

The Afterglow

Issue 97, Spring 2020

New Possibilities Open Up with the Ed Building Renovation - Katie Hoffman



What a wonderful Saturday I spent on September 26th! Not only did I have the opportunity to visit Camp, but Nell Jefferson Fredericksen and I were there together, taking a look at progress so far and dreaming together about all of the ways in which the Education Building renovation will allow our whole community to make more and better use of this space. Nell was kind enough to bring her camera and take pictures so that everyone could see what they have to look forward to. We knew you'd want to see and not just read about the changes.

There are still some finishing touches left to go—COVID-19 has slowed everything down, and this process has been no exception. But L. G. Flint Construction has really done a wonderful job. From the get-go, Andy Flint was looking for ways to keep costs down, including reclaiming some lab fixtures for us that Lynchburg University was going to just relegate to the dumpster. These locking cabinets will be a great place for storing chemicals and lab equipment. We're grateful for his help in carrying out the collective vision that Gibson Worsham and the team from Glavé and Holmes helped us develop during the charrette. It has come together beautifully, thanks to the combined efforts and talents and generosity of so many in the Nature Camp community!

We'll offer just a few observations about the changes in the building here; you'll notice even more enhancements as you tour the Education Building in person.

The lab has kept its rustic charm, but it now sports a real lab table with seats around it, making it a great place for classes and special projects. Along with the new glass-fronted cabinets to the left of the sink, a large, vertical vivarium now occupies the front right corner of the room. The design of the vivarium ensures that counselors can easily care for the critters that will inevitably be on display over the summer. The animals can be locked safely behind Plexiglas, but easily seen by curious campers. And the adjustable shelves in the back of the lab will make it easier to store items of different sizes.

The library probably looks the most like it did before, with the exception of the ceiling that is now open to the rafters. The bookshelves are now all adjustable, so books can be shelved together by topic, pretty much no matter their size. The





space will sport the same tables and benches as before, though some of the “tip-pier” benches may be modified to alleviate their tippy-ness. At the moment, the library is in use as the storage space for all of the items that will eventually find their way back into other parts of the building. By next spring, it will be tidied up and ready for use by campers and staff.

The library becomes pretty full late in each session, and seating is at a premium. Now that the library has a door that opens into the museum, overflow traffic from the library can be routed to the museum. Campers will be able to work on their reports at the gorgeous new tables made and donated by Jerry Wine. Jerry made these tables both beautiful and sturdy—and they echo the tables already present in the lab and library. He and his daughter Carolyn Wine are fixtures at Service Weekends, and we appreciate this additional, much-needed gift that will help make the museum a much more vibrant multipurpose space.

The museum has changed more than either of the other two rooms in the building. Just as there is a pocket door between the museum and library, there is now a pocket door between the museum and the lab. The huge, deep closets that flanked the front of the museum are gone, replaced with smaller closets and

glass display cases. The front of the museum can now be used as a meeting or working space. It can be outfitted with rows of folding chairs for a class or presentation when needed, but will probably become a well-used overflow working and meeting space. A large glass case divides the front and the back spaces in the museum, offering additional display opportunities with enclosed storage at the bottom. Around the back of the museum, the original glass-fronted cabinets still face each other across the room, but the counters have become storage cabinets, with glass display cases in the tops of them. Jerry's two new tables sit in the middle of the room, making it the perfect place for a class on a rainy day and a prime spot for working on reports.

All three spaces received a new fresh coat or two of paint this past spring thanks to the efforts of Krista Sampson and family.

As you probably remember, the Layne family kicked off this whole Education Building renovation with a generous donation, and the museum is now named after Mary Jane Gannaway Layne, who was a counselor under Mrs. Schilling and a dedicated Garden Club member for all of her adult life. She was an ardent supporter of Nature Camp, and sent her daughter Peggy Layne—who is now an active and beloved part of our community of alumni. Because of their generosity, the Mary Jane Gannaway Layne Museum has become a more usable and welcoming space for all of us.

