

Junior Yearly Meeting Retreats (JYM)

JYM is a community of children, teens and adults under the care of New England Yearly Meeting (Quakers). We hold 4 retreats a year in various locations around New England for children in grades 2 through 6. Our goal is to create a safe, trusting and joyous community in which we can seek and find that of God in ourselves and in each other within the faith tradition and practice of Friends. With much intentionality, delight and prayer, we come together to create a place where joy abounds, children are lovingly safe, and where a wonder of that of God and all of life is cultivated.

We choose our staff very carefully. We are blessed to have a core with years of experience, some stellar Young Adult Friends who came up through NEYM's youth programs, and carefully chosen teens who serve as junior staffers. All have completed a screening and application process. They are a wonderful group of people with a variety of gifts and spiritual journeys. What they share in common is that they are appropriate, loving and utterly safe with young people; they are grounded in Friends and have good senses of humor, willing hearts, and flexible agendas. I am constantly in awe and full of gratitude for them. (If you are interested in staffing with us, please be in touch with me. Our application and screening process takes a couple of months.) Our very low child to staff ratio ensures that children receive extra TLC or individual assistance at any time. This ratio also helps Way open for wonderful interactions between children, teens and adult Friends throughout the weekend.



Each retreat has a theme that helps us explore aspects of Friends and spirituality. A schedule and short description of each year's retreats is available by mid-July. Staff Notes and Quotes for each retreat are made available to parents a week beforehand so that they have a sense of where we think we are going – understanding that we remain open to where the Spirit may lead us on any retreat! The small groups provide a format for us to explore aspects of the theme in interactive and age appropriate ways.

On the back are answers to some frequently asked questions. Our website www.neym.org/jym has lots more information and a link to our photo gallery which provides a wonderful visual of our program. Please be in touch with questions, concerns, or if your child has special needs that we need to be aware of in order to help him or her have a successful experience with us.

We would love to have your child join us!

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**Photo credits: Page 1 top and page 2 by Kevin Lee. Page 1 bottom by Buddy Baker-Smith.

Some Frequently Asked Questions About JYM

- **Who are you, Gretchen?**

I started staffing JYM in 1989 for Kevin Lee and never really left, even when I became the coordinator of Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) in 2003. Kevin has been a mentor and partner in ministry throughout this time. I coordinate the JHYM and the JYM Programs for NEYM as a full time employee. My husband Buddy (one of my best JHYM Staffers) and I are members of Westport Monthly Meeting and the parents of 3 young adults who grew up in NEYM's youth programs.

- **When are the retreats?**

Registration is at 5pm on Fridays, and we wrap up on Sunday at 12:30pm.

- **What do you do?**

We eat, sleep, worship, play games, sing and share music, do crafts, help with chores, talk about lots of things in small groups, and play and hang out during free time. Late Saturday afternoon we pull out JYM Retreats' tubs of dress up clothes. Art is often part of our program. Occasionally we go on field trips.

- **Where do you sleep?**

At Woolman Hill Conference Center many of us get a bed, or at least a mattress. The rest of the time, we are on floors in sleeping bags. We highly recommend a sleeping pad! There are staffers – and nightlights - in all sleeping areas. Quiet Hour on Saturday afternoon provides another opportunity for rest. However, your child will likely still return home on Sunday tired (but happy).

- **Can my child come to part of a retreat?**

We really discourage this. If your child is not ready to stay, it is best to wait and try again when they seem more confident. Part of the experience is being with the community for the entire weekend. We want them to have a good time and to greet you on Sunday with pride, happiness, new friends, and many stories.

- **Do we have to be members of a Meeting?**

No. Your child does have to be willing to be fully engaged in all parts of our community, including being open and inclusive to everyone, solving problems in the manner of Friends, and sharing worship and small group discussions. NEYM's Faith & Practice guides our themes, activities and approaches to conflict resolution, etc.

- **Do 6th graders go to JYM or JHYM?**

Some 6th graders stay in JYM and some move up to JHYM. At any point, 6th Graders can come to a JHYM Retreat instead of the JYM Retreat nearest that date and then decide which retreat program to remain in for the rest of the year. See our letter to parents of 6th Graders for more information.

- **Will there be food?**

Of course! Our retreat chefs are not only great cooks, they are also wonderful people who do all they can to accommodate everyone's dietary needs. Just let us know of any allergies or diets your child has (such as being a vegetarian). We will take good care of them – as long as we have some notice!

- **My child has special needs or concerns around bedtime. Can I call you?**

Yes! Please do. I am always available by phone. We want to help your child feel comfortable and well rested while on retreat with us. Confidentiality is always honored.

- **What does it cost?**

Our fee structure is a version of the Pay-As-Led approach that New England Quakers adopted for Sessions several years ago. It's about trust and abundance. Families can pay less or more depending on their budgets—from giving more to support others to zero dollars—no questions asked. \$50 is great if budgets are tight; \$95/child covers food and supply expenses for our weekends; \$155 covers all related costs.

- **How do I register?**

Go to www.neym.org/jym, and click on the Registration link!

