

## **WORK GRANT/VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK BALTIMORE YEARLY MEETING CAMPING PROGRAM**

Thank you for volunteering in the BYM Camping Program. Without the contribution of work grantees, BYM would not be able to run the camps. You are an important part of making BYM Camp a meaningful and memorable experience.

The purpose of this Work Grant Handbook is to provide you with information about what to expect, what to bring, frequently asked questions about your role in the camping program, and information on how to make this a rewarding experience for yourself. For those of you who have done a work grant in the past, this will serve as a reminder of what you're looking forward to.

### **What to bring**

*Tent:* Most volunteers sleep in their own tents, so you will need to bring a tent and related equipment (ground cloth, rain fly, stakes, rope, etc.). Of course you'll also want your sleeping bag and perhaps a blow-up mattress, if you're not used to sleeping on the ground for a week.

*Clothing and personal items:* You'll want comfortable cool clothes (including long pants if you are volunteering for maintenance). A rain coat and umbrella can come in handy. Also, each camp does have options for swimming, and during the hot summers getting in the water is a wonderful way to cool down. So bring swimsuit, water shoes, goggles, etc.—and don't forget sunscreen. Bug repellent can be useful, too. The bathhouses do have flush toilets and showers, but you will need to bring your own bathroom items, including towels, washcloths, soap, and shampoo. Most volunteer roles at camp require a good bit of walking and standing, so comfortable, supportive shoes are a must! Also, it's advisable to wear closed-toe shoes most of the time to prevent injury to your feet. You will also want at least one flashlight (a Petzl-type headlamp is great), and many volunteers bring a small battery-operated lantern of some sort to use in your tent. Cooks will need an alarm clock. Remember extra batteries!!

*Other:* Some volunteers bring a camp chair or a "crazy creek" type seat to relax in during down time. Other items that you might enjoy having: camera, books, musical instruments, journal, sketch book, bike, etc.

### **Where volunteers sleep**

Most volunteers bring their own tent and gear. A few bunks are available in shared cabin space at Catoctin [and Opequon?] but that is very limited. If you are bringing younger children you do need to provide a tent for your family. Medical staff sleeps in the infirmary.

### **Typical day at camp**

*Morning:* For cooks, the day begins early. Breakfast preparation can start as early as 6:00 am. For campers, the day starts with a wake-up call shortly before breakfast. Once breakfast is over, there is a short period of time for the camper work crews to do their morning tasks, and then everyone gathers for Meeting for Worship. Meeting for Worship generally lasts 20-30 minutes and is followed by singing, then Morning Activity. Volunteers are invited and encouraged to participate in Meeting for Worship and singing. Morning Activities generally include an all-camper activity, then smaller group activities. While the campers are involved in morning activities, you may have specific tasks to do, or this may be some of your down time.

*Afternoon:* Lunch is typically served around noon or 12:30. After lunch there is a clean-up time and then rest period for campers, counselors, and cooks. Throughout the afternoon, campers participate in small-group activities led by counselors (e.g., arts & crafts, sports, nature hikes, games, letter-writing). They eat a snack mid-afternoon. For cooks, dinner preparation takes much of the afternoon. If cooks plan to take a swim break, it's a good idea to schedule around campers' swim times.

*Evening:* Following dinner and clean-up, the camp gathers together for an evening activity—games, skits, and a fire circle with singing are common activities. Volunteers are welcome to participate in these activities. Counselors take campers back to their cabins for bed, and a few counselors stay on duty with sleeping campers while the rest are free to relax, plan upcoming trips, or eat leftovers.

### **Meeting for worship**

The camp meets as a whole every day for meeting for worship, and usually an evening fire-circle gathering also begins in silence. Meeting for Worship is usually 20-30 minutes, although some days it may stretch to an hour. For Quakers, this silence is a time to seek within themselves for God's voice. Quakers say that they seek to understand God's leading. But for people unaccustomed to attending Quaker Meeting for Worship, the experience of a group sitting in silence can be strange at first. Feel free to use the time in Meeting for Worship to meditate, to let your thoughts wander, or just to sit quietly and enjoy the summer beauty of camp.

Sometimes a counselor or the director will offer a query to center the thoughts of the Meeting. Possible queries might be, *Where do you find God? What places or experiences help you experience that which is divine to you? What are the building blocks of peace? How do you experience unconditional love? What does it mean to "walk cheerfully over the earth, answering that of God in everyone?"* Members of the meeting (campers, counselors, and parent volunteers) speak out of the silence to respond to these queries if they feel led to do so. People might also speak out of the silence when

there is no specific query. It is important to allow some silence to follow any spoken message so that it can be fully taken in.

### **How much work/down time?**

This varies by camp and by job and can't always be predicted. It should be possible for everyone to take a break at some point in the day, and indeed, it's important to do so. You and the folks you are working with can coordinate schedules so that everyone can get away for a break.

