

Camp Administrative Secretary's Report, 2005

by Jane Megginson, Camp Admin. Secretary

The past nine months in this new job have been very challenging. The learning curve has been steep. I never could have imagined all of the balls in the air I'm supposed to keep up at one time! Josh Riley, the past Camp Administrative Secretary, has been extremely helpful to me, always answering my calls and my questions, no matter the hour! One of the greatest lessons, and yet one I already intrinsically knew, was how great our Camp Directors are and what a great job they do. Now I know it from a different perspective and I have to say, they have surpassed my expectations in terms of how well they run camp, how committed they are to the Camping Program – the campers, staff, volunteers, and the people of the Yearly Meeting. So a tremendous Thank You goes out to Elaine Brigham, Dana Foster, Linda Garrettson, Melissa Poole, and Whitney Thompson. I look forward to working with you all more, learning your styles more, figuring out ways to support you better, developing trust with each of you, and just reveling in who you are and how you do this incredible thing we call the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Camping Program.

I am looking at some interesting challenges for the coming year. One is to increase enrollment of girls at Shiloh and Catoctin. This year our enrollment was down again,



Playing in a canoe on the Lagoon.

with 516 campers total, and far more boys than girls. Last year we had 528 campers and in 2003 we had an all time high of 580 campers. I am also greatly challenged by keeping the program within the budget when the enrollment was below what was projected. In addition, the administrative work is becoming more complex with increasing demands from ourselves and outside sources that involve more documentation, more written policy, more filling out of official

forms for permits, and background checking of all of our 120 staff members and another 120 or so volunteers.

I, along with the Camping Program Committee, have been struggling with the difficult conundrum of keeping the fees to attend camp low (we charge 1/2 to 1/3 what other comparable programs charge) while meeting the growing demand for scholarships and

trying to pay more of our freight to the Yearly Meeting for the use of the properties. We would like for everyone who wants to come to camp to be able to do so without regard for ability to pay, but we had requests for over \$28k in scholarship and a budget of only \$17k. Most of that scholarship money comes directly out of camper fees. We had to ask every person who applied for scholarship this year to reconsider the requested amount. We are working on a better scholarship application for the coming season that will help us make more informed decisions about how to disperse that precious resource.

We Need More Girls at Camp!

During the 2006 camping season we will be looking for more **girls in rising grades 4-9** for Shiloh and Catoctin. Keeping a good balance of girls and boys makes the BYM camps more complete, and functional. If you or your children know of girls who would enjoy camp, please encourage them to apply!!!!

Camping Programs Wish List

- \$1 million scholarship endowment. > See page 5
- 50 or so girls between the ages of 9-13 who want to come to Shiloh or Catoctin. Spread the word!
- When you talk to David Hunter, the Camp Property Manager, tell him how grateful you are that he is working so hard to help the Yearly Meeting be good stewards of our resources. > See page 6
- Each Monthly Meeting, please send a group of people to help at a camp work weekend. > See page 7

A Letter of Thanks and Gratitude from a Camp Parent

by Kimberly M. DeSha-Doll

Dear F/friends,

This letter has been a long time in its composition; though not because I have not tried, but because I was so unsure of how to express my feelings through the written word. I finally decided to stop repeating the words over and over in my head and simply put pen to paper. My creation of this letter began just after receiving a call from the Clerk of Religious Education (of Stony Run Monthly Meeting) informing me that my request for Nurture funds to send my two oldest girls (Gwendolyn and Amelia) to Opequon Quaker Camp had been approved. However, I am glad that something inside of me decided to refrain from its composition until after the completion of camp. I believe the only proper way to express my feelings would be to start at the beginning.

When I first requested Nurture funds, I explained that I was requesting the full amount of the girls' tuition because as I was (and am) living on a very limited and fixed income, I could not see a way to afford both tuition, and acquire all of the necessary equipment (of which we owned none) that the girls would require to attend camp. Thankfully (as it always does) the way opened, and the call did come through, telling me that the Meeting had approved the full amount requested. Of course, I still knew that I had an up-hill battle in front of me in acquiring all of the necessary camping accoutrements for both girls.

