

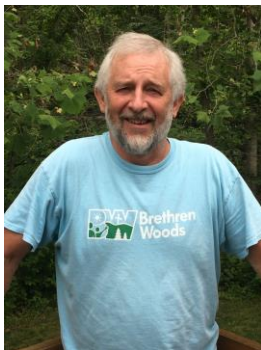


The Shenandoah Update

News from the Shenandoah District Church of the Brethren

November 17, 2021

District News



Brethren Woods Executive Director Doug Phillips Honored at District Conference

Doug Phillips was recognized for 39 years of service to Brethren Woods at the November 6 District Conference.

(Photo courtesy of Brethren Woods)

With Humor and Humility, Brethren Woods Executive Director Doug Phillips Retires

After 39 years at the helm of Brethren Woods, Doug Phillips was seated at the District Conference on November 6 holding the hand of his wife, Cindy, as he was being recognized for his nearly four decades of selfless service. Doug will officially be retiring on December 31 but is wrapping up his day-to-day activities this month. A lot has happened during his 39-year tenure and Doug has a wagonload of great memories from his time in ministry.

Larry Glick was called upon to write a citation for the conference send-off which endeavored to encapsulate in a 15-minute presentation all that Doug has accomplished at Brethren Woods. Glick drew from the reflections of past campers, staff and friends to discover more about Doug's impact at the facility.

One comment from a camp supporter poignantly summarized Doug's role at Brethren Woods, "He has been a friend, a visionary, a disciplinarian, a confidant, a matchmaker, a counselor, a pastor, a fundraiser, an administrator, a budget developer, and above all a steadfast man of God."

These, among many other accolades, caused Doug to assure others that he is simply a child of God who makes a lot of mistakes. "Even a blind pig finds an acorn once in a while," he noted. Yet, as Sam Flora told him at the 60th anniversary celebration for Brethren Woods, he has come to accept that, "it's okay to feel good about what you are doing." Doug reflected, "The positive things are what help you know you are going in the right direction."

Over the years, God has worked through Doug and a multitude of donors, volunteers and staff members to renew and revitalize the facility and programs at Brethren Woods. From just two buildings, a full-time director and a part-time staff member, it has now grown to 30 structures and six full-time staff members. Since 1983, the facility has hosted 146,000 people. Doug is grateful God has used him "in spite of all his flaws" and he gives God the credit for all the successes. He still enjoys watching what God is doing at Brethren Woods and looks forward to what God will do next.

Doug is originally from Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and came to the Shenandoah Valley to attend Eastern Mennonite College (now EMU) after a four-year stint in the workforce and an initial year in college after high school. He began his college experience in the social work curriculum but noticed how much fun his friends were having taking classes in rappelling, kayaking and other outdoor adventure sports. After these experiences, he became drawn to the camping and youth ministries program, as well, and completed both courses of study.

As Doug and Cindy began to explore job opportunities after college, they wanted to move back to Pennsylvania, but nothing available there seemed right. He had always sensed a calling to work with people but had nothing specific in mind. Both he and Cindy felt inclined to pursue a different kind of ministry but were not sure what that was until the fall of October 1982 when they heard about Brethren Woods. They were interviewed and he was hired as director and Cindy came on board in a part-time programming capacity.

Their journey with Brethren Woods officially began in January 1983, and over the years, his role has changed as growth in facilities, staff and programs required increasing administrative oversight. He has gone from being the person building the evening campfires, to being able to stand at a distance and absorb the ministry God is doing at those campfires. He has been called upon to plant some trees and has had to cut down some trees, nearly 400 of them, in fact, after the Emerald Ash Borer infestation. He has tracked the numbers,

repaired various pieces of equipment and tirelessly advocated on behalf of the mission. Yet, he never wanted to lose connection with people. Recently, he assigned himself as the pourer of the milk at breakfast each day so that he could stay in touch with campers.

In all these endeavors, Doug has not been alone. He has depended on God to make the dreams a reality and has relied upon the encouragement of Cindy and their girls, Sarah and Rachel, who have been by his side through it all. He has had great staff members and volunteers who got the job done--even when campers were not able to be on-site due to COVID-19 public health regulations. Doug has also met remarkable people on the various committees, boards and teams that shared a vision for Brethren Woods. A large part of the vision has been realized through the support of congregations and individuals who partnered with Brethren Woods and the Shenandoah District to create a place where people can 'make room for God.'

When asked what one who is considering entry into Christian ministry should do, Doug has sage advice from his decades of serving: "Run!" He notes that it is impossible to persevere in ministry without knowing beyond a doubt that is where God has called one to be. His answer reflects what he has become known and respected for most--ministering with a great sense of humor and heart full of humility.

As Doug looks forward, he has a new vision, one where he will no longer be working, in his words, a "half-time job," which he humorously defined as "12 hours a day, seven days a week." Instead, he will be focused on his other job title, "Pappo," and plans to be able to spend more time with his grandson, Nolan, granddaughter Sloane and the rest of his family. Fishing is also in the planning, as is traveling with Cindy to visit national parks and other Church of the Brethren camps.

The District Leadership Team has appointed Assistant Director Linetta Ballew as the acting director at Brethren Woods until the formal search process gets underway next year.

It is with a mountain of gratitude for a life of service to Brethren Woods that the Shenandoah District wished "Pappo" great success in his new full-time role.

Click to read Larry Glick's [Citation for Doug Phillips](#).

This article first appeared in The Shenandoah Update, a publication of the Shenandoah District Church of the Brethren, on November 17, 2021.