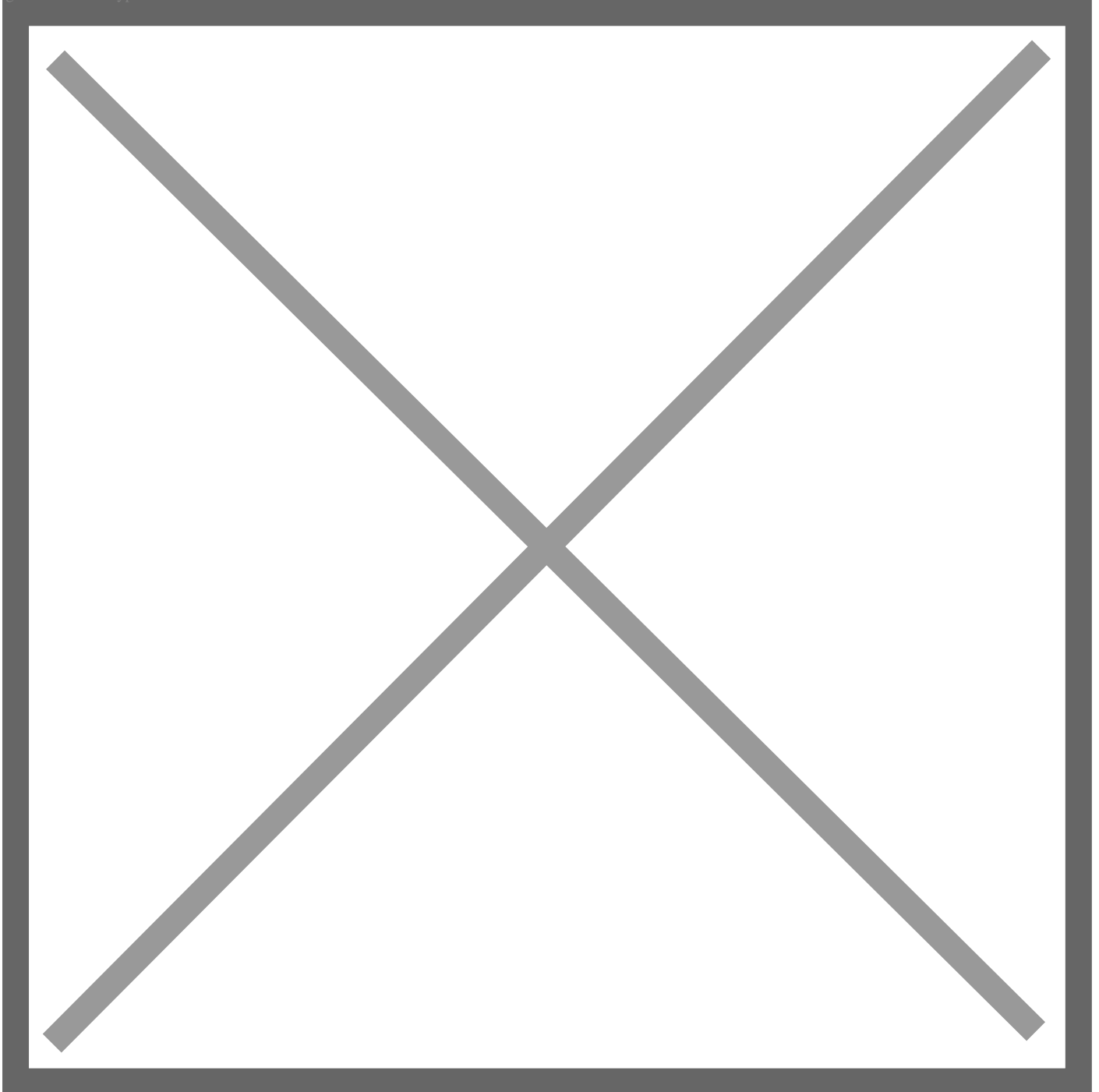


Teens Across The Nation Get Creative in the Tenth Annual Lexus Eco Challenge One Sip at a Time and by Turning Trash into Music To Our Ears

