

CATEGORY: FAMILY AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

ACTIVITY — YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP/ OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Description —

Organize and host a youth camp. The camp will allow children to spend time with Izaak Walton League members, naturalists, and other experts in the field of natural resources, learning about conservation issues, problems, and solutions.

Benefits —

Investing in chapter youth programs reaps generational benefits. These are our nation's future conservationists who will also preserve our outdoor recreation traditions. By organizing a youth camp, you will increase interest and understanding of conservation-related issues among the youth in your chapter and community. A camp also provides an added, valued benefit to your members, should their children opt to participate.

Key Steps —

- Select your date and location. You can host the event on chapter grounds or at a local park with a nature center or outdoor pavilion. The time of year you choose may help determine the length of the camp/classroom program (day, weekend, week-long). Be sure to avoid conflicts with the school year and major holidays.
- Determine the camp or class agenda. The variety of classes offered depends on your instructors' expertise and the age group you want to attract. Courses could include stream sampling, insect and reptile studies, forest management, and wildlife identification.
- Recruit instructors and additional volunteers for the camp committee.
- Determine equipment needs for classroom instruction and recreational activities.
- Plan for food and refreshments.
- Have adequate restrooms and a first aid kit.
- Check with local authorities on regulations and permit requirements.
- Provide parents with a list for what children should bring and wear, such as rain gear and sunscreen, and identify any special needs.

Who Can Help —

Volunteers: Start with two to six volunteers; larger events may require up to 25 volunteers per day.

Partners/sponsors: Local businesses, outdoor retailers, homeowners associations, watershed groups, various conservation organizations, and state fish and wildlife, natural resources, or forestry agencies.

Technical and other support: Local board of education, state fish and wildlife agencies, U.S. Forest Service, state and county parks and recreation departments, and local nature centers.

Dollar and Cents —

Expenses: Costs for 20 participants begin at \$800 to \$1,000 for six days. Be sure to include the cost of materials, equipment, snacks, drinks, and meals for youth participants.

Revenue: Business contributions, local and regional conservation group donations, and grants and member contributions may help to cover costs. Consider charging a nominal registration fee. Requiring pre-registrations will assist in planning and budgeting. Cut costs by requiring participants to bring their own bag lunches or snacks.

Getting the Word Out —

Contact your area public school system, local board of education, and community events programs. Advertise through your chapter newsletter and Web site. Send a pre-event news release to media contacts with a special invitation to a reporter/photographer to attend. Send a post-event news release with photos of youth participating in the camp or outdoor classroom. You will need to obtain parents' permission for any photographs of children that you use for promotional purposes. Provide youth and their parents with information about the League's mission, your chapter's accomplishments, and membership. Take advantage of those non-members attending the camp or class by promoting the League and recruiting them as new members.

Chapters with Successful YOUTH CONSERVATION CAMP/OUTDOOR CLASSROOM Activities —

Mountaineer, WV

Northwest Ohio Yikes, OH

St. Joseph County, IN

Argos, IN

Central NY, NY

Wabash, IN

McCook Lake, SD

Oil City, PA

Orange, CA

Note: For the most current specific chapter contacts, refer the *IWLA National Directory* or IWLA Web site (www.iwla.org).