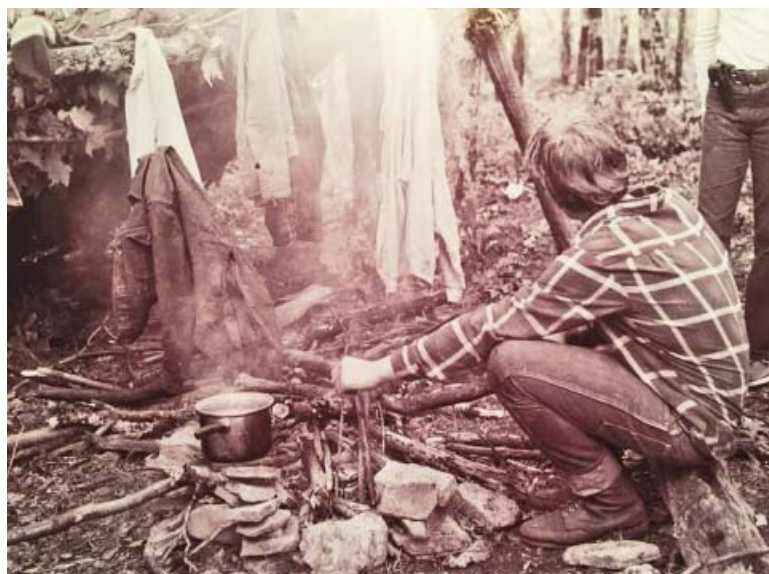
The outpouring of donations, ideas, sweat equity, and enthusiasm from this community has been both enormous and inspiring. It's exciting to see the Education Building refreshed and ready for us to put it back together again in the spring during Service Weekend (provided that it's safe for us to gather). I'm a big believer in what I call Nature Camp Magic, which operates whenever we undertake a project together, making it turn out even better than we could have imagined. I'm sure it's Nature Camp Magic—along with the love, hard work, and thoughtful planning and execution—that now makes the building look even more like part of Camp than it did before.

Mark your calendars for the Grand Opening celebration during the Fall 2021 (Labor Day weekend)



Memories of Camp

Walter Mehring shared several photos from his time as a counselor on the Nature Camp Alumni facebook page - and then agreed to do a little story telling for us here.



So here we were: a girl counselor, half a dozen bedraggled campers and me, soaking wet, lost in the George Washington National Forest, and our breakfast was, at that moment, being served back at Camp, wherever that was. It seemed like we had been walking down hill from Whetstone Ridge forever...

How did I get into this mess? It all had started the summer before, when my brother, Peter, then the Nature Camp Director of Instruction, asked me if I would come teach at Camp. He thought my skills at doing things with nature as opposed to knowing things about nature would be a valuable addition. That year, I taught properties of various local woods and how to safely and effectively use wood working tools like

axes, knives and chisels. After Camp, I had the opportunity to spend several months living off the land and reefs of Vieques, Puerto Rico with a spear gun and Ewell Gibbons's book, *Stalking the Blue Eyed Scallop*. When I returned to Camp the following summer of '72, Colonel Reeves' first year as Director, we decided I would continue my "hands on" approach by teaching a class on basic survival skills and local wild foods. To add some immediacy to the class, there would be a final test: one morning, late in the second week of each session (before we'd eaten breakfast!), the Colonel would announce that "our plane had crashed," We were then dropped off somewhere in the forest and were left on our own for 24 hours until we rescued ourselves. Each camper was allowed to take only the clothes they were wearing at the moment of the "crash." I also took an aluminum pot and spoons.

It was a lot of fun, at first. We'd practiced making shelters out of hemlock boughs, but the weather was warm and clear, and the extra work and destruction seemed unnecessary. So we foraged as we hiked and looked for a camping spot for the night with spring water, adequate dry wood, and shelter from the wind. Plant foods included greenbriar, chickweed, wild mustard, wood sorrel, plantain, wild lettuce, wild onion, violets, lambs quarters, Canadian ginger, grape leaves, fern fiddleheads, rock tripe lichen, stinging nettles, and assorted berries. Animal foods included crayfish, and dusky and seal salamanders from the creeks. On one hike we caught a rattlesnake, and caught a nice big fish by hand fishing. What we foraged went into the pot and got boiled. Some sessions ate better than others. The slim picking dinners got special names. One meal that was mostly stinging nettles and rock tripe was christened "Green Grunge". Another that was seasoned with a baby bluejay was named "Bouillon Bleu."

Mostly campers ate what they gathered with great cheer and fortitude. A few elected to fast for the duration. A few others threw up in the bushes. Two foods that I'd read were edible but seemed to cause problems were boiled young jewel weed shoots and raw daylily tubers.



