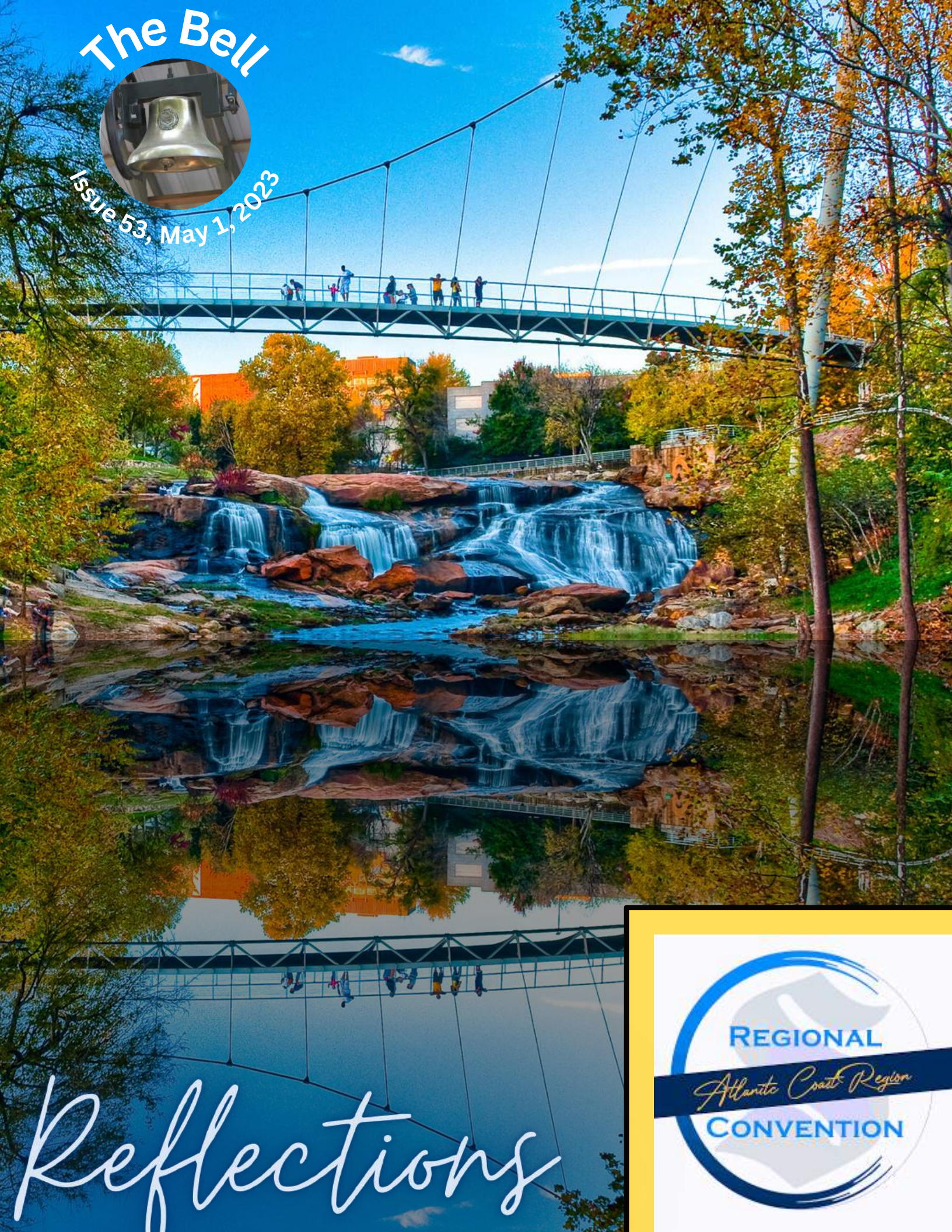


The Bell



Issue 53, May 1, 2023



Reflections

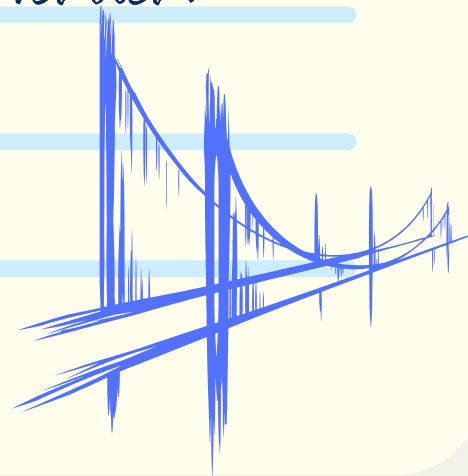


Camp Sertoma of South Carolina



What an incredible meeting! I don't think I've ever been more proud of our camp or the clubs that make it happen. The testimonies we were able to hear from former campers and counselors and the impactful message from the mother of a camper should make YOU proud too. I'm so thankful this year's convention was in Greenville and so many Sentonians were able to gather together and celebrate our camp and be inspired to keep going. I hope you enjoy these reflections on our time together at the regional convention.

Dr. Dale





Seeing the Charlie White Trail leading into the conference room entrance, I knew that the Camp Sertoma of South Carolina session would be very special. I was very happy to see and meet many caring and devoted Sertomans from across the state--as well as members from the Anderson Sertoma Club--in attendance. The parent of a Camp Sertoma camper--joined by four Camp Sertoma counselors--gave powerful testimonies to emphasize