



# ANSWERS to your FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED...

At Camp Swamp, we have a long-standing commitment to our families and friends to be *"the safest place on the planet."* A lot goes into living up to that standard, so as a part of this commitment we want to ensure each of you understand as much as possible about the camp and its management.

With this in mind, we have put together this Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document as an easy-to-reference guide to some of the not-so-obvious-and-curious topics. May it increase your knowledge and comfort to our commitment to indeed make Camp Swamp *"the safest place on the planet, besides your home."*

Board of Directors

### What is the operational thinking behind camp?

We think in this priority:

1. Safety: is everyone safe physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?
2. Quality: is everyone having a fun experience and feeling valued?
3. Cost: can we have #1 and #2 and do all that we want while keeping it affordable for everyone?



We think in this order without sacrificing a higher priority for a lower one.

### What is the philosophy behind the cost of camp?

To keep it as low as possible so as many kids can go while still being fiscally responsible allowing for expenditures, maintenance, and growth.

### What is the true cost of camp without rental income, donations, and church support?

Without being subsidized by camp rentals and donations, the real cost of camp would be \$925 per week **just to keep the doors open**. This does not include capital expenses, major maintenance repairs or future growth and stability.

### How can I get information regarding the financial status of the camp?

Visit our website at <https://www.campswamp.com/about/financials> to review our Annual Report (might possibly be the most encouraging annual report you will ever read), download a copy of our Form 990, which is an IRS required filing for all 501c3 organizations, and see our yearly Key Financial Indicators.

### Don't summer camp & retreat fees pay for everything?

Unfortunately, no. We rely strongly on rental business revenue and donations to supplement our operating budget.



### Who owns the camp?

The camp property is owned by the Atlanta Church of Christ Association Inc., currently a group of four Atlanta-based churches (Atlanta Church of Christ Gwinnett, Cornerstone Church of Christ, Northview Church of Christ, and North River Church of Christ). Camp Swamp, as a separate organization, basically rents the property from this association.

### Is Swamp Camp Services a true non-profit?

Yes. We are a recognized 501c3, Publication 78

organization; our EIN number is 58-2381032.

### **Who is on the Board and how is the Board chosen?**

Visit the Camp Swamp Board of Directors website page at <https://www.campswamp.com/about/team/board> for a listing of our board members including a picture and a short biography. Each of the four churches who are members of the Association, which owns the camp property, supplies one seat on the Board. These Board members are appointed by the Board of their respective church.

### **Who works for the Swamp and what are their roles?**

Visit the Camp Swamp Staff website page at <https://www.campswamp.com/about/team/staff/> to see a listing of our staff and their roles along with a picture and short biography. Of the current staff only two are full time: Erwin and Jeff. Erwin and Jeff's wives are part-time. Karen and Dona are part-time as well. Karen is a new addition in 2021.

### **How do you vet potential rental groups?**

We follow a three-fold procedure to give us insight into a group which is not generally-recognized (i.e. already widely established church, school or civic group):

1. Determine organizational status and validation:
  - a. Are they a recognized 501c3, LLC, or S-Corporation status?
  - b. Do they have an obtainable Charter or Statement of Purpose?
2. Research for any newsworthy trouble or behavior.
3. Establish funding confidence: per participant fee, membership dues, grants, etc.

### **Why Swamp Corps?**

This is the missionary arm of Camp Swamp. There are hundreds, thousands, millions of kids around the globe who can benefit from the amazing Swamp camp cultural values, not to mention the spirituality and medium through which God can make Himself real in a child-friendly manner. And quite simply, the Spirit keeps saying yes.



### **How do you choose Swamp Corps locations?**

One thing we do not do in any shape or form is advertise Swamp Corps. Not one organization, church or conference is contacted to say that we have a training process that can influence hundreds of kids and young leaders in your area. Thus far, every Swamp Corps destination has been organically started by word of mouth. We perpetuate this for two reasons: 1) our desire is to see a perennial camp, which will serve generations of kids; therefore, if someone contacts us with interest they are more likely to own the training and setup process, which brings more assurance to its long-term sustainability than if we “push” it on people; and 2) we want to be 100% Spirit-led. There is no worldwide conquest or plan to see camps everywhere—a vision, yes! An established plan, no.—so

we rely on the Spirit to open and close doors and direct our path; this keeps it God's plan, not man's...and sustains a faithful and inspiring outlook to growth. So far, we are just trying to "*keep in step*" with the Spirit.

