

The following is an article about Camp Sertoma's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration that appeared in the Patriot-News.



## Camp Sertoma visitors celebrate 50 years of fun

Monday, June 09, 2008

BY MARY KLAUS

**Of The Patriot-News**

Lisa Knight wasn't even born when Camp Sertoma opened in 1958.

But the Harrisburg woman who made the transition from camper to counselor seems to know that from its inception, the camp's purpose has been "to make people happy."

Knight and nearly 300 others spent Sunday at the 50th-anniversary celebration of the facility, which provides camping for people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities. On the slope of Blue Mountain in Lower Paxton Twp., just eight miles from downtown Harrisburg, Camp Sertoma seems to be in the middle of the wilderness. The 69-acre camp, owned by Arc of Dauphin & Lebanon Counties, includes cabins, a heated swimming pool with an accessible ramp, a playground, a nature center and places for arts, crafts and other activities. "I've been coming here for 21 years," said Knight, 30. "I've always felt like a part of this camp. I never want to leave it. It feels like home."

Years ago, Knight was a camper who enjoyed sports, games, arts, crafts, nature and swimming. Richard Honeycutt, camp director, saw potential in the young woman with the big smile. "She was outgoing, took instructions well and always helped people automatically," he said. "Lisa was a natural leader, everyone's big sister. She was very popular. Later, she took training here to be a camp counselor. She excelled at that, too. She's been working here ever since."

Knight said she loves being a counselor. When she comforts homesick campers, "I tell people everything will be all right, just do the best you can," she said. "Helping others makes me happy, too."

She also loves teaching swimming.

"We had a girl who was afraid of water," she said. "So I took her on the ramp, stayed beside her and she went in up to her chest. I then taught her how to swim. We also have aquatic wheelchairs that we can push into the pool."

In her free time, Knight enjoys listening to music, dancing and collecting little statues of frogs. Despite temperatures in the mid-90s, visitors toured the camp and enjoyed 1950s activities such as a hula hoop contest, a sock hop, jacks and hopscotch and a cake walk. Many sipped root beer floats.

Barbara Will of Elizabethtown, a Camp Sertoma visitor for 25 years, donned a straw skirt, a lei and a flower in the costume room. Will, 80, gently swayed her hips as she demonstrated hula dancing.

June Diggs, whose son Tommy has had brain damage since he was an infant, showed pictures of the camp over the years. The Swatara Twp. woman recalled how her son, now 60, used to go to Camp Sertoma day camp.

"He liked Camp Sertoma," she said. "It was a place where he could run around and where he could sit and put puzzles together. Tommy still likes Camp Sertoma. It means a lot to both of us." Eleanor Hayes of Susquehanna Twp. brought her son Terry, 45, a camp visitor in the 1970s. "Terry used to go swimming and hiking, make crafts and go on field trips," she said. "It was fun for him and a break for me. He was safe there and everyone treated him well. Camp Sertoma is great."

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#### **HOW TO HELP**

- Camp Sertoma can use donations of single beds, bunk beds, dressers, balls and bats.
- Monetary donations for Camp Sertoma can be sent to the Arc of Dauphin & Lebanon Counties, Harsco Center, 2569 Walnut St., Harrisburg, PA 17103.