



# Education History



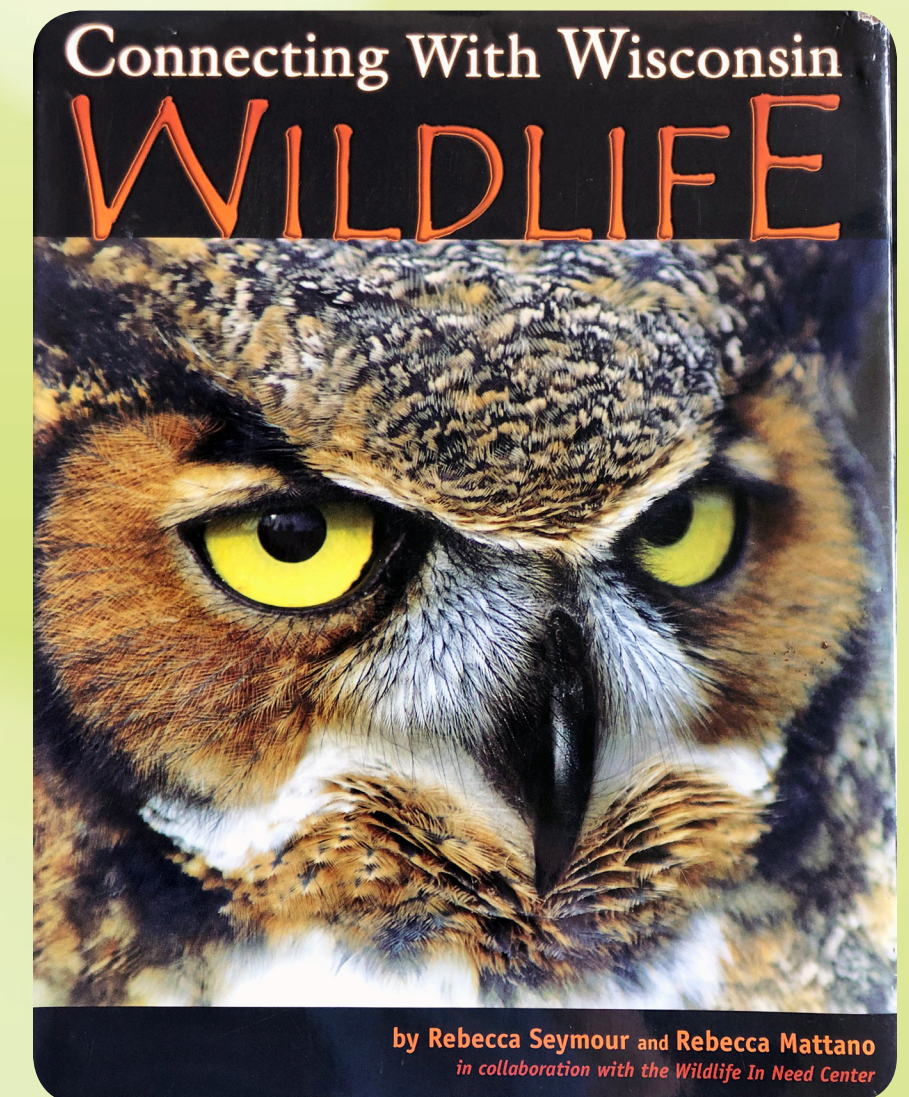
Left: Early education and awareness booth



Middle left: Leslie Kiehl with Sova



Middle right: Alex Schlecht with Daphne



Right: Book cover

When the Wildlife in Need Center first began, the founders believed education was a crucial part to helping wild animals and was an important “piece of the puzzle” to our mission. The central focus was about spreading the Wildlife in Need Center’s mission of wildlife rehabilitation and release, and to get the word about services provided at WINC. Education efforts began at veterinarian offices, pet stores, local civic clubs and festivals. WINC then expanded to schools and scout groups.

Nancy Frank and Nan Calvert were the first staff members to help run the education, as well as taking care of the wild patients. Along with early staff members, volunteers played an integral role in giving education programs and running education booths (also called awareness booths as seen in the above left picture).

In the early education years, volunteers used a slide projector, then transitioned to props and skulls.  
In 1999, the first animal ambassadors were introduced.

In a 1996 newspaper article: “We have a two-pronged mission,” says Frank, “We not only work with the animals, but we also educate people and teach a respect for the earth as a whole.” Nancy further commented, “Volunteers from the center frequently visit schools and libraries to teach children about what the center does and how important it is to respect nature’s children.” This practice continues today!

In 2003, Leslie Kiehl (middle left picture above) was the first person hired at the Wildlife in Need Center specifically for the Education Department. During her time from 2003-2015, Leslie educated more than 100,000 people and instilled a newfound respect for wildlife within the public. In memory of Leslie, the Leslie Kiehl Education WINC Education Program Fund was created in 2015 to provide funding for groups who unable to pay the program fee.

