

Using Social Action for Community Outreach

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Conscience Bay Meeting

Our meeting is in unity about the importance of outreach, but, as a small Meeting with limited resources, we are challenged with expanding our membership and letting the outside world know about our very existence. We are finding that involvement with local organizations, including the opportunities provided by NYYM's Quaker Outside the Lines program, is a good avenue for pursuing community outreach.

A number of us in the Meeting have been personally active in a grassroots coalition that cultivates friendships and alliances among the diverse communities in our local geographical area, nurtures positive relationships by building bridges across racial and other divides, and celebrates all efforts that encourage unity. These principles and values align with our Quaker beliefs. With this in mind and through my involvement with NYYM's 'Outreach Practitioners' Circle' and becoming more aware of outreach, our Meeting agreed to sponsor one of the coalition's gatherings at our Quaker meetinghouse. It seemed like a wonderful opportunity to have like minds under the same roof expressing social concerns.

What a successful evening of harmony, nurturing fellowship and acceptance it proved to be! In addition to the organization's agenda, we Quakers gave a short presentation on what Quakers are about and showed the short video entitled 'What Quakers Do in Silent Worship' which is part of the QuakerSpeak video series. Then we invited everyone to join in about five minutes of silent communal worship. It was very powerful. The very positive feedback that was shared was inspirational, and evoked comments like, "so enjoyed the depth of the silence", "always wanted to visit a Quaker meetinghouse," and "so grateful for this experience". Many said they would come back to visit us again. We also had people come early so that they may view our lovely grounds and walk our simple labyrinth. As clerk of grounds I was so very pleased to share the beauty of our gardens and lawns.

This event was easy to sponsor and allowed so many others from different religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds to come together, work on common goals and learn about Quakerism. Through this outreach we welcomed new faces and we were left feeling optimistic about having shared our

‘condition’ with others, resulting in our being more mindful of future growth and hopefulness.

In addition, with financial support from the ‘Quaker Outside the Lines’ program, our meeting partnered this spring with the local Association for Mental Health & Wellness whose mission is to “empower people and communities to pursue and sustain healthy and enriched lives.” We assisted in their spring clean-up, purchased new garden tools and worked with youth volunteers to support their chemical free garden that supplies an abundance of fresh produce and a place of serenity as a Certified Butterfly Garden. Working with the Association and coming together to tend the earth, we knew we were reflecting our Quaker faith as well as offering a meaningful service outside our meeting.

For our Meeting the process of working with community organizations has been an opportunity to reflect, reinforce and practice our Quaker values while also acquainting community members with Quakerism and making our presence more visible.