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# VOICE

THURSTON COUNTY CHAMBER

## **Wolf Haven International:**

Globally Recognized  
Conservation and  
Education

**SPSCC's Residential  
Construction Academy  
Building Career  
Opportunities**

**Balancing Forest  
Conservation and  
Community Revenue**

**Executive Profile:  
Hampton Lanham Group**

GROWING A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY & VIBRANT COMMUNITY



# Wolf Haven International:

## *Globally Recognized Conservation and Education*

*Since 1982, Wolf Haven International has combined sanctuary, conservation and education to protect and preserve wolves. This 501(c)(3) nonprofit welcomes families, school groups, and visitors from near and far to learn about these iconic and deeply admired animals.*

*Left to right: Evan Skytte, Irina Osechinskaya, Heather Hilf, Kelley McKee, Geoff Willard*

*by Kathryn Millhorn • Photos by Shanna Paxton Photography*

Executive Director Geoff Willard moved to Washington in 2022 specifically to join the Wolf Haven team. With more than 20 years in the conservation field, Willard appreciates how deeply “enmeshed in the community” the organization is. He finds great joy in working with these remarkable animals, sharing their significance, and witnessing the lasting educational impact Wolf Haven has on families and visitors alike.

“When I tell locals I’m with Wolf Haven,” says Willard, “most admit they’ve only visited on school field trips. I’m super glad they have that positive memory, but I always encourage them to come see how we’ve grown and evolved over the years; we’re a real gem in the community.”

Wolf Haven is a 2024 Outstanding Sanctuary Award winner from the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries. They’re the only wolf sanctuary in the world to gain that achievement.

This represents decades of hard work and research to benefit the many canids in their care. “Here, humans are visitors but the sanctuary is first and foremost for the wolves,” says Willard. “Our activities used to be more oriented to people and entertainment, but we’ve really shifted more and more focus on the wellbeing of the animals. We’re not a zoo; we’re a sanctuary and care for two distinct populations of wolves.”

The first are rescued wolves who had been raised in captivity as black-market pets, wolf-dog hybrids, or those otherwise incapable of living in the wild. When confiscated by or surrendered to the authorities, such animals are typically either euthanized or rescued by sanctuaries. At Wolf Haven, “they can live in dignity, as wolves, for the rest of their lives,” says Willard.

The other population is more wild—these wolves are candidates for eventual release, where they can





*Six year old female, Ellie is 90% wolf.*

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–Geoff Willard*

live freely in the wilderness and support recovery of wild populations. They reside in remote parts of the sanctuary and are part of a federal endangered species program managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wolf Haven participates in the conservation of both American red wolves and Mexican gray wolves. Just last year, one of their males was released in North Carolina and has already fathered two litters—sixteen healthy pups in total, and a huge success for the most endangered canid species in the world.

Willard and the Wolf Haven team greatly appreciate the networking and programming opportunities offered by the Chamber of Commerce and other civic supporters.

“This is an amazing county,” he says, “and we’re fortunate to have been founded here. Wolf Haven thrives with community partnerships from businesses, nonprofits,

school groups, foundations, and volunteers.”

A few key community partners include Evergreen Veterinary Hospital, Summit Fence, Walrath Landscape Supply, Colvin Ranch, Olympia Computer, the Olympia Garden Club, Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, regional tribal governments, Thurston Conservation District, Center for Natural Lands Management, the town of Tenino, and local stores like Browser’s Booksellers, Radiance, Orca Books, and Rainy Day Records who have featured their publications for sale.

The public can support Wolf Haven through direct giving, sponsoring your favorite wolf, grants, memberships, offering volunteer hours, or even donations of fresh roadkill and unused portions of hunted animals. Questions about meat donations can be directed to [JudahJ@wolfhaven.org](mailto:JudahJ@wolfhaven.org) or by calling 360.264.4695 x226.



To visit Wolf Haven, advance online reservations are required. The sanctuary offers six small-group tours each weekend, year-round—except during April and May. Tours are available on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays in the warmer months, and on Saturdays and Sundays during the winter.

Visitors can also explore the 36-acre Mima Mound Patrick Vance Dunn Memorial Prairie, a stunning protected site with a walking path open from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Friday through Sunday in summer, and from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday during winter months. Prairie visitors are asked to check in and out at the Wolf Haven Visitor Center.

Keep an eye out for Wolf Haven's ongoing capital campaign to build a state-of-the-art Treehouse Learning Center for kids, as well as its annual spring auction and fundraiser at Great Wolf Lodge in March 2026—where else? The event will feature keynote speaker Diane Boyd, a renowned wolf biologist and researcher. Ticket and sponsorship information will be announced soon.

So, the next time you're craving a meaningful Pacific Northwest adventure, plan a trip to Wolf Haven. Bring the whole family and experience the beauty, majesty, and enduring spirit of the wolves that have long called our region home. ●

*9-year old male Mexican wolf, Hodari. His official designation within the SAFE program is M1458.*