Just as I thought things were beginning to really go my way, I learned that the beloved Opequon Quaker Camp that I'd attended and worked at twenty years earlier, though located in the same physical place, had in fact changed. Not only had the people changed, which considering the time frame was inevitable, but the formula that I'd known had changed as well. Not only were the overnights shorter than in my recollection, but the emphasis had changed as well. Realizing (once again) that at times in our lives everything changes, I proceeded on faith that I was still on the correct path for my children.

If someone had asked me twenty years ago where my most favorite place in the world had been, I would have told them that it was in Brucetown, Virginia; and that is where I would have wanted my ashes spread upon my death, along the banks of the Opequon Creek. When I first drove my three girls back to Opequon, I realized that my answer might have changed if asked that same question. Though the physical place may not have changed, the spirit and appearance of it had. I could not exactly put my finger on what all of the changes were, I just knew that they were there.

After a lot of phone calls, I was told that yes, my help would be accepted in the kitchen, not only for the third

week as originally requested of me, but there was also a great need for me to work the fifth week as well. Maddie and I left Amelia with my parents for the week as we left the comfort and normalcy of our everyday lives for the dust and the unknown that was to come with a week in the woods. At the end of the first week I had learned several things. I learned that I, too, could still make the bonds of lasting and fulfilling friendships that I'd long associated with camp. I also learned (once again) that yes, though change is inevitable, it could be good!

Because of a few scheduling snafus, Maddie and I (this time accompanied by Amelia) returned to Opequon for the fourth week to help fill in gaps that had been created in the kitchen. Of course, by this time, I was yet again an old pro in the camp kitchen and it was another pleasant week.

The last week of the first four-week session, however, may have had one of the best nights of my life. After dinner and clean up, we all made the long walk to the fire circle. Even though this was Gwendolyn's first time at Opequon, due to her age it would be her last as a camper and, therefore, it was graduation night for her. Sitting at the entrance to the fire circle, I had in my direct vision all three of my girls. As Wendi stood holding her candle in front of the fire/candelabra, for the first time in my children's lives, I could see on their faces that they finally understood what I'd been trying to tell them. All of my girls understood what camp had meant to me, and what it was coming to mean for them as well. In that instant, with all four of us crying around the same fire circle where I had been seated so many years ago, in seeing into their faces, I realized that I could give my girls no greater gift for them to experience for themselves exactly what I had been telling them stories about. Until that very moment, I don't think I had ever felt real pure joy, but there it was, and I can only hope in the retelling of that moment that you can in part imagine the pure joy I felt, and realize how truly amazing it was.

The next morning, I drove Wendi home to spend the next week with my parents so that I could work the fifth week in the kitchen and Emily could officially begin her time as a camper. At the end of that week, I asked the director (Elaine) whether or not I could have a meeting with her so that we could discuss some of the things that I had observed over the previous three weeks, as well as the fact that I had been asked by both her and the current kitchen manager (Maria) to return the following year in the position as Head Chef, if not as Kitchen Manager.

Elaine expressed great thanks for the three weeks of service that I'd already given, as well as regret that I could not return for the following (and final) week of camp. I told Elaine that if my service was required, I would love to

Continued on next page

Letter of Thanks continued

return the following week. We also discussed the fact that my three weeks (thus far) of service had been just that, service. Elaine did not know Stony Run had paid in advance for the girls' tuition, and that I had been completely volunteering all of the time I had been there. I explained to her because of my disability, I had been unsure of how much time I'd actually be able to contribute to the camping community and did not know whether or not I would be able to survive repaying the girls' tuition, and that is part of the reason I'd asked Stony Run to pay their tuition in the first place. Elaine tried to

pay me for the time that I had worked, and I, again, explained that I could not accept for two reasons. One because of my disability, and two because I would much rather donate the time I'd worked to another family in need.

