

W.I.L.D. About Denali

Wilderness Intensive Learning Development



DEC Mission: To promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through fun, informative and inspiring programs.



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What is *W.I.L.D.* about Denali?

W.I.L.D. about Denali is a program designed for at-risk youth and developmentally challenged youth and adults. It is operated in partnership with several Alaska social service agencies. Activities cultivate personal growth and encourage full participation in society through wilderness experiences in Denali National Park and Preserve. The program occurs over a three-day, two-night camping trip at Savage Campground and involves interpreted hikes focusing on ecology and wilderness stewardship; campground activities centered around teambuilding and self-confidence; and a whitewater rafting trip on the Nenana River.

For those who have participated in a "regular" *W.I.L.D.* program and want to have a deeper wilderness experience, we have created *W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake*. Participants travel to Wonder Lake, 90 miles inside the park, on a Camper Bus and stay at the Wonder Lake Campground. With the added challenge of being in a remote wilderness setting, *W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake* builds upon skills learned in prior programs and will deepen participant's understanding of Denali National Park and Preserve as a protected resource.

Program Mission: To provide opportunities for participants to experience and develop respect, self-confidence and team building through wilderness experiences in Denali National Park and Preserve.

Goals and Objectives:

- 1) Respect learned from wilderness will translate into respect for oneself, other people and everyday surroundings.**
 - a) Participants will discover sense of self.
 - b) Participants will enhance their awareness of wilderness.
 - c) Participants will learn to value others.

- 2) Self-confidence gained from learning basic backcountry skills will enable participants to make more informed decisions, thus enhancing self-esteem.**
 - a) Staff will implement positive reinforcement.
 - b) Staff will teach basic backcountry safety.
 - c) Staff will encourage active participation in all activities.

- 3) Participants will learn team-building skills through interaction with other participants and with staff.**
 - a) Staff will demonstrate active role modeling.
 - b) Participants will practice social skills.
 - c) Participants and staff will examine problem solving.

Who are the *W.I.L.D.* partners?

Denali Education Center, Denali National Park and Preserve, Denali Outdoor Center, Old Sourdough Studios, Fairbanks Community Mental Health Association, Family Centered Services of Alaska, and Challenge Alaska.

Who is eligible for the W.I.L.D. program?

Denali Education Center partners with cooperating social service agencies and other organizations throughout Alaska, especially those that seek to empower individuals through wilderness experiences. Each cooperating agency is responsible to determine which clients are eligible for the *W.I.L.D.* experience according to the agencies' own guidelines.

What do the cooperating agencies provide?

- Transportation for all participants to and from Denali and at all times throughout program.
- Staffing: Two or more counselors per group based on a **maximum of twelve participants**.
- Personal camping gear: sleeping bags, sleeping pads, clothing and extra shoes, day pack, reusable water bottle etc. Denali Education Center has a limited number of sleeping bags and pads to supplement those who do not have personal gear.

What does the Denali Education Center provide?

- Staffing: One leader per group. An additional counselor may be available by special arrangement.
- Food for the entire group.
- Campground reservations for the group.
- Group rafting trip on the Nenana River (weather permitting).
- Group camping equipment; tents, stoves, cooking gear, etc.
- Group rafting photo provided by Old Sourdough Studio.

What is the cost per participant?

The cost of the *W.I.L.D.* program is **\$300 per participant**. This includes all food, campground reservations, rafting and photo fees. There is a **\$225 charge for counselors** from participating agencies. For those fundraising for their participant fee, we offer scholarships through the ***Maureen Sims Memorial Endowment*** annually.

Program Deposit and Cancellation Policy:

Denali Education Center requires a refundable program deposit of **\$300**. This deposit is due at the time of registration; the remaining balance is due upon arrival.

The deposit is necessary to cover costs that are incurred in preparation for each trip. It is for these reasons and others that we require a deposit and have implemented the following cancellation policy:

- Cancel 3 weeks prior to start date..... Full refund (of program deposit)
 - Cancel 2 weeks prior to start date.....75% refund
 - Cancel 1 week prior to start date.....50% refund
- Cancellations that occur within a week of the program will receive **no refund**.*

Denali Education Center Staff Role

Our role is to engage participants with the wilderness of Denali through positive learning experiences. Denali Education Center field staff coordinate the logistics of the week and facilitate the campout activities in a manner that encourages teamwork and self-reliance.