the very special place that Camp Sertoma is, and the blessings and benefits that it brings to everyone involved--the campers, their families, the counselors, and the staff. Dr. Dale Treash echoed their sentiments in his presentation, "Spark S'More Joy!", and he spoke of the many ways that Sertomans across the state work tirelessly to make sure that Camp Sertoma continues its more than 50-year tradition of caring for and enriching the lives of children in our state.

-Dr. Lynn Ellison





And then it was time for getting right down to business!





Lauren and Ellis Corn give a powerful testimony of Camp Sertoma's help in building a young girl's self-confidence.



Essence Thompson shares how her experience as a camper made her want to come back to Camp Sertoma as a counselor to pass the love along to others.





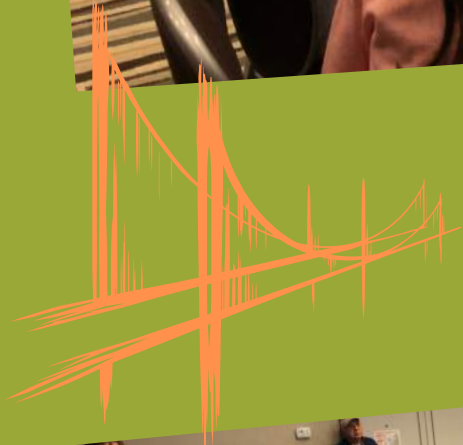
“I get to love on these kids for one week—that’s what I’m there for...there is so much about Camp that happens outside the gates...what goes on here doesn’t have to stay here...take it outside the gates...’I’m here to show you that I love you’.”

