

Innovative Students Demonstrate Their Commitment to the Environment and Earn \$500,000 in Grants and Scholarships

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TORRANCE, Calif., April 7, 2011 – Educating the community about the contamination of lobsters in local and global waters and raising money to purchase solar panels for their school and encouraging others to look into renewable energy were the two top winning projects in the fourth annual Lexus Eco Challenge, an educational program and contest that inspires and empowers middle and high school students to learn about the environment and take action to improve it.

Student teams from Clark Magnet High School in La Crescenta, Calif., and St. James School in Madison, Wis., each earned a grand prize of \$30,000 in grants and scholarships. Eight first-place teams also won \$15,000 each. In all, \$500,000 in grants and scholarships have been awarded throughout the seven-month-long environmental education program and contest.

“With the terrific entries we saw from these students, it’s very clear that the Lexus Eco Challenge was more than just a science project for them...they were fueled by passion,” said Mark Templin, Lexus group vice president and general manager. “Not only have they improved the environment, they’ve demonstrated that they can change the world. We couldn’t be more proud of all the winning participants.”

The two grand prize winning teams have demonstrated how great ideas can inspire an entire community and improve the environment globally. The “Eco Savers” team made of five students from Clark Magnet High school in La Crescenta, Calif., wanted to address the organic and inorganic threat to waterways and oceans and its effects on the lobster population around the world. They learned the lobsters, and potentially other marine life species, have traces of contamination that are harmful if consumed by humans. The team tackled the task by getting a local seafood company to donate lobster samples from around the world, formed a partnership with a testing facility, created maps in ArcGIS and created awareness through presentations to the community and schools.

The “Ladies of the Light,” made up of eight students from St. James School in Madison, Wis., focused their efforts on renewable energy. They found that 93% of energy in the U.S. comes from non-renewable resources. The team thought since schools use a lot of energy, they would raise funds to purchase solar panels for their school. Their efforts included a proposal to the Madison Gas & Electric Foundation to offer scholarships to other schools to purchase solar panels and to inspire the next class of students to continue the fundraising efforts. In addition, the team created awareness through local media and a documentary video. The result was raising enough money to purchase their first solar panel for the school.

For their efforts, each grand prize winning 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.

“Opportunities like the Lexus Eco Challenge are phenomenal in providing children the chance to make positive and real impacts in the world,” said Jennifer Taylor of Estes Park Middle School in Estes Park, Col. “Such experiences are the best approach for learning since they will continue to make a difference in the future. This was one of the highlights in my teaching career and surely the lives of my students.”

This year’s winners emerged from the 500 registered teams representing more than 4,000 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.

The eight first-place winning teams are (click here to read about their projects <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3750833>)

- **Colorado (Estes Park) – “Shuttle Bugs” – Estes Park Middle School** – Focused on reducing carbon dioxide emissions by establishing a shuttle service to Rocky Mountain National Park.
- **Florida (Lakeland) – “EcoGang” – Lawton Chiles Middle Academy** – Centered on the misuse of mercury and misleading labels on cosmetics and how it is endangering the health of people.
- **Florida (Pinecrest) – “Solar Kids” – Miami Palmetto Senior High School** – Concentrated on reducing global carbon footprint.
- **Illinois (Chicago) – “Whitney Young Biodiesel” – Whitney Young Magnet High School** – Centered on developing a biodiesel infrastructure.
- **New Jersey (Manahawkin) – “Team Kreepy Krawlers” – All Saints Regional Catholic School** – Focused on saving the woodlands, trees and forests from gypsy moths, leaf eating moths.
- **New York (Lagrangeville) – “Wet Hands Beyond the Wetlands” – Arlington High School** – Focused on preservation of biodiversity, protecting species from harm, shrinking wetlands.
- **Ohio (Chesterland) – “Environmental Discovery Project” – West Geauga High School** – Addressed sanitation issues worldwide and concentrated on recycling and reusing waste.
- **South Carolina (Hanahan) – “The Eco Challenge Team” – Hanahan Middle School** – Centered on reducing litter to help protect sea turtle populations and coastal ecosystems.

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 fifth year in fall 2011. 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 next year’s program.

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