As our meeting ended, it was decided that I would return for the last week in the kitchen as Head Chef, and that the time I had worked would go to offset some of the funds needed to fly friends from New Mexico that had attended camp.

Another wonderful thing came out of my family's summer camping experience. I (once again) found my writ-

ing voice. For the past year, I had been at an impasse with myself when it came to writing. Whenever I tried to write (even in my journal), I found I could not. As you can see by this letter alone, I have now found that voice (as well as my pen) within myself, and I am forever grateful!

I cannot begin to thank friends enough for all that they have afforded my family for the past fifty years, let alone over the past several months. I do, however, hope that this little peek into the past few months of my family's lives will begin to explain my gratitude. ~ September 11, 2005

Report of the Camping Program Committee, 2005

by Steve Gilbert and Elizabeth Krome, Co-clerks

In our eight meetings this year, several themes have been dominant. Three important and interconnected themes have been mission, communications, and budget

Mission of the Camping Program Committee (CPC) itself, as well as the mission of the Camping Program and BYM;

Communications of the CPC with other committees of BYM, with camp directors and senior staff, and with the wider constituency of families of campers and other Yearly Meetings;

Budget procedures as well as budget goals - how to balance the needs to pay wonderful staff equitably, keep registration fees within financial reach of most BYM families, respond to financial needs of BYM and Monthly Meetings, support the quality of program expected by BYM and the wider community...

As a committee we continue to ask what our proper role is. We revised the description of CPC for the Manual of Procedure and submitted it for approval. We function as neither a board of directors nor a fire department auxiliary, although some of our activities

would be appropriate for those groups. We acknowledge that one of our most important roles is to be so thoroughly acquainted with the Camping Program that we can assure others in BYM who are not so close to it, that the program is conducted in good order and with a proper regard for Friendly values.

This role touches on our second theme, communication. We communicate with many entities of BYM: the camp directors, the Camp Administrative Secretary, Stewardship and Finance Committee, Camp Property Management Committee, to name the most obvious. In an effort to strengthen this communication, we have met jointly this year with the camp directors, with the Camp Property Management Committee, and with the General Secretary, Frank Massey. We will continue to invite representatives from other committees and the BYM staff and BYM clerks to our meetings (and to remind all that our meetings are open). We hope to be invited to some other committee meetings as well. We will make greater efforts next year to align our meeting schedule with Interim Meetings so that we have more opportunities for communication there. Our understanding of this issue has been

greatly enhanced by the insights and perspective of the Camp Administrative Secretary, Jane Megginson.

The third theme is the budget. We have accelerated our budgeting process to be more in step with the overall BYM timelines, and Jane's good thinking and attention to detail have aided us tremendously. We are currently running a deficit, which we believe reflects several things. A primary culprit is underenrollment (we do not anticipate that every camp will be full to capacity for every session this summer), caused partly by demographic trends, and partly perhaps by overconfidence in the power of word-of-mouth advertising and past patterns of family commitments. We may have failed to recognize the demographic trends in time to advertise appropriately. We do not believe that we can reduce expenses significantly without impairing the quality of the program. Another culprit is one we are only now recognizing: as is the case with colleges, it is probably unrealistic to think that we can cover the costs of our program from camper fees alone. We have no mechanism for fund-raising to provide the endowment that would enable us

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Who is on the Camping Program Committee?

Below are listed the members of the Camping Program Committee and Camp Property Management Committee. Feel free to contact them if you have any thoughts or concerns about the camping programs or properties. Call the BYM office for contact information, or consult the *2005 BYM Yearbook*.

