places.

However, it may be challenging for the new trees to become established. At Shiloh, the forest that is home to many ash trees is also home to a host of invasive species waiting in the understory. These invasive vines, un-

desirable trees, and shrubs will take advantage of the available light and make it difficult for native species to flourish. It will be important that we increase our management of invasive species before we lose the ash trees so that other native species can take their places.

Forests are not only a beautiful home for our programs they are essential to our health and the health of the planet. As we face the challenges of climate change healthy forests will play an essential role in our efforts to preserve the planet and maintain earth as a healthy home for creation.

### A New Bathhouse for Catoctin

Lots of time and energy have gone into planning and designing new bathhouses for Catoctin this year. I have enjoyed the collaborative process to design this structure immensely. The time spent with Catoctin staff, alumni, off-season renters, state and local permitting authorities, architects and engineers has been an education and a pleasure. The sharing of ideas, reflecting on the values we want to up-hold, the care and concern that has gone into the work, the waiting in silence for way to open, have all added up to an enriching personal experience for me and a thoughtful, practical, and beautiful design. The building will reflect many of the things we value as Friends, how we want to live with one another as a community and the tender care we want to offer the environment that provides us with our home.

We can't wait to begin construction so that the building will be ready for the 2017 camping season. There is a lot to be done before next August so that we will be ready to break ground immediately after camp closes. There will be design questions to finalize, site plan modifications to file with the county, permits to apply for and contractors to hire.

There will also be money to be raised

and this is the part of the work we can all share! Isn't it wonderful to know that we all have a role to play in making this much needed building a reality! Let's get busy fulfilling the promise of a more beautiful and sustainable future for our camping programs!

### Coming soon:

#### Cabins at Shiloh and Opequon

We are looking forward to building cabins at Shiloh and Opequon before the 2016 camping season. The design will be similar to other new cabins that have been replaced at Shiloh and Opequon. We are striving to use materials that are produced as close to the camps as possible in order to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the structure. Of course we are looking for materials that are the right fit for the camps as well.

One of the things that I enjoy most about my job is the opportunity to interact with a broad variety of people. Inevitably the people I enjoy most are the Quakers and camp friends that I visit with. I cannot move among Friends or those who have been touched by our camps without hearing stories of how lives are changed by our programs. It is clear that Friends are proud of the Yearly Meeting's commitment to making these life-changing opportunities possible.

We have worked hard, scraped by, and cobbled together creative solutions to bring our programs to life year after year. Through this hard work we have established programs that others strive to emulate because it is evident that they make a difference in the lives that they touch. I would suggest that we are beginning to arrive at a point in our corporate life where we can shift our focus from addressing the needs of the moment to ensuring the promise that the camping program and the camp properties hold is carried forward into the future. It will take all of us to fulfill the promise, but the camp properties, our young people and the sustenance and strength we gain from the camps are worth the effort.



# BYM Camps Looking Ahead to Exciting Opportunities

Jane Meggison, Camp Program Manager The BYM Camps—Shiloh, Opequon, Catoctin and Teen Adventure (TA)—had a great 2015 season. For the third year in a row we are at a high of camper weeks enrolled- this year, we tied last years number of camper weeks (1388), which exceeded (just barely) the former high in 2013 (1386). In other words, enrollment continues to be good. We always have some areas we want to improve and the Camping Program Committee, Directors, and I continue to explore ways that we can improve enrollment and ways we can strengthen camp overall.

One of the ways we are improving camp overall, and the Yearly Meeting and camp families can help, is the kick off of our new Greening Campaign! We have started raising money to work on the exciting multi-year projects to improve our facilities in much needed areas, and as we improve them, we are working sustainability into our plans. Our first project, construction starting at the end of camp in 2016, will be a new bath house at Catoctin. The new bath house will include composting toilets, as well as a higher, airier ceiling to improve light and air quality,

and doors on toilet stalls! In addition, the bath house design will include 2 private shower/toilet rooms that are gender neutral and accessible, as part of the design.

Future year plans include new Opequon bath houses, overhauling the Shiloh art pavilion, and some improvements to the BYM Office in Sandy Spring. Please join us in supporting this effort to update our facilities and build in some teachable/usable environmental improvements as well.

## Diversity and Inclusion

Our residential camps are making great headway and average 30% campers of color compared to the first year we started collecting this data in 2008 when only 17% of our residential campers were of color. At Teen Adventure, only 16% of our campers are of color, up from 13% in 2008. Clearly we have a long way to go with TA, and some more work to do with our residential camps, including increasing the presence of staff of color. Fortunately, a lot of hard work by the Camp Working Group on Racism, along with a lot of other individuals in the Yearly Meeting has paid off and we have received a

very generous grant from the Shoemaker Fund to help us fund a full time person to work on creating a more inclusive Yearly Meeting stemming from the work we have started at our camps. The new position, the Outreach and Inclusion Coordinator (OIC), will start this Fall to continue the efforts begun at our camps to reach out to campers that are generally underrepresented and work with volunteers to

spread this intentional work throughout our camps, and our Yearly Meeting. I am so excited that the hard work of so many people has paid off to take this program to the next level. I cannot wait to see what our new OIC person can do when able to focus on this effort full time, and to see what the members of our camps and Yearly Meeting will do with this great opportunity!