### **Are Swamp Camp and Swamp Corps two different organizations?**

No and Yes. They both operate under the Swamp Camp Services, Inc. organization. Swamp Camp represents our domestic, southeast-based camp; Swamp Corps represents the missionary and camp/staff training arm. Think of it as your church and your church planting churches, or its missions arm. We have named them separately so as to designate internal operations and fiduciary activities per a process or revenue stream and, externally, for branding and shared understanding of purpose and vision. Each operate financially independent of the other as designated in our Annual Report. The Form 990 per IRS stipulations combines the financials as if it were one entity, which legally Swamp Camp Services is. To be clear, in every other internal and external way except for the Form 990, the two organizations operate financially separate. No financial resources designated to and for Swamp Camp goes to support Swamp Corps. Even the director's (Jeff) salary and benefits are reimbursed to Swamp Camp by Swamp Corps funds for any time spent on Swamp Corps trips.

### **Does my donation go towards Swamp or another camp somewhere else in the world?**

All donations into the Swamp general fund go for the U.S. based camp only. Only those donations, which have been designated for a specific camp location, or for Swamp Corps general funds will be used for that location or worldwide training of other camps. All Swamp Corps trained camps are taught to utilize their own local fundraising for their camp. All Swamp Corps trips are self-funded and individuals participating in a Swamp Corps trip are backed by local fund-raising from their respective church.



### **How is the organization run? How does the director seek counsel and advice?**

The Board of Directors has final say and ultimate authority for all things related to the camp. Unlike most non-profits, Swamp Camp Services, Inc. does not have an Executive Director; this role is currently being filled in part by the Executive Program Director, the Executive Committee and the Board. The Executive Committee, comprised of volunteer members, oversees the fundraising and resource development areas of the organization. We are thrilled to have Sonny and Carolyn Sessions, the founders of Camp Swamp, as our available consultants ready with much wisdom and input.





The day-to-day operations of Summer Camp, Swamp Corps, Camp Rentals, and Business Management is overseen by the Executive Program Director, currently Jeff and his wife, Jennifer oversee Summer Camp and Swamp-Hosted Retreat operations. They also handle Swamp Corps camp training and directing. Erwin Clark is the Property & Facilities Manager. His wife, Debbie, is the kitchen manager and fills in as the Onsite

Rental/Event Coordinator when Jeff is unavailable during rental group activity. Dona Stephenson, who works part-time, rounds out the staff as the Registration Coordinator and Swamp Corps Participant Coordinator.

Currently the Executive Program Director (EPD), receives input from the following:

- *Board of Directors*: via quarterly and ad-hoc meetings; they are also invaluable for on-the-spot direction as topics rise.
- *Founder*: constant contact is kept with the founder and former director in regards to original vision and cultural sustainability and various topics and occurrences which happen at or away from the camp proper.
- *Operational Staff*: via quarterly meetings and on-going conversations around events, calendar occurrences and handling of Swamp Hosted Events and Rental groups.
- *Parents of Campers*: input is solicited from parents on a broad and specific scale, i.e. asking for input from them regarding their child's experience at the end of closing ceremonies for camp weeks and events, various surveys throughout the year, and informal talks especially during Parent-Child retreats and those who come each week to work in the kitchen are used as a feedback group for questions regarding camper situations and how should we handle various circumstances. They are also instrumental for on-the-spot situations which may arise while camp is in process via our kitchen staff comprised of parents; they are consulted at least once a week for various situations and topics.
- *Counselor Staff*: via conversation and requests for feedback regarding the camp leadership, informal peer-to-peer evaluations, and development of future counselors.
- *Elders*: via a group of elders which are contacted by phone or email regarding topics and situations that arise.
- *Teachers*: meaning Biblical church-designated teachers, who are consulted regarding topics, themes, scriptures, Biblical correctness, etc.
- *Professionals*: via a selected group of counseling or medical professionals who



are camp-savvy and understand needs of kids.

- *Legal*: via retained counsel for legal matters and risk management matters.
- *Church Leadership*: via ongoing relationships with various church leaders in the southeast; the EPD attends all possible quarterly Georgia Preachers Meeting and annual Southeast Leaders Conferences to keep connections.
- *Other Camp Directors*: via ongoing relationships with domestic and worldwide camp directors.
- *Customers*: feedback from clients and leaders of the rental groups is requested in order to better their experience.
- *Surveys*: each event at Camp Swamp is followed by a survey to ascertain various information regarding camp experience, relatability and adherence to camp mission and values.
- *Open Solicitations*: via various emails and phone calls regarding situations as they arise and at weekly Summer Camp Closing Ceremonies.

### **What feedback processes are in place to ensure the safety and culture of the camp are sustained?**

See the answer to the above question and Staff training as outlined below.

