I had the privilege of meeting with Major John Tate, General Counsel for the Lexington County Sheriff’s Department, for this issue of *For the Good of the Order*. After meeting with Major Tate for only a short amount of time it became clear to me that he wanted to put the spotlight on his favorite area of pro bono work, Camp Kemo.

Prior to coming to law school, Major Tate served as a police officer for eight years. This early career inspired his desire to eventually return to working in law enforcement after law school. He graduated from the University of South Carolina School of Law, Class of 1993, and eventually worked his way to his current position as General Counsel for the Lexington County Sheriff’s Department. As a paddle enthusiast, Major Tate spent his summers while in law school serving as a river guide. One summer his boss approached him about helping out at Camp Kemo, and he has been helping out with the organization ever since.

The Palmetto Health Foundation and the Palmetto Health Children’s Hospital sponsor Camp Kemo, a week long summer camp for cancer patients, ages 5-18, and their siblings. Staffed by physicians, nurses, and volunteers, Camp Kemo allows campers to swim, boat, and hike with an overall goal of helping campers forget about their illnesses and simply be children. They have around 100 campers each summer that attend the Monday through Saturday camp session. The fun the children experience at Camp Kemo lays important groundwork for their future treatment as participants learn to trust, respect, and relate to one another. Camp Kemo is completely funded by donations from individuals and organizations throughout the community, allowing campers to attend at no cost. Their ultimate goal is to provide every camper with the best experience possible and let them relate to other children in a similar situation.

Major Tate continues to give his time every year to this amazing camp. He describes Camp Kemo and the work that he does for the organization as a second full time job where he gets paid with hugs and smiles. While Major Tate serves as a member of the Camp Kemo Coun-
cil throughout the year, he especially looks forward to the week he gets to spend with the children at camp. He has become a fixture at Camp Kemo and is viewed as a person that can take care of anything, whether that includes taking campers out on the lake in a canoe, or fixing an air conditioning unit in a cabin. When asked if he has been recognized for his work with Camp Kemo, Major Tate did not reference the plaque he received for ten years of service, but instead took a painting made by the campers off the wall that had been given to him. The fun that the campers have, the interactions he has with the campers, and the memories made at Camp Kemo are all he needs for his time and effort.

Major Tate shared with me the benefits that he gains from his pro bono work at Camp Kemo. He said that so very often it is easy for people, even more so lawyers, to get caught up in their careers. He feels that his work with Camp Kemo brings many benefits which spread to all aspects of his life and provide a balance. In his view, interactions with a seven year-old who has life threatening cancer teaches you the difference between importance and urgency. Furthermore, the skills mastered while learning to interact with these children are the same types of skills that can serve a person in their professional interactions. As Major Tate explained, the work that he does with Camp Kemo helps keeps him human. When not working at the Lexington County Sherriff’s Department or Camp Kemo, Major Tate enjoys spending time on the water, traveling the world, and being outdoors.

If you are interested in finding out more information about Camp Kemo, you can visit campkemo.org. If you would like to help with fundraising for this worthy cause, please contact Priscilla Young at priscilla.young@palmettohealth.org.

For the Good of The Order: Profiles in Pro Bono is a publication of the Board of the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program. The purpose is to highlight the activities of inspirational attorneys performing outstanding pro bono service.

This interview was conducted by Pro Bono Board member Michael Crocker