Clerk’s Message:
Preliminary Results of Survey on Needs of our Monthly Meetings
by Jo Posti

From time to time, every organization needs an internal assessment, and LEYM is no exception. During Annual Sessions, worship group and monthly meeting clerks discussed surveying members to learn more about how well LEYM is meeting the needs of our constituent monthly meetings. This will help us to discern new ways that Spirit may be calling the Yearly Meeting to grow and new paths for it to follow.

As I write this, the results are still coming in, but we expect to have results to share with Friends sometime in November. Thank you to everyone who participated.

As we look at preliminary results, some of the responses that grab my attention are those to questions regarding their meeting’s organizational health where at least 30% of respondents did not select “Agree” or “Strongly agree.” They are:

We experience grounded, rich meetings for worship:
- Neutral: 23 (23%)
- Disagree: 4 (4%)
- Strongly Disagree: 1 (1%)
- Don’t Know: 3 (3%)

Has a First Day school:
- Neutral: 12 (12%)
- Disagree: 13 (13%)
- Strongly Disagree: 12 (12%)
- Don’t Know: 1 (1%)

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We experience grounded, rich meetings for worship:

Has a welcoming, informative online presence:
- Neutral: 21 (21%)
- Disagree: 8 (8%)
- Strongly disagree: 5 (5%)
- Don’t Know: 2 (2%)

Contents

- Clerk’s Message, pp. 1-2
- LEYM Epistle and Epistles from High School & Middle School Groups, pp. 3-5
- Annual Meeting Photo Montage, pp. 5-7
- News from Finance Committee, p. 8
- Welcome to New LEYM Employees, p. 9
- Walking Toward Common Ground, p. 9
- News from Monthly Meetings, p. 10
- Using Facebook for Outreach, pp. 10-11
- Prisoner Visitation and Support, p. 11
- A Fine Fall Youth Retreat, p. 12
- Calendar and Committee Clerks, p. 12
When asked to share their opinions on the value to their meetings of these potential programs or supports, more than half of the respondents found value in all but one of the programs listed:

- First day school curriculum or program
- Youth programming
- Intergenerational connections
- Ways to handle theological diversity
- Connection to the wider Quaker world
- Serving an aging community
- Growing our meetings
- Understanding Quaker business process
- Growing capacity in clerking
- Growing capacity in the recording clerk role
- Intervisitation
- Developing ministries within our meeting
- Becoming an anti-racist faith community
- Financial or other administrative skills
- Using a *Faith & Practice* developed by our yearly meeting

The only item that a majority of respondents did not see as valuable or highly valuable was “Seeding and nurturing new meetings.” But what do we do with the results we’ve gathered? Where will this lead us and how can we set priorities? My prayer is that we will consider next steps carefully and in a variety of settings: within our monthly meetings, in the Executive Committee, in committees, and within the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

As we share more information, we hope that each of you will be a part of the process. This is an opportunity to affirm work that supports our monthly meetings and to consider challenges our meetings face that could benefit from Yearly Meeting support. I want to thank Susan Loucks from Pittsburgh Friends Meeting for her help developing the survey. I encourage each of you to provide feedback on which of these issues resonate with your meeting or with you personally.
Epistle to all Friends
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
July 25–28, 2019
Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio

“(We) remain a vibrant community of dedicated, caring, flawed, and lovely Quakers. Gathering together for worship, study, fellowship, or work strengthens our bonds and renews our spirits. We face the uncertain future not afraid and not alone. Puzzled sometimes and often tired, but willing to try in love, in kindness, in hope and grace. We are finding our way step by prayed step.” ~ Kalamazoo Friends Meeting

To Friends Everywhere,

We arrived in Bluffton, Ohio, from college towns like Ann Arbor and Athens, big cities like Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and communities throughout Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania with small worship groups and growing meetings. Bluffton is a place that for many is full of memories of past Yearly Meeting sessions; those who gathered found comfort in the familiar and also engaged energetically with what is new.

The 25 participants in the children’s program delighted to be with each other and spent their time singing, crafting, and in active play. Our evening of talent and ice cream brought out surprises and hidden skills among us, including delightful round-singing by the children, original poetry and song, and music from Pete Seeger to J. S. Bach. We heard creative re-interpretations of a Psalm and of Micah 6. Four Friends presented a report on their sojourn at the FWCC Section of the Americas gathering in dramatic form, some of it in Spanish, ending in the group song that summed up their joyful experience of listening and ministering with Evangelical, Conservative, and Unprogrammed Friends: Demos Gracias al Señor.

