

Passion for the Environment Prevails as \$500,000 in Grants and Scholarships Awarded to Teens

March 20, 2012

TORRANCE, Calif., March 20, 2012 – From Hawaii to New York, student teams were honored today for their innovative environmental programs and rewarded with a total of \$500,000 in scholarships and grants.

Two Grand Prize winners earned \$30,000 each, and eight First Place winning teams were awarded \$15,000 each. “The Green Musketeers” from Jericho High School in Jericho, New York, and the “One-Towel Wonders” from SCAPA Bluegrass in Lexington, Ky., were the Grand Prize winners. “The Green Musketeers” created their own filtration system with the goal of patenting it, selling it, and using profits toward developing systems in third-world countries. The “One-Towel Wonders” demonstrated how a simple idea – using one towel per person, per week – would benefit the environment. For their efforts, each grand prize winner will receive \$30,000, of which the school will receive a grant for \$7,000, the teacher advisor will get a \$3,000 grant, and the students will share \$20,000 in scholarships.

Since the program was created, the Lexus Eco Challenge has awarded \$4 million in scholarships and grants to empower middle and high school students to learn about the environment and take action to improve it.

“For anyone who wonders if teens today care about the world, the Lexus Eco Challenge is proof that they do,” said Mark Templin, Lexus group vice president and general manager. “Through this program, more than 25,000 participants have demonstrated that they want to make the world a better place. By coming up with real-world solutions to environmental challenges, students are learning how they can make a difference in the world around them.”

The eight First Place teams each won \$15,000 with \$3,000 for the school, \$2,000 for the teacher advisor and \$10,000 in scholarships for the students. The winning teams were:

- **California (Arboga) – “Team Aqua” – Arboga Elementary School** – Raised money and awareness around the world for water conservation programs.
- **California (La Crescenta) – “Carbonators” – Clark Magnet High School** – Used ArcGIS to analyze smog levels around the world and how that impacts health.
- **Florida (Miami) – “The Tropic” – Miami Palmetto Senior High School** – Focused on reducing carbon dioxide emissions through programs to benefit the land, air and water in their community.
- **Hawaii (Wahiawa) – “WEACT” – Leilehua High School** – Launched an environmental awareness program in the community to culminate in the construction of a mural.
- **Kentucky (Lexington) – “Purpledinowolficorns” – Bates Creek Middle School** – Developed proposal to the mayor about involving the community to improve the city.
- **Michigan (Whitehall) – “WMS Carbon Busters” – Whitehall Middle School** – Encouraged the school, community and state to pass on bottled water and drink tap water.
- **Ohio (Chesterland) – “Environmental Discovery Project” – West Geauga High School** – Contacted international communities to encourage composting
- **South Carolina (Hanahan) – “HMS Hawks” – Hanahan Middle School** – Raised awareness of the benefits of eating locally grown produce.

“The Lexus Eco Challenge is an integral part of the environmental studies curriculum at SCAPA,” said Ashlie Beals, teacher advisor for the “One-Towel Wonders.” “For the past five years all of my 8th grade students have worked in teams to create and implement innovative campaigns to encourage others to make one small change that can have a large positive impact on our environment. During the challenge students sharpen their oral and written communication skills, utilize many forms of technology, and work together actively and enthusiastically to solve real-life problems. My younger students eagerly look forward to their chance to participate in the challenge when they are in 8th grade. I can’t thank Lexus and Scholastic enough for offering this tremendous opportunity to my students.”

This year’s winners emerged from more than 400 registered teams representing nearly 3,000 middle and high school students nationwide. The 10 winners were selected from 32 teams that qualified to enter the Final Challenge by winning in one or both of the two previous Challenges that were held from September to February. The earlier phases of the contest, which required teams to address the topics of land, water, air or climate, challenged teams to make a difference for the environment in their local communities. The Final Challenge asked teams to reach beyond the local community and inspire environmental action around the world.

In addition to the ongoing contest, the Lexus Eco Challenge also includes educational materials designed by Scholastic to encourage teachers to integrate creative lesson plans into their classrooms to help teach students about the environment. 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 will enter its sixth year in fall 2012. Teachers and students are encouraged to visit www.scholastic.com/lexus to view all the winning entries and to learn how they can take part in the next challenge.