



"QVS tied me back to a faith community and invited me into Quaker practice in a way that made me feel I belonged."

-2017-18 Atlanta Alum



**QUAKER
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE**

ALUMNI IMPACT REPORT 2020



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INTRODUCTION

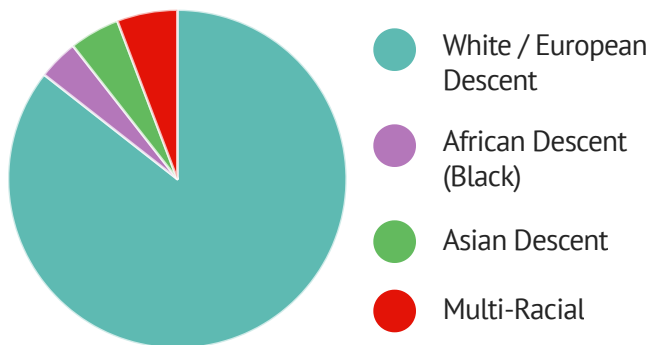
Quaker Voluntary Service immerses young adults in a year of integrated spirituality and action during a transient life-stage. By 2019, 160 young adults lived a year of intentional Quaker engagement in one of QVS's five program cities – Atlanta, Boston, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Philadelphia, and Portland, OR.

In Spring 2020, QVS conducted a major outreach survey to gather stories and impact from QVS Alumni. The following report offers testimonials, statistics, and learnings across the three pillars of the QVS experience: Community, Spirituality, Service/Justice. In addition, the report closes with reflections on the larger impact QVS is having on the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

Today, many QVS Alumni play key leadership roles in Quaker meetings and organizations and work in settings which contribute to the healing of the world. These young adults infuse the Religious Society and the wider world with new life and vision.

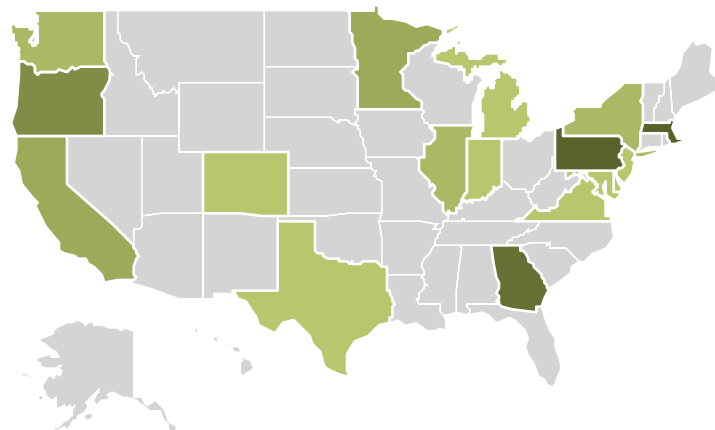
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Over two-thirds of all QVS Alumni responded to the survey (111 of 160). Alumni were asked to share their racial identity, and whether they identified as LGBTQIA. The Alumni who responded to the survey represented the five program cities and the seven program years proportionately to the total number of young adults who participated in QVS.



59%
of Alumni respondents identify as LGBTQIA.

Where are QVS Alumni now?



3%
of Alumni live outside of the US.

"I left QVS with a deeper commitment to living my spirituality through community, reflection, and action." -2017-18 Boston Alum

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

In each QVS city, 6-8 young adults live in a house together. Through simple, communal living, QVS Fellows learn to care for themselves and others. Fellows are expected to gather weekly for worship, decision-making, and shared meals. Meanwhile, QVS staff offer 1on1 support, community programming days, and seasonal retreats to help young adults navigate the challenging and empowering work of building community together.

“Living in [QVS] intentional community was life altering for me.”

-2015-16 Philadelphia Alum

TOOLS & PRACTICES LEARNED IN COMMUNITY:

1. Making collective decisions in house meetings using Quaker business process
2. Navigating conflict with nonviolent communication, non-defensiveness, heart-centered listening
3. Using tools like the Enneagram to build shared language about communication patterns, stress, growth
4. Distributing labor and resources equitably (i.e. food, money, emotional capacity, skills)
5. Discerning and advocating for one's needs, and practicing vulnerability in asking for help



"Intentional community living taught me a lot about communication and conflict resolution, and what it looks like to listen for needs and not interests... [and] to offer support that is not about fixing but about being present."