Primary responsibilities of Denali Education Center Staff include:

- Facilitate camp set up and break down
- Instruct cooking and meal time preparations
- Coordinate the logistics of daily activities
- Facilitate hikes and campout activities

Agency Staff Role

Because the primary role of the Denali Education Center staff is to guide the campout aspect of the program and coordinate logistics, it is important for the agency staff to manage the participant's interactions and help encourage a positive experience for all. Any agency staff that accompanies participants on a *W.I.L.D.* trip is expected to fulfill the role of disciplinarian and to take the lead in managing appropriate behavior in this group-oriented scenario. Denali Education Center staff do not know the participants, their challenges or behavioral norms; we expect agency staff to be experts in this field.

Primary expectations for agency staff:

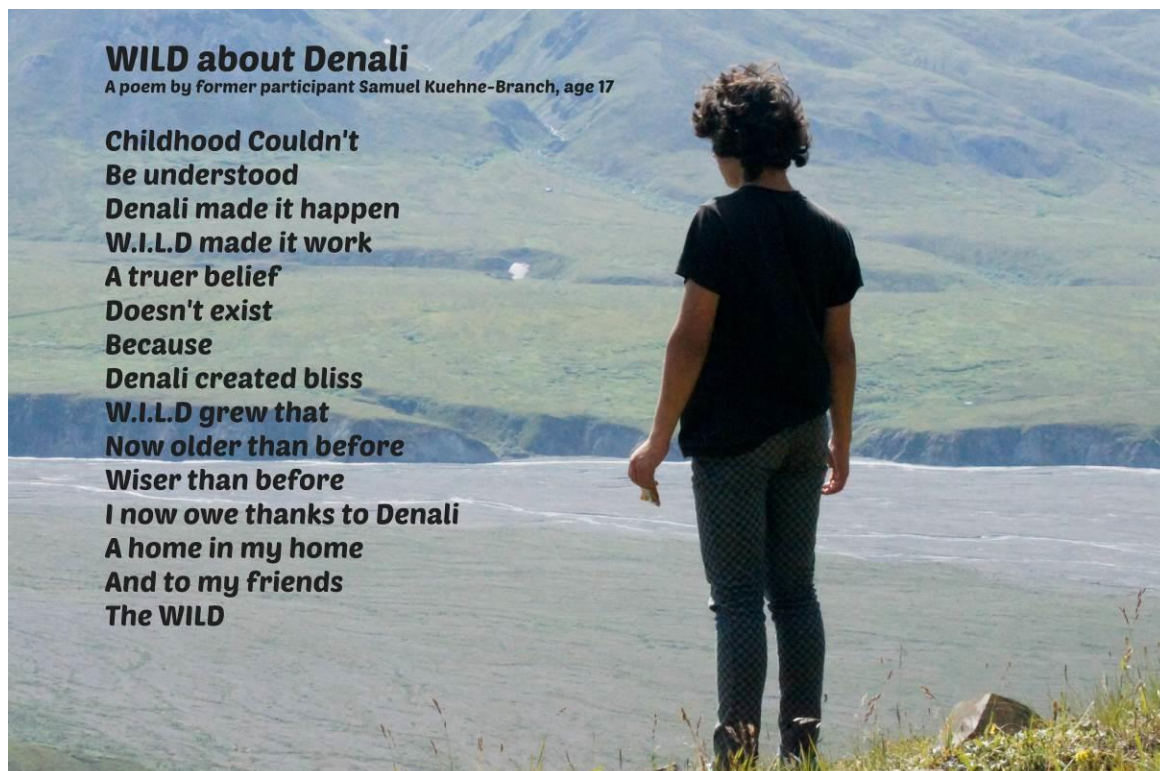
- Participants must be supervised by agency staff at all times including bathroom trips, filling water jugs, etc. All participants must be in sight and sound distance.
- Manage discipline and behavior of participants
- Assist in motivating the participants to help with camp chores (meal preparations, camp set up and break down, dishwashing, etc.)

