



# THE WILD TIMES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF WILDHERNESS

JANUARY 2024

## CONTENTS

THE POWER OF  
BELONGING

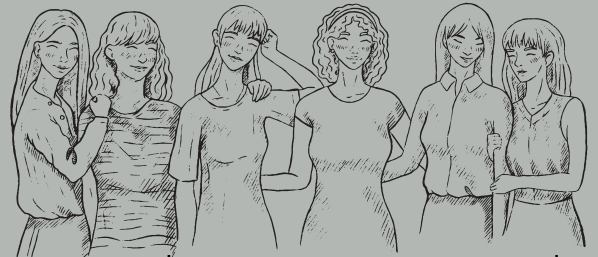
GROWING UP

CHANGING  
PERSPECTIVES

WHY WILDHERNESS

EPHIPHANIES &  
EMPOWERMENT

UPCOMING EVENTS



## *To belong.*

The search for belonging and connection is a universal and deeply human experience. Throughout our lives, we seek spaces where we can express ourselves without fear of judgment, find understanding and build meaningful connections with others.

The journey to find one's place of belonging often involves self-discovery and embracing our true identity. It's about understanding who we are, what we value, and where we feel a sense of alignment with others. Sometimes, it takes time and exploration to discover the people and communities that resonate with our authentic selves.

wildHERness was built for women to be their unabashed selves, to experience a supportive and expectation-free environment, and enjoy unlimited chances for adventure.

Welcome to wildHERness. You belong here.

## THE POWER OF BELONGING

FROM JESS RICE  
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

AUTHENTIC ACCESSIBLE ADVENTURE



## GROWING UP

HOW WE CONTINUE TO LEARN, EXPAND, AND  
SHARE OUR VISION

by Jess Banes, Co-founder

It was another wonderful year for wildHERness; full of learning, expansion, and notable progress in our mission to educate, mentor and serve our communities. At our 2023 Leadership Team Retreat we happily acknowledged our development from a shared idea and dream to the fully operational and impactful organization we are today. Along with acknowledging our growth, our team discussed how we plan to continue with the same momentum of expansion, while holding true to the values and missions of our organization, as we transition into 2024.

Maya Angelou said, "You can't really know where you are going until you know where you have been." For us, that means DATA and a team to collect, assess and implement the information gathered. Our new Measurements, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) committee is going to be hitting the books, crunching the numbers, and asking questions over the next year to develop evidence-based procedures with measurable outcomes. Our implementation plans will support continuous organizational improvement and control drift from our objective of providing Authentic Accessible Adventure to our community.

Our new MEL Committee will be comprised of myself, Jenny Anderson, Secretary and Rachel Erkenbeck-Hart, Oklahoma Coordinator. We are excited to get started and help wildHERness continue to evolve.



### NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OVER \$48K RAISED &  
INVESTED IN OUR  
MISSION

HOSTED OVER 30  
EVENTS

HELD 6 LEARN TO HUNT  
CAMPS

PARTNERED WITH 12  
ORGANIZATIONS

COMPLETED 3 SERVICE  
PROJECTS

SERVED OVER 350  
INDIVIDUALS

APPOINTED A FULL  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APPOINTED 4  
COORDINATORS

# CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

by Kellie Beargie

***I used to be a vegetarian, and now I'm a hunter.***

Let me explain.

I've always been against factory farming. The crowded lots, the mass slaughter. Little opportunity for animals to engage in natural behaviors. Then, on a wildHERness camp out (caving...turns out I hate caving), someone pointed out that the deer she hunts are living completely free, natural lives. I turned that over in my mind for a while and found, much to my surprise, that I agreed.

So I snuck into Learn to Hunt Deer Camp that year, shot my very first rifle, and while I didn't get a deer, I did find that a whole world existed alongside mine. And I get these rare, privileged glimpses into it when I'm out in the field. The realization that I'm such a small part of this great big thing is so blindingly, overwhelmingly comforting, and frightening, and never fails to blow my mind.

This connection is something I never would have experienced without wildHERness, and now I can't even imagine my life without it. How can *you* begin to explore *your* wild?



## SPONSOR SHOUTOUT



### SOUTHERN RACKS

HIGH QUALITY SCENT-FREE PRODUCTS FORMULATED FOR WOMEN'S NEEDS!  
CHECK OUT THE ENTIRE LINE HERE: [SOUTHERNRACKSOUTDOORS.COM](http://SOUTHERNRACKSOUTDOORS.COM)

### ADVENTURESS MAGAZINE

THE ONLY WOMEN'S HUNTING AND FISHING MAGAZINE IN PUBLICATION!  
SUBSCRIBE HERE: [ADVENTURESSMAGAZINE.COM](http://ADVENTURESSMAGAZINE.COM)





WILDERNESS  
FIRST AID  
NOVEMBER 2023



 CAMP WYMAN  
Experiences

 ALPINE  
SHOP  
#get OUTSIDEyourself

# WHY WILDERNESS

*by Marsha Riley, Treasurer*

"Why wildHERness?" you ask? Here is my take.

wildHERness was formed to offer outdoors opportunities for women of all ages, demographics, and experiences an avenue to learn and skill build in all facets of the outdoor world. Along the way, participants have a chance to build relationships with other women with similar interests.

