Lexus Eco Challenge Stirs Students' Studies - Learning About the Environment and Community Empowerment Reaps Rewards of $500,000

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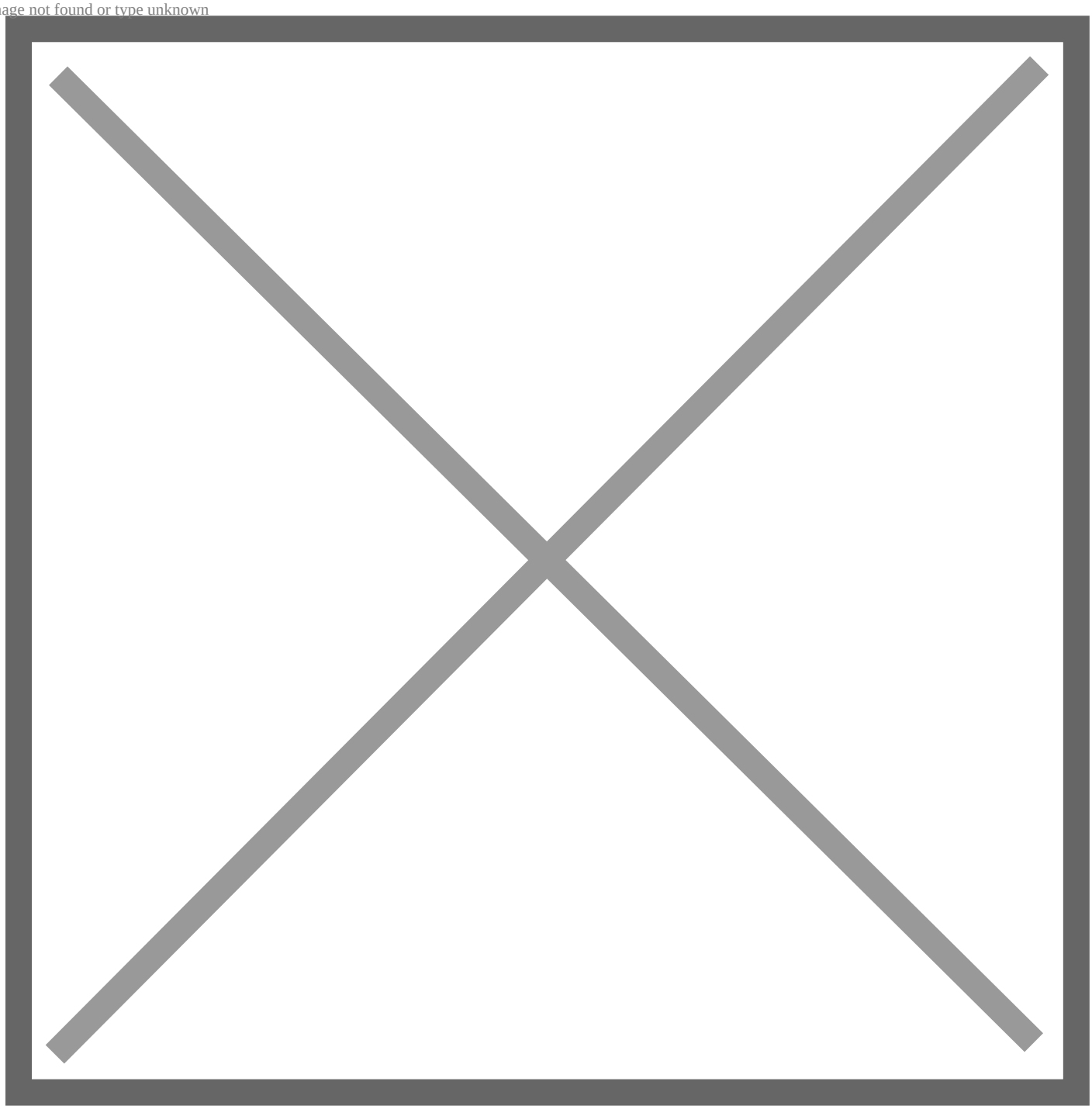

TORRANCE, Calif. (April 16, 2015) – Who would have thought algae patties and cow patties would be the basis for scholarships and grants! Students across the nation are learning about the environment and making their communities a better place through science, technology, engineering and math. Using these studies, students, teachers and schools are being rewarded with $500,000 through the Lexus Eco Challenge.