Carol Ahlum - Frederick
Al Best - Ashland
Lois Carter Fay - Valley
Kevin Caughlan - Sandy Spring
Arlene DeBlanc - Sandy Spring
Nancy Eynon Lark - Adelphi
Chrissie Devinney - Goose Creek
Peter Doo - Stony Run
Steve Gilbert - FMW, Co-clerk
Jody Hopkins - Homewood
Wes Jordan - Annapolis
Betsy Krome - Wmsbg
Anna Krome-Lukens - Wmsbg
Katrina Mason - Bethesda
Annie Storr - Adelphi
Tasha Walsh - Maur Rvr - Co-clerk

Ex Officio:

Jane Megginson, Camp Admin. Sec.
Linda Garrettson, Director, CQC
Dana Foster, Director, SQC
Elaine Brigham, Director, OQC
Whitney Thompson, Co-Dir., TA
Melissa Poole, Co-Dir., TA

Who is on the Camp Property Management Committee?

Paul Buchanan-Wollaston, Deer Crk
Allen Fetter, Stony Run, clerk
Wayne Finegar - Sandy Spring
Tom Horne - Takoma Park
Neil Mozer - Sandy Spring
Randy Rogers - Alexandria
Greg Tobin - Frederick

Ex Officio:

David Hunter, Camp Property Mgr.
Arlene Rodenbeck, Stewardship & Finance
Ted Hawkins, Trustees

CPC Report

Continued from previous page

to run the camps well and still maintain economic diversity of campers. We have reviewed fee levels of other similar camps and believe that ours is rightly positioned nearer the low end than the high end.

It's worth noting that this has been a year of transition, as Josh Riley left the office and Jane took up his job. We continue to miss Josh's presence (and count the months until we feel we can appropriately suggest he should serve with us on the Committee) -but Jane's clear head and wealth of experience in both the Camping Program and BYM make her the ideal person to work with now.

We have addressed a range of topics during the year. Child safety is obviously a central concern for our program, and one that receives specific attention in pre-camp training. We eagerly await the child safety policy that BYM will develop; we anticipate contributing our thoughts to the development process and aligning our procedures with that policy once it is final. We identified hiring processes as an area that could be better understood; directors are working together to arrive at a "best practices" model. Likewise, the end-of-camp evaluations, which we take quite seriously, have a higher return rate at some camps than at others, and we hope to see a high return rate everywhere this year. A long-range topic that remains on our agenda is the desirability of providing a non-hiking camp option for TA-age Friends.

In the somewhat dual nature of this Committee, most of the above-mentioned topics fall under the more Board-ish side of the description. In the more Auxiliary line, committee members have made telephone calls to camp parents, collated and analyzed the evaluations, set up work-grant schedules for two of the three residential

camps (apologies, Linda), and assisted with Skills Week, cooking at Teen Adventure, and shuttle bus organizing.

Our Committee meets often and works hard. We are cognizant that camping is the largest program the Yearly Meeting runs; we also think it's critically important to the continued development of leadership in the yearly meeting. We want the Camping Program to be fun for the campers, challenging and empowering for the counselors and staff, offering opportunities for participation and support from BYM members and the broader community of Quakers and campers' families, and completely trust-worthy for parents.

We believe that the Camping Program Committee has an important responsibility to keep reinterpreting our mission and to work hard to collaborate within the Committee and with others who have a significant stake in the program. We are often invigorated by what we learn about the wonderful impact of this special Camping Program on so many lives - young and old - not only in love for the outdoors and camping skills, but also in deepening spiritual opportunities for all involved. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve and benefit from participation in this spiritually rich program, this particular group, and BYM itself.