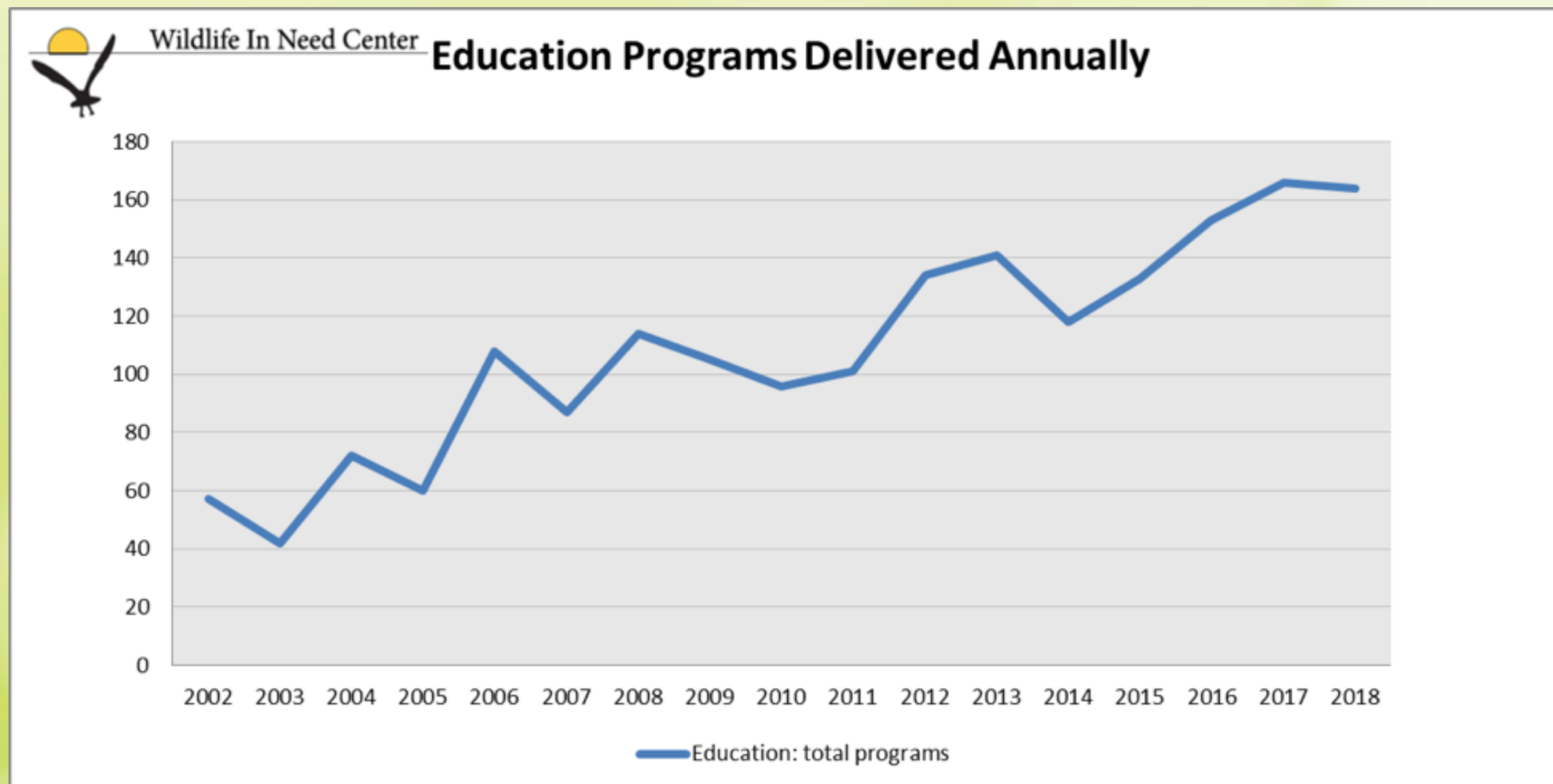
After Leslie’s passing, Alex Schlecht (middle right picture above) took over as Education Coordinator in 2015 until 2018. With the expansion of the Education Department, Angela Nirk was hired in 2017 as a part-time Wildlife Educator, followed by Maddi Williams who is our current Education Coordinator. Maddi and Angela work as a team to provide wildlife education programs from Madison to Milwaukee and everywhere in between.

In 2013 WINC published a book, *Connecting People with Wisconsin Wildlife* authored by Rebecca Mattano & Rebecca Seymour (Left picture). This book is about Wisconsin wildlife while featuring several animal ambassadors and Dakota the Great Horned Owl.

Today, WINC’s Education Department continues to meet the demand for wildlife education in Waukesha County and surrounding communities. WINC’s mobile education team travels frequently, reaching a wide variety of groups and people of all ages. The education mission endures to teach people about living harmoniously with wildlife. Since 1999, WINC’s education team has reached over 500,000 people.



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## WINC Education Stats

- 1999 WINC delivered 28 education programs reaching 1,660 people
- Today, WINC delivers an average 160 education programs annually reaching 25-115,000 people



## The first ambassador crew: (year they became an ambassador)

- Zip the Bullsake 1999
- Digger the Eastern Tiger Salamander 1999
- Slither the Western Fox Snake 1999
- Ralph and Maggie the Black-tailed Prairie Dog 2000
- Dakota the Great Horned Owl was our first bird in 2000

## Current Education Ambassadors: (year they became an ambassador)

- Dakota the Great Horned Owl 2000
- Daphne the Muscovy Duck 2007
- Jewel the Ornate Box Turtle 2005
- Raenah the Red-tailed Hawk 2008
- Antoinette the Western Painted Turtle 2010
- Gregory the Groundhog 2010
- Grace the American Kestrel 2011
- Chloe the Eastern Screech Owl 2012
- Sova the Barred Owl 2012
- Meadow the Bull snake 2013
- Evie the Eastern Fox snake 2015
- Bella the American Toad 2015
- Chase the Striped Skunk 2016



Top left & bottom right: Madilyn Williams, Education Coordinator

Bottom: Stacey Zacher, Education Volunteer

Middle: WINC mobile donated by Dean Pipito, pictured right, with WINC staff. Used for education and animal care

Top right: Angela Nirk, Wildlife Educator