SPECIAL CAMPAIGN FOR OPEQUON QUAKER CAMP – FINAL REPORT – 2025

Part 1: OVERVIEW - THE STORY BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN

Two years ago, BYM Friends came together to address the necessity to move Opequon Quaker Camp and to build a new camp facility at Rolling Ridge Conservancy in West Virginia. Based on months of study and discernment by Trustees, Stewardship and Finance, Camp Program and Camp Properties committees, the recommendation was approved at Spring Interim Meeting 2023. Now came the challenge: to raise the estimated $735,000 to complete the project.

The Development Committee then went to work to organize a capital campaign to reach that goal.

Policies needed to be determined (Will we accept multi-year pledges? Yes. Can planned gifts from bequests be applied to this goal? No, the costs will occur too soon. What will be done if gifts total more than the goal? They will support future BYM Camp needs. And so forth).

Campaign materials needed to be created (A case statement that was compelling and inspiring. An attractive campaign brochure. A video that captured the spirit of BYM camps. And so forth.)

An experienced campaign consultant, Barbara Wille, was found and engaged to work with us to test the feasibility of success for this campaign, help us create the message and the materials, make the plan, and then help us implement the plan.

A working committee of volunteers needed to be recruited, who would be willing to personally discuss the Opequon project with BYM Friends in person, over the phone, in writing, sometimes at Monthly Meetings – all over an intensive first two years of the campaign (normally the “quiet phase” in traditional campaign terms). Broader fundraising would then continue for a second two years.

All of those things were well along by Annual Session 2023. But it was rapidly becoming clear that this was not going to be a traditional campaign. Just months after the Interim Meeting decision, Opequon held its last session at the old site, and everything that was movable had to be moved to Rolling Ridge. And a few months after that, construction must begin on the new facility, so campers would have a new home by summer 2024.

With that challenge facing us, the Special Campaign for Opequon Quaker Camp was announced at Annual Session 2023. The enthusiasm for this new camp, first shown at Interim Meeting earlier that year, was evident. And when one Friend rose to say “I’ll pay for the first cabin,” the campaign was underway!

To cover the “minimum viable construction” needed to open camp in summer 2024, about a third (about $250,000) of the total needed to be raised by spring thaw, 2024. No time to waste! The campaign committee met monthly and communicated at least weekly, reviewed prospect lists, arranged general mailings, wrote individual letters, made phone calls and arranged appointments, visited and solicited individual donors, made presentations to Meetings, and much more.

Before 2023 ended, we had met and exceeded that “minimum viable construction” cost. The new Opequon Camp could open in time for its first session in 2024.

Yet to reach the $735,000 needed for the full project, the Campaign Committee still had much to do. The testimonials we were able to print in the periodic campaign newsletters, about life-changing experiences at BYM camps, and the joy evident to visitors at the new site, were as inspiring to donors as we had hoped. And they were also inspiring to us. The campaign was moving fast, yes, but it was also fulfilling for committee members.

And now, as we approach the end of two years in the three to four year campaign, how are we doing? Thanks to 119 donors (including 10 Meetings) we have raised over $802,000. That exceeds the original goal! This has enabled completion of additional important work that became apparent over these first two years at the new Opequon camp grounds.

On behalf of the Campaign Committee, a huge thank you to the donors and the volunteers, to the many BYM committees that explored the need for a new campground, and to the camp staff who made it all come to life.

Special Campaign committee members: Al Best, Arthur Boyd (clerk), Gretchen Hall, Jon Nafziger, Victor Thuronyi.

Part 2: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BARBARA WILLE

A Special/Capital/Restricted fundraising campaign needs to have a number of foundational

elements in place, the quality of which will determine the Campaign’s success. These elements

are: **Case for Support, Prospects, Volunteers, Budget, and Staffing.**

The Special Campaign for Opequon Quaker Camp combined these elements with particular

success. As a campaign review, I will analyze the different elements and make any

recommendations I have for future activity.