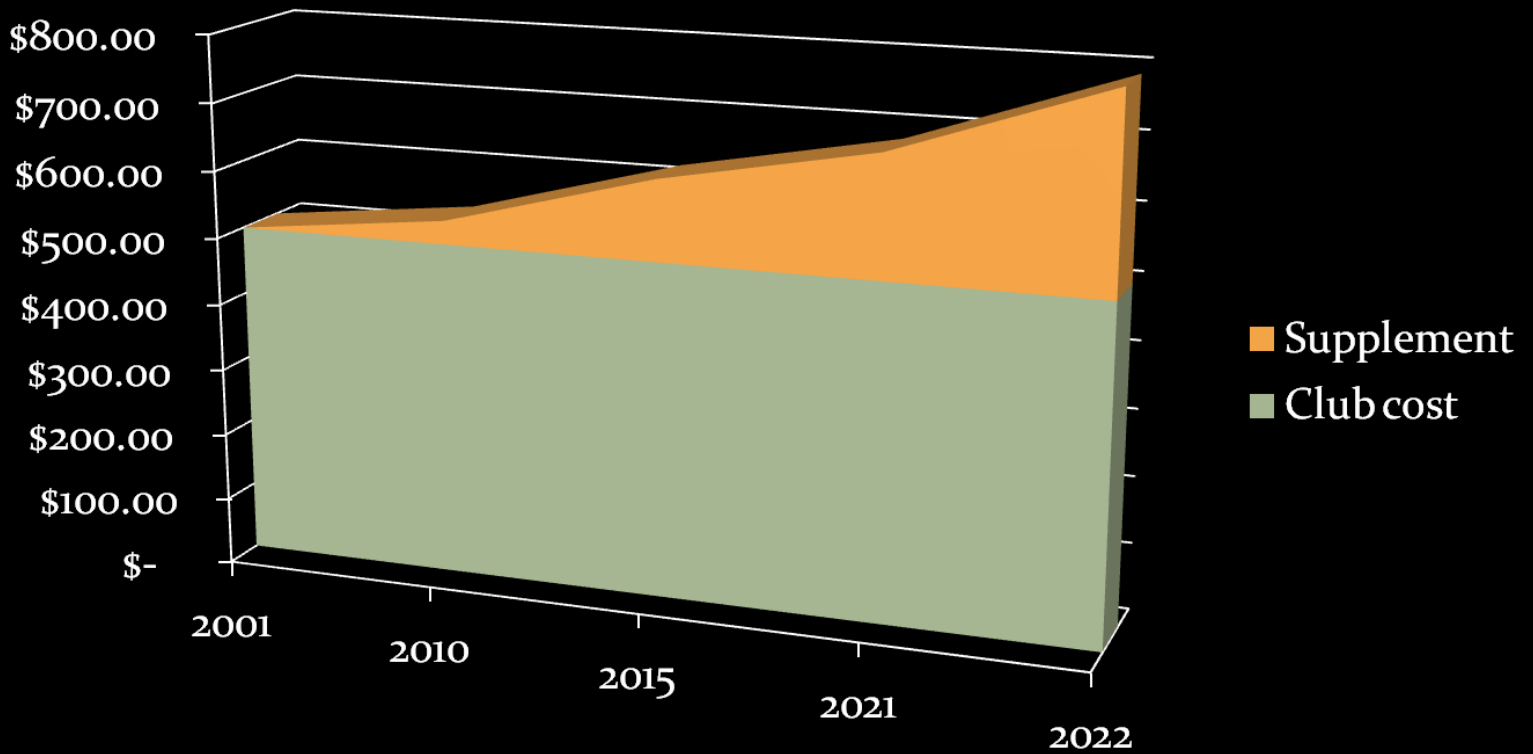
Taylor Thompson

Egan Conrad gives a powerful message about the ways camp impacted her career path and the depth of relationships that develop with campers and other counselors in such a short amount of time. You'll notice Egan shares a last name with our awesome camp director, Leslie Conrad.



It was standing room only for a giant group of Sertomans coming together to celebrate Camp Sertoma.





While our club costs per camper has been kept steady for 20 years at \$500, our cost per camper has increased to \$825.

This has been made possible through our endowment and our Camp Sertoma Golf Tournament.





“A summer at camp will give kids a chance to catch up on all the face-to-face time they have missed—and reintroduce the skills they need to navigate life’s ups and downs. “One of the best things camp does is offer kids 24 hours of no escape—they can’t turn their screen off, shut down their phone, or block a friend which forces, in the best possible way, kids to navigate not only the wonderful aspects of the deep friendships that they can only develop at camp, but also to have to hang in there when the going gets tough,” continued Steiner-Adair. “There are so many ways through technology where kids can ghost and avoid challenging conversations, avoid conflict, and avoid apologizing. Camp historically has been a deep skill building training ground for developing social emotional intelligence. While many children have been able to maintain their academic learning, experts are concerned about the impact of Covid on children’s social and emotional well-being and development and that’s where camp can have a huge impact.”





