

## **THE ACADEMY ALUMNI NETWORK**

The Academy Alumni Network will offer connection as our students continue to grow in their careers by offering support in the form of career advice and networking opportunities. The network will also make the Academy more sustainable by encouraging alumni to mentor new students, serve on field school advisory boards, and volunteer at the summer field schools. Meeting this goal will ensure success for our Academy Alumni, 700 strong by the end of 2018, through a network of support as they move from high school to college to career.

In the fall of 2016, we will officially launch the network at a 10 year Anniversary Banquet. The anniversary banquet will be the kick off for an annual alumni networking and fundraising event.

*In 2015, a preliminary online survey was conducted with our Academy Alumni that included retrieving up to date contact information and more.*

### **RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY OF ACADEMY ALUMNI SURVEY (N=24):**

*Sample of Colleges Attending with Corresponding Major/Minors:*

- Allegheny College (Geology Major, Economic Minor)
- American University (International Studies)
- Delaware Valley University (Conservation and Wildlife Management)
- Duquesne University (Doctor of Pharmacy)
- McGill University (Environmental Biology)
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Environmental Biology, Geography Minor)
- Keystone College (Environmental Resource Management, Chemistry Minor)
- Kutztown University (Environmental Science/Biology)
- Mansfield University (Fisheries Biology)
- Penn State Dubious (Wildlife Technology)
- Penn State University (Forest Ecosystem Management)
- Shippensburg University (Biology; Geo-environmental Studies, Biology Minor)
- Theil College (Environmental Science/Criminal Justice)
- University of Pittsburgh (Music/Anthropology)
- West Chester University (Psychology, Italian Minor)

*Did being a part of the Wildlife Leadership Academy influence your interest in the job you have now and/or what you chose to study in college? If so, how?*

- Yes, it increased my interest in wildlife and fisheries.
- I thought that I wanted to study wildlife, but WLA helped cement that wildlife was really what I wanted to do.
- Definitely, in particular the program started my fascination for botany, as plants are the keystone of most ecosystems. While I have always had a deep connection and appreciation for the natural world, attending this program cemented my decision to pursue a degree and occupation in the environmental science field. I learned that I needed to step up to combat today's numerous environmental problems.

- Yes, the Academy solidified my interest in my field of study and exposed me to skills I use in my job including radio telemetry and plant identification.
- Yes, it broadened my interests in the field of fisheries.
- The instructors at WLA opened my mind to the study of plant communities and I've been intrigued ever since. I take many plant related classes at college and I research plant communities each summer.
- No, but it helped me grow as a person to help me realize what I wanted in life.
- Yes, I am enthusiastic about fish cultures and trout conservation.
- Yes it was a great experience, one I will always remember and helped reconfirm my interest in what I wanted to study.
- WLA transformed an interest I had at a young age into a passion that I want to pursue as a career. Connecting with the instructors and completing my outreach gave me the confidence and skills that have helped to motivate me thus far.
- Yes it helped me choose my course of study in college by showing me that I can get a career doing what I love.
- Yes! I am trying to learn about global environmental sustainability thanks to WLA.
- I chose my minor in Geography because of the advice I got from the Wildlife Leadership Academy.
- Definitely, I knew going into WLA that I wanted to do something in the conservation/environmental field, but WLA was able to help me narrow that very broad field for me.
- Yes it did, I was already planning on majoring in Wildlife, but WLA made me realize that wildlife is definitely for me and also allowed me to discover some new interests like forestry.

*Do you think the Wildlife Leadership Academy has had an influence on your conservation ethic? If yes, please explain.*

- Yes, when in the woods I constantly look how to better manage the habitat.
- Yes I think it gave me a better view of the world I live in, and also human interactions and conservation efforts.
- Yes, it has shown unique and different methods of conservation education.
- Yes, it taught me what conservation ethic is and how it applies to my daily life.
- Yes, it introduced me to conservation ethic and refined my understanding of it.
- Yes it has. Before WLA I had no idea how much of an impact conservation had on our world and the way we live our lives. It has influenced me to become more aware of how I live my life, and what I can do to spread the word so others can do the same.
- Yes, I am aware of how to efficiently and ethically manage a property, which I will inherit from my parents.
- Yes, it has influenced me to keep a closer relationship with nature, which results in more respect for it.
- Yes, I know a lot more and am more conscientious about my environment.
- Absolutely, it taught me that conservation is a lifestyle, not just as something to aspire to on occasion. While it has a personal cost, conservation leaves a definable, positive legacy for generations to come. Were it not for the conservation efforts of those who went before, we would not be able to enjoy the continued beauty of the natural world.

- Yes, taught me to be conscientious about fish environment and water conservation.
- Yes it did, along with my scout laws/oath about maintaining the beauty of the environment.
- Yes, WLA has enabled me to see the world through a conservationist's eye. For example when I hike through the woods, I can quickly assess the relative health of the habitat. I can identify plant species and determine what animals are likely to thrive there. Also, when I see clear cuts or places that have experienced prescribed burns, I understand their value in creating habitat. (I used to view this as destruction of habitat.)
- Yes because they showed me new ways to conserve nature that I never heard of before.
- Yes, now I understand the balance between the hunter and the hunted. I also learned how to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- Yes, I always try to look at the big picture when thinking about conservation decisions, but WLA taught me how to take a second glimpse and you'll find something you didn't see before.
- Yes, I feel that I am better aware of what quality habitat and food sources look like after having gone through the program.

*Is there anything you would like to add about the impact the Wildlife Leadership Academy program has had on you to date?*

- The Wildlife Leadership Academy has been a wonderful supporter of me. I could never thank them enough for all they have done for me and all the connections I have made through the camps.
- I am more aware of conservation and how to magnify my efforts towards it. I was also exposed to a fantastic network of organizations dedicated to this purpose. Learning at this age in my life, rather than later, impacted me greatly in how I think about the environment and its inhabitants, and I would fully recommend the program to other young outdoor enthusiasts!
- Some of the volunteers and staff have been great mentors to me throughout my academic journey. I am very grateful for the quality volunteers and staff at WLA that truly care for the success of the students.
- Attending WLA has definitely changed my life.
- Excellent experience! No other camp offers this chance to learn and explore our environment.
- It was a great experience, one that I will always remember. The experience/education I received was something I will carry with me.
- The main thing holding me back when I started high school was my shyness. WLA forced me to break out of my shell both at the field school and when completing my outreach. Public speaking is much easier for me now.
- WLA changed my view on the world and how we interact with our environment. It also taught me how to become more of a leader and put myself out there for people to see.
- If it weren't for WLA I have no idea where I'd be today. I know I wouldn't have met all the wonderful people I have met through this program and I wouldn't have had the spectacular experiences either.