**Camping Program Committee Report to BYM Annual Session 2025**

The **Mission of** [**BYM Camps**](https://bymcamps.org/our-camps/) is to build a vibrant, diverse, and youth-centered community where we: Welcome all with open arms; Nurture campers’ ability to both find themselves and be themselves; Create opportunities for campers to step into leadership, to shine their light brightly while also celebrating the light of others; Cultivate life-long connections to wild spaces, to specific places, and to each other.

Camp is in session; camp magic is happening. This report outlines the challenges which were overcome to build this summer’s Fire at The Center.

Briefly, our spiritual state is stubbornly optimistic but weighed down. It used to be that everyone doing what they could was enough, and we got enough done. It was fulfilling and we found joy and reward. Although joy and reward can still be found, we are bogged down in the practical minutia of making the camping program happen. Our role of addressing big picture questions and tackling long-term sustainability is inhibited by a lack of volunteer energy. A few of us have taken on too much, and many of us wish they had more energy and time to give. Our ability to joyfully minister to youth, staff and volunteers feels dimmed.

We are called to this ministry. No one said callings were easy yet we are committed to the cause. Way opens.

**Activities**

Since the 2024 Annual Session, the CPC oversaw the transition of the Camp Program Manager position, the Opequon Camp Director position, and shepherded our Minute on Camping Governance into a working group of the yearly meeting: Camp Governance Study Committee (ad hoc). The committee adopted spiritual oversight of the STRIDE program. Family Camp will return in the Fall of 2025.

Members of the CPC also supported the Camp Property Management Committee (CPMC) and BYM staff as the yearly meeting built out the infrastructure at the Rolling Ridge property to accommodate the needs of Opequon Quaker Camp. There have been wide-ranging and substantial improvements, among which are the upgrades to showers, toilets, and the completion of nearly all the cabins. To facilitate communication between the two committees, the clerks of CPC and CPMC have met monthly; this practice has been helpful towards meeting the charge of both committees. The “program” side of camps is immensely grateful to those on the “property” side who make our joyful efforts possible.

Collaborating with the Development Committee has continued to strengthen the financial support of BYM Camps. The contributions to the Special Campaign for Opequon have been nothing short of spectacular. The CPC conveyed an appeal to the December Interim Meeting to increase donations for scholarships and the response has been heartening. Ongoing discernment will continue to see that the mission of camp is successfully underwritten. That is, we are progressing towards a development plan that grows non-tuition revenue.

The ongoing burden of the CPC has been our concern with the budgetary shortfall. We have continued to work with representatives of the following committees: Stewardship and Finance, Supervisory, Development, and Property Management. The importance of the General Secretary’s dogged efforts on the budget, both overseeing and problem solving this issue cannot be overstated. The work of our overworked yearly meeting staff, camping program manager, and seasonal camp staff has been extraordinary. We are grateful.

**Transitions Affect Momentum**

We lost momentum at the beginning of 2025 when Brian Massey, our Camp Program Manager, transitioned to working for the American Camp Association. This was an excellent opportunity elsewhere and he has our enthusiastic blessing. However, the CPC’s progress towards attaining our goals slowed considerably. CPC greatly appreciates our Interim Camp Program Manager, Zora Tucker, who has stepped into this role. We are grateful that Zora is off and running.

In our February joint meeting of the CPC and CPMC, the following **Minute of appreciation for Brian Massey** was recorded.

The BYM Camping Program Committee offers great appreciation to Brian Massey. We were lucky to have someone with so much history and love of the program in the Camping Program Manager role. He guided the camping community through difficult times with the pandemic. His passion for the program, innovation, and dedication to its continued success through all the challenges was tremendous. We transitioned to offering more mental health support to staff and campers, improving training, paying staff better, and creating full-time positions for a Camping Program Associate, and a Camp Director. We are also grateful for his guidance on creating a Strategic Plan. He also helped guide us as we transitioned from Opequon in Brucetown to Rolling Ridge Conservancy near Harpers Ferry. He brought great love to all his work and helped model and inspire community members to set healthy work-life balance boundaries. We will miss him, and we know that he will bring passion and creativity into his new job, working on camp innovations for the American Camping Association.

**Strategic Plan**

The [BYM Camps Strategic Plan 2023-2028](https://bymcamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BYM-Camps-Strategic-Plan-2023-28.pdf) listed our goals regarding A) campers, B) community, C) clarity, and D) sustainability. Some of the goals can only be addressed by the wider Yearly Meeting–through a variety of committees–and others are the purview of the Staff of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. That is, the CPC can take the lead on some but not all of the goals. None-the-less, we take this opportunity to reflect on progress towards these goals. What have we done?

