

Example of Creative Outreach: The Meeting Yard Sale

by Kathy Slattery, Orchard Park Friends Meeting, NYYM

Our small meeting (average at Sunday worship is 8) has the benefit of an almost 200 year old meetinghouse, which was built to hold regional gatherings of 300. The meetinghouse is centrally located in a Quaker-founded village, on a main highway; it is iconic in the community. For a time, the building housed the fledgling historical society and the meeting, and many locals still assume it's a museum, not a place of worship, despite the sign and welcome out front.

For the past 4 or 5 years, we have had a yard sale on a Friday and Saturday of a June weekend whose theme is Recycle, Reuse and Repurpose (and for Quakers, SIMPLIFY!). We have a very large front yard (lots of tables) and a big front porch where we put out books and some furniture. The first year, some of us were worried that items on tarp-covered tables might be stolen overnight. Those worries dissolved when we arrived Saturday morning to find that people had dropped off donated items for our sale—everything from mugs to bookcases!

The yard sale has brought out new and esteemed gifts within our meeting too, from recycling mountains of packing material to linking with local shelters and rural outreach with unsold items, to the gift of easy conversation with strangers, and sharing one's passion (Canoeing? Quilting? Old Star Trek paperbacks?).

Now the meetinghouse neighbors regularly donate items; people in the upscale community and more diverse commuters look forward to the sale each year (low prices); people meet genuine Quakers; kids try out sports equipment on the lawn; folks are welcomed to a personal tour of the inside of the meetinghouse; and after years "in the red", we're solidly in the black, and the meetinghouse gets painted with the proceeds. And **people have good feelings about those Quakers and their yard sale**, and know we're more than the Quaker oats logo on the doors of village police cars.