-2012-13 Atlanta Alum

"For the first time I was able to truly feel safe experimenting with taking up space [and] bringing conflict to the surface that might otherwise go unspoken. I was able to ask hard questions in a way that felt authentic, challenging, and reflected back to me the value I offer to community. I was also extremely humbled by the ways my housemates showed me that I didn't have it all figured out and that I had a lot to learn about open and honest communication."

-2018-19 Minneapolis Alum



LIFE-LONG CONNECTIONS

90% of Alumni are still connected and in relationship with individuals from their QVS year.



58% of Alumni are connected to QVS Alumni outside of their house communities.



31% of Alumni currently live in intentional community, many with their QVS housemates.



"I learned [in QVS] a lot about showing compassion, listening, communicating one's needs, and staying consistently present... I formed some strong relationships with my housemates, and in post-QVS life I have found it easier to build and maintain relationships with family, friends, coworkers."

-2017-18 Portland Alum

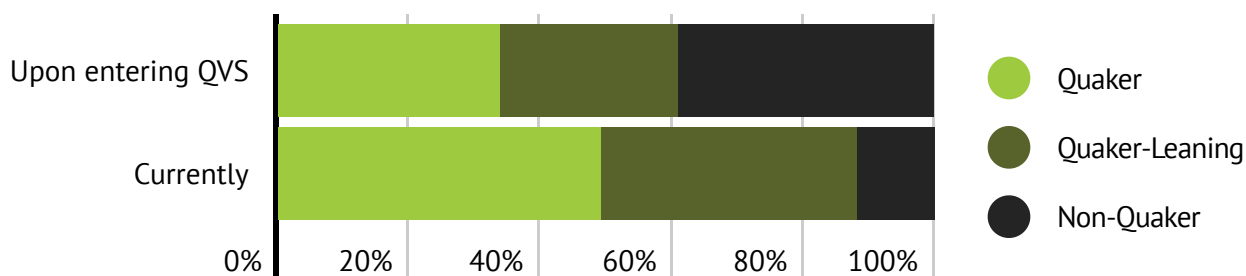


SPIRITUALITY & QUAKERISM

You don't have to be a Quaker to participate in QVS. In fact, only about half of applicants have an affiliation with Friends communities prior to QVS. Instead, we ask young adults to "try on" Quaker practices during the QVS year. This includes: using Quaker process to make household decisions, drawing on the Quaker clearness process to support spiritual discernment, worshipping with housemates, and attending worship with local Friends.

Additionally, each QVS Fellow is paired with a Spiritual Nurturer from the local Friends community. These Friends offer Fellows one-on-one spiritual accompaniment during their fellowship year.

Do QVS Alumni identify as Quaker?



"I recall worshipping on the train on the way to work in the morning, and feeling like every element of my life was connected! It was so wonderful to be supported in each aspect of my life, and have it all intertwined as a meaningful community."

-2014-15 Philadelphia Alum



SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP

1/3 of Alumni report they are still connected with their Spiritual Nurturer.



"Reflecting with a Spiritual Nurturer, and utilizing a discernment committee for noteworthy decisions are [spiritual practices] that I still find significant value in."

-2017-18 Boston Alum

After QVS, Alumni remain connected with local Friends and spiritual communities from their fellowship year, and also build new connections with Friends across the globe. Alumni identified over **40 monthly meetings, churches, and larger bodies of Friends** with which they worship and engage.



"For much of my life I saw church as a place people went to fulfill an obligation, but [QVS] showed me the many ways I was wrong about that. [Attending West Hills Friends] made me feel supported and seen in a way I had never felt in a "church" setting... There isn't a Quaker Meeting near my town, but I have been talking with a roommate about starting one in our living room!"

