

Testimonial – Brandi Love

My experience with the 2021 Women Hunt™ Program:

I honestly don't know where to begin or how to accurately describe the life changing impact this program has had on me personally.

From the newfound circle of women who I get the privilege of calling my friends, the generous gifts and donations to start my hunting journey in terms of gear and supplies, to the ever-amazing experience of "learning" from some of the best instructors and passionate conservationists.

I applied for the program, looking to open a new door, a new opportunity, a new chapter per se. During the pandemic, it was easy to get stuck, working from home, looking at the four same walls every day; life had gotten a little stagnate. I respected the application and the quality of questions asked of me. I knew that the opportunity was grand and should not be taken lightly, nor were my answers.

Getting the news that I had been selected started the ball in motion, so to speak. It became real! The excitement began to grow. The planning, the coordinating, the few extra "I"s and "T"s to cross with a global pandemic and international travel, just made things become more real and real. The whole time leading up to the trip, the support from Renée and the Wild Sheep Foundation was beyond beneficial. Renée went above and beyond to provide resources, insight and tips and tricks to make sure I left Canada without a hitch.

Once arriving in San Antonio, the magic just happened. From our first dinner together as a group, you could feel the excitement and energy that we all brought together. Every one of us came with an open uplifted outlook to what would be the next five days ahead. The trip out to the ranch seemed to fly by, the buzz in the van and the excitement was nothing to be ignored.

The FTW Ranch was beyond any of my expectations. The accommodations, the food, the staff, all made the trip go off seamlessly. The comfort and ease that was provided, that at home feeling just hit a person as soon as they arrived.

The learning environment aspect also carried the same feeling. The instructors, guides and staff all made me feel like this was an environment to learn, become comfortable and confident and prepared. When I tell people about my experience, I often refer to it as a clinic or a school, terms commonly used in the horse world, to reference specialized learning with specialized instructors. That's exactly what this program was. A safe, secure, comfortable learning environment where a person who was open could absorb and learn as much as possible. By creating this environment, never once did I feel frustrated, confused, angered or any sort of other "negative" feeling. Any challenges, opportunities were met head on, or communicated in "A"nother way with a different technique, or language, so that I could gain the most out of the experience and become comfortable and confident to ensure I was able to take that one shot as a hunter. Prior to the trip, I was a registered firearm owner, and there hasn't been a gopher or a coyote that at minimum hasn't been shot at through my scope on my .22. However, I have only fired a larger caliber rifle at most 5 times before this experience. To say the least, that first day on the range, I was nervous. We had some of the most tried and true instructors there to help us through the experience. One of the more comforting parts of this is the removal of the element of pressure. My father has been an amazing teacher and has gotten me to where I am today with my shooting, however

there is always that undercurrent of pressure from a family member or someone you have a close personal relationship with (family member, husband, boyfriend or even friend) when you are trying to learn a new skill and become confident. There tends to be a barrier in communication or flexibility in teaching, that the instructors at the FTW Ranch and their new hunter program have learnt and overcome.

As a direct result of this trip, I feel confident and knowledgeable enough to set out into the outdoors. I am so thankful for the formalized mentorship piece, that sharing of knowledge and continued guidance with getting into hunting. There are lots of challenges, gear, regulations, methods, etc. that come along with hunting and while I feel like I have a foundation, that continued learning and educational aspect never stops and nor should it. That guidance ensures that the efforts and commitments set out by the Women Hunt™ Program have a legacy affect.

The legacy part of the Women Hunt™ Program doesn't just end as we boarded flights home or when the next group of women are selected, it continues with the ignited passion to become involved, give back and be a part of the solution. I will be honest to say that I have been lacking that "give back" drive or purpose probably for the past 10 years. While I had been involved in rodeo associations and boards earlier, as of late I have been focused on other aspects of my life and had yet to find something worthy of my time. Well, that's changed! I see the impact and the momentum that WSF and its chapters and affiliates do and to say the least, I am all in! I hope to be an ambassador for the sport, the conservation, and the Women Hunt™ Program. I take every opportunity to share my story, my experience and encourage others to become involve. This is not just limited to the Women Hunt™ Program, though its largely the focus. My story and experience already include conversations about conservation, ethics, mindset shifts regarding regional hunting and guidelines, and encouraging the same conversations and open discussions in others.

The overall impact that this opportunity has provided falls nothing short of life changing.