**Case for Support** – This is the area where BYM, Sarah G, key volunteers and staff made the

biggest and most important positive impact to the success of the Special Campaign. I believe

the Case was so successful -- because it:

● was articulated in a way that is totally clear and compelling

● combined elements most important to BYM constituents

● combined practical needs and emotional needs

● grew out of genuine need, careful planning, and wide input

● easily understood and articulated in an “elevator speech”

● the rollout of the Campaign involved the whole community – Annual Session, 2023

I think that the stars aligned for this Campaign, and looking ahead, I recommend that BYM go

through a similar slow, deliberate, well researched process of building the CASE for the next

campaign. I think the Special Campaign has banished the memory of a prior troubled campaign.

It's vital that the next effort be as careful as the Special Campaign for Opequon Quaker Camp.

**Prospects** – The happy truth is that most of the funds raised from individuals were donated

proactively. It is VERY important that BYM staff and volunteers understand that these “over the

transom” gifts did not “just happen”. Instead, people’s interest and commitments grew out of

the CASE, and the way that the community was inspired by the need, the message, and the

messengers. From the beginning, Campaign staff and volunteers were careful to present the

Campaign as carefully planned, smartly budgeted and led by experienced staff and volunteers.

In my opinion, the key donors whose early gifts launched the Campaign will not repeat this level

of giving in the future – though all are planned giving prospects. Others may very well give at

the same level again if their Special Campaign gifts are well stewarded, and they are properly

cultivated and solicited for the next campaign. Other key BYM donors did not participate in the

Special Campaign – some said “no” to solicitation; others were not asked before the campaign

closed but still remain as prospects for future special gifts.

The Special Campaign, through research and volunteer screening, identified many more

prospects in the BYM community, and their inclination to make major gifts needs to be

determined and tested. The prospect pool for the next campaign is there!

**Volunteers** – The Special Campaign was enormously fortunate to have experienced (expert!)

fundraising professionals on the Campaign Committee, individuals who were not afraid to ask

for money, were happily staffed and who were inspired by the project. Some of these

volunteers, I think, will not be doing this again for a BYM Campaign. It was a major time

commitment, gladly given, but gladly finished. BYM is going to need to identify the next cadre

of campaign leaders and solicitors, as well as training up staff to serve as solicitors.

**Budget** – I’m going to address 2 different budgets – A - the budget to implement the Opequon

Quaker Camp project, and B - the budget for the Special Campaign fundraising project.

A – It is very impressive that so many of the estimated costs of the Opequon project turned out

to be close to the actual costs. It was difficult for the Committee not to get the actual numbers

– it took “the wind out of the sails” of the Campaign, and stood in the way of fundraising

activities later in the process. There were valiant efforts to get us the numbers, and hopefully

processes have been developed for next time. One important lesson learned in building the

campaign budget is that there needs to be money budgeted for staff to implement the

operations and activities of the project. Not just an overall Project Manager, but also a portion

of the General Secretary’s time, the development office, finance, and staff for the particular

project. The burden on staff necessary to create the Camp was brutal and hopefully won’t be

repeated.

B – I don’t know the numbers for costs for the Campaign implementation – I do know that BYM

spent more fees for my services than were in the budget. I suggest that there be a closer

relationship between finance and the Campaign so that staff know more about how much they

“still have to spend” in their budget.

**Staffing** – My role in the Special Campaign was not as counsel, it was as a resident manager.

There is so much paperwork, analysis, research, scheduling and administrative activities

necessary to move a campaign forward that I strongly suggest that BYM hire a specific staff

member when you undertake another capital campaign. It is very time consuming, even if the staff person is very experienced. Even though the development office could very well have the

experience and knowledge to staff a next campaign – they will not have the administrative band

width to staff volunteers and implement the campaign. Additionally, having the objective voice

of outside staff can be valuable – both in a campaign context, and in the regular fundraising

schedule.