



"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](mailto: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.