2015 Available Dates

- June 30 – July 2
- July 7 – 9
- July 14 – 16
- July 21 – 23
- August 4 – 7 (W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake)
- August 11 – 14 (W.I.L.D. Wonder Lake)
- August 18 – 20
- August 25 - 27

How to make a reservation

Contact Julie Pearson youth@denali.org or Kimber Burrows kimber@denali.org
Call: 907-683-2597



Sample Itineraries

W.I.L.D. about Denali

Denali Education Center is flexible and interested in working with cooperating agencies to construct appropriate and relevant itineraries that address the agency's specific needs.

Location: Savage River Campground

Tuesday

- 12:00 PM Group leaves Fairbanks/Anchorage with bagged lunches
- 2:30 PM Group arrives at Savage Campground for orientation
- 3:30 PM Set up tents
- 4:00 PM Hike
- 6:00 PM Dinner
- 7:30 PM Hike, group games or presentation

Wednesday

- 8:00 AM Wake up, eat breakfast & pack lunches
- 10:00 AM Hike Horseshoe Lake, or Mt. Healy Overlook
- 12:45 PM Lunch at Riley Creek Mercantile
- 2:00 PM Drive to Denali Outdoor Center for rafting the canyon
- 4:30 PM Raft take-out at D.O.C.
- 5:00 PM Watch movie at Visitor's Center, back to campground
- 6:00 PM Dinner
- 7:30 PM Group games or presentation

Thursday

- 8:30 AM Wake up, eat breakfast, & pack lunches
- 9:30 AM Break camp and pack van
- 10:45 AM Visit Park Kennels
- 11:30 AM Gear clean-up at Denali Education Center
- 12:00 PM Closing Circle and Goodbyes
- 12:15 PM Depart for Fairbanks with lunches

Note: This itinerary is based on previous trips with groups of 6 participants aged 8-16.

Location: Wonder Lake Campground

Tuesday

- 12:30 pm orientation
- 2:05 pm Depart Riley Creek Loop for Wonder Lake
- 7:15 pm Arrive at Wonder Lake
- 7:30 pm Set up camp, Dinner, Pack lunches

Wednesday

- 7:00 am Breakfast
- 9:00 am Hike Quigley Ridge
- 12:30 pm Lunch on the Trail
- 4:00 pm Afternoon Activity
- 6:30 pm Dinner
- 7:30 pm Group games or presentation

Thursday

- 8:30 am Breakfast
- 10:30 am Morning activity
- 12:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00 pm Hike on McKinley Bar Trail
- 6:30 pm Dinner
- 7:30 pm Ranger presentation

Friday

- 8:00 am Depart Wonder Lake
- 1:50 pm Arrive at MSLC bus loop
- 2:15 pm Clean up at Denali Education Center
- 3:00 pm Closing Circle and Departure





“Inspiring Personal Connections to Denali”

Our Mission: To promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through fun, informative and inspiring programs.

Facilities: The Denali Education Center’s 90-seat lecture hall and offices are located in the *Charles Sheldon Center*, named in honor of the founder of Denali National Park. The Charles Sheldon Center was built with over 4,000 hours of volunteer effort and features post and beam log construction, an 18-foot stained glass mural of the Alaska Range, and an intricate tile mosaic of Denali. The Denali Education Center also operates a residential campus housing programs on the banks of the Nenana River just outside of Denali National Park and Preserve.

Current Program Offerings:

Tundra Tots: What could be more exciting than watching young minds discover the world around them! The Tundra Tots program is designed for toddlers/preschoolers age two to five. The program features a different nature theme each week and uses sensory and hands-on play to introduce toddlers to the importance of outdoor learning in Denali National Park.

Denali Discovery Camp: Partnering with the National Park Service through the Murie Science and Learning Center and the Denali Borough community, this weeklong day camp for first through eighth-graders provides an opportunity to discover Denali’s important and diverse ecosystems. Days filled with excursions to different locations within the park connect this vast wilderness and its future caretakers. Up to 36 kids participate in Denali Discovery Camp each summer.

Denali Backcountry Adventures: Designed specifically for high school students, this program is a follow-up to Denali Discovery Camp. Participants travel into the backcountry wilderness of Denali National Park for three nights to gather information for use by Denali Park researchers monitoring soundscapes, wildlife frequency and ecological impacts.