## Administrative Details

I spent a tremendous amount of time this past year switching the camper database from a local server based database to a cloud based system. Along with that I had the opportunity (and the pitfalls) of designing a new camper registration system. Most of you will experience this change if you register campers or sign up for a work grant at camp. I was able to make some improvements on our previous registration system and found that some of the choices I made and some of the things our excellent camp database company, CampBrain, promised were not ready yet. So there is more tweaking to do. Overall, though, there were more improvements and potential in this new system. Some of the things that I am excited about:

- \* Directors can now access the database and look up information about campers, camper families, and medical information wherever they have access to the internet. In the past, only the office staff had access to camper data.
- \*The camp medical staff can track which camper needs medication at what times using database reporting.
- \* This year staff applications and staff form management will be accessible to our directors online.
- \* Most of the forms – medical, financial aid, releases – are all done online now and thus can be stored with each camper record online (camper medical and release forms need to be stored



and accessible for 17 years for legal reasons).

\* Having forms accessible online means we no longer need to mail out packets to all camp families, saving paper, postage, and time.

\* The new database has simplified the process of emailing camp families.

There are other benefits, but these are the ones that spring to mind. Thanks to the camp families for being patient with some of the bumps and being willing to learn a new system and give feedback to help improve it! I am going to Toronto this fall to attend a conference for CampBrain users to help me and help CampBrain improve the system even more.

### Staff

The BYM Camps provide a service to the young people of our Yearly Meeting by giving them an opportunity to seek meaningful work, often a first job, doing something they love, with a great group of peers. The work is demanding and rewarding. Our staffers carry a tremendous amount of responsibility for the physical, mental and spiritual care of just under 600 campers. They learn a lot, they grow a lot, and they give a lot. Every application is reviewed. The top candidates are interviewed and new hires reference-checked. In 2015 BYM Camps employed 134 summer camp staff, 39 of whom were new. That is a lot of interviewing! The new hires all get two references checked, and get background checks performed. Most arrive at camp two weeks before the campers to start training for their new job. Our camp directors interview, hire, train, and supervise all of their own staff. You know that old saying, "Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did, only going backwards and in heels"? Well that kind of puts me in mind of what our Camp Directors do – they hire their entire staff and get prepared for camp while working full time at their other jobs. Any time I stop and reflect on how committed and passionate about their work our staff are, it moves me profoundly. (I just



paused a few moments and reflected on that). In this space of reflection and gratitude, I want to thank all of the counselors and staff who work extremely hard to make our camps the safe, growthful, challenging, encouraging places that they are.

The 2015 camp season was the last for Co-Director of Catoctin Quaker Camp, Kathrin Gilbert. Kathrin has Co-Directed Catoctin with Dyresha Harris for the past 4 seasons – how time flies. Please join me in thanking Kathrin for her hard work at Catoctin for BYM. Kathrin is moving on to complete her MA and pursue year round work in her field.

While I am thinking of people and efforts to be grateful for, I want to thank all of the folks that participate in the work grants that make our camps run. Thanks also go the Camping Program and Camp Property Management Committees and all of the other Committees of the Yearly Meeting that help support the camps – Trustees, Supervisory, Stewardship and Finance. I don't want to forget all of the contributions that the year-round BYM office staff make to help keep the camp juggernaut running smoothly. Mostly, I want to thank all of the parents and campers that choose to come to our camps year after year and the members of the Yearly Meeting that believe in what we are doing and support this program!

### Action Item Opportunities:

- If you are interested in the work of including more people from underrepresented groups in BYM Camps and in the Yearly Meeting, contact the new Outreach and Inclusion Coordinator to welcome her to the staff and ask some questions. Think about inviting the OIC staff to your Meeting or find out what you can do to help with this important work – at your Meeting, in the Yearly Meeting, or at your Camp!
- Think about how important BYM Camps are to you and your family, and/or how important sustainability and efforts to make less impact on the earth are to you and make a donation to the Greening Campaign!
- Thank a BYM Camp staff person for their hard work in sharing BYM's message with youth.

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*"Something you realize part way through TALT is that the counselors are there for safety and supervision, but that as a camper you've realized how to do all of the in camp work like cooking and setting up tarps. It's a great realization that you have what it takes to be independent, but also what it takes to work with other people and reach a consensus about what needs to be done."*

*Izzy Lott, TALT 2015*

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The *Firecircle* is published annually by the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. If you'd like to submit an article or have a comment, please direct it to BYM Camping Program 717-481-4870.

## **2016 Camp Season Enrollment Begins January 15**

Camp registration will open Friday, January 15th at 7:00 pm for returning campers. Starting Monday, February 1st at 7:00 pm, we will accept registrations from new campers. If you are a returning camper and want to make sure of your spot in a particular session, please register as soon as you can. Enrollment is first come, first served. This will include registration for Teen Adventure, so if you want to make sure you get in, please register as close to opening as possible.

Like last year, please sign up for Work Grants (working a week at camp as a cook, maintenance or medical person to offset camper fees) ONLINE at the same time you sign up for camp. If you are a returning work granter and your kids are NOT first-time attenders at camp, please sign up for a work grant the first week your child is attending camp if possible!