We believe that our corporate discernment has come to the point where we understand the issues that revolve around Goal #D1 towards a **sustainable financial model**, which is: “Develop and implement a regular and transparent process to review the BYM Camping Program financial forecast and model to enable strategic decision-making.” Formulating a sustainable financial model must be the priority in the upcoming year.

For this to be accomplished, The CPC will need to address Goal #D2: “Review and revise (if necessary) the tuition model to ensure that it is values-aligned and supports the financial needs of the program.” We believe it is aligned, but not adequately supporting the program. The staff is reported to be in the process of addressing Goal #D3: “Review and revise (if necessary) the compensation structure for staff to ensure it is transparent and growth-oriented”. As mentioned, the development goal (#D4) is being addressed in part. Goal #D4 is “Design and implement a development plan that grows non-tuition revenue by cultivating alumni support and garnering institutional funding and partnerships.” The CPC is in the process of developing a wider marketing plan to address Goal #5: “Strengthen and expand our communication functions to build awareness of BYM Camps and our impact among a broad array of constituent groups.” This will be the key to ensuring full enrollment during the 2026 season. The “Big Think” effort of the General Secretary could be part of Goal #D6: “Create and implement a Camp Master Plan to ensure mission-aligned properties that inspire and promote programmatic effectiveness.” The Big Think is an upcoming design workshop to rethink our camping program, brainstorm, and consider some fundamental changes.

The first of the five **Campers at the Center goals**, “Goal #A1: Continue the work of facilitating a genuinely diverse, inclusive, anti-racist, and welcoming community that promotes acceptance, belonging, love, and a celebration of the Light in everyone”, is *the* foundational goal of BYM Camps. The STRIDE program and the tuition sliding scale specifically address these goals. To a large extent, this is the animating purpose of the Camp Directors and the seasonal camp staff. Through their efforts, Camp Magic continues to happen.

However, it is difficult to see progress on the remaining goals in this group: “Goal #A2: Clearly and consistently communicate our foundational statements across the program: mission, vision, and core values. Goal #A3: Establish and implement a regular review process to consider all aspects of the BYM Camping Program relative to its foundational statements. Goal #A4: Create Camper Outcome Program Guides that articulate the desired camper outcomes, relative to the BYM Camping program foundational statements, for each camp and age level. Goal #5A: Develop the programmatic and personnel structures that support and respond to campers’ mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health at each age and experience level, and that support the desired camper outcomes.” Among other things, The Big Think may address whether diverse types of camp experiences will also serve our Mission.

Over the past several years staff have been short handed and focused on the most immediate priorities. So, it is understandable if only some progress has been made on the five **Vibrant & Diverse Community of Staff & Volunteers goals: “**Goal #B1: Draft and execute a multi-year staff recruitment plan to ensure sufficient and sustainable staffing levels for all BYM Camps. Goal #B2: Create a Staff Orientation Program Guide and process to orient and train new and returning administration, staff, and volunteers to the program's values, mission, vision, and practices. Goal #B3: Update the Staff Handbook to articulate the processes and practices that promote a spirit-led, values-driven, joyous, and just culture across all camps. Goal #B4: Create a Volunteer Program Guide to articulate the structures and processes to encourage volunteers to contribute to the program in appropriate, meaningful, and attainable ways. Goal #B5: Develop and implement a process to measure and cultivate staff and community satisfaction.”

We have begun to see some progress on the three **Clear and Effective Governance & Leadership goals:** Goal #C1: “Determine the governance and leadership model that best meets the current and future needs of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting and the BYM camping program.” The above-mentioned ad hoc working group is addressing this. Time permitting, the staff continues to work on the remaining goals. “Goal #C2: Establish a comprehensive staffing model at the administration and programmatic levels that effectively supports the entire program and nourishes staff work/life balance. Goal #C3: Develop and implement a meaningful review process for BYM camping program leaders, managers, directors, and staff for accountability, feedback, and dynamic growth.”

**Gratitude**

We are immensely grateful to the camper families who have entrusted their children to the transformative experience of BYM Camps. Their joy is also shared with the many volunteers and staff who make Camp Magic happen. The CPC remains open to suggestions for improving the camp experience through living our Quaker values.

Our gratitude cannot be overstated for the grit and hard work of Sarah Gillooly, Brian Massey, Zora Tucker, David Hunter, Harriet Dugan, Randy Matten, Rai Carter, Dyresha Harris, Hope Swank, Rosie Eck, Jesse Austell, and Peter Abrikian. We cannot say that their work is tireless, because they are indeed tired. But they doggedly persist. We thank them for that, and it is our intention to be part of the solution to find a more sustainable model to prevent burnout.

Submitted by Al Best (ongoing Co-clerk) and Anna Best (outgoing Co-clerk) on behalf of the BYM Camping Program Committee.