Did you know that the Camping Program Committee and the Camp Property Management Committee have put together a number of **slide shows** and are eager to share them with your Monthly Meeting or other gathering? If you are interested in **hosting a discussion or information meeting** about BYM's camping program or camp properties, please call David Hunter or Jane Megginson at the Yearly Meeting office. 301-774-7663

Saving Swimming at Catoctin: Plans for the Lagoon

by David Hunter,
Camp Property Manager

You may have heard that the pond at Catoctin was not available for swimming last summer (2004). In spring of 2004 the county health department was not willing to accept our application for a natural bathing beach permit due to some concerns about the quality of water in the stream that feeds our pond. During the off-season we worked with local water quality laboratories, County and state health officials and made many calls to the MD Department of Natural Resources and the Department of the Environment. Late in the fall we requested proposals from three environmental engineering firms and on January 29, 2005 a group of biologists, environmental engineers and others (all camp parents and concerned Friends), met to evaluate the proposals.

The goal was to insure that bacteria levels in the pond would be kept well below a safe threshold and ensure a safe place to cool off for our campers. One proposal stood head and shoulders above the rest. It was prepared by two Friends from different engineering firms who are long-time camp parents and Quakers. The pro-

posal blended careful evaluation, monitoring, and environmentally sensitive technologies in a holistic long-term solution to the problem.

The Frederick County Health department recognized the efforts that we were making to improve the situation and issued a bathing beach permit, contingent on the usual criteria. For much of the summer we were able to meet these criteria and joyful noises emanated from the pond for much of the camping seasons.

The plan for this phase of the project involves carefully controlling the amount of water that is allowed into the pond and diligent monitoring of the quality of that water. We will also install a UV disinfection system to control bacterial in the pond. Future work on the quality of water in the Pond will include controlling the turbidity, or cloudiness of the water in the pond, eliminating even more bacteria and making the pond even safer for our camp community.

The current phase of the project comes with a price tag of about \$52,000. So far, Friends of the camping program and Friends within Baltimore Yearly Meeting have generously do-

noted nearly \$30,000. However, for this work to move forward we need everyone to do all that they can. Please take some time to think about what a splash in the Lagoon on a hot afternoon has meant to the Catoctin community in the past. Then consider what you can do to ensure that the Lagoon is available for the campers of the future and send a contribution or make a pledge.

Pledge forms, plans and ideas about the project, pictures of the Lagoon through the years, and more information about this fundraising effort are available at <<http://www.bym-rsf.org/camping/CQCLagoonFundRaising/GoonFundRaising.html>>.

Please Contribute!

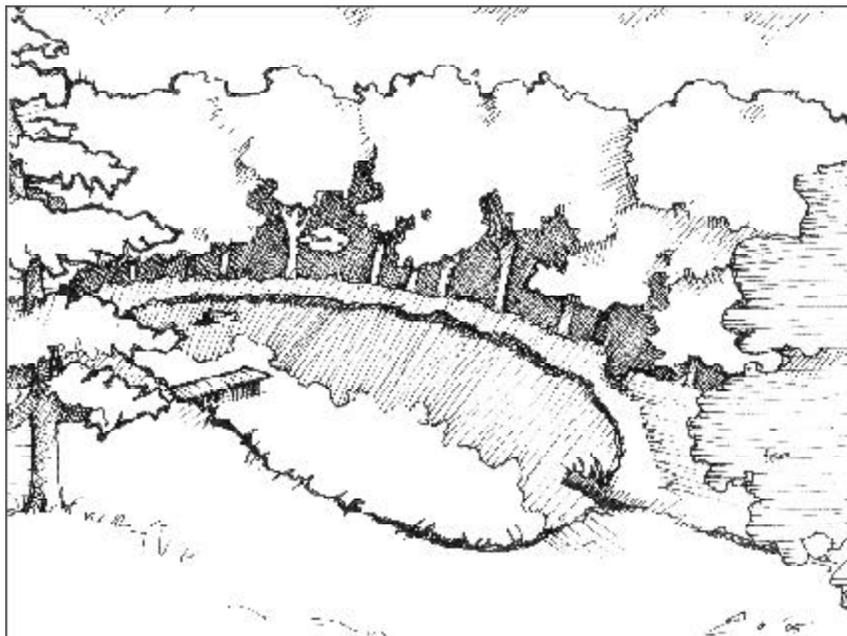
Did you know that you can now **make pledges and contributions online**? You can now contribute **using your credit card, debit card, or bank account fund transfer** with the option of scheduling **regular payments** on pledges that you make to support the camping programs and camp properties.

