



IV. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee consists of GWF Staff Members, GWF Board Members, and other community partners with a strong interest in the program and the time and resources to get involved. GWF recommends that you involve at least two other partners to help host a Camp Charlie weekend and have them assume a primary role in planning the event. Primary responsibilities of the Executive Committee include:

1. Determine target audiences.
2. Determine theme or emphasis of Camp Charlie.
3. Decide on possible partners.
4. Determine funding needs.
5. Select Site and Dates.
6. Choose committees and oversee their progress.
7. Publicize the program.
8. Check into insurance needs and other liability issues.
9. Review applications and choose participating families and mentors.
10. Survey campers and evaluate results.

Determine Target Audience

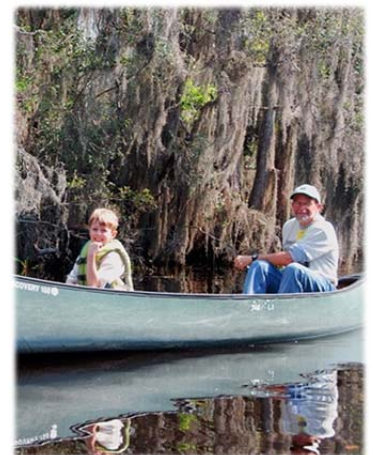
Camp Charlie primarily targets families who would like to experience the outdoors, but who may lack the knowledge, skill, equipment, and self-confidence necessary to go-it-alone. To determine your specific target audience, think about relationships in your community that have already been established and go from there.

Examples:

You may have a volunteer who is a teacher at a local elementary school. This would be a great connection to utilize in recruiting both volunteers and camping families.

You may have a committee member that is also a single mother. This might be a natural way to pull in other single moms in the area that feel uncomfortable participating in outdoor activities with their kids.

The pilot program at the Okefenokee consisted of a wide range of experienced and beginner campers including young children, grandparents, and all ages in between.



Determine Theme or Emphasis

Consider your target audience and choose a theme that best fosters enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors and enables campers to feel comfortable. If you have an extremely diverse group, it might be best to focus on general wildlife or basic camping skills programs, or offer several options of activities during the day. Regardless, the message of environmental stewardship and appreciation will be the thread that runs throughout your weekend and all other Camp Charlies throughout the state.

Determine Possible Partners

Establishing community partnerships is a key component to having a successful event. Camp Charlie will appeal to a diversity of individuals and organizations, from those focused on the outdoors, to health and human service organizations. Potential partners might include:

- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- 4-H
- Boy Scouts
- B.A.S.S. Chapters
- Church Camps
- Local Service Organizations
- Local Non-profit Organizations
- Outdoor Activity/Education Centers
- YMCA

Determine Funding Needs

The goal is to keep the expense for campers at no or a very minimal costs. To do this, you will need to seek funding or donations to cover food, transportation, promotional items and giveaways, equipment rentals or purchases, program/activity fees, signage, printing, postage and administrative costs. Although costs can vary greatly among weekends, a good number to shoot for is \$7500.

Selecting Your Site and Dates

Select a site, preferably within a one-hour drive from your target audience. If you go much further, you may find that families are not willing to drive that distance for a weekend, and/or it will cut into your program time on Friday night. If possible, utilize the Georgia State Park

Possible Camp Themes

*Fishing
Canoeing
Basic Camping Skills
Outdoor Cooking
Local Wildlife
Birding
Hiking
Nature Photography*



For our pilot program, the theme was simply to enjoy and experience the Okefenokee Swamp, the crown jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge System and one of Georgia's natural wonders.

system. In general, campsites are very family-friendly — most have electrical outlets, water, picnic tables, and a grill. Introducing your families to the park system, especially the ones “in their own backyard” will increase the likelihood of them trying camping again on their own. Other options for camping and/or programs may include National Forests, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, private campgrounds, and public and private outdoor education centers.

One of the most important aspects of finding a site is also finding cooperative site directors/managers. If you can find a park whose director shares the goals of the Camp Charlie program, it will make planning more enjoyable and easier. The staff may also be willing to provide some of the programming for your weekend or have regular public programming to incorporate into the schedule. Before you commit to a location, ask yourself:

- Are there enough campsites available to accommodate the expected number of participants? Remember to plan for varying sizes of family groups.
- Are adequate bathroom/shower facilities available? Are they clean?
- Are campsites available Friday through Sunday?
- Do you need handicapped accessible sites and facilities?
- Do you need a shelter for programming, group meals, or for inclement weather?
- Does your site have the natural features or meeting areas needed to conduct classes and activities?
- How much of a deposit is required? When is final payment due?
- Are campfires permitted?
- Are there fees to use any of the additional facilities?
- Is the camp covered with liability insurance? (GWF recommends that camps have at least \$1,000,000 in liability insurance)
- Are lakes, ponds or streams stocked? When and with what?
- What is the campground’s reservation policy? Make sure you have, in writing, documentation of reservation dates, number of campsites, check-in/out times, and any arrangements you have made concerning use of facilities or natural areas.
- What is the campground’s cancellation policy?
- Are there any camp rules you should know about such as curfews or restrictions?

