

# Generation Next: Youth Program

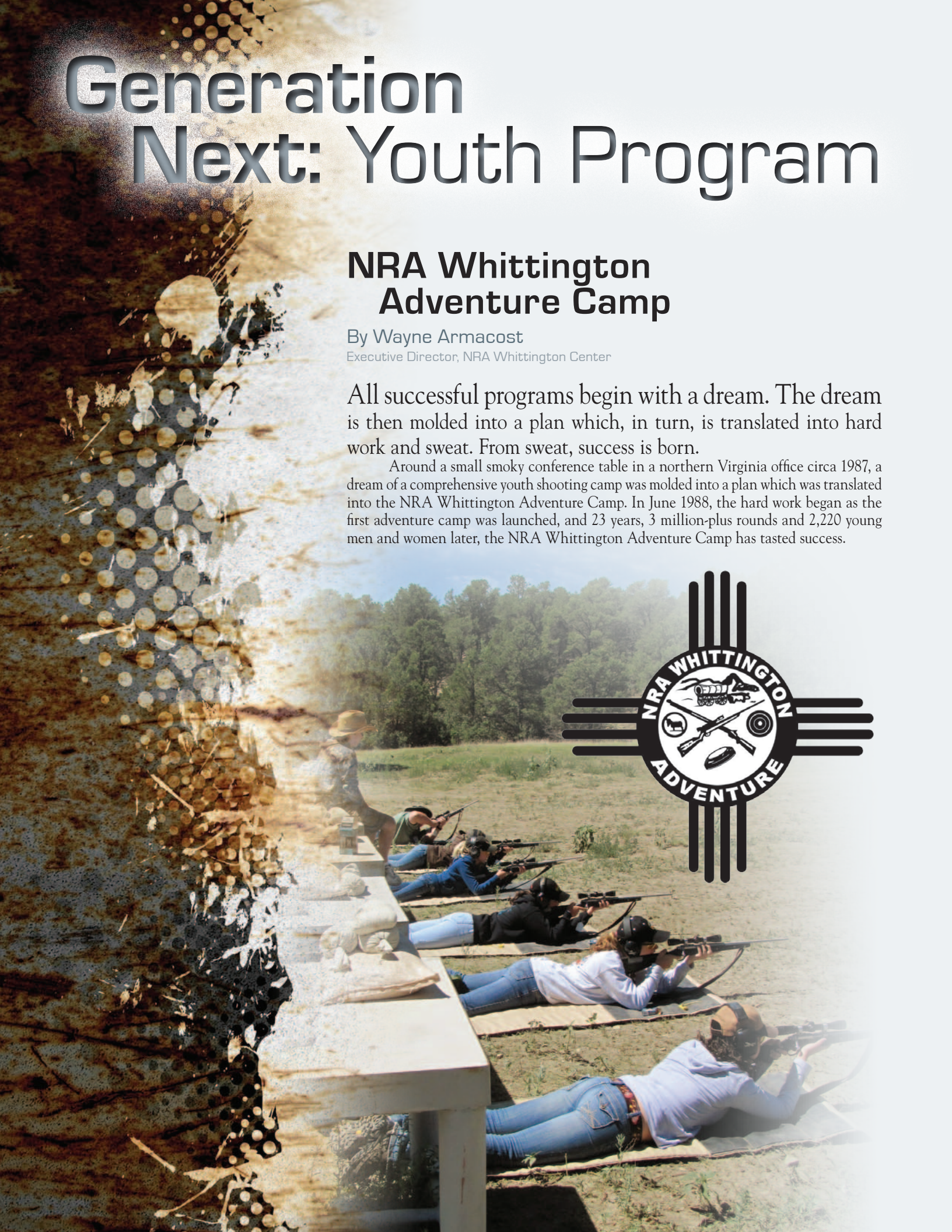
## NRA Whittington Adventure Camp

By Wayne Armacost

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All successful programs begin with a dream. The dream is then molded into a plan which, in turn, is translated into hard work and sweat. From sweat, success is born.

