



"Not only campers find their home here."



I have come here to find myself.
It is so easy to get
lost in the world.

HERE WE WILL ALWAYS BE HOME.
-Sertoma counselors and campers

Dear Friends of Camp Sertoma,

This issue of THE BELL puts the spotlight on the ones who live with our campers, OUR CAMP COUNSELORS! They are the ones who RING our bell on Sundays. They are the ones who hug our children when they're scared. They are the ones who encourage our kids to try new things, make new friends, and sing new songs. They are the ones who spend 6 weeks of summer NOT in air conditioning. They CAMP our campers.

These young people spend their time serving others in a world that celebrates serving yourself. They put the needs of our campers above their own.

Campers are served first, family style, at meals. Our counselors assure that our campers get enough water throughout the day, that they're wearing sunscreen, that they don't forget their towel at the pool. When a cool twenty year old is singing THE LITTLE GREEN FROG and dancing around, it tells our campers, "You don't have to stop being a kid." Our counselors stay up late at night making personalized awards for each camper, assuring each child KNOWS that a camp full of people see something good in him.

And they give more than their time, comfort and energy. They give away their hearts. Every week. They show kids who've grown up too fast that its okay to be silly. They listen to our campers. They are amazed by our campers. They believe in our campers. And they make our campers feel special...like they are a part of our camp family. They make sure our campers know that they matter...and that they are NEEDED. Our campers know that they contribute something to their cabin, to our camp and to this world, that no one else in the world can contribute.

You've doubtless seen it's effect. Timid downward gazes on Sundays become giant-smiled-top-of-your-lungs-song-leading on Saturday. The lost become leaders. The fearful find freedom. The lonely lose their aloneness.

Our pool is awesome. Our waterslide is one of a kind. Thunderball. Archery. Canoeing. All wonderful. But none of those activities produce the metamorphosis described above. Our counselors are the catalyst for that transformation. And this issue of THE BELL is dedicated to them!

If I had known...



If I had known the depth of impact I could have on these children,
I would have sailed a little happier
Sang a little louder
Walked a little slower
I would have listened more intently.



If I had known the tears that fall when these children say goodbye
To the best friends they've ever had,
I would have cheered a little louder
Hugged a little more
Fished with more enthusiasm
I would have smiled constantly.



If I had known the joy I would feel when a child I've known
For a week introduces me to his parents as his best friend,
I would have camped a little happier
Encouraged a little more
Played more when it rained
I would have shown a more unconditional love



And if I had known a time would come when the summer job
That became a part of me would only be a memory,
I'd treasure every moment, hoping each one would
Fill a part of the emptiness I would too soon feel.
I'd crack a smile. I'd shed a tear.

I'd thank each child for being a part of my life
And I'd do my best to become a part of theirs.



I saw great things today
in the eyes of a child.

I saw life and hope and peace and joy
all swirled together.

I saw a heart that should have been hardened
from what it had endured already
in it's young life.

But instead of closing up and refusing to love
he offered his heart freely to any
taker

I looked with sadness into eyes that had
already seen things most of us
only read about.

But what I saw was utter contentment
living every moment
as if it were his last.

I saw great wisdom today
in the eyes of this child.

Wisdom far greater than anything
most can fathom
or take time to understand.

He has a love that is unconditional
and a happiness that finds it's
roots in soil much richer than riches.

I saw that he has found a love
that few ever find.

And somewhere along the way
he helped me find it too.

But I wonder if he'll ever understand
just how much he has given me.



I saw lots of neat things today
all around camp.

I saw birds and trees and flowers
swimming in the sunshine.

People say that I'm a troubled child,
an at-risk youth, and that
my home is broken.

I got an award for being
the best helper in camp.

A lot of great stuff happens here
we swim and sail, but the
best part is the people.

Everyone at camp is nice, they really
care about you and help you
when you need it.

I think this is the way it is supposed
to be everywhere.

I learned to swim the other day and
my counselor hugged me and
said he knew I could do it.

He believed in me and I guess that
helped me to believe in
myself.

Now I want to help other people
the way he has helped me.

He tells me I'm special and
somehow makes me believe
that I really am.

But I wonder if he'll ever understand
Just how much he has given me.



Camp Time

It's camp time. A time when the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth are cleared from my mind and I can see what is truly important.

A time when a camper knows (and believe me he knows) that the smile he's receiving is out of pleasure and not pity. A time when the child who wouldn't lift her head to look you in the eyes now wants to lead the whole camp in "The Little Green Frog." Fear has been crowded out by love.