The campers had learned to make fire without paper -2 matches allowed. So, as nightfall approached, we foraged for dryish firewood. Lower branches of hemlocks tended to be dead and dry and were easily snapped off. Three fallen saplings were slowly fed into the fire, small end first. 25-foot saplings would last the night. As darkness closed around us, the orange fire and bright sparks gave welcome warmth and security, while the rotting root ball ends of the saplings we were feeding into the flames glowed eerily with green phosphorescence in the dark beyond the circle of firelight.

Mostly, we were accident free. A camper or two huddled a little too close to the flames and partially melted their shoes. Freeman Jones sliced his hand with a knife trying to make a spear for a rabbit hunt.

A little after midnight, survival got real. The warm evening temperatures plummeted and we were drenched with cold soaking rain and wind that quickly reduced our warm fire to a few struggling coals and left us shivering in the dark. To avoid hypothermia we sat packed together in a line, back to belly, through the long night to conserve body heat. It was a long wait for the slow glow of dawn.

With first light we got moving down the mountain to warm up, in eager anticipation of Camp breakfast. But, as the morning wore on the forest never seemed to end, which is where this story begins. Eventually we did hit Rt 608. We'd taken the wrong ridge down and were heading toward Buena Vista rather than Camp. We got back to Camp in time for lunch rather than breakfast. There were cheers when we finally showed up. Rumor had it that Colonel was on the verge of calling out rescue helicopters.

Looking back, I'm surprised the Colonel let the class continue, especially after that first Whetstone Ridge trek. We had no cell phones in those days so there was really no way to get in touch with Camp except to show back up again after 24 hours. Liability risk seemed pretty high, but the good Colonel let me continue the class for the rest of that summer and the next. I believe Freeman Jones continued the class after I left.

I hope the class was good for my campers. I know it was good for me. After college, I had no clear idea of what I wanted to do next with my life. Shortly after my last Camp session, I emerged from my shack in the woods where I was living and burst into tears. I suddenly realized I was going to become a teacher. For nine years after that, I taught wilderness survival skills as a Life Science teacher. After that, for thirty years, I taught wilderness survival skills as a counselor and marriage and family therapist.

I have loved it all!

News from “Virtual” Nature Camp

By Philip Coulling, NC Executive Director

How do you transfer the Nature Camp experience to a computer screen? How can you maintain a sense of community when the members of that community are physically distant from one another? Both goals are obviously challenging, perhaps even unattainable. But it is possible to create a program of activities and web of connections that is engaging, supportive, enjoyable, stimulating, educational, and memorable, and in so doing it is possible to help fill an enormous void and soften a crushing blow caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Such is the story of **Nature Camp 2020: Bringing Camp Home.**

When the Nature Camp Board of Directors reluctantly but unanimously decided in mid-May to suspend on-site sessions this summer (a decision ultimately rendered moot, since overnight summer camps were not permitted to operate in Virginia in 2020), plans were already underway to offer some sort of virtual programming instead, although just what online camp would look like was still very much uncertain. We knew that we wanted to present the usual slate of classes, despite the necessity of significant pedagogical modifications and the inability to offer hands-on, field-based instruction. Well before the summer began, other camps had already experienced success with what many were calling “cabin groups,” and it seemed appealing and worthwhile to try to offer our own “bunkhouse groups,” small gatherings of peers meeting regularly for social and recreational time facilitated by counselors. The other pieces of the online camp puzzle would largely be up to the staff.

I have long asserted that the Nature Camp staff is the heart and soul of this organization, and in all my years at Camp, I have never been more impressed by a staff's ingenuity, adaptability, and creativity than I was this summer. Despite all the uncertainty that this year presented and with the understanding that a shortened operating season would reduce their compensation, the entire staff remained on board and rededicated themselves to providing a meaningful and enriching experience for the campers. In late June, the staff gathered at Camp for a two-week "retreat" and time for brainstorming, planning, training—and shooting lots of video to share with campers online. Then we all went our separate ways, launched online camp, and waited to see if anyone would sign up.