- 2017-18 Portland Alum



TOP SPIRITUAL TOOLS HONED DURING QVS

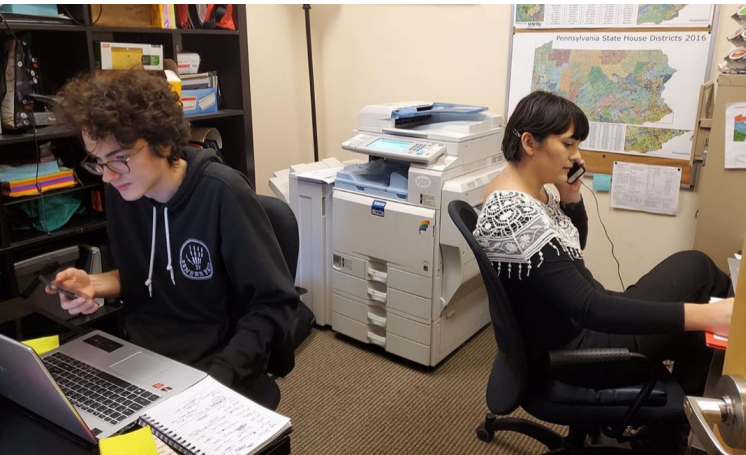
1. **CLEARNESS COMMITTEES** - *"I still use Quaker discernment practices... in work I do as a chaplain."*
2. **HOUSE WORSHIP** - *"[I left QVS] feeling empowered to make almost anything a worshipful practice."*
3. **SPIRITUAL NURTURERS** - *"Building intergenerational spiritual relationships was so meaningful"*
4. **CLERKING** - *"Meeting for Business taught me so much."*
5. **PRACTICING INTEGRATION** - *"Bringing my whole self, including my spirituality, into my daily life!"*

"It was our intimate, self-curated [house] worships that made me think about my feelings, emotions and spirit... [and] made the most impact on me spiritually"

-2018-19 Minneapolis Alum

SERVICE & JUSTICE WORK

During the fellowship year, each young adult is placed in a full-time position at a local nonprofit. Their work increases capacity for partner organizations that address racial, environmental, economic, and gender justice. Meanwhile, QVS staff equip Fellows with programming, training, and seasonal retreats to support them during the year and prepare them for a lifetime of social change work.



"QVS's emphasis on relationships and mentorship was transformative for me. Being offered the support of a Coordinator to process initial workplace dynamics gave me more assuredness to advocate for what I needed from my supervisor, and to reflect more holistically about the position and my identity in the workplace."

-2016-17 Atlanta Alum

What types of organizations do Fellows work for?

QVS Fellows serve in a wide range of nonprofits, including healthcare and housing clinics, immigration agencies, schools, climate policy and advocacy centers, and more. Fellows engage in direct service work and reflect on the many different forms and paths of social change.



MOST COMMON SKILLS DEVELOPED AT WORK SITES

1. Self-advocacy and communication, especially with a supervisor
2. Balance and boundary setting
3. Discernment of one's gifts and calling
4. Nuanced understandings of power, service, and social change



"Our continued relationship has proven to be mutually beneficial. Fellows challenge themselves on a daily basis to assist the most vulnerable individuals in our community."

- Philadelphia Site Placement Supervisor

Over the years, QVS has strengthened vocational discernment curriculum with the goal of equipping more young adults with tools, practices, and connections to support them in discerning their gifts and callings. Meanwhile, trust and partnerships with site placements have grown, so that in recent years more sites are offering positions to Fellows at the close of their program year.

IMPACT ON VOCATION

50% of Alumni were offered a full-time position at their organization following their QVS year.

1/3 of Alumni were led to further studies or graduate school following their QVS year. An additional 1/3 are currently applying or planning to go.



"I worked at my site placement for three years after my QVS year. I am now in graduate school in social work, which I feel was informed by the work I did during my QVS year and beyond at my site placement."

-2013-14 Atlanta Alum

"I still don't have a clear idea [of my path], but QVS certainly gave me the space to think about a whole variety of options."

-2018-19 Boston Alum

"[My QVS year] led me to work within the intersection of mental health and social justice. I chose to go to nursing school and become a nurse practitioner because of my experience at my site placement."

-2013-14 Portland Alum

"While QVS helped me land a paying job, I found that it also prepared me to continue engaging in city politics, organizing, and community building outside of my 9-5 job setting."

-2018-19 Philadelphia Alum

"Working with homeless youth definitely created a fiery passion for advocating for this growing group of people, as well as other folks who are economically and socially isolated by society."

-2017-18 Portland Alum



QVS & the Religious Society of Friends


QVS and our partner Friends meetings and churches offer young adults a spiritual home during a transient life-stage. As previous Quaker service opportunities (such as those through AFSC and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting) provided earlier generations a bridge to Friends, QVS is this bridge for young adults in the modern age. Though QVS engages young adults for only one year, this year positions them for a lifetime of engagement with Friends.




