

## Pheasants Forever Takes Next Generation Under its Wing

*By Doug Pike*

Pheasant season in Colorado starts on November 18. That means Stan Barthlama and the Northern Colorado Chapter of Pheasants Forever only have a couple of months remaining to get the next generation of sportsmen ready for the annual harvest.

Barthlama, outreach coordinator for the NoCo chapter, said a love of kids has kept him involved in Pheasants Forever's youth programs for the past 14 years.

Pheasants Forever's youth programs aim to instill an interest and ability in sporting activities through educational and experiential opportunities. Events teach youth ages 9-18, as well as their parents or guardians, the skills required for hunting, fishing, archery and habitat preservation.

Barthlama says the sight of a family learning to enjoy the Colorado outdoors together never gets old.



*Stan Barthlama, outreach coordinator for the Northern Colorado Chapter of Pheasants Forever, stands in front of a trailer that supplies the organization's hands-on youth events. (Photo by Doug Pike)*



"The neatest thing I see is that, all of a sudden, they're a family doing archery, fishing, hunting, target practicing, clay shooting, all together," Barthlama said.

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**"When you get young people today out of their normal environment ... they become a different kid and totally different than they might be at the schoolyard or at home."**

~ Stan Barthlama

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Pheasants Forever provides all the equipment necessary everything from shotguns and rifles to fishing poles and archery equipment.

"A huge percentage of them haven't done this before and don't own their own shotgun or fishing pole. I hand out around 40 guns at each event. We provide a weapon if they don't have one," said Barthlama, who estimates that two-thirds of youth participants at each event are new to Pheasants

Forever. "Safety is number one. It's the highest emphasis. Most kids have hunter safety cards, but we still do a demonstration. And some kids don't want to harvest something, and that's fine. We do a lot of target shooting and trap shooting, too."

Around 30 mentors are needed to run each youth event, Barthlama said, and Pheasants Forever is always seeking volunteers for both its day events and camp-outs.

The Ultimate Nature Experience (TUNE) camp-outs are weeklong, overnight programs that provide instruction and opportunities for hunting, fishing, habitat planting, and horseback & ATV riding. The Colorado Division of Wildlife also gives kids opportunities to see trained field dogs.

"We try to give them a really well-rounded outdoor experience," Barthlama said.

Pheasants Forever trailers fully stocked with shotguns, .22 caliber rifles, and archery and fishing equipment—are available and free for use by youth groups, provided that a Pheasants Forever member is present and expendable materials are replaced.

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