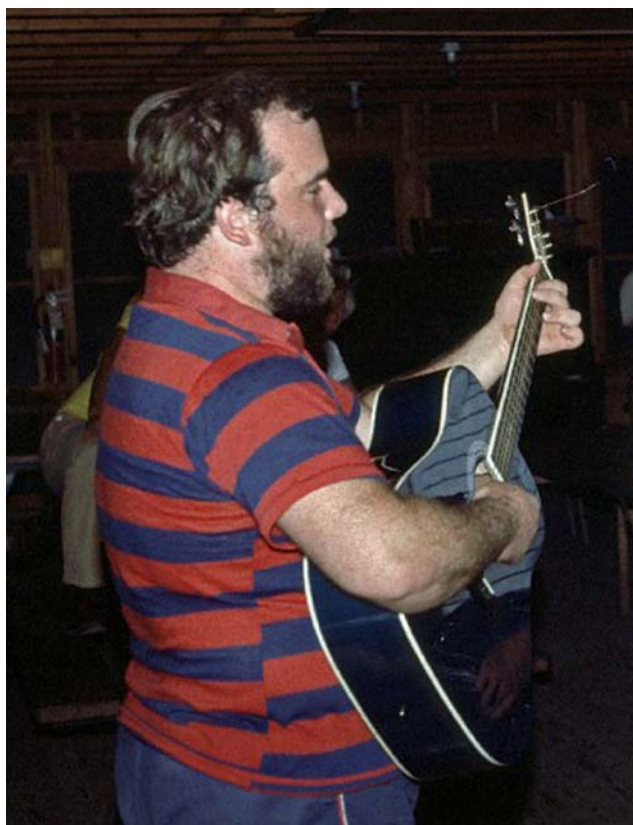
Over the next six weeks—throughout July and the first half of August—approximately 120 campers participated through the platform of Zoom in one or more online classes (we offered the standard complement of 11 subjects, three of which had two sections each), attended one of nine bunkhouse groups, and joined in novel activities such as yoga, arts and crafts, and a biweekly discussion group exploring issues of environmental justice. We also presented a few evening programs, including a virtual talent show and campfire (with new audio recordings of the tales of Percy and Sandy), and we concluded the summer with a virtual Closing Ceremony (complete with Benedictine Silence).

We know that online camp was but a pale reflection of the in-person experience, and we couldn't replicate in Zoom many of the tangible and intangible elements that are so integral to a session in the Big Mary's Creek valley: the excitement of Sunday hikes, the thrill of the slide at Table Rock, the joy of learning how to identify a new plant or finding an unexpected mushroom, the delight of an insightful conversation in the Gus Deeds Memorial Pavilion, the taste of that great camp food, the comforting lullaby of tree frogs and whippoorwills. And while we were thrilled that so many campers chose to join us, we regret that that number represented only a fraction of the campers who would have attended Camp in a typical summer. On the other hand, this summer offered some unique opportunities in addition to new activities. Most classes spanned a range of ages so campers were able to interact not just with their peers, and many participated for the full six weeks of online camp rather than the usual two weeks of every session. But above all, the staff—whether by narrating a guided nature walk, keeping herpetological video logs along with the campers, explaining how bedrock influences the location of skyscrapers in New York City, or simply leading a silly game online—managed to create some of that remarkable and inexplicable Nature Camp magic. As one parent (who is also a Camp alum) remarked, online camp helped the campers "renew and maintain their connection into their memories, friends, and values espoused by Camp!"

All told we presented nearly 150 hours of programming this summer, although most campers attended no more than three or four hours per week; consequently they avoided (we hope) "Zoom burnout" and we were able to keep the number of participants in each class and activity manageably small. Nature Camp elected to offer online camp entirely free of charge, even though our costs were not insubstantial. A Paycheck Protection Program loan helped to keep the staff employed, and scores of Camp families and scholarship sponsors generously reallocated tuition payments as donations or chose to take credits for next year. Consequently, although Nature Camp did experience a significant deficit in the recently completed fiscal year, we are certainly better off than many other summer camps, and with the unwavering support of the Nature Camp Foundation (and all those reading this issue of the *Afterglow*), I am confident that the future of Nature Camp remains bright.

We obviously do not know what the next seven or eight months will bring; while we fervently hope that we can resume a typical operating schedule next summer, we know that 2021 almost certainly won't resemble 2019. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, Camp still happened in 2020, and it will happen in 2021 too, in some form or another. For that I am truly grateful, and for all who made (and continue to make) it happen I am eternally thankful.