Around a small smoky conference table in a northern Virginia office circa 1987, a dream of a comprehensive youth shooting camp was molded into a plan which was translated into the NRA Whittington Adventure Camp. In June 1988, the hard work began as the first adventure camp was launched, and 23 years, 3 million-plus rounds and 2,220 young men and women later, the NRA Whittington Adventure Camp has tasted success.



Each year 56 teenagers ages 13-17 from around the globe descend on Raton, New Mexico, and the NRA Whittington Center. For two weeks they learn the basics of pistol, rifle, shotgun, muzzle loading, and archery. They learn orienteering and basic wilderness survival. They go through the New Mexico Hunter Education Program, learn to put up a hunting camp complete with canvas wall tent, and they learn to cook in the outdoors. But most importantly, they learn safety, self-respect, and leadership skills. They arrive as kids and leave as young adults.

Name it and there is an opportunity to shoot it: .50 BMG rifle, Glock pistols, Ruger .22LR pistols and rifles, Springfield armory 1911s, Thompson center muzzle loaders, AR-15s, Beretta, and Mossberg shotguns, and Bowtech bows, to name a few. Campers are broken down into groups according to age and spend a day and a half on each range.

Before a round is ever fired down range, each group spends the first half day in an intensive safety and training seminar. After which, it's out of the classroom and onto the range. Make no mistake, this is a shooting camp. Each camper will shoot between 1,200 and 1,300 rounds of ammunition! Mixed in with all the firearm training, we pack in orienteering, knot-tying and hunt skills.

The NRA Whittington Center is a 33,300-acre outdoor recreation paradise located in northeast New Mexico, equidistant between Denver, Colorado, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Shooting, hunting, hiking, biking, camping, RVing—we have it all. Just want to unwind and let the worries of the world pass you by? Then rent a cabin or bring your RV and watch mule deer and antelope graze, sunsets and sunrises. Enjoy a round or two of sporting clays, trap or skeet, then head over to the .22 ranges and plink at silhouettes. Overdue for a challenge? Bring your favorite hunting rifle and take a shot at the world famous “white buffalo” at over 1,100 yards.

Like history? You are in the right place. The NRA Whittington rests atop the Santa Fe Trail which transported goods and individuals from Franklin, Missouri west to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Whittington Center is one of the few places where the public has access to a piece of American history; if one looks hard enough while standing in the grass-covered ruts, you can see the oxen strain against their harnesses as the wagons amble by.



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For two weeks they learn the basics of pistol, rifle, shotgun, muzzle loading, and archery shooting. They also have a hunting component that covers orienteering, basic wilderness survival, and the New Mexico Hunter Education Program.



Move from the trail down to the Frank Brownell Museum of the Southwest where you can lose yourself in firearm history and memorabilia. From Conquistadors to Cowboys, from Indian Wars to the World Wars, the Brownell Museum will mesmerize you. The museum has some unique and rare pieces that helped win (and keep!) the West, and it is constantly changing as we add new displays periodically.

The Whittington Center is changing and evolving, and the website, [nraawc.org](http://nraawc.org), is a good place to keep abreast of what's new. Currently, the Whittington Center is fundraising for a 23,000 square-foot event center that will be a great facility for year-round usage. Additionally, the facility will allow us to expand training opportunities, provide for a jam-packed summer schedule, and open

the Whittington Center to corporate America in ways previously unavailable.

The NRA Whittington Center believes in affordable instruction and training opportunities for civilian self-defense. That is why the Whittington Center has partnered with Professional Marksman, [professionalmarksmen.com](http://professionalmarksmen.com), to offer handgun instruction that goes beyond basic conceal/carry classes. What a fantastic place to exercise your Second Amendment freedom!

New Mexico is called the Land of Enchantment; with one visit to the Whittington Center, you will realize why. There is something magical that happens when you visit. You find that time doesn't matter, that you are relaxed and comfortable, and suddenly you realize that you have fallen under New Mexico's spell, and you don't want to leave. ■