As a member of the senior LGBTQ+ community, I felt left out of many of the organizations available to me in Kansas City. Sure, I have quite a bit of experience in hunting and fishing - over 55 years. I felt something was missing. The ability to connect with like-minded women was hard to find. Also, I wanted to give back, teach, and share.

I met Jess Rice, President and Founder, while buying deer tags when wildHERness was a new group in 2020. She encouraged me to attend an event- and I did! The rest is history - and history yet to be written. I have met women who I consider my closest friends, hunting, and fishing buddies. wildHERness also allowed me to share my passion for archery. I love to teach what has meant so much to me.

My outdoors experience is so much richer because of this wonderful organization. I have a feeling it will be for you also if you join us. It doesn't have to be just hunting and fishing. Hiking, stained glass making, foraging, mentoring, camping, outdoor cooking, wilderness first aid, and overlanding just touch the tip of what makes up wildHERness. So, that is "Why wildHERness" - because we need each other!



# MEET OUR *Featured*

## OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATE

*Spotlighting the industry associates who go above and beyond to make women feel comfortable shopping in their stores.*

*A passion project by  
Sharenda Birts, Co-founder*



## BRAD BECKER

### OLATHE GUN STORE

**How long have you been employed at OGS?**

*I've been in sales since 2015.*

**What do you like most about working directly with customers in the outdoor industry?**

*I like working with people and assisting them in enjoying shooting sports: shotguns (hunting or target shooting), rifles and handguns.*

**How do you approach assisting women in the store or while shooting?**

*When helping a lady shooter I first like to observe. I look for gun fit, stance and mechanics. New shooters are easier to assist because they have no old habits. New shooters need success and that is why I like reactive targets (clays, steel, splatter targets). And, I like to see success, because mistakes like missing the target lead to success. We all started at some point and practice is what allows shooters to improve.*

**What advice do you have for women coming to your business for the first time?**

*Do NOT get discouraged--shooting takes time. Be consistent with mechanics; gun fit and gun mount are important. Then practice and enjoy!*

**Thank you, Brad, for all you do to help get new shooters into the sport!**

**BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OUR SPRING SHOTGUN CLINIC!**

# EPIPHANIES & EMPOWERMENT

by Amy Rush Howard

**I had an epiphany at this year's GO WYLD event and it has to do with magic.**

My husband and daughter arrived right before the first day's classes commenced. I let my daughter know where her first class would meet and asked if she was ok going alone. She replied, "Yeah, Mom. See ya." I didn't see her again until dinner time.

That's when the epiphany struck...she didn't need my help or my company. She was an independent, fearless 13-year-old girl who could navigate herself just fine, all thanks to the magic of wildHERness. Her first wildHERness event was last year's GO WYLD. I was instructing, so she was a bit apprehensive about going to classes on her own. We did a few classes together, introduced her to other participants and instructors, and by the end of the event she was comfortable enough to explore a bit on her own.

Magic happened that weekend.

Earlier this year she surprised me by wanting to go to a frogging event that would involve gigging, processing and eating her absolute most favorite animal on the planet. This kid not only gigged a frog, she skinned and processed several others and was one of the first to eat battered and seasoned frog legs fresh from the fryer. I credit the phenomenal women there that night with providing my daughter with a safe, non-judgmental place to learn. They cheered when she gigged her first frog, they encouraged her when she got frustrated trying to skin one and were such an awesome group of women to learn from. The magic of wildHERness was there again.



By the time this year's GO WYLD came around she was ready to do her own thing. She checked her schedule, attended her classes and only checked in at the end of the day during dinner. That magic I mentioned earlier has to do with the whole vibe that surrounds wildHERness events. It's *empowering*, it's *welcoming* and it's most definitely *amazing*.

# WE ARE CHANGING!

With the new year comes many changes. You won't find any new resolutions here at wildHERness--just the same commitment to creating authentic accessible adventure for everyone.



# WE ARE GROWING!

That means we are expanding to new areas! We have added 2 new board members, 6 new coordinators and 2 new states of operation. Read on to learn more about the incredible humans that are joining our team in 2024.





## Zsakee Lewis

Zsakee was born and raised in NYC. Her primary outdoor activities include hiking, camping, hunting, fishing and gardening. Zsakee believes that when we see ourselves in the outdoors, we'll feel more comfortable exploring. She encourages women/ women of color to explore, take up space, adventure confidently, and step up as conservationists and stewards of the lands in which we recreate.



