



Dede's Green Scene: Ian Somerhalder Foundation

by Dede Tabak, June 13 2018



Ian Somerhalder and Nikki Reed made a name for themselves playing vampires in Hollywood, but in real life, the pair are known for their generous hearts and passion, especially towards activism. In 2010, Ian founded the Ian Somerhalder Foundation as a way to educate and make some positive changes to the planet. Over the years, Ian and Nikki's efforts have helped the organization flourish and grow. The foundation now has a youth outreach program which will ensure that future generations are inspired to continue the ISF mission. Jules Trace, the Director of Youth and Director of Community Outreach for ISF, took time to answer some questions from EcoPlum about the Ian Somerhalder Foundation and its future.

1. What was the motivation behind creating the [Ian Somerhalder Foundation](#)?



Ian Somerhalder, Founder and President of ISF, and wife Nikki Reed, Vice President of ISF, share a passion for animals, youth and the environment that inspires them to make the world a better place for this and future generations. Their combined efforts are the driving force behind the Ian Somerhalder Foundation. Ian was born and raised in Louisiana. He grew up spending most of his time outdoors where he learned to appreciate the great beauty of nature and to respect the valuable lessons that it can teach us. After witnessing the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the horrible aftermath of the Gulf Oil Spill just five years later, Ian was overcome by a feeling of helplessness. He was inspired to take action and so, The Ian Somerhalder Foundation was established in November 2010.

The purpose of the Foundation is to advance science; promote the conservation of natural resources, such as forests, lands, and wildlife, for the benefit of the entire community; provide relief to the poor, distressed, and underprivileged; and support other organizations conducting activities under Section 501(c)(3) of the

Internal Revenue Code. Our environment functions as an interdependent system. Plants, animals and humans depend upon one another for survival and each person plays a unique role in the future of all

life on this planet. The problems we face require a cohesive approach that does not sacrifice one component over another. ISF empowers human action through programs and collaborations that promote education, innovation and build skills in empathy and effective leadership. ISF engages and supports youth – one of our most powerful, yet often disregarded, groups. Through programs, partnerships, grants, media initiatives and campaigns, ISF provides support for organizational and grassroots efforts that protect and restore our planet.

2. Jules, who are you and what inspired you to get involved with ISF?



After 7+ years with the Foundation, this answer comes from the fullest, most appreciative part of my heart. My name is Jules Trace and I am the Director of Youth and Director of Community Outreach for ISF.

I am a self-proclaimed animal enthusiast, dating back to my earliest memories as a child. I have a tie dye personality, ruled by happiness and consumed by appreciation for all living creatures. As I got older, an additional passion started to develop for inspiring and uplifting children, too. I obtained my teaching degree in Special Education. I realized that creating heart connected, mentally inspiring *awareness* is the key to

developing true passion and generating real change. With my inherit love and appreciation for the underserved, both creatures and youth, I knew my future had to combine those passions.

I was first inspired by ISF when I heard of Ian Somerhalder himself, getting his hands dirty and using his voice to make goals of powerful change with his namesake Foundation. I began my volunteerism as the “Kids Manager” within the first few months of the Foundation’s inception. With our Team’s inspiration and motivation to create a hands-on project for children of all ages and abilities, a program was born simply from love, strength and many voices and has now grown into a world renowned accomplishment and opportunity for youth.

As the years went on, my quiet voice was given a megaphone BY and WITH the kids themselves and I realized when you truly believe and love something, talking about that in public isn’t scary but instead energizing - vibrating meaningful connections between you, others and the planet. The title Director of Community Outreach was added and now we strive to do 15+ events a year where we teach others around the globe of ISF’s Mission. Once you discover your passion (or multiple!), you just can’t contain it. BE who you want to be, completely and honestly, and always grow in your learning and love. Don’t settle in your life. Your dream job exists, take my word for it!

3. What are ISF’s Current Programs and Services?

While ISF is continually running several projects and campaigns, these are our ongoing Program Services:



The [ISF Emergency Medical Care Grant for Animals](#) provides financial assistance to animal welfare organizations, agencies, and in some cases individual rescuers, responsible for the care of animals recovering from abuse, neglect or injuries suffered from a traumatic event. Founded in 2014, as of this date ISF has given over \$400,000 and helped to save over 1,600 animals through this program. A unique quality of this program is any creature is applicable, not just domestic, as we believe all animals lives and care are of equal value.



[ISF Youth Volunteer Days](#) are impactful and unifying one day events where kids and teens join ISF, collaborating organizations and hosting facilities in a hands-on volunteer day to help the planet. The purpose of the ISF Youth Days Program is to support like-minded initiatives while cultivating passion-driven collaboration and facilitating unique personal growth experiences for youth. This program is in its 2nd year with previous events including: Community Environmental Clean Ups; Restoration of animal sanctuaries; Career advancement opportunities for youth in their passion-related fields;

Education and repurposing events benefiting wildlife and exotic animals; hands on volunteerism to learn what it takes to run an animal rescue.

The [ISF Sanctuary](#) is just under 100 acres of land on the bayou in Louisiana with the desire to create an animal sanctuary and preserve. A place for young people, and everyone, to learn about this vital ecosystem, our environment and the effect we all have on it. Roughly 70 acres of the Sanctuary is preserved bayou land that will continue to be protected and to flourish as a natural habitat for wildlife and plant life. The remaining acreage will be utilized in support of the creature population, youth and community needs.

Soon to be announced [environmental program](#) - a new, very exciting program service will be announced this summer!



4. What is the best way for people to get involved?



The Ian Somerhalder Foundation's [Grassroots](#) engages people across the globe in support of their efforts to make a positive difference in local communities, and ultimately, the world. Inspiring and empowering action on an individual and local level is at the heart of ISF's mission. Through delivery of educational resources, grants and promotion, ISF provides support for exceptional grassroots action and leadership efforts. If you are making an impact in your community through grassroots action in alignment with ISF's mission, we would love to share your stories. If you want to

make an impact, but are not sure where to start, ISF would like to help through offering [toolkits](#) and [informational live online sessions](#) with activists who can help answer questions and give insightful tips on how they make positive change.

5. What would you say are stepping stones for people who want to make positive changes in their own lives to but are overwhelmed with where to start?

I truly believe the most important stepping stones to create change are:

1. NEVER doubt your abilities and strengths. Nurture them continuously.
2. No action is too small. If you focus on every problem in our world, it will absolutely become overwhelming. Instead, make one change at a time. Say to yourself, "What topic is most important to my heart right now?" Find a *doable* action and start doing it. Once you master that, add another. You'll soon realize your whole life has changed; it will feel *great*.

3. Don't criticize yourself! If you mess up, it's totally ok. If you backtrack, don't waste any time feeling guilty and just get back on track. *You are never a failure as long as you are trying.* Realizing that is the only way to success.
4. Reduce your plastic consumption. You'll be amazed how little changes in your daily life make a huge impact.
5. Realize that what you are doing is seen by others. Inspire one other person to make the same small change as you, and instantly your direct impact has DOUBLED. Keep a log of people you have directly inspired to make a small change - it'll become your motivation to keep growing.
6. Find a strong group of like-minded friends. DON'T SETTLE. If the people around you don't agree with the deepest passions in your heart, stop wasting your time. It will only distract you from your goals. Ask yourself, does this person help me grow or hold me back? Do I help them grow, too?
7. Become a mentor - helping kids make a change motivates you to do the same

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