



CAMP SERTOMA OF S.C., INC.

P.O. Box 1808

Anderson, S.C. 29622

August 1, 2022

Dear Friends of Camp Sertoma of S.C.,

Whew! Camp Sertoma 2022 is officially finished. Many of us feel like we've been in a fifteen round emotional boxing match. We've been hit. We've been knocked down. We've been sucker-punched a couple of times. We threw some good shots of our own. We're bruised, black-eyed, tired, bloody, sweaty and sore. Two summers ago COVID shut down our whole camp. Left hook. Last year the number of campers was limited and we had to have COVID testing and QR codes. Jab. This year, we had a decimation of our summer staff. Uppercut.

We were flat on our back. We were seeing stars...and not in the normal, campy good way of seeing stars. We seemed down for the count. But round after round our GOAT Camp Director Leslie picked us up off the canvas. Rocky would have been proud. But unlike Sly Stallone's performance. Our battle was real. The punches hurt. They hurt our campers. They hurt parents. They hurt you. They hurt me. They hurt Leslie and the FIERCELY FIGHTING FEW summer camp counselors answered the bell to come to camp, stay at camp, come back to camp. Old counselors brought their whole family to camp for an entire week to serve. Volunteers stayed at camp with campers to ensure safe camper/staff ratios and to cheer on and encourage our beleaguered summer staff. The program adapted, re-adapted and re-re-adapted to make the experience just as...Camp Sertoma-y...as the fifty-two summers before.

Then a case of COVID at camp. Sucker-punch to the back of the head. We had to send a whole cabin of boys home. Parents had to drive to camp from Columbia to pick up their boys. One heroic team of Sertomans drove from Columbia to pick up a camper, take him to Sumter where they met his mom, who had driven from the coast in a service-saturated relay (by the way, the Sertomans who did that, the camper, and the mom were all cheerful and thankful for the experience the boy was able to have). Counselors had to quarantine, meaning they couldn't serve the next session's cabin of boys. More campers cancelled. More parents and Sertomans had to be called and given the difficult news. A year's worth of work, fund-raising, camper recruiting, online registering, hopes-upping gone. Gone. So many kids didn't get to come to our camp. So many. We felt down. Several times.

But we kept getting up, we'd go to our corner and images and letters from camp and campers would patch us up, give us a sip of water, and send us back out for the next round.

This fight is not fifteen rounds. It's not fifty rounds. It's a death match. As long as we keep getting up, keep answering THE BELL, the fight goes on. THE BELL will ring again. Sertomans will answer. We'll get towelled off, we'll take a squirt of water, we'll raise ourselves up, look COVID in its spiky little eyes, put up our guard and stride straight out to the center of the ring and start swinging. We'll do it again this fall. We'll do it again in 2023. We'll do it over and over again. There is no other option. Quit is not in us. This fight means too much.

SO, Sertomans of South Carolina, this issue of THE BELL is about to ring as you open it. Take in the reminders of why we do what we do like a cool drink of water. Cue the Rocky theme. Here we go.

It's a long one. It's filled with new pictures from this summer and some of our favorite camper letters of all time. Read as much or as little as you want, but know that there is irrefutable evidence that all the work you do matters.

My most sincere thanks to Leslie, our summer staff, our board and the Sertomans of South Carolina!

Lastly, we have a tremendous event planned for you! We will be hosting a one day, massively fun, exquisitely informative, absolutely inspiring conference about Camp Sertoma on Saturday, September 24th, 9 am-3pm at St. Michael's and All Angels' Episcopal Church in Columbia. There will be a tiny fee to cover a portion of lunch. Look for an email from Rick Vandiver to sign up. We would like to have several folks from each club in attendance, as we will also be holding our election for our board of trustees.

**Dale Treash, Chairman
Camp Sertoma of South Carolina**