The eighth annual Youth Mentor Hunt was hosted by the Southwestern Nebraska Pheasants Forever Chapter last fall. Eighteen recent hunter safety graduates participated in the annual event.

Youths from Imperial, Benkelman, Elsie, Parks, Grant, Madrid and Haigler participated in the day’s activities. The hunt was based at the Don Weiss Jr. farmstead, northwest of Imperial.

The sessions that the youth and their mentors participated in included a hunter safety refresher, trapshooting, gun cleaning, pheasant habitat, the history of Pheasants Forever and hunting pheasants.

The annual Youth Mentor Hunt pairs youths that have completed the hunter safety course and an adult mentor together for an exciting day of hunting activities.

According to PF Wildlife Biologist Drew Larsen, “The program is designed to target those youth that have a strong interest in hunting, but limited opportunities to go hunting. Hunting is not something that you can just pick up and learn overnight. You need an experienced individual to show you the ropes, and we hope that we are accomplishing this through our youth events.”

Every youth that goes through the program receives their very own upland hunting vest and hat courtesy of Pheasants Forever and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Although it cost roughly $100/youth to participate in the program, the kids get to participate for free. In 2008, PF conducted over 60 “Youth Mentor Hunts” throughout Nebraska.

Pheasant Forever chapter members and volunteers are a huge part of this successful day. Without volunteers who enjoy helping the youths learn more about hunting, this annual event would not be possible.

Each pair of youth and mentor was able to go hunting in the afternoon. Dog handlers and their dogs were available for each group. This is a great opportunity for the youth to see what difference a dog makes in hunting.

Banquet next week

The Southwestern Nebraska Pheasants Forever Chapter will be hosting its 19th annual banquet on Saturday, March 7, at Enders Lake Golf Course. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. with supper to begin at 7 p.m. and the auction to follow.

The gun for the annual gun raffle this year is a Steven 12 gauge Over and Under.

Like many other organizations, PF chapters generate operating funds by means of an annual fundraising/membership banquet. What makes Pheasants Forever unique is that 100% of the net proceeds are spent at the local level to conduct the desired habitat projects.

In short, it gives sportsmen and other concerned conservationists an opportunity to effect their own county’s habitat.

If you have questions about the banquet, please contact Banquet Chairperson Joe Weiss at 882-5039 or Jason Weiss at 285-3741.