## Nikki Horne

Nikki has worked for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service since 2016. She currently manages a national wildlife refuge in Northwest Colorado, near the Utah border. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Nikki has been an avid outdoorswoman from the beginning. Nikki's mom was a role model in the outdoors, bringing her along on many outdoor adventures from bowfishing invasive carp in the Wolf River to countless hours in the deer stand. Her dad was a Wisconsin Conservation Warden instilling a knowledge and respect for natural resources from early on turning her passion into a career and never looking back. Now, she gets to manage land for the benefit of wildlife! In her free time, Nikki enjoys spending time with her golden retriever, Oakley, and exploring the West. You'll likely find her in the mountains hunting elk or perfecting her fly-fishing skills in a river somewhere. One of her biggest passions is being a mentor for other women as they embark on their journeys in the world's greatest classroom: The Outdoors.



## Amy Rush Howard

Amy is Missouri-born gal who was lucky enough to have a dad that shared her inquisitive nature and his love of the natural world. Growing up, she enjoyed everything about the outdoors - doing things like fishing, hunting for insects, birdwatching, camping and hiking. Amy lived in Arizona for 8 years and traveled extensively around the U.S. before returning home to the KC area. After getting married to a gun guy, she tried out shooting sports and then went on her first deer hunt 8 years ago with her husband as her mentor. That unlocked a whole new level of outdoor interest so Amy started signing up for activities through organizations like wildHERness to try different things - and found that she really liked just about everything she tried. That has led to learning lots of new skills, mentoring other women and gaining so many fantastic and like-minded friends. What an amazing journey it's been so far!





## Sam Nash

Based out of Cass County, MO, Samantha grew up exploring the Kansas & Missouri countryside. She deepened her passion for nature after connecting with wildHERness. Sam soon found a personal niche in trapping and she has developed a skill set and knowledge base that rivals even the most seasoned veteran & now teaches other women how to trap. Sam encourages everyone to get out & explore!



## Amanda Garrett

Amanda was born and raised in a little farming community in rural Kansas. Growing up, she loved to tag along hunting and fishing with her dad. Amanda has had a love of the outdoors and God's amazing creations for as long as she can remember. When Amanda met her husband, he added fuel to the fire, and they continued to adventure in nature together with their kids. A few of Amanda's favorite activities are upland and turkey hunting, homesteading, horseback riding, and trapping.

When she met the gals of wildHERness, she knew she had found the missing link she'd been craving. Exploring the outdoors with other WOMEN who were welcoming, encouraging, and supportive was a game changer. Amanda has forged new friendships that will last a lifetime, gained new skills and knowledge, and found a new passion for making other women feel confident and capable in exploring their own wild.



## Paula Hiatt

Paula is an avid outdoorsman who has a deep passion for hunting, fishing, bowfishing, and shooting sports. With a natural affinity for the great outdoors, Paula always seeks adventures that allow her to connect with nature. Whether she's patiently waiting in a tree stand or targeting fish with her bow, she finds solace and exhilaration in these activities. Her dedication to these sports goes beyond mere hobbies; it's a lifestyle that encompasses her love for nature, her respect for wildlife, and her commitment to preserving the environment. Paula is a KDWP-Certified Fishing Instructor, a Certified NRA Range Safety Officer, and a distinguished graduate in defensive handguns. She seeks to inspire, empower, and guide other outdoor enthusiasts, and actively mentors those wishing to sharpen their skills.





# 2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

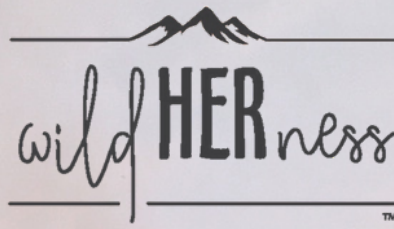
Mom & Me Squirrel Hunt  
Waterfowl DIY  
Colorado Adventure Retreat  
Snowshoeing  
Furtrapping Camp  
Long Range Rifle School  
Reloading  
Basic Handgun  
Bowfishing

DIY Euro Mounts  
NY Salmon on the Fly  
Botanical Inks  
Magical Mosses  
Milk & Milk Products  
Backyard Meat Birds  
Colorado Winter Sports  
Women's Hunter Education  
Boating & Backing Basics

*and more!*

WILDHERNESS.ORG





## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR WORK

### **DONATE**

100% of funds raised go to support our mission

### **LAND ACCESS**

help us introduce more women to outdoor pursuits

### **MENTOR + TEACH**

make an impact by sharing your passion & knowledge

### **SHARE**

spread the word! Share our posts, tell your friends. Better yet--bring a friend to an event!

### **BUY MERCH**

all proceeds go to support our mission