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TORRANCE, Calif. (April 6, 2017) – To sip or not to sip? One man’s trash or treasure? Inspired students are taking their passion in science, technology, engineering and math to a whole new level. By taking charge, learning about their environment, and making a positive impact on the world, students, teachers, and schools are being rewarded with \$500,000 in scholarships and grants through the annual Lexus Eco Challenge. To learn more about the program and the winners visit: www.scholastic.com/lexus.

In its tenth year, the Lexus Eco Challenge is an educational program and contest that inspires and empowers young people to learn about the environment and take action to improve it. High school and middle school teams nationwide define an environmental issue that is important to them, develop an action plan to address the issue, implement the plan, and report on the results.

Lexus and Scholastic reviewed the finalists’ innovative submissions and selected one middle school team and one high school team as the 2016-2017 Lexus Eco Challenge Grand Prize winners.

The Grand Prize-winning teams earn \$30,000. Each winning team divides the grand prize: a \$7,000 grant for the school, a \$3,000 grant for the team’s teacher advisor, and \$20,000 in scholarships for the students to share. Eight First Place-winning teams will be awarded \$15,000 each.

This year’s Grand Prize winners are “Second Chance Band” from Lebanon Trail High School in Frisco, Texas, and “WMS Coral Keepers” from Whitehall Middle School in Whitehall, Michigan.

To address landfills filling up with trash across the United States and the increase of ocean trash pollution, “Second Chance Band” made an impact in their community and worldwide with a unique upcycling project using trash and other discarded objects to create instruments. The team’s focus was to educate the community on landfill stress and demonstrate the value for trash through a culture of upcycling and re-purposing. During their research, the team learned how different instruments are made and the materials required. They found that these materials could all be found in a landfill. The team collected old instruments and upcycled trash to build and refurbish all different types of instruments including flutes, violins, guitars, trumpets and percussion. Over 75 handmade instruments were made, including a violin from a tin lunch box and discarded violin neck, small drums from a Styrofoam box, old x-ray films and a broken picture frame, and flutes from found metal pipes. Using social media, the team was able to reach the global community and share their how-to videos. Making even more of an impact, the team sent the recycled instruments to areas in need around the world, from Latin America to the Middle East.

“WMS Coral Keepers” wanted to bring attention to the issue of plastic straw pollution in lakes and oceans and encourage everyone to “Skip the Straw!” Their research showed that over 500 million plastic drinking straws are used in the United States every single day. They also learned that plastic straws do not biodegrade and break into tiny pieces that are eaten by birds, fish and other marine animals. The team took action and made a difference at their school, in their community and beyond. They eliminated plastic straws in their school and offered the option to purchase reusable or paper straws, worked with area restaurants to reduce straw usage and petitioned the National Day Calendar to create National Skip the Straw Day on the fourth Friday in February every year. “WMS Coral Keepers” furthered their community outreach with social media and provided interviews to local newspapers and television stations.

The 2016-2017 Lexus Eco Challenge had more than 1,700 student participants. Thirty-two middle and high school teams were selected as finalists for the Lexus Eco Challenge, each claiming a \$10,000 prize to be shared among the team, teacher, and school.

For the final challenge, all 32 finalist teams were tasked with reaching beyond their local community to inspire environmental action. The teams communicated their innovative ideas to a wide audience in the last round, broadening the reach of their work to people outside of their communities and even further abroad.

The Grand Prize- and First Place-winning teams that best addressed environmental challenges are listed below.

Final Challenge

State, City

School Name

High School Grand Prize Winner

Team Name

Project Summary

TX – Frisco
Lebanon Trail High School

Second Chance Band

Promoted upcycling and tackled the throwaway culture and produced playable musical instruments from upcycled trash, hoping to set an example of how to creatively relieve overstressed landfills, manage waste, and more.