A time when I can pause and catch a glimpse of the way the world is supposed to be. It's camp time. A time when a camper is made to feel important enough to take his turn, to tell what his favorite activity is, to say, "Wait for me, don't leave me behind." A time when the conversation she overhears is not about where she can be dropped off today, but how she can be lifted up. A time when food is plentiful.

It's a time when he can cheer with all his heart and not be told to be quiet. There is not only enough time for her to tell her story, but you can stop, sit, look her in the eyes, and listen with eyes filled with wonder. A time when he succeeds because he tries... and he tries because he knows he is safe.

It's camp time. A time when a stranger becomes a new friend and a new friend becomes a best friend all in one afternoon. A time when his imagination is not squelched but ignited. Her enthusiasm is caught, not condemned. It's camp time. It's his birthday and Christmas and the Fourth of July everyday. It's my Thanksgiving. It's a time to revel. A time to cherish. A time to hold onto with all your might.

It's a time when you realize all the other things you could have done with your summer...and you don't regret a thing. Camp time is completely unlike the time outside those gates...except for one thing. Both slip away too fast.



SUMMER CAMP COUNSELORS NEEDED!



If you are interested in becoming a part of our Camp Sertoma family:

Call 864-646-7502

Email conrad@clemson.edu

visit: <https://www.clemson.edu/cbshs/centers-institutes/outdoor-lab/camps-programs/index.html>



FROM OUR COUNSELORS...

"There isn't a day when watching the staff video doesn't brighten my mood and make me long for a long sweaty day at the Outdoor Lab.

"Thank you for the glorious privilege of working at camp.

"Not a day goes by that I don't think about a person that I met at camp or an experience that I had there."

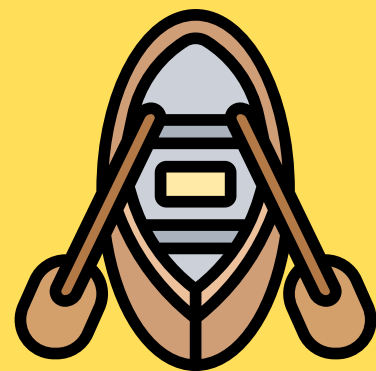
"These lessons helped me grow into a better counselor and a more compassionate human being, and I am eternally grateful for them."

"I can say unequivocally that I am a different person for having spent a summer at Camp Sertoma and I thank you all for giving me that opportunity."

"I am from Camp Sertoma, where campers know that they are loved and full of self-worth from the moment they arrive until they turn the corner and lose sight of the camp that they will always be able to call home."



Camp Sertoma is a shelter
For the hurting and the lost.
But no one really told me what
Loving like this would cost.



I gave my heart away today
To a kid in a canoe.
My mind could hardly understand
All that he'd been through.





Yet here he was, trusting me
As he climbed into my boat.
Having never seen one-
He didn't know how it would float.



Later, as he took my hand,
And climbed up in a tree,
He clipped right in and took a leap,
The thrill of being free.



As we walk, his hand in mine,
From pool to woods to lake,
He shares his heart, his joys, his fears,
His dreams, his hurts and aches.

I mostly nod and listen and
Tell him I'm a bit lost too.
But we can walk together and
Figure out what we should do.

"This sunshine is just perfect,"
I remark, "for just these kinds of thoughts.
I've done a lot of figurin
Right in this very spot."

"But mostly what I've figured
Is no matter what the weather,
We can handle dark and storm
As long as we're together."

He seemed to nod a little bit
His chin nestled in his hand.
"Will you sit and figure with me,
And help me understand."

I gasp a bit and hold back tears
I search for my reply.
"I'll bet if we will just look up
The answer's somewhere in the sky.

Just then the first night's star emerged
A tear trickled past my smile.
"Let's try and find the brightest star.
And then we'll talk a while."



We learned that stars are brightest
When the sky is at its darkest.
We learned that we can shine as bright
When life is at its hardest.

I told my new friend just how much
I see him shining brightly.
And his light is not a matter
That should be taken lightly.

“Do you know that little flicker
Is a massive ball of fire?
Do you know that you’re just like that star?
When you shine, then you inspire.

He smiled and said, “Did YOU know
Those stars up there, arranged in their formation
When they shine together
They make amazing constellations.

Our last night together,
Others felt was a bit bizarre
His award for best in canoe.
Was shaped like a star.

Campers looked a bit confused
The staff thought I was nutty.
But I got a knowing smile from
My new star-gazing buddy.

The next morning it was time to leave.
He held my hand once more.
But this time he was guiding me
Out our cabin’s door.

He had his bag. He had his star.
He had his own creation.
His own craft, made for me
A two-star constellation.