South Carolina Sertomans recently gathered in Greenville, SC, for the Atlantic Regional Sertoma Conference. As part of the conference, a Camp Sertoma presentation was hosted by Dale Tesh and Charlie White. A standing room only audience heard stories highlighting the impact Camp Sertoma has on campers, counselors, and families of camp attendees. The power of camp was shared in a way that was both meaningful and relevant to Sertoma Clubs throughout South Carolina.



The joy experienced by all who lend financial support, serve as staff members, and attend camp as campers is evident and exceeds efforts to truly measure camp's impact. Dale shared a letter from a camper who attended Camp Sertoma over 20 years ago. The camper was seeking to thank the counselor who had provided transformational experiences to her at a time so pivotal in her development. Counselors also shared camper letters affirming their love and appreciation for the camp experience. A parent shared the fear she experienced after learning that her child had hearing loss. The message was clear: Camp Sertoma changes lives and "Sparks Joy" in all who experience the magic found there.



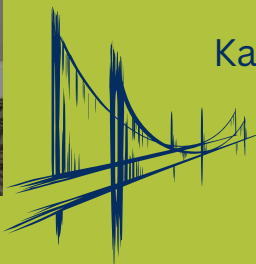
Dale shared budget funding details, and thanked those involved in the annual Sertoma Golf tournament...what a labor of love! Dale also reminded attendees of the May 12-13 Sertoma Work Weekend at the Outdoor Lab. It's not too late to make plans to attend all or part of the weekend.



Those who are unable to work, but who would like to attend the cookout on May 12 are invited to do so. Please register for any portion of the weekend here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090E45ABAE2DABFC1-sertoma>



Kaye Carraway, Clemson Sertoma Club



LOOKING BACK

Development, Part 1

The Clemson Forest, land surrounding the main campus north and south contains over 17,000 acres of beautiful, wooded property. Over 100 miles of those acres border Lake Hartwell. The land was initially acquired from the federal government for about \$4 per acre. At that time, almost all of it was abandoned, cleared, practically worthless, and badly eroded farmland. There was no Lake Harwell. Clemson University rebuilt that land into the property it is today, but it took decades to do so.

The CU Outdoor Lab, home of Camp Sertoma, sits in the south section of the Clemson Forest, and claims about 200 acres and over a mile of shoreline. When Sertomans deliver children to Camp Sertoma, they passed a few miles of the Clemson Forest on both sides of the highway before getting to the Outdoor Lab entrance sign.

The CU Forest is a valuable resource, set aside for forest management, research, and recreation (walking, running, horseback riding, etc.). It is not and never has been available for development, although numerous attempts have been made. Cutting a tree or clearing an area, except for forest management, is against all regulations. It is untouchable property, considered by many to be sacred property. If someone dares to propose any development in the Clemson Forest, you can be certain that the President's office and state government officials will be inundated with texts, emails, and phone calls of protest.

But wait! Camp Sertoma IS in the Clemson Forest, as is the entire Outdoor Lab. It IS land that was cleared and developed. In fact, I believe it was the very first land in the Clemson Forest that was developed for use for any reason other than forest management. Its very existence violates the purpose of the Clemson Forest. Did someone go to sleep on the job and let the Department of Recreation and Park Administration sneak in in the middle of the night and build a camp?

No, we did so in the middle of the day. To be seen by all. And, yes, the President's office and officials in Columbia were flooded with protests. It was scandalous, in the opinion of many. It could not be allowed to happen. Some took matters into their own hands. Some who did, lost their job.

But one person made it happen. One person held firm against significant opposition. One person turned the keys of development over to those of us with boots on the ground at that time, those of us trying to find a permanent home for our fledgling camp programs.

The person, the events, the outcome.....follow me into Part 2 next month.

Charlie White

