

Message from ACA, New York and New Jersey Board President

After two challenging years, 2022 was a welcome return to normalcy for our industry. This summer brought back camp trips, inter-camp games, and indoor camp activities. For over two years, COVID-19 has disrupted so much of the important work that we do. However, it also underscored to many families the value of camps for children's socialization and mental health. The high enrollment our camps are experiencing reflects this. Although staffing has continued to be a challenge, our camps worked through staffing difficulties to provide a safe and successful camp experience for hundreds of thousands of campers and staff. Thank you to all our members for being leaders in the youth development field.

ACA, New York and New Jersey is proud to welcome 75 new member camps and seven accredited summer camps to our association this year. We hope our current and new members continue to value their membership in our organization and the work ACA, NY and NJ does on their behalf. We are grateful to our over 150 volunteers who serve on our board of directors, accredit camps, serve on professional development committees, and help run the largest camp conference in the world. The ACA, NY and NJ simply would not function without your dedication to our organization.

The Tri-State CAMP Conference was back in person this year and words cannot describe the energy that was felt throughout the halls and sessions of the Atlantic City Convention Center. Being back together again while learning and networking side-by-side with over 3,000 camp professionals and a sold-out Exhibitor Hall with over 260 different vendors invigorated us all and put us in a positive mindset for the summer ahead.

Besides the Tri-State CAMP Conference, ACA, NY and NJ offered over 20 professional development opportunities this year, both in-person and virtually. While nothing takes the place of being together, our virtual offerings allowed more camp professionals to access our professional development webinars and conferences and reach camp professionals across the US. ACA, NY and NJ continues to offer scholarships to our events for our nonprofit members and many of our virtual events are free for ACA members.

One of our greatest accomplishments this past year was the \$150,000 grants given out to four ACA, NY and NJ nonprofit member camps through the Scott Ralls Fund. This fund was established in memory of our friend, mentor, former president and volunteer for ACA, NY and NJ, and camp owner and director, Scott Ralls. The grants ranged in amounts and are designated for capital improvement projects. We look forward to continuing the Scott Ralls Fund grants in 2023.

A big thank-you to all the legislative groups who work tirelessly on our industry's behalf. After a ten-year lobbying effort, this summer was the first time New York camps could hire licensed professionals, including mental health professionals. If you are not already involved with your local legislative groups, I encourage you to do so. Each voice matters and needs to be heard for us to make impactful changes for our camps.

As we look ahead to 2023, I am more certain than ever before that the work we do is imperative for today's youth. As I finish my term as president, I want to thank our members and staff for the work they do year after year to make a positive impact on the lives of children.

Mark Benerofe
Board President – ACA, New York and New Jersey