Go to <www.bym-rsf.org> and click on the "find out how to contribute to BYM programs" link

Keeping Camp Affordable

Baltimore Yearly Meeting has been providing affordable camping experiences for children for well over 50 years. It is our intention to continue to do so. One of the ways that we do this is by **not passing the full cost of improvements and major repairs on to the campers in the form of increased camping fees**. If we are to keep our programs affordable for as many children as possible we need your help! Please visit us online and make a pledge or a contribution today.

Catoctin Lagoon by longtime Assistant Director, Eo Trueblood



Projects at Camps Improve the Facilities and Involve Many

This has been an exciting and active year at the Yearly Meeting camp properties. We have successfully complete a number of exciting projects, others projects are underway and our next set of challenges are visible on the horizon.

This year work weekend participants were able to accomplish a great deal. A beautiful new post and beam cabin was built at Catoctin in the fall of 2004 and another was built in the fall of 2005 (see picture below, right). They are both spectacular examples of the simple beauty of post and beam construction. Everyone should find an opportunity to come up and see them. We are indebted to Peter Bugler for working with our volunteers in building these cabins.

A new cabin was constructed on the site of the upper tarp platform at Shiloh as well. It is a sturdy structure complete with its own outhouse. Those who sleep in the newest cabin at Shiloh should be prepared to enjoy one of the most beautiful vistas on our properties as they roll out of bed and head down the hill for breakfast. Work weekend participants at Shiloh were also able to put a grand new roof on the crafts shelter, and reclaim the Great Oaks trail.

Volunteers raised and repaired the foundation and floor beams on two cabins at Opequon and the kitchen at Catoctin has a gleaming new coat of paint. There are countless other repairs, improvements and projects that have been undertaken by volunteers and we are always grate-

ful for all that they do to ensure that the properties are well maintained and safe.

Teen Adventure Pavilion: For



Catoctin campers say, "Thanks BYM!" (above) for the new cabin at Catoctin (middle). TA Campers and staff perform skits in the new pavillion at Common Ground (bottom).



over 12 years our Teen Adventure Program has been based at Common Ground, an intentional community near Lexington, VA. This is where the Teen

Adventure campers gather at the beginning and end of their trips and where the support staff is based while the campers are on the trail. Common

Ground has wanted to build a pavilion, which we could use while we are on site and the Teen Adventure Program has been eager to have a place to get out of the rain. This year we were able to help a pavilion (pictured below) get built and to negotiate a long-term rental agreement so that Teen Adventure will have a secure base camp for more than a decade to come. The pavilion was built by members of the Common Ground community, Teen Adventure campers, and

lots of volunteers. By the time the campers returned from their trips, the pavilion was over 75% completed and had a roof. Everyone was grateful for all of the hard work when rain POURED down during the end-of-season square dance, which was being held at Common Ground for the first time.

The Catoctin Pond Water Quality Improvement Project:

Lots of hard work has gone into developing a proposal and a set of plans to control the bacteria levels in the pond water at Catoctin. At this point the plans have been submitted to the appropriate state and county permitting agencies. A number of Friendly contractors have been lined up and we are looking forward to installing the system this spring so that all will be ready for the 2006 camping season. Funds are still needed to help pay for this work. Please consider a contribution.

Cabins at Catoctin: We are planning to replace the rest of the cabins

Property Projects continued

at Catoctin in the years to come. The state health inspectors have been encouraging us to do this for a long time. We have found that the post and beam design that we have been using is cost effective and elegant in its simplicity. We have replaced three cabins and are eager to keep building.