High School First Prize Winners

CA – La Crescenta
Clark Magnet High School

EcoNarcs 3.0

Examined *S. horneri* for poisonous substances and partnered with diving clubs as well as with researchers to gather data. Presented their findings to elementary, middle, and high schools, and were interviewed about their work by several newspapers.

NM – Dora
Dora High School

The Milky Way

Explored the significant environmental benefits of livestock feed supplemented with Rumenase enzyme, which can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent. Consulted with researchers and contacted dairies throughout their state (and the U.S.) about the enzyme, presented to local schools, engaged in a dialogue with their state senate office, and more. Explored how treatment wetlands could address water quality problems in an affected area. Worked with local colleges and organizations, and built a working model of treatment wetlands to demonstrate their findings. Spoke with nearly 40 schools worldwide about their efforts, and have been on TV, radio, and more.

OH – Toledo
St. Ursula Academy

SUA Soil Savers

High School First Prize Winners – con't

NY – Jericho
Jericho High School

Aquasorb

Focused on local water pollution owing to heavy metals and more. Made presentations to younger students, went door-to-door with their very own “waterless car wash” to spread awareness about toxic water runoff, and continued their school battery drive.

Middle School Grand Prize Winner

MI – Whitehall
Whitehall Middle School

WMS Coral Keepers

Educated the community that every day approximately 500 million plastic drinking straws are used in the U.S. Straws find their way into lakes, rivers, and oceans. Met with regional environmental groups, selling reusable straws at school, advocating for paper straws to replace plastic ones at lunch, and organizing “Skip the Straw” awareness campaign.

Middle School First Prize Winners

CA – Watsonville
Mount Madonna School

The Seed of Flame

Created climate science education kits for a nearby summer camp, raised money to plant a forest garden in Africa, sent seed packets to Loma Fire victims in California, and more. Focused on creating awareness of superbugs, when bacteria evolve and become resistant to antibiotics. Promoted safe disposal practices and connected with police and local organizations to host a successful medication drop-off event to help keep drugs out of rivers and lakes.

MI – Whitehall
Whitehall Middle School

WMS SOAP Stars

Tackled plastic pollution by working with other area schools and met with a local congressman about initiating a program to incentivize their community to think about reducing plastic pollution.

FL – Lakeland
Lawton Chiles Middle Academy

Plastic People

Middle School First Prize Winners – con’t

NJ – Jersey City
Christa McAuliffe

TEAM D.R.O.N.E.

Researched and zoned in on gathering drone data about local algal blooms and invasive species. Research showed spider mites were harming trees, so they built “shakers” to attach to the drones and disperse predator mites to eradicate the spider mites.

To learn more about the winning teams, visit: <http://bit.ly/2p25gEl>.

Over the past ten years, the Lexus Eco Challenge has awarded more than \$5 million in scholarships. More than 30,800 middle and high school students have impacted their communities, learned about the environment, and improved their teamwork skills.

The Lexus Eco Challenge also provides supplemental educational materials, created and distributed by Scholastic, the global children’s publishing, education and media company, to encourage teachers to integrate creative environmental lesson plans into their classrooms. For each challenge, the website has lesson plans and teacher instructions, including questions to help guide a discussion about the current challenge topic, facts about the topic, and guidelines for a specific classroom project.

The Lexus Eco Challenge is part of [The Lexus Pursuit of Potential](#), a philanthropic initiative that generates up to \$3 million in donations each year for organizations that help build, shape and improve children’s lives.

Lexus will open the 11th annual 2017-2018 Lexus Eco Challenge this fall with \$500,000 in prize money for eligible students, teachers, and schools. Information on how students and teachers can participate in the “Land and Water” and/or “Air and Climate” challenges will be available this summer at www.scholastic.com/lexus.