Involving Your Youth: The Mentality of Inclusion

A common misconception among QDMA Branches is that they must host separate events for adults and youth. Not so, as inclusion will foster the next generation of QDMA members and deer stewards. After all, when you first experienced hunting, chances are there wasn’t a special day for you to hunt. You were probably “just one of the guys” that day at deer camp, and that’s exactly what you wanted.

For example, in June, the Pennsylvania Advisory Council assisted with the Wildlife Leadership Academy’s PA Bucktails Field School where 24 youth were exposed to a course similar to QDMA’s Deer Steward program for an extremely knowledgeable and passionate staff and volunteers. The concentration of the curriculum was in no way diluted from the topics typically heard in QDMA education. Also worth noting, many past students continue to be active in QDMA Branches throughout the state.

Later in the month, New York’s Greater Rochester Southern Tier Branch held an educational day at Neil and Craig Dougherty’s NorthCountry Whitetails property. While there was one youth-focused activity, a shed hunt, the Rack Pack members got to participate and ask questions with parents and mentors during seminars and property tours. “Crushing their Brush” with a dozer is a few years off for most of them, but they were visibly excited with the idea.

As summer came to an end and South Carolinians took care of all their business before their early deer season, the Lakelands Branch of Greenwood held its annual banquet. A champion of the Rack Pack since its inception, the Lakelands Branch had 36 Rack Pack members in attendance, which included a raffle just for the youth present. Also featured was a special ceremony highlighting a new youth candidate, a new youth venture and recognition for the Branch’s National Youth Hunt candidate.

Youth involvement doesn’t require a ton of additional planning, simply inclusion. It can bring a new perspective and help reinvigorate a Branch stuck in the routine. To add some liveliness, a sense of purpose, and to pluck the heartstrings of your group, think Rack Pack!

– Hank Forester, QDMA Youth Education & Outreach Manager

Hunting Property: Collaboration With Plum Creek

QDMA and long-time corporate sponsor Plum Creek are proud to announce a new collaboration with a generous gift of a three-year lease to a 500-acre property, which includes a three-bedroom house and fishing pond.

The mission of the joint venture, the first of its kind in QDMA’s history, will be to maximize the educational and recreational value of the property for deserving youth, disabled, military, first-time and minority hunters in a safe, professional manner that enhances public awareness and credibility of QDMA and Plum Creek.

The property, located outside of Greenwood, South Carolina, will also be used for QDMA Branch events, and the Lakelands Branch will manage it with support from QDMA and Plum Creek.

New Members: To Receive Grunt Call

The membership package for new Rack Pack members has been updated (as of September 1) and will now include a grunt call.

Four Point Award: Presented at 2013 National Convention

Hunter Pruitt of Georgia and Ally Wright of Florida were named the recipients of the inaugural Rack Pack Four-Point Award at the 2013 QDMA National Convention. The award was created to recognize outstanding service and leadership to youth in the spirit of the QDMA mission, future generations and our hunting heritage. The four points of the award include spirit, service, leadership and commitment.

Hunter is a Deer Steward Level I and II graduate who spoke at QDMA’s 2012 National Leadership Summit. Now, a rising sophomore at the University of Georgia, Hunter is an experienced hunter and manager who practices Quality Deer Management, and he has an article in this issue of Quality Whitetails (see pages 56-59).

Ally is the youngest person to ever complete the Deer Steward Level I course. The now 9-year-old who is in the third grade took her first deer last season. Ally helps manage property with her parents practicing QDM principles, and she writes a blog on the Rack Pack website titled “Ally’s Way.”

For more information on the Rack Pack and to get involved contact Hank Forester, QDMA’s Youth Education and Outreach Manager. You can reach Hank at hforester@qdma.com or by calling (800) 209-3337. The Rack Pack can also be found on Facebook.com/RackPack and @RackPackQDMA.