

Storm Warnings: Best Practices provides timely information, trends and ideas that relate to the looming storm and impact on our lives.

BEST PRACTICES

“Practical solutions for challenging times”

Issue 3, 2014

Engaging People in Solutions for Climate Change

Best practices Award: Weathering the Storm periodically recognizes organizations that provide practical, effective and quantifiable solutions for addressing the challenges of the *perfect storm*. It is our privilege and honor to present the Will Steger Foundation (WSF) as our newest “Best Practices Award” winner for its outstanding work in educating, empowering and engaging others in solutions to climate change.

WILL STEGER
FOUNDATION



Mission: “The Will Steger Foundation (WSF) educates and empowers people to engage in solutions to climate change.”

Organization: Based in Minneapolis, and founded in 2006 as a 501(c) (3) organization, the WSF’s unique story stems from their founder Will Steger, a legendary explorer. Using his compelling eyewitness account of the consequences of a warming world from over 50 years of polar exploration, the WSF engages people in the issue and solutions. Their culture of innovation stems from Will’s entrepreneurial spirit and accomplishments in exploration, education and advocacy.

The WSF strategically engages and empowers emerging youth leaders and educators for innovative climate change solutions. It recognizes that youth will inherit the unparalleled impacts of climate change and are among our most powerful advocates. It also recognizes that educators are critical messengers of climate and energy literacy, and schools and non-formal learning centers provide powerful examples of sustainability in communities. In addition, the WSF believes that to authentically address climate change, it needs to connect people, heart to heart, place to place, and align the issues with personal

experiences. Ultimately, just and sustainable solutions to climate change can only be realized through collective action.

How it works: The WSF works closely with youth, educators, decision-makers and the public to foster climate literacy and action with the goal of building a more equitable and sustainable future for all. To maximize the impact of climate change actions, the WSF has developed a portfolio of climate change initiatives that include: “training the trainers,” engaging young student leaders, and educating the public in a variety of ways.

Over 1,000 educators a year are reached through its Education Program. Over 5,000 young leaders, mentored by the WSF staff, are engaged in creating solutions on their campuses and in their communities. Will Steger’s tireless eyewitness to climate change presentations have inspired over 60,000 Minnesotans to take action in their homes, congregations and communities since he began presenting in 2006.

Track record: The results are impressive. In 2013-2014 alone, the WSF has achieved remarkable results in three major areas. Some examples::

1) Education:

- Its Summer Institute for Climate Change and Energy Education reached 60 educators from 6 states with a 3-day residential program. Four climate and energy literacy webinars were offered to over 200 participants from 30 states, and three countries and an additional 350 people watched the archives.
- Trained over 1,000 educators to incorporate climate change education into their teaching through conferences, workshops and other professional development opportunities.
- Expanded their reach through partnerships with the National Climate Assessment/Climate.Gov, [Parks Climate Challenge](#), [Climate and Energy Literacy Awareness Network](#), [Green Ribbons Schools](#) and Youth Voices of Change: Climate Change Youth video contest with the MN Pollution Control Agency.

2) Emerging Leaders:

- Directly supported student leadership on climate action projects at ten metro area high schools, actively mentored eight high school leaders through the [YEA! MN](#) steering committee, and organized a Youth Summit with Governor Dayton where 75 high school and college youth met with the Governor privately to discuss Minnesota’s clean energy future.
- Expanded our innovative mentorship program connecting 40 emerging youth climate leaders and veteran staff at 35 environmental non-profit organizations across 6 Midwest states.

3) Policy:

- Worked with the Minnesota Clean Energy and Jobs Coalition, comprising over 60

groups to advance Minnesota's clean energy future to strengthen Minnesota's renewable energy and energy efficiency laws and passed the state's first solar standard.

- Built broad-based public support for climate action and clean air protections. With partners, we collected 11,400 public comments to direct Xcel Energy to examine shutting down coal burners at the Sherco power plant in Becker, MN.

Ways to Engage/Connect with the Will Steger Foundation:

There are several access points in which to be a part of the solution and a supporter of the WSF's work! (www.willstegerfoundation.org/contribute). You may also download the WSF curriculum and other educational resources at:

<http://www.willstegerfoundation.org/climate-change-basics> and

<http://www.willstegerfoundation.org/curricula-resources>

Stay tuned for WSF climate change education events including their climate and energy literacy webinar series, "*Dine for Climate, Brewing a Better Climate*" and more by signing up for the WSF's newsletter.

<http://www.willstegerfoundation.org/enewsletter>

Last, check out their website for updates on their newest project: "*Minnesota Stories in a Changing Climate*." This two-year project aims to collect and share stories on climate impacts here in Minnesota in forums and workshops around the state and via an interactive website and Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) program.

Check out their blog for the latest in climate news, climate change education resources, and stories of our youth in action: <http://www.willstegerfoundation.org/about-us/wsf-blog>

Visit them online:

www.willstegerfoundation.org

www.facebook.com/willstegerfoundation

www.twitter.com/willstegerfound

Weathering the Storm: Closing commentary:

As the "perfect storm" gains traction and the ravages of climate change become more pronounced, the Will Steger Foundation is a shining example of a boots-on-ground organization developing proactive initiatives that get results. By leveraging their efforts through teachers, educating the public and mentoring youth leaders of tomorrow, they are effectively fulfilling their mission to "inspire and empower people to engage in solutions to climate change."

And so, to the Will Steger Foundation and its dedicated staff, we salute you!

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