

Youth Programs Manager's Annual Report

This year was a wild time for sure. As a new Youth Programs Manager (YPM), I started in September and within 2 weeks I was hosting a virtual Nuts and Bolts Committee (NBC) Conference over Zoom. And at that time NBC of Young Friends (YFs) made a lot of decisions about what the year would look like and what the year could look like. As we're all aware, for YF and Junior Young Friends (JYFs) we did virtual cons over zoom for almost all of this year due to the pandemic. This allowed for a lot of creativity on how to maintain and nourish our community in this totally new way. Though Friends acknowledged that of course it wasn't the same, they also were grateful for the time and connection these Zooms allowed. It also meant we could have participants who have moved away join us once again. We had YFs from as far as California join us as well as a Friendly Adult Presence who lives in Sweden. This also prompted a revamping of the Youth Programs section of the BYM website and making an online store for Youth Programs merchandise. This year also brought new energy to social media outreach. YFs began using their Instagram account (@ErikBrokeMyHeart) to advertise conferences and to share announcements. They also continued the use of their website (<http://yf.bym-rsf.net/>) to keep the community up-to-date on all things YF. As YPM, I began using Twitter (@BYMYouthProgram) to reach a greater audience and connect with other Quaker communities. Young Friends also approved the shift of their Facebook page to be converted to an alumni page. You can find us on Facebook by searching BYM Youth Programs Alumni.

This year we had an average of almost 13 JYFs attending each con. The numbers this year were of course going to be smaller than years past but we had a very consistent crew of JYFs. They brought joy and laughter to the screen and held very efficient Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business. Those started with the collective discerning of the year's theme which was creativity through food. Our lovely and dedicated JYF Subcommittee of the Youth Programs Committee (YPC) decided that with the virtual con situation it would be perfect to have cooking ingredients dropped off at everyone's homes and that our workshops would be creating space for the JYFs to discover or hone their abilities to cook from scratch. The JYFs also spent quality time with each other playing online games together including but not limited to Among Us, Sporcle, A Fake Artist Goes to New York, and Code Names. With the Covid vaccine out, the JYF Subcommittee made the call to have an in-person portion of the final con of the year which was deeply enjoyed by all. Along with the adjustments around being virtual, the JYF Subcommittee approved having a suggested registration fee for cons while also giving the space for families to pay less if they needed to. This payment structure worked well for us this year.

YFs and NBC also participated in virtual conferences for most of the year. They made Friday night a game night and time to check in with each other. Saturdays included workshops, games, show and tells, and plenty of breaks in between so that folks wouldn't get too burnt out on screen time. There was also usually a movie option that night. On Sundays, we did our best to worship virtually with the Meeting we would have been with had we been in person. This year we had an average of 21 YFs at each con. Young Friends put together a Grad con subcommittee to share a proposal with YPC about holding an in-person con. YPC accepted this proposal and supported YFs in their planning. Grad con was a glorious one night conference, in-person, held at the BYM office, where YFs and Friendly Adult Presences slept in their own

tents, masked up, and social distanced. This allowed us to have our yearly celebration of our seniors, Senior Circle, in person with an option for those who could not make it join over FaceTime. The joy displayed by sharing space was palpable. This year YF made the decision to have each virtual con have no registration fee, but to ask for donations. The generosity of our immediate community was comforting. As Annual Sessions are being held virtually, YFs decided not to plan additional activities or to meet with a concern for business this year.

YPC needs more active members. JYF Subcommittee met regularly after each JYF con to talk over how it went and find improvements as we planned the next. The Friendly Adult Presence (FAP) Subcommittee met multiple times in the fall to plan a virtual FAP training. We had 2 folks interested and trained one of them. In the coming fall, the FAP Subcommittee will be working toward ways to increase the number of trained FAPs we have. If you are interested in volunteering or curious as to what is involved in that, please visit https://www.bym-rsf.org/what_we_do/yutes/jyfs/friendly-adult-presence-application.html.

I want to thank the entire BYM community for their continued support of our Youth Programs. We look forward to the coming school year and the opportunities it will bring for all of us.