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 to select one middle school team and one high school team as the 2014-2015 Lexus Eco Challenge Grand Prize winners.

The Grand Prize winning teams earn $30,000 each of which the school will receive a grant for $7,000. Each Grand Prize winning team's teacher advisor will get a $3,000 grant, while the students will share $20,000 in scholarships. Eight First Place winning teams will be awarded $15,000 each.

This year's Grand Prize winners are "First Class Biogas" from Daniel Boone High School in Birdsboro, Pa. and middle school team "S.T.A.X." from P.S. #28 Christa McAuliffe in Jersey City, N.J.

To encourage the advancement of energy alternatives that do not contribute to an increase in greenhouse gases "First Class Biogas" promoted the use of small scale power generation systems like the methane gas biogas digester. The biogas digester converts organic waste into methane gas to generate electricity. The team encouraged a local dairy farm to build its own digesters to reduce electricity costs, sell electricity to the power grid, and use post digested organic material more efficiently. The team also educated and lobbied its community and local and state government officials on clean, renewable energy alternatives.

"S.T.A.X." researched a way to remove algae from its local reservoir without chemicals using tilapia. The team designed and built an aquaculture program for tilapia, learned how to make algae patty fish food, obtained tilapia, and received a permit to release the fish into the reservoir using a tilapia chinampa it designed to keep the non-native fish captive while they enjoy the reservoir's algae buffet. S.T.AX.'s influence went beyond the reservoir as it educated the community and students about its preservation efforts.

The 2014-2015 Lexus Eco Challenge had more than 1,125 students participate. Thirty-two middle and high school teams were selected as finalists for the Lexus Eco Challenge – claiming a $10,000 prize to be shared among the team, teacher and school.

All 32 finalist teams were asked to reach beyond the local community and inspire environmental action around the world through innovative ideas that are communicated to a wide audience for the final challenge.

The grand prize and first place teams that best addressed environmental challenges are listed below.

Final Challenge **State, City** **School Name** **High School Grand Prize Winner**	**Team Name**	**Project Summary**
PA – Birdsboro Daniel Boone High School	First Class Biogas	Built methane biogas digester to generate more sustainable electricity and help power the grid.

High School First Prize Winners

CA – La Crescenta Clark Magnet High School	Kelp Huggers	Documented the presence of microplastics in marine life and boosted awareness of the effects on the environment.
NY – LaGrangeville Arlington High School	Minnewaska pHish	Studied ocean acidification and raised awareness of its impact on aquatic life.

High School First Prize Winners – con't

MO – St. Louis Parkway North High School	Pollinator Project	Initiated plan to protect and expand pollinator habitats and educated community about importance of pollinators and the effects of pesticides.
WA – Redmond Nicola Tesla STEM High School	Tesla STEM Aquifier Education	Educate local and global communities about the importance of aquifiers and the hazards of contamination.

Middle School Grand Prize Winner

NJ – Jersey City P.S. #28 Christa McAuliffe	S.T.A.X.	Designed aquaculture program for tilapia to help manage excess macroalgae and surface vegetation in local reservoir.

Middle School First Prize Winners

KY – Lexington SCAPA Bluegrass	No Heat Ninjas	Encouraged community to reduce use of cooking appliances and minimize CO_2 production.
UT – Holladay Olympus Jr. High School	iRecycle	Recycled old and broken cell phones to help reduce pollution.
FL – Lakeland Lawton Chiles Middle Academy	Photosympathy	Combatted local lake pollution with water hyssops.
AZ – Mesa Sequoia Pathfinder Academy Eastmark	SPAE Green Team	Created school and community recycling program.

To learn more about the winning teams, visit:
http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3750833

Over the past eight years, the Lexus Eco Challenge has awarded more than $4 million in scholarships. More than 27,000 middle and high school students have impacted their communities, learned about the environment and improved their team work skills.

The Lexus Eco Challenge also includes educational materials created and distributed by Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, to encourage teachers to integrate creative lesson plans about the environment into their classrooms. For each challenge, the Web site (www.scholastic.com/lexus) 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 ninth annual 2015-2016 Eco Challenge this fall with $500,000 in available prize money. Information on how students and teachers can participate in the "Land and Water" or "Air and Climate" challenges will be available this summer at www.scholastic.com/lexus.