Joe Garvin - 1962-2020



Joseph P. Garvin, husband, father, friend, and veterinarian, died at home in Sperryville, VA on Sunday, June 14, 2020, following a brief illness. He was 58. Joe received his bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in 1983 and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the Virginia Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in 1987.

Joe dedicated his career to public service. He was employed by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) in the Division of Animal & Food Industry Services for 32 years. Dr. Garvin joined VDACS in 1988 as a veterinarian in Meat and Poultry Services. In 1990, he was promoted to Veterinary Diagnostician for the Office of Laboratory Services (OLS) and in June 2003, he was promoted to the position of Program Manager for OLS. He was actively involved in numerous state and national committees and projects.

Joe was an avid naturalist and generously volunteered his time. He enjoyed birding and participated in Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Bird Counts annually. Joe was vice-president of the Board of Directors of Nature Camp, Inc. at the time of his death.

Joe influenced a whole era of Nature Campers. Those of us who were campers and/or counselors alongside Joe remember his kindness, quiet sense of humor and his laugh, and his talent with guitar and song. Joe was a camper, Best All-Around Camper, counselor, and assistant director, but he is perhaps best known and most beloved for his many summers of playing guitar during evening singing and his long tenure as a cook in the Nature Camp kitchen. For a generation of campers coming of age in the 1980s, Joe epitomized Nature Camp as much as anyone. One camper once wrote of Joe in Woodland Echoes (the Camp newspaper), "When I think of Camp, I think of you."

Please keep in your thoughts and prayers Joe's son Ryan (himself a camper, BAC, counselor, and cook), sister Ann (camper and counselor 1980-1990), wife Sue, stepson Ben, and the rest of his family.

Development Committee & Capital Campaign Update

by Amy Kasdorf Gonzalez

This year makes me think of that purported Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times." I am ready for less interesting (read less chaotic). How about you all?

A bright side to all this chaos and disruption is the response and the love shown by our Nature Camp Foundation community. In the face of no activity at Nature Camp and the accompanying shortfalls in revenue experienced, many of you all have stepped up and answered our call for help.

In response to the impact of the pandemic shutdown, we issued a special call for support in early July, signed by the presidents of Nature Camp, Inc., Nature Camp Foundation, and me. I see your gifts as they come in and remain continually moved by the generosity of our Nature Camp family. Over 175 donations have been received since July 1st, totaling more than \$42,000. The truly remarkable and exciting part of this has been the number of first time donors. More than a fifth of supporters have never sent in a gift before. Many of these "first-timers" are folks whose only connection to Nature Camp is through their children, who so missed being able to attend in-person Camp this year. They know what a positive impact Nature Camp has had on their children and they are intent on ensuring that it remain viable in the coming years. Thanks to each of you who dug deep and sent in a gift that signals hope for the future.

As of this date in early October, we have received 60% of our goal of \$300,000 for our Building on Tradition Capital Campaign, designated for renovations and improvements to the Education Building. Thanks to some great work by our Service Weekend volunteers and our amazing contractor, LG Flint, we hope to come in under budget, but there is still a need. More on that from NCI President and Ed Building Project Task Leader Katie E. Hoffman.

Thank you for all your gifts.

Let's ride out this "interesting" year and hope that 2021 is really boring.

Robert Lee Ritchie - 1933-2020

Robert Lee Ritchie, 87, of Verona, passed away Friday, October 16, 2020 at Shenandoah Hospice House in Fishersville. He was born February 3, 1933 in Blue Grass, a son of the late Ivan Raymond and Leola Grace (Wimer) Ritchie.

Robert was a member of Blue Grass United Methodist Church. After moving to Verona, VA, he became a member of Verona United Methodist Church. As a youth, he participated in the Nature Camp in Rockbridge County, VA and later became a supporter of the Nature Camp Foundation. A member of The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4989, Robert served in the U. S. Army as a Pvt. E-1 during the Korean War and was stationed in Germany. Robert retired as an inspector with the VA Department of Transportation. His many interests gave him little time to be idle. A naturalist, he owned Highland County property considered "spectacular and biologically significant" by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. He had a deep interest in Highland and family history. Robert was among the first, if not the first, to suggest tubing to improve harvesting of sap from Highland's Maple trees. He did masterful work in refinishing antique furniture and amassed an amazing collection of memorabilia. Intelligent, with a great sense of humor and a spontaneous twinkle in his eyes; he will be missed.

