Training Objectives:

• Teach nature as the “lesson,” information technology as the “tool.”
• Engage participants through inquiry-based activities.
• Build capacity and enthusiasm in Environmental Literacy.
• Focus on real learning aligned with “life skills” and “academic standards”.
• Build connections to subject areas and 4-H project areas.
• Integrate formal and non-formal learning environments.
• Showcase youth/student products through public education.

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• International Water Institute

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Olympus America Inc.

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A special thanks to Stephen/Argyle Science Teacher, Gary Kotts, and his students for creating the foundation for this project.

Photo by: Levi, Hawley Student

Photo by: Haley, Hawley Student

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There are numerous initiatives sweeping the nation directed at reversing the trends of today’s young people to live an inside, sedentary lifestyle affected by societal fears, technology and other factors of convenience. Emerging research has demonstrated that kids who are connected to nature are healthier, have fewer behavioral problems, and score better on standardized tests in school.

“Through the Lens of a Camera” is a new, “experientially-based” 4-H program, designed to use photography and video to help connect kids and adults to nature experiences found right in our back yards. All activities are linked to MN Educational Standards and MN 4-H Life Skills.

Academic Achievement
Nationwide studies show that schools and communities that used outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based experiential education were associated with significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. For example, students involved in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27% (American Institute for Research 2005). Additional studies find that using “hands-on” approaches supports critical brain development in kids. (Reuters 2008)

Engages Kids in their Learning
The infusion of technology with the natural learning environment of the outdoors, connects participants to learning that is real in context and relevant to long term retention of skills needed academically and for life!

These skills include:
- Inquiry
- Observation
- Research
- Sensory perception
- Problem Solving
- Communication
- Technology Literacy

Through the Lens of a Camera

The most important thing about introducing a child to nature is: “not what you know, but how you feel” - Richard Louv