Residential Programs: An adventure in lifelong learning for school groups, conservation organizations, alumni travel groups and affinity groups. A variety of programs throughout the year bring people together from around the world to study Denali’s wildlife and natural history while exploring the balance between preservation and use in this unique subarctic wilderness. Denali Education Center residential programs reach up to 800 people each summer.

Denali Community Series: An open forum for cultural and natural history, current research, community interest, classes, art and music. Events are hosted throughout the summer in the Charles Sheldon Center and at the McKinley Park Community Center during the winter months. This popular series serves approximately 5000 people each year. Current events can be found on our online Community Calendar.

Discover Denali Research Fellowship: The Discover Denali Research Fellowship encourages scientific research that addresses management issues in Denali National Park and Preserve. Since its inception in 2006, the Discover Denali Research Fellowship has funded more than \$100,000 of research in the park.

Welcome to the Subarctic: The hour-long Welcome to the Subarctic presentation helps those preparing to travel into Denali National Park and Preserve. This hands-on lecture helps visitors make the most of their experience by introducing Denali’s subarctic ecosystem.

W.I.L.D. About Denali: Partnering with social service agencies, the Wilderness Intensive Learning Development (W.I.L.D.) program for at-risk youth and developmentally challenged youth and adults fosters personal growth during a wilderness experience in Denali National Park and Preserve. W.I.L.D.’s goals focus on developing self-confidence, teamwork skills, and respect for self, others and wilderness. Camping, rafting and hiking in Denali are powerful tools used to impact the participants. W.I.L.D. About Denali serves up to 80 participants each summer.

Organization History:

The Denali Education Center, formerly the Denali Foundation, was established in 1989 by the Denali Park Concessionaire and Denali National Park and Preserve Superintendent. These two were inspired to found a nonprofit that would serve as a research facility for biologists studying Denali's unique ecosystem and would encourage them to share their expertise with other professionals, park visitors, and the local community. This vision helped fill the communication gap between biologists, resource managers, and the public. In November 1989, the Denali Foundation was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Throughout the 1990s, the Denali Foundation offered educational travel programs for visitors to Denali in partnership with Elderhostel (now Road Scholar). These programs brought people from all over the country to Denali National Park for six nights to study wildlife, natural history, and the intricate balance between preservation and use. This week-long intensive study in Denali was (and remains) an incredibly unique experience in a tourist area where most visitors stay only one or two nights. The program created ambassadors for Denali. As the need for education about wilderness and protected places became apparent, the Denali Foundation adopted it as the focus of the organization.

Today we serve our original purpose and an expanded education-centered mission. In 2007, we changed our name to the Denali Education Center and our mission became *to promote understanding and appreciation of Denali through fun, informative and inspiring programs*. Over the last 26 years we have diversified our program offerings in an effort to reach program participants of all ages. Our goal is to help *all* visitors experience the mountains, forests, rivers, wildlife and people of Denali.



Denali Education Center Staff:

Executive Director	Jodi Rodwell
Operations Director	Jill Boelsma
Program Director	Kimber Burrows
Residential Program Manager	Patty Burns
Youth Program Manager	Julie Pearson

Denali Education Center Board of Directors:

Chairman	Greg LaHaie , <i>Owner, Kantishna Air Taxi, Denali Park, AK</i>
Vice Chair	Thom McAleer , <i>General Manager, Alaska Denali Travel, Anchorage, AK</i>
Secretary/Treasurer	Matthew Fitzgerald , <i>Area Manager, South/Central Washington, Wells Fargo Bank, Seattle, WA</i>
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	Jersey Jones , <i>Sales and Marketing, Specialty Imports, Fairbanks, AK</i>
	Scott Kiersztyn , <i>Instructor, Tahoma Audubon, Tahoma, WA</i>
	Blair Schoenborn , <i>Senior Analyst, Corporate Social Responsibility at BNY Mellon, Pittsburgh, PA</i>
	Mike Speaks , <i>International Adventure Travel, Denali Park, AK</i>
	Bonnie Westlund , <i>General Manager, Denali Princess Lodge, Denali Park, AK</i>