Infirmery at Opequon: We are beginning to design a new Infirmery for Opequon Quaker Camp. The building that we have been using has done its best but it is a very small one roomed

cabin with a small sink. We would like to have a structure with space for an examination area, a place for campers to rest if they need to be away from others, and a place for the Health Care Person to stay so that they are near by in case they are needed. We are looking at a number of alternatives that include refurbishing a small trailer, building a small cabin or building a year-round cabin that could be rented in the off-season.

It is also exciting to think about all of the other projects that would be beneficial as we move forward — a new tool/wood shed at Catoctin, bathhouses at Catoctin and Opequon, a pond at Shiloh... the sky is the limit!



Proud volunteers stand next to the cabin they helped build on the upper trail at Shiloh.

spend New Year's Eve afternoon with your favorite people!

Camp Alumni Holiday Gathering!

Who: Former campers and current or former staff

When: **Saturday, December 31, 2005**
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Where: **Sandy Spring Meeting Community House**
17715 Meeting House Road
Sandy Spring, MD 20860

Bring: Appetizers, party food, or dessert to share

We will provide some munchies, hot cider and holiday cheer. Please R.S.V.P. to janemegginson@bym-rsf.org or call the BYM office at 301-774-7663 or 800-962-4766.

Directions: <http://www.sandyspring.org/directions.html>

Work Weekend Information

Taking part in work weekends is a great way to stay in touch with the camps in the off season. Work weekends offer us all a chance to savor some meaningful work, enjoy the beautiful places that we love, reconnect with old friends, make some new friends, or to spend some time with our families at camp. The icing of the cake is that we can significantly reduce the cost of improving and maintaining our properties by all pitching in.

All are invited to participate in work weekends. You DO NOT need to have any specific skills to make a contribution! We are always looking for sweepers, painters, cooks, ditchers, concrete mixers, traveling minstrels, and fun facilitators, as well as skilled carpenters, landscapers, and other handy folks. All of us have contributions to make, but we have to be there to make them. So, come on out and enjoy some physical activity and the company of Friends!

The workdays are usually held on both **Saturday** and **Sunday**; you may come just for the day or spend the night on Saturday night. You may arrive Friday night if you'd like to make a weekend of it, but there will be no dinner on Friday. We will provide simple meals from Saturday lunch through Sunday lunch. Friends of all ages are welcome. Young people (0 to 18 years of age) should always bring their parents or a responsible adult.

Please be sure to visit the website <<http://www.bym-rsf.org/camping/work.html>> for more information before you come. If you still have questions please contact David Hunter at (301-774-7663) or e-mail him at <davidhunter@bym-rsf.org>.

See back page for Work Weekend Dates in the fall and spring.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Camping Programs
17100 Quaker Lane
Sandy Spring, MD 20860

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the firecircle is published yearly 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 @ 301-774-7663.

New Deadlines and Fee Payment Schedule for Camp 2006

- Dec. 10 Camp applications mailed out.
- Feb. 1 Applications DUE with \$25 administrative fee **and \$250 deposit** (for a total of \$275); also **scholarship applications due**.
- March 1 Acceptances sent out, work grant applicants will be contacted to schedule work grant during March.
- April 1 Scholarships awarded, notifications sent
- April 15 Work grants scheduled and letter sent
- May 1 Cancel by this date and \$250 deposit will be refunded.
- May 15 **Entire balance DUE for camp** (that's right, paid in advance!)

Work Weekends 2006

April 21-22	Shiloh
April 28-30	Opequon
May 12-14	Catoctin
May 19-21	Catoctin
June 2-4	Opequon
Sept. 15-17	Catoctin
Sept. 22-24	Shiloh
Sept 29-1	Catoctin
Oct. 13-15	Opequon
Oct. 20-23	Catoctin

Come for the whole weekend or just on Saturday. Got skills? Great! Don't? No problem.

Please always pre-register with David Hunter. Check the website for more information and to see photos and stories from past work weekends.

<http://www.bym-rsf.org/camping/work.html>