We were led to go deeper in our corporate business. With thoughtful, substantive consideration of inclusion, we approved a new policy to provide guidance to adults who feel they have experienced harassment during our time together and developed a new scholarship fund for LEYM youth who choose to attend a Quaker college or internship experience. The theme of inclusion was also reflected in discussion of FGC’s process of becoming an anti-racist organization, and in reports on how individual meetings within LEYM have taken up this work. We were reminded that true anti-racist practice – and, indeed, radical inclusion on a wider scale – must be practiced like preventative dental care. While there is no fixed destination or closure to this work, we had the hopeful sense that, in many cases, we are reporting from a place of new experimentation and implementation – one step along the way.

One example of this experimentation was our intentionality around food choices during Sessions. Broadmead Monthly Meeting, in coordination with LEYM’s Earthcare Committee, created signage around the dining hall that educated us on the environmental cost of different food choices, menus were largely vegetarian, and youth served as compost helpers/educators. Both participants and dining hall staff were enthusiastic about the resulting reduction in waste and impact.

Our plenary speaker, Joyce Ajlouny, American Friends Service Committee’s General Secretary, shared information on AFSC’s history as well as the ways its work is manifesting in the world, led by people who are impacted by oppression. Their current planning process is illustrating that AFSC fills needs where others do not go. Its work shows ways we can join in their courage to accompany and support those whose voices are silenced, including immigrants, the incarcerated, and – as Joyce shared in stories from her own life – the Palestinian people.

Continued on next page
The gaps in our Nominating Committee slate and a dinner with monthly meeting clerks provoked reflection on the core value of LEYM to its members. We know that many members of monthly meetings do not even know of, let alone take advantage of, LEYM resources or opportunities. We have an opportunity to learn more about who we are. What do meetings most need from a larger Quaker body? How does this match, or not, ways we are currently organized? What new forms and practices might emerge if we identified different objectives? Exploring these possibilities already releases us from guilt and gives access to new energy and enthusiasm.

Repeatedly, in business sessions and in workshops, we heard of the value of connections to each other and to the Earth, meeting-to-meeting, meetings to Quaker organizations, between individuals within meetings, and with the Divine [God]. We turn to each other with more urgency in a world with needs that leave us, at times, hopeless and despairing. We struggle to live with the damage and our complicity, unsure how to balance comfort and challenge in our lives.

In sessions, we heard a request for endorsement of a traveling minute and considered ways we may be best equipped to support people whose call is to travel among Friends and how we support gifts both at the monthly and yearly meeting levels. In various workshops, the theme of moving from inward deepening to interconnection was frequently raised up. We have hope that, with deeper connections, we may learn better how to name our gifts and understand the work that we are uniquely suited to do.

Our hearts have been made lighter and more tender through sharing your epistles, whether you are yearly meetings that are regrouping after rupture or are finding community in diverse expressions of our faith. We are grateful for the opportunity to be in relationship and send prayers that Truth continues to prosper with you all.

Nancy Reeves, Presiding Clerk

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Epistle from the High School Group

Thursday we arrived, prepared for a weekend of fun,
We went to the store, where we all bought a ton.
On the way back we spotted a park,
That said we could play if it wasn’t too dark.
We took our time getting back,
Then we played cards, got through a whole stack.
After a while we were sent off to bed,
At least that’s what Carl’s mom said.
We rolled out of bed with hopes of French toast,
Then after we ate, we learned to compost.
We walked to the pump like we’ve done for years,
But the site that we saw filled us with tears.
The scene was in shambles, the pump was in half,
Then we shook up the bridge and had a good laugh.
After lunch the group was ready to roll,
We hopped in our cars and went to go bowl.
Elizabeth told the story of her sock,
The details of which will leave you in shock.
This year’s plenary we felt was commercial,
Though our group’s opinions were quite controversial.
We came back to the dorm to play in the grass,
Until we and the kids ran out of gas.
Saturday morning we took a long walk,
We went to the thrift store and bought out their stock.
Then again to the dollar store,
The first time was great, but we still wanted more.
The afternoon hit and it was off to the pool.
We swam for a bit, the water was cool.
The talent show ice cream made us loosen our belts.
The show was a hit, the ice cream melted.
This took us forever to write.
We stayed up late into the night.

In the high school group we are all each other’s friend.
Which is why we were so sad to see this year end.
Epistle from the Middle School Age Group

Our group is learning how we can do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God [the theme of this year’s Annual Meeting].

1. We began our journey this weekend by agreeing on the rules for our group. The most important rule was not to hurt ourselves or others on the inside or outside.

2. We used a talking piece to allow each of us to speak from our experience. Each of us carries a piece of the truth, we need to speak ours and hear others.

