



OFFERING A LIFELONG ALLIANCE TO PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES

# CROTCHED MOUNTAIN

February 5, 2004

Mr. Bill Allen  
Forever Young Treehouses, Inc.  
151 Robinson Parkway  
Burlington, Vermont 05401

Dear Bill:

We held the ribbon-cutting on Friday. Perhaps I should say *they* held the ribbon cutting. No grown-ups were invited; the kids went out by themselves. For Crotched Mountain Foundation, this is a very big deal. Kids with special-education labels are treated—special. Sometimes that is very helpful; sometimes it is the worst thing you can do. A tree house with a ramp is a place to leave behind the rest of the special stuff. How is it that something as simple and as old-fashioned as a tree house lift us above all that “special” stuff?

We watched from a window not too far away. The lined themselves up and held a formal ceremony. Two of them cut the tape, and they all raced and rolled up the ramp. They tacked up the rules (which they alone had set) and claimed the tree house as their own. Now they are working on a name for it.

The tree house is a symbol of our future, our new way of living. It captures a new spirit of joy and accomplishment. It points us in a new direction of life-sharing and community engagement. People with disabilities belong in the mainstream of community life, yet to succeed we all must have the relationships we need. Independence must be based on positive inter-dependence. Tree houses are places for building relationships and communities. With our tree house, we have begun a journey of making Crotched Mountain “into a community of mutual support.”

Working with Forever Young Treehouses has been an important part of this beginning. You were not a contractor, you were a partner. From the first contact and through every step, we have understood each other's needs and goals. You have worked very hard to help us in the development of the tree house, but more than that, you helped us in the building of the spirit of community. The choice of the site engaged our students. The design brought Yesterday's creative students to us. You gave us confidence in the planning and the fund raising. But the construction crew was something else.

Those guys are just wonderful. They joined us, lived with us, ate with us, and accepted all our students, staff, friends, and neighbors as their own new community. Their