### **How are themes determined and who has input on the themes?**

The Camp Director is responsible for the theme of any event and is considered, developed and created anywhere from 12-18 months in advance of the current summer season. This process typically starts as soon as the summer camp season is over and is composed of asking campers their needs, talking with church Teen Ministry leaders, discussing with parents and worldwide camp director ideas regarding theme and its content over the course of a 6-8-month process. The operational staff (Erwin & Debbie) are invaluable with ideas for theme-related activities. Much prayer and consideration is given over time to meet the needs of the campers and participants. Themes, Bible Classes, and Devotionals are finalized a couple of months before the summer starts.



### **How are counselors chosen and what are their qualifications?**

Visit our Staffing webpage at <https://www.campswamp.com/youthcamp/volunteerstaff/> which lists the qualifications and documents necessary to apply to be a counselor.

Basic requirements include:

- Be a Christian for at least six months at time of service,
- Complete an application detailing medical, emotional and mental health conditions,

- Obtain two letters of recommendation, and
- Pass a background check for criminal or sexual misconduct activity.



Additionally, the Directors' knowledge and observations of the applicant as developed through the years and events goes into play, i.e. how they were as Teen Workers, behavior and conduct as a camper; we also value and heavily rely on feedback from parents and/or ministry leaders throughout the year.

The Full-Time staff is chosen based on the above, their desire to be full-time, their various skills and talents (i.e. life guard, worship leader, other attributes). The goal of the composition of the full-time staff is to have a diverse enough staff in all aspects such that any one camper can find a relatable person on the full-time staff.

### **How is the Counseling Staff trained?**

The Staff (Teen Workers, Medical Staff, Counselors and Camp Leadership Team) meets each Sunday during Summer Camp season beginning at 9:30am for meet and greet, then a Worship Service from 10:00-11:00am, followed by training from 11:00am-1:00pm. After training the staff goes to lunch together (co-counselors have lunch together so they can get to know each other). Everyone reports back to camp by 2:45pm to be in place to greet the campers and parents at 3:00pm.



Training covers such items as introductions, safety and risk management procedures, core values of a camp servant, logistical and scheduling items for the week to run smoothly, and roles and expectations. All staff members are involved in the first third of the training, after which the medical staff and teen workers are dismissed to continue their responsibilities and the counselors remain for counselor-focused topics.

The training agenda is as generally follows:

- Review contents of Staff Handbook.
- Review the Mission of Camp.
- Review Core Values.
- Review Description and Action Steps for Three Key Medical Situations.
- Review Mandatory Reporting Guidelines.
- Review Staff / Counselor Specific Guidelines & Rules regarding interaction with campers.



- Review Emergency Action Guidelines & Policies.
- Review General Camp Rules.
- Review Pool Rules & Guidelines.
- Review the need for, application of, and locations of an epi-pen.
- Review location of AED machines.
- Review confidentiality of sensitive camper-counselor communication: steps and expectations.
- Review the procedures for reporting safety incidents.
- Discuss the week's flow and activities.
- Assign roles and responsibilities for classes and devotionals.



### **Does the Swamp have any plans for future growth?**

Yes. These include additional staff, increasing the number of summer camp campers and attendance of Swamp-Hosted retreat participants. A succession and long-term continuity plan. Plans to support training and maintaining of Swamp camps outside the southeast United States. A rolling five-year plan for financial solvency and health. A culture cultivated of continuous improvement in all areas.

### **Is the Swamp just a week in the summer or does it have greater aspirations regarding its scope of missionary service?**

We want the camp to be seen as more than a week in the summer; it is a vital ministry resource and partner to the churches in the southeast in particular, and the world in general. It is hoped that Camp Swamp can become the model for all to imitate in providing a safe and spiritual camp atmosphere where kids can be kids, young leaders can be trained in a safe and flourishing environment, and church's youth ministries can leverage and capitalize on the amazing ways God moves to reveal himself. We dream of Camp Swamp becoming a training destination for camp directors, new and old. We work and pray hard to be a year-round influence on children and their families here and abroad.

For further information and additional questions, be sure to visit one of our websites as listed below. We recommend a careful perusal of the FAQ page on each site; spend some time on our blog pages to see comments from campers and participants. If there are still questions, please don't hesitate to contact the director, Jeff Rorabaugh, at [jeff@campswamp.com](mailto:jeff@campswamp.com) or 706-818-5842 or one of us. We look forward to many years of service and fun at Camp Swamp.

Board of Directors





## Swamp Camp Services, Inc. Websites:

- Main Portal: [www.campswamp.com](http://www.campswamp.com)
- Youth Camp: [www.campswamp.com/youthcamp](http://www.campswamp.com/youthcamp)
- Swamp Corps: [www.swampcorps.com](http://www.swampcorps.com)
- Rentals: [www.campswamp.com/rentals](http://www.campswamp.com/rentals)
- Laser Tag: [www.campswamp.com/lasertag](http://www.campswamp.com/lasertag)
- Alumni: [www.campswamp.com/alumni](http://www.campswamp.com/alumni)

