

Expectations of Staff

THANK YOU for volunteering your time, heart, gifts, and spirit. The heart of the JYM & JHYM Communities are sustained by these retreat weekends, which could not happen without adults like you.

Creating Space for Transformation

I believe that is far easier to be open to the love of that of God if we have experienced the love of family and friends. Creating a safe and joy-filled community in which to seek and find that of God is central to my understanding and practice of ministry. I rely on the presence of the Spirit to guide us all – adults and young people. I believe that we are all both teachers and students, and that we adults are regularly inspired and sometimes even appropriately elated by the children in our community. We all have some of the Light within us.

We strive in all that we do at retreats to be faithful to the Light and the practices and testimonies of Friends.

Ministry of Presence

Your primary roles are to help create a safe and welcoming space and to be present to our retreat attendees. Ministry happens at the craft table, in and around games and chores, or over a cup of tea or hot chocolate. Your willingness to be with the young people attending our retreats, offering appropriate, loving hospitality and friendship, is a powerful gift. Being seen and known is transforming.

There is a fair amount of physical effort and labor at retreat. I try to keep the staff to attendee ratios low enough that staffers do not leave on Sunday feeling exhausted. It is important to pace yourself. Take opportunities to sit, make sure you eat and drink well (this is not hard to do with our retreat cooks), and respect what your body can and can't do. Enjoy the connections with other staffers. Youth workers in NEYM are some of the finest people on earth, and the circle of deep friendship and joy is a blessing.

We try to build tall walls with wide spaces for young people to move within, but the borders shift depending on where we are and who is with us! For instance, ball playing may be fine in one place but not in another. We work a lot of situations out as we go. It can be confusing to discern what is "acceptable" versus "unacceptable" behavior. Ask questions, ask for help, and express uncertainties or concerns, especially if the safety or wellbeing of a child or teen is in doubt.

My mantra: Free time is not staff free time. Our job is one of cheerfully helping everyone create a safe and grounded Quaker community. Speak with me about any questions or concerns as they arise.

Timelines

I arrive between 3 and 4 PM on Friday. Registration starts at 5:00 for JYM and 6:00 for JHYM. It's helpful to have most staffers arrive between 4:30 and 6:00. Work schedules and travel times make this difficult for some; we can work things out with advanced notice. Except in very rare circumstances, staff must be available for the duration of the retreat. The retreat, for staff, concludes after lunch *and cleanup* on Sunday. We aim to be on the road around 2:00 PM.

Expect noise, lots of noise this weekend! The first couple of hours on Friday evening seem especially noisy as we reconnect with old friends, stake out sleeping areas, etc. Think of it as a whirlwind of community

building! You will notice though, that once our retreat community reaches its “rhythm,” the noise level tapers off to an energetic “hum!”

Staff Notebooks and Evaluations

When you arrive on Friday, you'll find a Staff Notebook ready for you with the staff notes, schedule, small group list, small group activities, an attenders' list, and additional resources or information as needed. nourishment. Look for a blue TLC sheet giving information on individual children who may need some extra attention during the retreat. Once you have read your TLC sheet, please return it to me so that confidentiality is assured. Every once in awhile a young person will check out a staffer's notebook.

Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation form in the back pocket. I take these seriously.

You are welcome to take any of the contents of your notebook home for use with your Meeting, etc. (Please do leave the binders.)

Leadership and Leadings

I very much value your spiritual insights and wisdom. You have been recommended to our program and selected as a staffer precisely for the skills and spiritual gifts which others have experienced and seen within you. Our varied approaches to the Divine, especially as Friends, are a blessing to be shared.

Consider setting some time aside to meditate and pray on the theme of the retreat before the retreat weekend. Your spiritual insights and experiences regarding the selected theme are valued. If something starts brewing, be in touch with me. Come expecting to share and have fun.

Do know that I generally don't ask first-time staff to do too much on their first retreat. I really want you to have plenty of time to just be with everyone and get a feel for the rhythm and group. New staffers frequently share that it can be hard to know how to be useful. Please keep remembering that our primary ministry is one of presence.

As a matter of course I prefer to make judgment calls and the occasional hard decision with considerable input from other staffers. I also pray a lot! I accept however, that the final responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of both children and staff within our program rests with me as the coordinator

Thank you for your time, generosity, and open-hearted presence.

Gretchen Baker-Smith
JYM-JHYM Coordinator