3. Our cell phones are needed to stay in touch with those not present. We only need them during our 15-minute snack break and to share music with the group.

4. We learned that loving mercy means showing kindness to each other, encouraging each other to participate fully in our games, truth-sharing, and activities outside of the formal program times.

5. We learned to do justice by recognizing inequalities that can exclude some of us from group activities. We struggled with differences in access to funds for purchasing food and items in our trip to town.

6. We learned to walk humbly with that of God in ourselves and each other by taking turns, speaking and listening to each other’s truth.

Photos from Annual Meeting

Clockwise from top left: Plenary speaker Joyce Ajlouny receives her T-shirt; Teens on the swinging bridge (is there a load limit?); Over half of us ate vegetarian dishes throughout Annual Meeting.
Clockwise from top left: Joyful hams at the talent show; Joel Ottenbreit presenting for Peace & Justice; Carolyn Lejuste and Marvin Barnes speak on FGC Anti-Racism Work; Claire Cohen and Bill Warters report on the AFSC Corporation Meeting; R. E. Hogan discusses Quaker Earthcare Witness; View from the clerks' table.
From the top, left to right: The elementary age group; High schoolers encouraging Friends to compost; Singers at the talent show; Young climbers; Behind the “water fall”; Part of the middle school age group.

Thanks to Jo Posti and Greg Mott for most of the photos.
News from Finance Committee

Below are the financial report for the 2019 Annual Meeting and the approved budget for 2019–20. For Annual Meeting, expenses exceeded income by $720, a deficit about 60% lower than last year’s. The balance in the Annual Meeting Fund is now minus $633; Joe Mills, clerk of Finance Committee, notes that “the Yearly Meeting’s finances can handle this near term, but we will need to watch it in the future.”

The budget includes an additional $500 to cover an audit, an additional $1000 in the line for Quaker college/university scholarships and internships, and additional funding for the contract worker and database manager. With these increases, totaling $3725, the suggested contribution per member is up by $5 to $35. ~ Ed.

Financial Report for 2019 Annual Meeting

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<th>Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
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<td>Housing and commuter fees</td>
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<td>Meal fees</td>
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<td>Registration fees</td>
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<td>Discounts</td>
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<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>$18,139.26</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>Housing and commuter fees</td>
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<td>Meals</td>
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Net Deficit: (720.06)

Ending Balance of Annual Meeting Fund: (633.39)

LEYM Budget for 2019–20

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<td>College/University scholarship</td>
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<td>FGC contribution</td>
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<td>Service projects</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$25,775</strong></td>
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Suggested contribution per member: $35

Miscellaneous Announcements

Information on applying for a scholarship to attend a Quaker college or university or participate in a post-secondary internship can be found at https://leymquaker.files.wordpress.com/2019/08/leym_scholarship_fund.pdf.

In the 2019 Annual Records, the ZIP for Dearborn is shown incorrectly as 48214; it should read 48124 (p. 152 for Detroit Meeting and p. 177 for the Ottenbreits).
LEYM Welcomes Two New Employees

Bill Warters (Birmingham) is the new webmaster and Meeting worker for LEYM. In May 2019 Bill retired from the faculty at the Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution Program at Wayne State University. He is now returning to the LEYM webmaster role, having previously served for several years before Mathilda Navias took on the task. Bill has developed and managed multiple online projects promoting conflict resolution in education, such as the still active CREducation.net site. In 2008 the Association for Conflict Resolution awarded him the William J. Kreidler Award for Distinguished Service to the Field of Conflict Resolution Education. Within LEYM, Bill has served on the Publications & Archives and Nominating Committees and now helps out with the technology in business meetings as part of the Arrangements & Site Committee. As a volunteer, Bill is active serving as a facilitator and regional coordinator for the Alternatives to Violence Project in Michigan.

Maryann Concannon (Red Cedar) is the new database manager. She has been attending LEYM meetings since 2016 and is Red Cedar’s representative. She writes, “I am still getting up and running with the database, which you would think would be a breeze since I am a database manager for the University of Michigan Medical Center’s Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy program as my ‘real’ job. But [there], . . . if I have any questions or problems, I just call the helpline. There is no LEYM database helpline—oh wait, that is ME.”

“Most of my social life centers around my Meeting, [which] is very dear to me. My peace and social action work is doing overnight shifts a few nights a month at a homeless shelter. I am also in the inaugural class of ‘Participating in God’s Power’ through the School of the Spirit. I look forward to serving LEYM, which also has become dear to my heart.”

