

# Generation Next: Youth Program

Laura Dalles  
Education Coordinator  
Wild Sheep Foundation



## Wild Sheep Foundation's Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience

Inaugural event introduces youth to conservation

The Wild Sheep Foundation launched its inaugural 2012 MidwayUSA Youth Wildlife Conservation Experience (YWCE) during the 2012 Sheep Show in Reno. A three day hands-on event introduced Reno area youth to shooting sports, fly tying, archery, wildlife management and conservation. This event was made possible as a result of Larry and Brenda Potterfield's vision and generosity who believe youth should be educated about wildlife conservation and the outdoors and that it is up to this generation of conservation organizations to teach the next generation.

"The Wild Sheep Foundation is grateful for the Potterfield's vision and generosity in launching this new initiative. WSF will expand the YWCE each year from here on out. We look forward to developing this event and supporting the Midway USA Foundation's mission. This program gets younger boys and girls outdoors and helps teach the principles of wildlife conservation and stewardship. The future of wildlife and stewardship will depend on not only us, but future generations", stated Gray N. Thornton, WSF President and CEO.

"I think it is important to have mentors because they help you and guide you through learning. Besides a new skill, they taught me how to have fun while learning something that might be hard to learn. They make learning easier."  
2012 participant  
Olivia



The goal of the WSF's YWCE is to connect and strengthen our youths' connection to wildlife, conservation and natural resources by communicating the importance of wildlife and habitat management, outdoor skills, ethics, behavior and stewardship while perpetuating our hunting, fishing and wildlife heritage.

"The measure of our success came from the smiles and excitement of the youth that participated," stated Laura Dalles,



WSF Education Coordinator. “Those kids were engaged, enthused, and excited. Many young conservationists commented that they wanted to be forensic biologists as a result of their participation with Operation Game Thief – an inquiry into who-did-it in the wildlife poaching world. Parents, teachers, and volunteers commented on the success of offering a hands-on learning environment that sparked creativity, introduced new skills and got kids excited about spending time outdoors,” said Dalles.

In addition to the three day event, students who participated were given an opportunity to expand their experience by applying for a Hunter/Mentor/Youth Conservation Experience. Students can submit an application to WSF and be considered for an opportunity to spend a day assisting the Nevada Department of Wildlife Fisheries Division stock trout, spend a day fishing local lakes or streams with a member of the Truckee River Fly Fishers who will mentor them in the art of fishing, or spend a day hunting seasonal game birds with an adult hunter mentor. “The idea behind this was to offer the youth who attended an opportunity to take what they learned and apply it in the real world. Hopefully this will spark a long term love of the outdoors, and add young sportsman and women to the fraternity of wildlife conservation,” stated Dalles. “We are encouraged by the response and enthusiasm of our young conservationists.”

“The success of our first YWCE would not have happened if not for the tremendous support and engagement of the committee members, volunteers, local youth groups, educators and parents who helped pull this together. Many thanks to all of those dedicated educators and conservationists,” concluded Dalles.

The Wild Sheep Foundation, formerly the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, was founded in 1977 by sheep and mountain hunting enthusiasts and conservationists. With a membership of more than 6,000 worldwide and a chapter network in North America, WSF is the premier advocate for wild sheep, wild goats, other wildlife and their habitat.

The Wild Sheep Foundation has raised more than \$80 million for conservation and educational programs in North America,



Europe and Asia. In 2011, the Wild Sheep Foundation raised and put on the ground more than \$3 million for wildlife conservation and other mission programs. ■

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