

Winter Camping 2018 - Epistle



Friends gathered at Camp Golden Pond on January 20-21 for our annual winter camping trip. This year, focused on youth and youth programs. We enjoyed the expanses at Camp Golden Pond, with its large wooden floor, clear starry sky, and bright commercial kitchen with room for seven at once.

Jason Acimovic surprised us at dinner by whisking out 20 perfectly golden, crisp grilled cheese sandwiches. The industrial griddle proved worth its salt. Jason is now known as the Grill Master!

We took hikes around the pond and pounded holes into the ice. We watched the youngest children dash and toddle inside Legacy Lodge, big and open like a gym. Kerry Wiessman taught us the Shoe Game, with a song: *I pass the shoe from me to you, to you. I pass, the shoe, and bring it back to you.* Bethany Seib brought along her hula-hoops, which attracted even the teens. The teens had been, undeniably and against their will, *dragged* here for the weekend. There is a slight chance that they stayed hula-hooping after most of us were done.

By day we hula-hooped, hiked, hopped, and ate well. At night we slept very little. The children invented a new game. The game goes like this: Jim Adams would toss the hula hoop, skidding it across the floor. The children would jump through it, one by one, lunging like perfect cats. The hoop would start to wobble, but they'd jump through it for as long as possible. When there was just barely a *moment* left, as the hoop fell to the ground, one last person would zing through in a spectacular dive!

This game lasted for hours. It re-emerged after dinner and grew its own rules and goals. Arlo, Katie, Maddison, Levi, Theresa, and Eliot stood in a ready line, their eyes on the hoop. They coordinated the jumps so that five people could hop through before it fell. "We're on our way to a Guinness Record here," someone said to me, washing a plate. By mid-evening, the jumping order had been perfected. Five people could dive through the hoop before it fell. Night came, and still they persisted. "We *have* to get to six," they explained. The game had gathered its own magic, the kind that comes when you have endless time and new surprises and delights. Some of adults rubbed their eyes. The room grew dark. The sleeping bags were waiting, and still cold. The youngest families were trying to sleep. All of a sudden, the children exploded into shrieks, frothing around the room, bumping into each other in glee. "We did it!" they cried. "We made it to six!" They romped and high-fived and spread their glee like hot butter. All of these hands and arms in the air. Inspired by success, Katie announced: "Now, seven."

But seven jumps would have to wait for another day, because it was time for bed!

Sunday dawned and brought with it early risers, cheesy egg casserole, French braids pressed by the pillows, and sleepy Quakers. Some more tired than others. Another round of hide 'n' seek began, without the adults knowing exactly when. In a scurry we mopped the floors, stashed the dishes away, searched out the dumpster for recycling, and still the older children played. When they started to crack into arguments, and then tears, it was clear to all that the long sleepover had taken its toll. But before that, before the impending sense of meltdown, we had a moment together by the fire.

Kerry called and herded us together, where we settled into Worship Sharing. She asked us to think of a moment this weekend that was pleasant, "something you enjoyed." Around the circle, we heard:

Cracking holes in the ice. Hearing the Great Horned Owl hoot, and calling back to it in the night. The clarity of the stars. The size of the commercial kitchen. Just being away from my regular routine, taking a break from the structure. That morning walk around the pond. The leaves crackling underneath my feet. In the midst of this one child announced, in a quiet voice: "There are some things *even more fun* than playing Minecraft."

The voice was so quiet, someone near me asked what they'd said. But it's true! We had such a fun time together, we rank among the most popular video games!

If you missed the gathering this year, save the month of January open for 2019. The whole month! Until then, keep an eye out for Quakers in the Guinness Book of hula-hoop records, and ask Jason if he might make you a grilled cheese sandwich (or 20)!

Thank you to our organizers, Kerry Wiessman, Karen Anderson, and Johanna Jackson, who spent much of January bringing this trip together. :)