“Walking Toward Common Ground”

Mey Hasbrook (Kalamazoo), LEYM Representative to QEW and FWCC

2019 was the fifth year for World Quaker Day, an initiative of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), held, as always, on the first First Day in October; if your meeting has missed it up to now, consider marking it for next time! This year’s theme was relevant whenever your meeting might take a rain check: “Sustainability: Planting Seeds of Renewal for the World We Love” (http://www.worldquakerday.org/).

One way to explore this theme is a new project by the FWCC World Office and Quaker Earthcare Witness of North America. The first fruit of this cooperative effort is the short video “Quakers Coming Together to Care for the Earth,” which can be found at http://fwcc.world/sustainability-resources: “Friends across theological traditions in North America ... share their personal testimonies on environmental justice, earthcare, and stewardship.” A discussion guide accompanying the video is linked on the same page.

The FWCC-QEW project was launched at the March 2019 Section of the Americas Meeting, held in Missouri. QEW General Secretary Shelley Tanenbaum describes this historic occasion in “Awaking Across the Branches of Friends” (see https://www.quakerearthcare.org/article/awaking-across-branches-friends). For the first time, Evangelical Friends took part in the focus on Earthcare. This project continues to grow through live-stream webinars, which debuted in July. Recordings are available on the lower part of the page http://fwcc.world/sustainability-resources.

The inter-organizational aspect of this project invites Friends to walk toward common ground: to listen and discern together at a time of increasing difficulty. Serving as LEYM’s new QEW representative and entering a second term as an FWCC representative, I’d welcome hearing back from meetings that take up the materials from the QEW-FWCC project. And, for ongoing discernment, I ask us to imagine its invitation: How might LEYM explore its prompting, since our geography overlaps all Friends’ affiliations?

Mey welcomes responses by email at meymdh@gmail.com. Phone and video chats also are possible, depending on scheduling.
News from LEYM Monthly Meetings

The snippets below were gathered from Facebook pages and State of the Meeting Reports. If you wish to have activities from your Meeting acknowledged in future LEYM Bulletins, please send photos or news snippets to the editors at bulletinlem@gmail.com. Longer articles are also welcome. ~ Eds.

Inspired by the use of cloth napkins at LEYM’s Annual Meeting, Ann Arbor Meeting has collected more than 70 used cloth napkins for its monthly potlucks. The napkins were donated from within our community and will save disposing of many paper napkins. In September a large number of Ann Arbor Friends participated in the Climate Strike, including the group shown at the left: Jeff Cooper, Peggy Daub, Paul Tinkerhess, Cassie Cammann, Elliott Brannon, and Becky Morehouse. Meanwhile, Quakers in the Toledo Worship Group (part of Broadmead Meeting), along with 18 other groups, marched around the county courthouse for peace. The March recognized the connection between peace and the climate crisis, while the Climate Strike occurred one block away. See the photo below, with Donna Rodriguez and Paul Helbling holding the banner.

Last year Athens Meeting supported two people from their Meeting who visited the U.S.-Mexico border and then reported back. The Meeting has become active in efforts to help immigrants, and donates items to be given to immigrants traveling by bus through Ohio.

Cleveland Monthly Meeting reports that several persons from their meeting regularly attend an interfaith prayer vigil outside the Northeast Ohio Immigration & Customs Processing Center.

North Columbus Meeting recently minuted its “support for and affirmation of all transgender, inter-sex, gender-fluid, and non-binary persons. We find that unconditional love and inclusion allow the fullest Light into our meeting and in our lives.”

The Bluffton Worship Group (part of Broadmead) spent an evening in September disassembling videotape cartridges for recycling. They socialized and saved nine boxes of cartridges from the landfill.

Using Facebook for Outreach

Among the materials displayed by the Advancement & Outreach Committee at Annual Meeting was advice on using Facebook for Outreach, adapted from an FGC Digital Outreach Course. Following a section on “Why Use Facebook?” (one reason being that 46% of new churches say social media is their most effective method of outreach), there is a long list of Do’s and Don’ts, e.g.,

* Put photos of people on your cover, not just a picture of your building;
* Don’t use the terms “Monthly Meeting” or “First Day School,” which confuse newcomers;
* Do write invitations as a clear call to action. “Join us for...” or “Come learn about...”;

Continued at bottom of next page
Prisoner Visitation and Support
By Jerry Knutson (Monongalia, Baltimore YM; Orlando, Southeastern YM)

I started visiting prisoners in 2007 in Hazelton, West Virginia. I visit through Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS), a national organization co-founded by Fay Honey Knopp, a Quaker. PVS is the only group authorized to visit prisoners in all federal and military prisons in the United States.

