

Junior High Yearly Meeting Retreats (JHYM)

JHYM is a community of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and adult staffers from all over New England Yearly Meeting (Quakers). We have 6 retreats a year in various locations around New England. 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. As we build our community, we share and explore what it means, looks and feels like to be a Quaker in the 21st Century. We also have a lot of fun!

Middle Schoolers come to JHYM primarily for the community. Most are the only Quakers in their schools or neighborhoods, and they love having a place where they don't feel they have to explain themselves. They are young people who sincerely and courageously strive to witness to their faith, while living in the wider world, every day of their lives. They are young teens who deeply ponder whether saying the Pledge of Allegiance is consistent with Friends, how non-violence can possibly work, and if the testimony of simplicity really applies to sneakers and the number of extra-curricular activities they are involved in. Over and over, our JH'ers say that JHYM is the place where they can simply be themselves – and be re-charged with the Light and friendship within our community.



This is how some JHYM attenders describe JHYM:

JHYM is one of the best things that have happened to me.

JHYM is a sanctuary.

It is a safe place where you can be yourself, and escape for awhile.

It is where your soul is free.

It's nothing like school. Everyone is so welcoming.

It is the best place in the world.

JHYM helps me connect with people in other states and be a complete Quaker.

In 12 words, JHYM is amazing, loving, peaceful, safe, community, inclusive, joyful, opening, and a giant circle.

JHYM is as heavenly as whip cream on fruit on pancakes.

Some of our staffers have been with us for years and some are Young Adult Friends who came up through NEYM's Youth Programs. All have completed a screening and application process. They are wonderful people with a variety of gifts and spiritual journeys, good senses of humor, kind hearts, and a commitment to being in relationship with young people in grounded and mutually respectful ways.



Each retreat has a theme that helps us explore aspects of Friends and spirituality. Our Staff Notes and Quotes are made available to parents and posted on our website for anyone to read. In fact, our website www.neym.org/junior-high has lots of info and photos. I hope that you'll take a look at it and then be in touch with me if you have other questions or concerns.

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We would love to have you join us!

Frequently Asked Questions about JHYM

- **Who are you, Gretchen?**
I coordinate JHYM and JYM (the elementary programs for 2nd-6th graders) for New England Yearly Meeting. I started staffing JYM in 1989 and coordinating JHYM in 2003. I am a member of Westport Monthly Meeting and the mom of 3 young adults. My husband Buddy is one of my best staffers. ☺
- **When are the retreats?**
Registration is at 6pm on Friday night, and we wrap up on Sunday at 12:30pm.
- **What do you do?**
We eat, sleep, worship, play games, sing, do crafts, help with chores, talk about lots of things in small groups, and hang out during free time. Art is often part of our program. Occasionally we go on field trips or do service projects.
- **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.
- **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 in all sleeping areas.
- **Can I come to part of a retreat?**
We really discourage this. The most amazing thing about JHYM is the community that we build together. This takes time and space – it really doesn't happen on a drop-in basis.
- **Do I have to be a member of a Meeting?**
No. You do 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.
- **The retreat is far from my house. How do I get there?**
You will receive a registration list 3 weeks before the retreat that you and your parent can use to arrange carpools. Parents have worked out all sorts of arrangements including one family lending their van to another to do the driving, several families pitching in money for a hotel for the driver, and moms turning the drive into an opportunity for a getaway weekend with other JHYM parents. I am always available to help you figure it out.
- **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. When you register, just let us know of any allergies or diets you have (such as being a vegetarian). We will take good care of you!
- **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. \$45 is great if budgets are tight; \$90/child covers food and supply expenses for our weekends; \$150 covers all related costs.
- **How do I register?**
Go to our website: www.neym.org/junior-high, and click on the Registration link!

