

## SAYF Steering Committee Report Yearly Meeting 2025

SAYF has had a wonderful year, continuing to rebuild and deepen in connection, despite some unique challenges this year. SAYMA at Berea last year was an excellent start, with an opportunity for SAYFers to share their lived experience with the wider community during the plenary session. Several SAYFers presented on how they build community, even when there are disagreements and varied perspectives. We heard from many members of the community that it was an inspiring point of connection. As a part of SAYMA we work to minimize costs as much as possible, so we are pleased that as our numbers have grown and with careful stewardship we have been able to cover the basic retreat costs of groceries and activities with registration fees. This year we have directed funds and planning time to make sure that young friends from Western North Carolina have been able to participate as they are able, despite the devastation that Hurricane Helene brought to that region in late September. We had to adjust the retreat locations for the fall and had volunteer drivers from other areas assist in getting youth to the retreats. We were so glad that we could return to Celo for our March retreat, a milestone in the recovery efforts. We had our first retreat in several years at Nashville this spring, and the local FAN and nurturers did a stellar job.

I am also particularly pleased that in addition to growth in our young friends, we have grown our base of adult volunteers. It is an enormous amount of work to drive youth from multiple states to meet at a location, bring enough food for 20-30 people, and (in collaboration with the youth) cooking, cleaning and keeping everyone with the same number of fingers and toes as when they arrived. Beyond the logistics, the Steering committee and our program coordinator Autumn Woodward do faithful work in supporting the growth and development of the youth nurturers and considering how to shepherd SAYF so it can continue to be a beacon for youth for decades to come.

Inspiring is a word that frequently comes up for the adult volunteers that have the privilege to be with these young friends during their retreats. As clerk of Steering Committee for the last three years, and as a Steering Committee member and FAN for many years prior, I have borne witness to the transformation that occurs as young friends practice over and over again what it means to be a community – to explicitly work to include those who may feel excluded, to encourage each member to self-advocate for their own needs while also caring for the needs of others, to do the work of cooking, cleaning, and setting a schedule, to find time to play, time to serve others and time to worship in silence. I can also speak as a parent whose now young adult child spent many of her formative years in SAYF and continues to speak of the impact it had on her as she steps into other communities. I know I speak for all of us – youth, parents, volunteers, when I say we are so grateful for the

support of SAYMA – financial and otherwise. It has been a truly life-shaping event to be clerk of the SAYF Steering committee, and I am beyond grateful to be passing the torch to the able hands of Jennifer Killen, the upcoming clerk who I am positive will bring new energy to the role.

Peace,

Christopher de Beer

Clerk, SAYF Steering Committee