From PVS website http://prisonervisitation.org/:
Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) is a volunteer visitation program to Federal and Military prisoners throughout the United States. Our priority is to visit those prisoners who 1) do not ordinarily receive visits from family and friends, 2) want or need visits, 3) are in solitary confinement, 4) are on death row, and/or are serving long sentences. Our purpose is to provide prisoners with regular, face-to-face contact from the world outside of prison to help them cope with prison life and prepare for a successful re-entry into society.

Quakers believe that if we live our lives well, we will see that of God in everyone. This makes Quakers uniquely qualified to help prisoners. Many of our 320 visitors nationwide are Quakers. PVS visitors believe in the power of a nonjudgmental presence. We attempt to visit anyone who requests a visit, but some of our waiting lists are long because of a need for more visitors.

PVS is frugal but financially struggling because many people feel that prisoners got what they deserved, and social change funding sources will not fund PVS because we don’t do advocacy work.

To become a visitor, you should check the location of Federal Prisons to determine the distance to the prison and if you are willing to make the trip once a month (BOP.gov). You can also visit at Disciplinary Barracks (military) in Leavenworth, Kansas; Chesapeake, Virginia; Lejeune, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Fort Louis, Washington; Miromar, California, and San Diego, California (men’s barracks AND the only Military Barracks for women). If you can make the trip monthly, then you need to complete an application on the PVS website. Next, you will be interviewed by an experienced PVS visitor. If PVS approves, then the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) will send you application forms and BOP will perform a background check. When approved, PVS will give you a list of prisoner names and mail you a training manual. This process usually takes about a month. Before visiting you will need to complete four hours of training at the prison you will be visiting. On your first visit you will be accompanied by an experienced PVS visitor who will orient you to the visiting process.

To visit: Two weeks before the visit you send an email to BOP listing time, date of visit, and names and numbers of prisoners to be visited. One week before the visit, you send postcards to the prisoners informing them when you will be visiting them. You do not use your own return address but use the PVS office address. Usually PVS visitors see each prisoner for about an hour once a month. Three to four prisoners are usually visited during this visit. After the visit, a brief report is emailed to PVS. Usually you visit the same prisoners each month.

BOP and PVS require that visitors don’t criticize the federal prison system and aren’t involved in political action regarding federal prisons.

Query: Would you be willing to donate several hours a month to bring a little Light into one of the darkest places in the nation?

Contact Jerry at almostluddite@yahoo.com

Using Facebook, continued
* Do try to post two or three times a week;
* Do keep text brief;
* Avoid Quakerese or acronyms;
* Create memes, which work especially well for queries. An example from Pittsburgh Meeting is shown at the right.
A Fine Fall Youth Retreat

During the last weekend in September LEYM held its annual youth retreat at Templied Hills Camp near Bellville, Ohio, and, as usual, it was a success. There were nine families, with eight adults, eight teens, and eight children, from six monthly meetings: Ann Arbor, Athens, Birmingham, Broadmead, Pittsburgh, and Red Cedar. The weather was perfect: warm with no rain.

We arrived after dinner on Friday and relaxed, eating popcorn and catching up with friends. On Saturday we played GaGa ball, hiked, and designed and silkscreened T-shirts. There were also arts and crafts, puzzles, and board games. Saturday night we had a campfire and shared stories and sang. On Sunday morning we had worship sharing and, after lunch, departed, looking forward to meeting up again at the next LEYM activity. ~ Ellerie and Jonah Brownfain

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Calendar for 2020

January 15: Due date for submissions for winter Bulletin
April 1–4: White Privilege Conference, Mesa, Arizona. See www.fgc.quaker.org or www.whiteprivilegeconference.com
April 4: Representative Meeting, Pittsburgh Friends Meeting, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
May 2: Spiritual Formation Retreat, place tbd
May 15: Due date for submissions for spring Bulletin
June 30: Due date for State of the Meeting Reports
July 15: Due date for Statistical Reports
July 30–August 2: LEYM Annual Meeting, Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio

LEYM Committee Clerks, 2019–20

(Contact information available in Annual Records and on LEYM website)

Adult & Family Program
   Thomas Taylor (Ann Arbor)
Advancement & Outreach
   Ellen Barnes (Birmingham)
Arrangements & Site
   Jon Sommer (Broadmead)
Earthcare
   Mey Hasbrook (Kalamazoo)
Finance
   Joe Mills (Kalamazoo)
Ministry & Nurture
   Shelley Kotz (Broadmead) & Becky Morehouse (Ann Arbor)
Nominating
   Clémente Ravaçon Mershon (Erie WG)
Peace & Justice
   Joel Ottenbreit (Detroit)
Publications & Archives
   Peggy Daub (Ann Arbor)
Youth & Children's Program
   Kate Enger (Athens)