

“Woodloch Spirit” – Colleen MacLean Vernon

Woodloch is first and foremost a place to play and relax. But in reflecting on Woodloch’s 50th anniversary, I have realized how much more Woodloch has been for me. I can see that my years growing up at Woodloch helped to shape the very person I am today.

I first came to Woodloch at age 7, and very quickly learned how to be enthusiastic about even the smallest things. I yelled for the wooden horses in the nightclub, and sang along with Shane’s Singing Bingo. In every game we played, no matter how many points we scored, we were cheered, razzed, and supported by the Woodloch staff.

I found it very freeing to come to Woodloch, especially during my awkward middle school years. Here, craziness was not only accepted, but encouraged. Here, grown men happily dumped slime on each other and cheered for each other like it was the Super Bowl. Here, total strangers bonded together and strove for the coveted Woodloch potholders and martini glasses.

I was finally deemed “worthy of captainship” when I reached high school. Years of participating in the Woodloch games had taught me to cheer loudly for all teammates from the smallest to tallest, to laugh with others, and to push my team to try their hardest without squelching the fun.

In 2001, my 14th year coming to Woodloch, I was awarded “The True Spirit of Woodloch Games” trophy, the Chuck Russell Award. I had grown up a “Woodloch Kid” and always felt like the social staff members were family to me. The fact that they knew me and recognized my enthusiasm through this award was overwhelmingly emotional and affirming.

Whether Chuck Russell honorees or not, the guests at Woodloch are a rare breed. It constantly surprises me when I school or corporate events and people don’t fling themselves wholeheartedly into the company kickball game or water balloon toss. I have to remind myself that it isn’t Woodloch; it is only the Real World.

However, I always have enough Inner-Woodloch to infuse into any situation. As an elementary school music teacher, I often call upon my “Chuck Russell Spirit” to get me through the tough days with a smile. I honestly think that my confidence, creativity, and leadership skills are strong partly because of my experiences in the Woodloch games.

Woodloch has been a part of my life since childhood. It has been a place to play, relax, and recharge, but it has also taught me how to be a better person. I am proud to be an ambassador of the Woodloch Spirit every day of my life.