

SAYF Annual Report to SAYMA

June 13, 2025

Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) held 6 regular retreats during the past retreat cycle, August 2024-May 2025, with SAYF at SAYMA retreat upcoming. There were two Nurturing Committee retreats in August and February, meeting jointly for business with SAYF Steering Committee. SAYF will meet in Berea, KY on June 20-23, 2025 for SAYMA's yearly gathering.

Typical retreat size has been 20-26 Young Friends (YF) per retreat across the six regular retreats during the school year, with a couple of retreats having lower attendance (the October retreat following Hurricane Helene, which affected travel) and the lovely Nashville retreat (which is far for some meetings to travel), for an overall average of about 20 teens per retreat. The Nurturing Committee has grown again, following diminishment in numbers during Covid times, and is active, engaged and discerning.

SAYF Retreats:

Retreat	Location	Participants	Theme
Steering, Nurturing and Support Committee Retreat	August 2024 Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting	9	<i>Steering, Nurturing and Support Meeting</i>
SAYF Retreat	September, 2024 Atlanta Friends Meeting	26	Find relaxation in the environment around you
SAYF Retreat	October, 2024 Berea Friends Meeting	11	Fall Funsies
SAYF Retreat	November, 2024 Durham Friends Meeting (relocated from Asheville due to Hurricane Helene recovery)	21	Taking care of ourselves and our community
SAYF Retreat	January, 2025 Atlanta Friends Meeting	26	Climbing Through Change
Steering, Nurturing and Support Committee Retreat	February, 2025 West Knoxville Friends Meeting	12	<i>Steering, Nurturing and Support Meeting</i>
SAYF Retreat	March, 2025 Arthur Morgan School, Celo, NC	25	Cultivating Community
SAYF Retreat	May, 2025 Nashville Friends Meeting	12	Music in Our Lives, Visit to the National Museum of African American Music

Including Yearly Gathering registrations, 45 different teens have or will have attended at least one retreat during the past year, compared to 40 last year. Some Young Friends attended all 6 retreats, and others attended only one. Details of each retreat are summarized below.

Most retreats were hosted at Meetinghouses, but SAYF also gathered at Arthur Morgan School (AMS) in Celo, NC. We are deeply appreciative to Friends and to AMS for allowing us to use their facilities. Also, we are thankful to Durham, West Knoxville and Atlanta Friends Meetings, and individual SAYF families, whose generous donations have helped support scholarships for SAYF, and contributed to nourishing the program. Wonderful adult volunteers give their time and energy as Friendly Adult Nurturers (FANs), drivers, retreat hosts and as members of SAYF Steering and Nurturing Committees. The SAYF Nurturing Committee, composed of older SAYFers, guides and gives leadership to the community. SAYF appreciates the great contributions of all members of the community.

Sample of Retreat Overviews and Activities

September 2024 - Atlanta

This retreat was a great start to the new SAYF year. We began Saturday morning with opening circle followed by the talent show, which was different then when the talent show is usually scheduled, but went off quite well with the teens. We then packed burrito lunches and loaded into cars to drive about 30 minutes west of Atlanta to the Douglasville Animal Shelter, where we picked up 5 dogs through their Doggy Day Out program, and took them to Sweet Water Creek State Park. We spent a couple hours walking the dogs and swimming in the river before returning. Before dinner, young friends had free time and played board games. After dinner, a guest speaker came in and taught us all how to carve our own stamps out of erasers, which the young friends did then printed their stamps on bandanas, cards, and bags. Overall, it was an amazing retreat!

October 2024 - Berea

Meeting House workday and hike to Berea College Pinnacles. We then packed a sack lunch and ate it at the Pinnacles Amphitheater in the Berea College Forest. The kids performed a talent show on the stage and then we hiked to Indian Fort Lookout. We returned to the meeting house for some free time. Heather Dent from Winterberry Studio joined us for pumpkin decorations. The teens were very creative in their designs.

November 2024 - Durham

We did mindfulness activities & learned how to do body scans to find out where we are holding stress and how to discharge energy. We explored Duke gardens, performed a skit for our Stone Soup community potluck, then had a Fishbowl with local adults.

January 2025 - Atlanta

We began Saturday morning with a breakfast made by a SAYFers mom in celebration of her 15th birthday (quinceanera). We learned some about what a quinceanera means as a coming of age ceremony in Latinx culture. Following that we made bottle cap pins, using paint, collage material, and markers, then sealing it with clear nail polish and attaching a pin to the back. After lunch, our plans to hike up Stone Mountain were adjusted due to weather, so we went to the Doll's Head Trail, at Constitution Lakes. The trail is through the Weelaunee forest, and trash that was strewn in the area was collected and made into art for park visitors. We talked briefly about the history of the land and the Muscogee people who lived there, and about Tortugueta who was killed very near to those woods, two years ago on the same day. We held the tension between the violence that has happened on that land and the beauty of the land. In the evening, we

did an impromptu talent show, and finished the evening out with birthday cake and bear.

February 2025 - West Knoxville - Nurturing Retreat

Nurturers from Atlanta, Celo, Asheville, Berea, Durham and Chapel Hill gathered for a nurturers retreat to plan SAYF retreats. We completed productive business meetings on Saturday, and enjoyed time spent talking, watching movies, playing music, and creating amazing hairstyles during our down time.

March 2025 - Celo

This retreat was about being witness of and experiencing how it feels to be in a space such as Celo where we actively participate in a cultivated community. We experienced Tai Chi which grounded us and lead us to tap into the energy around us. We further Immersed ourselves into community land, enjoyed the community of each other and then helped Bruce, the new Camp Celo farmer, with his work. Experienced an exciting new game. The teens hiked and picnicked at a nearby pond. Nearly the entire day was outside with the exception of sleeping, cooking and eating.

May 2025 - Nashville

Although our group was smaller than usual, with many of our dear friends absent due to end-of-school-year commitments, the SAYF group had a great time in Music City. On Saturday, we took a trip to the National Museum of African American Music where we took a walk across time, seeing how African American music arose as a liberatory practice and continues to inspire people to move toward freedom today. After spending time at the Museum, we returned to the meetinghouse to enjoy a potluck with the Nashville Friends Meeting adults followed by musically themed skits and a game of bear.

Young Friend Queries

1. How can we create peace in a hostile world?
2. How do you stand firmly against inequality? How do you peacefully challenge problematic social norms?
3. How do you create and nurture community?
4. How do you practice good social work while nurturing your well being and what avenues exist between those?
5. What do you do that harms/affects the environment and how can you better such impact?
6. In what ways do you use your voices and express your perspectives?
7. How do we support people's identity and growth?
8. When do you reevaluate your perspective?

9. How do you remain grounded in a materialistic society?
10. How do you reconcile simplicity and self expression?
11. How do you apply Quaker values to your social media presence?
12. How does your energy change as you enter adulthood?
13. What is the light? Where do you find that in your life?
14. How do you identify as quaker and how do you explain that to your peers?
15. To whom do you extend your compassion?