### **When trips are out**

At each camp there is a period when campers are out of camp on trips. This time is one overnight at Opequon and can be two to three nights at Catoctin and Shiloh. For maintenance workers, this may be the time for a job that's hazardous to do with campers around. For medical staff, we hope it's a very quiet time! For cooks, it's a time to do clean-up chores that don't fit into the regular routine. For all volunteers, it's a time to catch your breath and take a nap—and also a good time to take a day hike with your fellow volunteers, fix a nice meal together in camp, or go out for someone else's cooking.

### **Role with campers (your children and campers in general)**

One of the great things about camp is that your child discovers how to be part of a much larger community of caring than just her/his own family. For this to happen, though, you need to relinquish your parental role while you are here. If your child has bug bites, the medical staff is ready to deal with them. If she is homesick, the counselors, staff, and director are ready to help. If he has food issues, his counselor should convey them to the kitchen liaison or the kitchen staff. In other words, everything your child needs, someone in camp is ready to provide. After all, most of the children in camp don't have parents on the scene. Camp works best when you can step away from your usual role. Make every effort to treat your children no differently from any others (e.g., no special treats) and let the counselors address your children's needs.

Volunteers are welcome to observe and interact with campers, but should not divert campers' attention away from the camp activity. Kitchen and maintenance volunteers should not be alone with a camper and should redirect any camper needs back to the counselors or camp staff. If you have questions about appropriate boundaries, please talk to the camp director(s), who have a great deal of experience helping parents allow room for their children to make camp their own place.

### **Staff Organization**

Each camp has a director, and some camps have two co-directors. The directors are responsible for hiring staff, coordinating staff training, communicating with parents, and keeping camp running smoothly every day. To help with these tasks, directors have a set of four to seven staff, variously called "staff-staff" (Shiloh), "G-staff" (Opequon), or "in-camp staff" (Catoctin). These staff are typically older than the counselors, and they

usually have significant past camp experience. Apart from supporting the director, they run in-camp activities, coordinate the logistics for out-of-camp trips, and support the counselors. The counselors are responsible for the day-to-day happiness, health, and safety of the campers. They foster community within their unit of campers, lead in-camp activities, plan and lead out-of-camp trips, and generally make things happen. Your child's counselor can tell you a lot about his or her wellbeing.

### **Role with Counselors**

Counselors are eager to take on the responsibility of creating a great camp experience for the campers. They take seriously the adult roles with which we entrust them. In terms of running camp, the adult volunteers and the younger counselors are peers. The counselors appreciate the respect of the volunteer parents—and they deserve it.

### **Safety**

Tremendous emphasis is put on safety during the pre-camp training. Counselors are certified in CPR and first-aid, and in addition many of them complete lifeguard training, whitewater canoeing safety courses, and wilderness first-aid courses. During pre-camp counselors learn how to deal with hypothermia, heat exhaustion, dehydration, and similar issues that may arise on the trail. Around camp, specific rules help prevent injury and illness. Adults cooking in the kitchen or doing maintenance need to observe basic rules of safety as well. These include always using a flashlight after dark. If there is tall grass near your tent, it is strongly advised that you wear close-toed shoes after dark.

### **Touch**

This is an area that requires judgment and discretion. Ideally, a crying camper will be comforted by her/his counselor. Adult volunteers need to balance a sensitivity to child safety concerns with common sense in responding to campers. If you're trying to figure out whether to hug or touch a child or not, you need to figure out if the hug is for you, or the child, and then assess what's appropriate.

It may seem incongruous to speak of child sexual safety issues in the context of our camps, which we feel are full of healthy affection. Nevertheless, we take these issues seriously; this is why we do background checks on all adult volunteers. A good principle to maintain is that at no time should one child be alone with one adult, with the exception of a camper in the infirmary with the medical person.

If you have a concern about touching between campers, this is a matter to take up with camp staff.

**Homesickness**

It is a rare session of camp that has no homesick campers. Often these campers bond with their cabin-mates on their first trip, and things look up after that. Sometimes homesickness continues throughout a camper's session. The most useful thing for adult volunteers to do is usually just to smile at these unhappy campers, perhaps address them by name if you have the chance.

In the event that the unhappy camper is your own child, it may be hard to resist the temptation to comfort your child; but he/she will grow more from the experience of learning to accept comfort and support from cabin-mates and counselors. It usually works best for parents to work during the second week their child is at camp rather than the first; this way your child is able to deal with homesickness issues the first week, while looking forward to your arrival at camp, rather than dreading your leaving during the whole week you are there. In any case, your child's counselors are the first-responders for homesickness.

**What to do with question/concerns?**

Before you arrive at camp, the camp Administrative Secretary (Jane Megginson, 717-481-4870) is the best person to answer your questions. Once you're at camp, there are several avenues for processing concerns. If the director is available, she/he will be interested to hear what you have to say. If the director is out, there will be a staff member in charge, on camp grounds. In addition, the kitchen manager can be a resource. If a member of Camping Program Committee is volunteering with you, this person can also help. Finally, the Camping Program conducts an online evaluation process, which we encourage all volunteers to complete after camp. We welcome your feedback.

**Have a great time!**

We are grateful for your help, and we hope that you (and your campers) have a wonderful time at camp this summer!