

A Big Thank You to Students Saving Elephants at Weber State University

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In the Fall of 2012, a group of Zoology students at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah collaborated on a civic engagement project in the Mammalogy course taught by Dr. Sam Zeveloff. They decided to raise awareness about the deteriorating plight of the African elephant.

The students (Kelsey Paolini, Tammy Edwards, Ryan Oda, Jared Johnson, Jaren French, and Vishal Patel) organized several events to inform members of the university and surrounding community about the struggle faced by these majestic mammals. Jaren and his friend Tom Bakke organized a "fight night for the elephants". (Tom, a recent Weber State graduate, is presently training to become an elephant keeper at the Toledo Zoo). Admission costs to view a televised mixed martial arts battle went into an account created for elephant conservation. Jared and his family donated printed t-shirts featuring an elephant with the words "I Stopped a Poacher"; these were sold at the event.

The group developed presentations about elephant conservation which were given at local schools. Jared and Jaren informed elementary school children about this issue, while Ryan and Vishal spoke at a regional high school, providing a more graphic and in-depth presentation about elephant poaching.

Kelsey and Tammy created an art sale with several components. First, they asked local artists to donate pieces which were subsequently sold at a silent auction. They also reached out to the Advanced Design class in the university's Department of Visual Arts to create elephant-themed posters which were made available for purchase. Some 20 design students contributed pieces; these were sold at a display booth in the Student Union Building. Many visitors ordered these striking posters, again resulting in funds for elephant conservation.

After a considered class discussion, it was determined that the money raised, \$872, should be donated to **Save the Elephants** given its long and successful history in promoting the survival of these magnificent animals. Through a concerted and innovative effort, these students were able to inform hundreds of individuals of all ages throughout northern Utah about the urgent need to protect the African elephant.