Dates should be selected as far in advance as possible. This will give you plenty of time for advance publicity. Camp Charlie weekends may occur



Camp Charlie at the Okefenokee was held at Trader’s Hill, a private campground close to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. This location had plenty of shady sites, a bath house, and a pavilion that was used for group meetings and dining.

during any season, as long as activities are geared appropriately. If fishing is your theme, Georgia has a free fishing day that would be an excellent date since you wouldn't have to be concerned with selling fishing licenses.

Consider the following when selecting dates:

- When is the site available?
- Is this a particularly busy time for the campground? A wonderfully planned weekend could easily be marred by an overcrowded and/or rowdy campground.
- Is GWF's Camp Charlie equipment available?
- Is this a good time to be outdoors in your area? For example, you wouldn't want to schedule a camp in south Georgia during the height of mosquito season (especially for first-time campers -- they'll never come back).
- Have you considered other activities that are already scheduled in your community (school events, school breaks, sporting events, local festivals, etc.)?
- Is it a crazy time of the year for the key players on your team? The month before Camp Charlie should be relatively open to make sure you can finish all the last-minute details.
- Is it a particularly busy time for the campground? A rowdy, overcrowded campground could drastically change the experience for your campers.

As your camping weekend approaches, be sure to confirm all reservations and make sure the needs of other committees are taken care of for on-site and off-site activities.

Choose Committees and Oversee Progress

Hopefully, by this point, you will have a great group of partners working with you to plan the weekend. Spread the work around and don't try to do it by yourself. We recommend establishing funding, activities/programs, food, mentor/volunteer, and registration/logistics committees. You may choose to divide the work out differently. Either way, follow the progress carefully, and require regular communications and updates from your team. As you move through the process, you may find that regular face-to-face meetings are needed to keep everyone accountable. Face-to-face meetings also help to spark new ideas and promote creativity.

The site selection map on the Camp Charlie website is a great help in choosing your site, as well as the Georgia Eco-Region map and Georgia State Parks map included in the appendices.



Publicize the Program

You will need to promote the program to pull in sponsors and donors, partners, campers and mentors. Take advantage of all available resources to successfully promote your program. Consider:

- GWF Website and electronic newsletters
- GWF printed newsletter
- Facebook, Twitter and Other Social Media
- Newspapers
- Radio Stations
- Schools, recreational leagues, community groups, etc.
- WORD OF MOUTH!!! More than likely, this will be your most effective way of pulling others into the program.

We recommend that you begin advertising no later than 6 months prior to the event. Work with the Funding Committee to make sure that all sponsors and partners are recognized appropriately in PR materials. All PR materials should be approved by GWF before they are distributed. And don't forget about follow-up articles -- assign someone to take photographs throughout the weekend to be used in the community newspaper and future promotions.

Check Into Insurance and Liability Issues

Camp Charlie activities should be covered under general liability insurance of the site and/or Georgia Wildlife Federation. Work closely with GWF staff concerning insurance needs. Make sure all participants and volunteers sign liability release forms as provided by GWF. Keep in mind that some activities, such as horseback riding, may require additional forms.

Review applications and choose families and mentors.

Campers will be chosen through an application process facilitated by GWF. The Executive Committee will be in charge of making final decisions on which families will attend and who will serve as their mentor. Things to consider during the application and selection process:

- Should you require a small deposit to deter folks from backing out at the last minute?
- Do your activities warrant having a minimum age for children?

Be sure to assign someone to take photographs and video clips so this important step doesn't get overlooked in the busyness of the weekend. Photos and videos are a great way to document the success of your program and convey the impact of the weekend to donors, sponsors and other supporters.



- Is the weekend an option for individuals with disabilities or certain health issues?
- Is the weekend restricted to a certain family size?
- For larger families, do you need more than one mentor?
- Do you need to require a certain adult to child ratio? We recommend that, between parents and mentors, there is one adult for every two children.

Once decisions have been made, be sure camping families are notified of their acceptance in a timely manner.

Survey Campers and Evaluate Success of the Program.

It is critically important to evaluate and document the strengths and weaknesses of each Camp Charlie weekend. This documentation will help make necessary improvements and aid in acquiring sponsors and donors for future camps.

Preferably, information will be collected through at least two methods including a written survey and a more active, hands-on activity. It may be necessary to create separate evaluations for adults and children. Examples are provided in the Appendices section and at the Camp Charlie website. Data should be submitted to GWF for evaluation.