Robert Ritchie attended only one session of Nature Camp --in 1950--and then nearly half a century passed by before he reconnected with the Camp community in the mid-1990s. Before age and declining health slowed him down, he was a frequent attendee of Service Weekends, where he lent his knowledge and expertise to numerous projects. Robert was a man of wit and wisdom, warmly generous, unfailingly cheerful, and always willing to share stories of Nature Camp in the Sherando Lake days. For his contributions to Nature Camp, Robert was inducted into the Roll of Honor in 2013. In addition to his wife, Charlotte, and children, he is survived by grandson Larry (Nature Camp 2005-2009).

Find us on Facebook!!!

You can connect with the Nature Camp Foundation at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nature-Camp-Foundation/107552817467>

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https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nare-Camp/324806714283350?ref=br_tf

Update your information!!!

The Foundation wants to have the best information on our supporters as possible so please update your contact information at <http://naturecampfoundation.org/my-profile/>. Updated and concise contact information will help the NCF provide the right information to you in the format you prefer.

Additionally, ask your Camp friends to do the same. There are plenty of folks still not in the "Circle" and we certainly want to inform them of the great things going on at Camp.

<http://naturecampfoundation.org/my-profile/>

Calendar of Events 2020-2021

Due to the uncertainty that Covid-19 brings to future months we have not yet scheduled events for 2021. As soon as we are able to gather safely we will set a schedule and you will certainly be among the first to know.

NCI Board Meeting

TBD

NCF Annual Meeting - Zoom

TBD

Spring Service Weekend

TBD

Virtual “Nature Camp Canteen”

You can now order T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, kids wear, mugs, etc. from our new online “canteen.” We now have 20 of the most requested designs available in our shop or you can purchase the designs for use on a huge variety of items.

Please visit our SpreadShirt shop at:

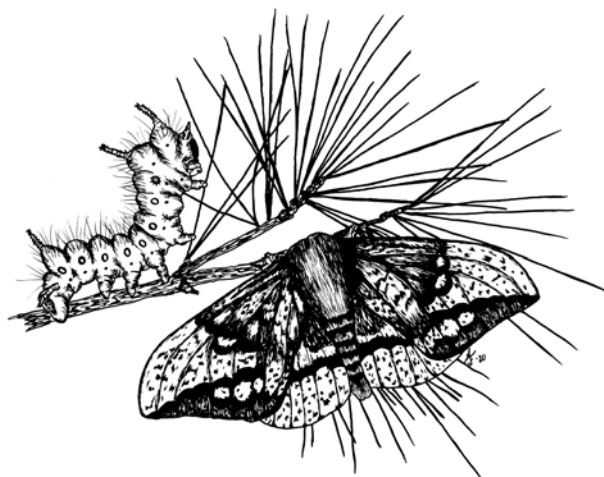
<https://shop.spreadshirt.com/NatureCampFoundation?no-Cache=true>

The \$2.50 we earn from each sale goes to support our scholarship fund!!!

The T-shirt that wasn't

Every year campers, staff, and alumni wait patiently to see what the Nature Camp T-shirt design will be. This year however, because all of the normal activities at Camp were cancelled due to Covid only a small group of Staff shirts were printed. Yes, there was a design, even with a hidden small Covid virus.

So, in order to help Camp, help fund the Education Building renovations, and give everyone the chance to own a 2020 Virtual Nature Camp T-shirt we will be putting this in our Virtual Nature Camp Canteen as a special limited time fund raiser. We will post on Facebook, on the NCF website, and send out an email with the link as soon as that is up!!



NCF Nominations and Elections

by Sarah Hulcher

Greetings Foundation Members. Elections and appointments to the Nature Camp Foundation Board are upcoming. Please be on the look out for paper and/or electronic ballots. The Nature Camp Foundation Vice President position will be on the ballot this year. If you would like to opt out of receiving a paper ballot, please be sure to update your information on the Nature Camp Foundation website (<https://www.naturecampfoundation.org/update-your-profile/>).

If you are interested in serving on the Nature Camp Foundation Board or have any questions about the upcoming election, please do not hesitate to reach out to Sarah Hulcher at hulchers@gmail.com.



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