

## Youth Programs Manager's Annual Report 2017-2018 - Jossie Dowling

As we segue into the summer, my heart and mind reflect on our successes and our shortcomings from this past year's youth conferences. The Youth Programs Committee continues to have ongoing conversations about how to sustain a successful program and how to make our programs the best it can be.

There have been a lot of new and exciting changes in the Junior Young Friends Program (JYF) this school year. YPC decided to move the first JYF conference of the school year from October to November, with the intention of giving the younger JYFs an opportunity to settle in and get used to middle school for a few months before diving into a new program. With this change we were able to successfully accommodate the influx of energetic and eager energy of many new 6th graders. The new scheduling shift forced our subsequent conferences to all take place in the new year, closer together in time, making the spring calendar a bit tighter than usual. Proceeding on business items from the prior school year, the Junior Young Friends helped write and approve a new set of Gathering Expectations for the program. The Gathering Expectations are a list of standardized rules/regulations the JYFs drafted for themselves on both appropriate behavior expected of community at the gatherings and behavior that is unwelcome and worth of consequence. The purpose of these Gathering Expectations are to establish a consistent foundation for behavior across all participants as well as prepare JYFs for similar standards as they transition into the Young Friends Program.

Attendance at our Young Friends Program dropped drastically this year. The average attendance at a conference this year was 45 YFs, down from last year's 60. We are unsure the reasons for this drop but are hoping that we can continue to support new attenders in the upcoming school year in the midst of the many scheduling obligations that young people have in their lives. After much discussion, the Young Friends created an ad hoc committee to discuss and problem-solve issues around Love Feast, their annual valentine's themed food-fight dance party. Young Friends approved replacing Love Feast with a prom-type dance in an effort to be more inclusive and accessible to those the have previously felt left out of the ritual. Following a lot of fraught discussion around the word "anti-racist" in the BYM Epistle at Annual Session, Young Friends' channeled their pain into healing by discussing among themselves and with members of the larger BYM community how important it is to do anti-racism work (and name it that way). Appointed members crafted a statement that was read at 10th month Interim Meeting on this topic, and continue to support other efforts of anti-oppression work on the horizon.

The Youth Programs Committee has a number of successes as well as things to look forward to in the approaching school year. We successfully trained 7 new Friendly Adult Presences at the FAP training at Goose Creek this past February. We are interested in exploring how to make our training more accessible with technology and creating an online training program to accommodate more people's location and schedule. A number of previous members have rotated off the committee and we are searching for new members that are interested in supporting our program. Our low membership has been challenging and we are eager to invite new members with new energy and perspective to join our team. Furthermore, YPC is on the search for a new Junior Young Friends Assistant that can help facilitate the programming of our JYF weekends. Please help spread the word about this new and exciting opportunity.

I want to thank the entire BYM community for their continued support of our youth programs. I am humbled by the positive feedback I receive about this work as I travel around to local meetings. Please be sure to say hello to members of the Young Friends Community this summer at Annual Session (they are nice, I promise). I will be eager to start a new season of conferences in the fall and hope everyone can help spread the word about the magic of BYM Youth Programs to help support our enrichment and growth.