

# Starting from the Roots in Woodcraft

**Jessica Finn**

I first joined the Woodcraft Folk (WCF) when I was six years old because it was a great way to make friends outside of my small village community. The WCF is built on co-operation; from the volunteers who share roles to turn bleak fields into vibrant camps, to the games which require children and adults alike to work together. Everyone has their say in the movement, whether on national committees or at our annual conference, no matter their age or ability. I have been able to speak about the issues that affect me at our AGM. That's something I've rarely seen so intrinsically elsewhere. We pool our skills and ideas to create massive spaces of organic, spontaneous fun, like the camaraderie at CoCamp (our 2011 international festival) to the more local district camps. Whether a 'woodie' is contacting comrades in far off lands or volunteering to help run their nearby group, WCF is fuelled by people getting stuck in.

WCF has a range of projects which provide peer mediation and education to our members, on topics ranging from sexual health to politics. The people who run these projects are Woodcraft members who provide a vital service at WCF events. One of the ways these projects work is by providing workshops open to all. Having these workshops available to me has helped me find out about topics not taught at school.

Even on the smaller scale of group nights, co-operation plays its part. Decisions on activities and responsibility for running them are made by the members, ensuring that everyone involved has ownership. These activities could include anything from discussion, working collectively with an issue in the local community or collaborative art projects. For example my group felt they had a negative stereotype in their area; Woodcraft gave them the perfect platform to combat it. The set-up isn't one where adults devise and provide a strict programme, but one where anyone feels comfortable putting their own ideas forward. It is for that reason I feel that each Woodcraft group has its own dynamic and ethos, and I'm glad that we can have that freedom.

Woodcraft as a whole is a very educational movement, but it's not the sort of education that requires classrooms and exercise books, it's the sort that only needs a space for people to come together and share skills. It's your peers who teach you, not someone in authority. So whether it's learning bushcraft whilst out on a walk or learning a foreign language from an international friend, Woodcraft lets children (and adults!) learn in a far more informal environment.

## The Author

Jessica Finn is 15 years old and currently studying for her GCSEs. She has been a member of Woodcraft Folk for nearly nine years. She is interested in current affairs, political issues, has a love of reading and is involved in various committees.

