



I. INTRODUCTION

Camp Charlie, developed by the Georgia Wildlife Federation in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is a planned weekend of camping and hands-on outdoor activities focused on family learning and fostering respect for the natural world. The program 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. Camp Charlie will connect people to the outdoors, beginning at home, in natural areas that are accessible to them, but of which they may not even be aware.

Camp Charlie will build a conservation community by fostering partnerships of individuals, local organizations, educators, natural resource professionals and community leaders. There are many acres of public lands, from National Wildlife Refuges to county parks and regional Wildlife Education Centers, managed by natural resource agencies and non-profit conservation organizations. This offers immense opportunity to develop partnerships to host Camp Charlie throughout the state, in every eco-region, from the mountains to the coast.

Camp Charlie is named in memory of Charles Newton Elliott and Dr. Charles H. Wharton. Both men had a genuine love of the outdoors and recognized the importance of connecting people of all ages with the natural world.

Charles Newton Elliott

1906 - 2000



Charlie Elliott lived in Covington, Georgia and grew up hunting and fishing in the Alcovy River Swamp. He served as the first Director of Georgia State Parks in 1937-38, became the Commissioner of Natural Resources in 1938, and then became the first Director of the Game and Fish Commission (now known as the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division) in 1943. Elliott was also Southeastern Field Editor for *Outdoor Life* magazine from 1950 until his passing. His dedication to the conservation of the natural world and wildlife was evident to those who knew him personally and those who read his many writings.

Why Create Camp Charlie?

Camp Charlie connects people with nature.

As more and more people move to urban/suburban areas, they are increasingly removed from the “real” outdoors. They experience the natural world through television, the Internet, video games, and other electronic devices. As a result, they are more naïve than ever before about their relationship with nature and less aware of how their actions affect the environment.

Camp Charlie fosters respect for the environment.

The natural world has the capacity to engender awe and wonder. As people discover this through experience and learning, they begin to place a greater value on the environment. Reverence, respect, and understanding can be fostered through a positive emotional experience in the outdoors.

Camp Charlie increases knowledge and skills.

Many families would like to have a more meaningful outdoors experience, but may lack the equipment, skill, and knowledge to do so. Through Camp Charlie, families will be introduced to basic camping and outdoor skills such as setting up camp, hiking, and campfire safety.

Camp Charlie promotes stewardship.

With the right combination of adventure, inspiration, education, and shared experiences, a family weekend in the outdoors becomes a great opportunity to instill a sense of responsibility or stewardship (a conservation ethic) that could impact a lifetime of choices. When children embrace the conservation ethic, they have a positive influence on their parents and tend to hold their parents accountable.

Camp Charlie builds a constituency for natural resources.

By involving people in outdoor activities, teaching them about nature, and challenging them to be

Dr. Charles H. Wharton

1923 - 2003



Charlie Wharton was dedicated to conservation and worked tirelessly for the preservation of Georgia's wild places. In the 1960s and '70s, Wharton led the fight against channelization of the Alcovy River. His efforts not only saved the Alcovy, but also led to changes in federal policies concerning channelization nationwide. He is best known for his academic work, particularly his book, *The Natural Environments of Georgia*, published by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1978. For more than 40 years, Dr. Wharton made his home in the Georgia mountains on a 129-acre tract of land that is now home to the Georgia Wildlife Federation's Wharton Conservation Center.

responsible, it is possible to build a constituency for natural resources. Even more important, it is possible to build a community that practices and lives a conservation ethic.

Camp Charlie educates all ages.

Connecting people with nature through Camp Charlie supports the mission of the Georgia Wildlife Federation “to seek more intensive education of the whole public, youth and adult, in recognizing resource conservation as vital to our way of life and its preservation.” By targeting families, the program will reach individuals of all ages, and will demonstrate that enjoying the outdoors is an activity that can be shared across multiple generations.

What Makes Camp Charlie Unique?

Camp Charlie engages and teaches families.

There are conservation programs for youth, women, senior citizens, and other groups, but not many that are geared to an affordable family weekend. Camp Charlie weekends are for all types and sizes of families. It may be an aunt bringing a nephew, mothers with their sons, grandparents and grandchildren. All ages may attend Camp Charlie programs. This inter-generational participation reinforces the message of protecting natural resources for future generations. Camp Charlie provides an opportunity for adults and children to interact in a relaxed and natural environment. Adults get involved with children and children have a chance to see the older folks learning new things along with them.

Camp Charlie builds community relationships.

By providing training for community partners who participate in all aspects of Camp Charlie, from planning, funding, and recruiting families to implementing the programs, Camp Charlie builds partnerships and community relationships. By involving partners, you strengthen the links within your conservation community. Others who share your goals will reap the positive benefits of the program. You may even establish long-lasting relationships with some of your partners.

Camp Charlie provides role models and promotes career awareness.

Role models in the Camp Charlie program are called “mentors” and are people who have volunteered because they want to share their love of the outdoors. Every family who attends a Camp Charlie program is assigned a mentor. By sharing with their families all weekend, the mentors provide a personal touch. Mentors may demonstrate by

Camp Charlie engages and teaches families:

AWARENESS

To become more aware of the opportunities to be involved in outdoor activities and the benefits of spending time together in nature.

APPRECIATION

To appreciate the value of clean water, wetlands, forests, undeveloped public lands and other natural resources.

KNOWLEDGE & SKILL

To learn new outdoor skills and explore nature.

ACTION

To take responsibility by doing something specific to help protect natural resources in their community, state, or the world for future generations.

example the opportunities for careers in conservation in the fields of outdoor recreation, forestry, wildlife management, aquatic biology, environmental education and many others. Camp Charlie also celebrates two “Charlies”, each of whom enjoyed successful careers in conservation and recognized the value of engaging and educating children and families about their natural world, in the comfort and safety of a familiar environment.

Camp Charlie is more than a weekend.

Camp Charlie is not a one-shot deal – it is a continuing effort to build a conservation ethic. After having a great time learning and doing many different activities in the outdoors, ideally the campers will begin to incorporate the values of good stewardship into their everyday lives.

Camp Charlie attracts and supports volunteers and interns.

Camp Charlie volunteers are not generally hard to recruit. The program allows people to be creative – to plan, share, teach, and demonstrate activities they enjoy, while providing opportunities to continue their own natural resource education. Many volunteers are so enthusiastic about the program that they begin to assume more responsibility and develop as leaders. Some of the families who attend may also indicate an interest in getting more involved.



Camp Charlie at the Okefenokee, GWF’s pilot program, brought together young children, grandparents, and everyone in between to explore and enjoy the great Okefenokee Swamp.

With the right combination of adventure, inspiration, education, and shared experiences, a family weekend in the outdoors is a great opportunity to instill a sense of responsibility and stewardship that could impact a lifetime of choices.