For many, young adulthood is a period of deep seeking and natural transition. QVS offers a container to experiment, discern, and explore freely with support and structure. And, even after the QVS year, many Alumni claim that QVS offers community, connections, and reminders of what transformation is possible.

"QVS brought me to the meeting I call my spiritual home [and] challenged me to explore my own relationship to spirituality." -2012-13 Atlanta Alum

IMPACT ON SPIRITUAL PATH

90% of Alumni say they identify with, or are influenced by, the Quaker Way. 

46% of Alumni currently attend a Friends meeting, church, or worship group. 

"QVS came at a perfect time for me. I was craving some kind of spiritual community but not sure I wanted to dive into more conventional Christian traditions. By the end of the year, I felt more drawn to [study] theology and Christian history. I still feel a deep comfort around Quaker spirituality and meetings, and I imagine my life will bring me back towards Quakerism at some point."

-2017-18 Boston Alum

"I feel that being a QVS alum is my strongest spiritual community. I feel instant connection and community with any fellow QVS alum I encounter. Being a transient young person, this common connection of deep transformational experience feels more relevant than geographically-based Friends communities."

-2014-15 Philadelphia Alum



We often hear from Alumni that they are practicing Quaker values outside of Friends spiritual communities. Some Alumni are led to work for Quaker organizations and put their faith in action. Meanwhile, others engage in peace and justice outside of paid work or employment – serving on boards, volunteering their time, donating resources and money, and attending gatherings and conferences.

"Because of QVS I had an opportunity to be in a room I never expected myself to be in, and I was able to do that not just as an employee, but as a Quaker."

- Kate Monahan, Shareholder
Engagement Manager at Friends Fiduciary,
and 2014-15 Philadelphia Alum



32% of Alumni currently work or have worked for a Quaker organization.

This includes: *American Friends Service Committee, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Earlham College, Farm and Wilderness Camps, Friends General Conference, Friends Community School, Friends Fiduciary, Friends United Meeting, Germantown Friends School, New England Year Meeting, Philadelphia Quarterly & Yearly Meeting, Quaker Service Norway, Quaker United Nations Office, Richmond Friends School, Right Sharing of World Resources, Sandy Spring Friends School, and the Friends School of Atlanta.*



In February 2019, QVS hosted a three-day Alumni Gathering. Over 40 QVS Alumni attended, as well as additional staff, supporters, and board members.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2019 ALUMNI GATHERING

Eight Alumni offered workshops on trauma stewardship and resiliency, anti-capitalist finance, crafting and creativity, the Enneagram, work and compensation, liberation theology, and spiritual practices.

Friends worshipped together, engaged in visioning sessions for ongoing alumni engagement, and celebrated the outgoing and Founding Executive Director, Christina Repoley.

"[I hope we can] continue to find ways to create the sanctuary that allows for deep growth... so that alums are educated to make the change they want to see in the world."

- 2017-18 Boston Alum

CONCLUSION

One of the major hallmarks of Quaker Voluntary Service is the integration of “distinct” parts of our lives: community and relationships; spiritual deepening; and service and justice work.

From the Alumni Survey and this Report, we have learned what it means to dedicate a year to this integration. Alumni are engaged in young adult and multigenerational spiritual communities, they work in a variety of issue areas — from social work to the medical field to education — and they use community-building skills honed in QVS in their daily lives. Alumni leave the QVS year with more clarity on what it means to live a Spirit-led life.

QVS eagerly serves as a peer network for young adults as they navigate spiritual community-building beyond the 11-month fellowship, thereby continuing to build the beloved community.



"Now that I'm out of the program I feel myself longing for more interruptions to my daily grind. I want to ask myself hard questions, and I want to be challenged more like I was during that year. It is an intense process, but it really set me up to be much more mindful in my life now [than] had I not done QVS."

-2017-18 Portland Alum

ARE YOU A SUSTAINING SUPPORTER?

Make a one-time or recurring gift today to invest in the leaders of tomorrow.

Visit us online at quakervoluntaryservice.org/ways-to-give to learn more.

"QVS gave me hope that Quakerism was still relevant in a world that needed a radical change. I am hopeful that young Quaker-ish leaders are the future of our faith community."

-2013-14 Philadelphia Alum