Dearest COCA-I Community,

I hope this letter finds you and your families healthy and taking this opportunity to remain connected to your camp family as well. Never before in the course of COCA-I history has a time come when its Member Camps had to contemplate postponing, cancelling or going virtual and/or remote in place of traditional onsite camps; due to COVID-19, we are now facing that reality. These uncharted waters have forced us all to look at the importance of camp for our families, fundraising efforts, donor stewardship and the necessity of medical support.

In response to this pandemic, COCA-I facilitated eight Regional Town Hall meetings and two Medical Town Halls. Our efforts provided a platform for members to communicate, share and learn from other camps. I am truly grateful for all the attendees and the wealth of knowledge, support and passion they brought to those Town Hall meetings. COCA-I will continue to offer innovative content to meet the needs of this ever-changing landscape, including Medical Town Halls, Mental Health and Self-Care, Virtual Camp programs, Virtual Fundraising, and more. We hope that all Member Camps will take advantage of these great opportunities to learn and share, as well as to continue strengthening our camp community - a community of the most caring, passionate, creative and skilled individuals I have ever had the pleasure to work with.

As camps, we have an extremely challenging time ahead of us full of questions, challenges and uncertainties. As a camp director myself, my campers’ and staff’s safety, health and well-being are of the utmost importance to me. I continue to educate myself on the virus and its possible effects on my entire camp community; campers, staff, visitors, donors and supporters. It is extremely important for all to educate themselves and to keep our camp families and staff connected to camp with strong communications and support.

Given the differences in our camps and the programs we provide, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to any decision making that COCA-I can provide. As you continue to stay informed, we recommend that all camps follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, local and state/province recommendations, and those of your medical staff. It is crucial, at this time, to make as informed a decision as humanly possible. The safety and well-being of your camp participants is the main concern - which is no different than any other year.
During this time, please remember that COCA-I is a community, and in a community we can rely on one another for support and celebration! No matter the shape and form of camp, one thing still remains; the feelings, social interactions, comradery, friendships, love and family that we provide our campers and their families will always remain, because that is what we do best!

Please reach out with any questions and concerns, and let’s help each other provide an amazing experience for our campers!

Yours truly,

Matthew
Matthew R. Ruttler
President
COCA-I