

Positive Action for the Planet Earns Students, Teachers and Schools \$500,000 in Grants and Scholarships

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Lexus and Scholastic Announce Winners of the Lexus Eco Challenge Finale

TORRANCE, Calif., April 19, 2010 – Bringing relief to Haiti in the form of a biodiesel processor, solar panels, seedlings for a 2.5-acre Jatropha Farm and donated hand tools, and educating the community about the importance of cleaning up of pet waste were the two top winning projects in the third 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 Mother McAuley High School in Chicago, and Lawton Chiles Middle School in Lakeland, Fla., 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 program.

“Every year, we see more and more creativity from the students and their teachers,” said Mark Templin, Lexus group vice president and general manager. “To know that this program has created collaboration between the public and private sectors, as far reaching as Haiti, is so rewarding. Our intent was to start a ripple effect that would continue well beyond the conclusion of each year’s contest, and that’s exactly what we’re seeing.”

The two grand prize winning teams have demonstrated how great ideas can inspire an entire community. The “McAuley Ecomacs: Operation Haiti” team, made of 10 students from Mother McAuley High School in Chicago, wanted their project to make an important impact on Haiti. They tackled all four areas highlighted by the Lexus Eco Challenge – land, water, air and climate. In addition to building a solar-powered biodiesel production system, they also worked with representatives from a school in Haiti to plant a Jatropha Farm to grow seeds that generate oil for the biodiesel system. They arranged for solar panels to be donated to the Haitian school. “The Green Team,” made up of five students from Lawton Chiles Middle School in Lakeland, Fla., focused their efforts on educating the community about the dangers of not cleaning up pet waste. In addition to changing pet owners’ behavior in their own community, the team also used social media platforms and the Internet to spread their message far and wide.

“The Lexus Eco Challenge has helped change the way I teach,” said Debbie Viertel, the teacher advisor for The Green Team. “By giving my students a real-world challenge, they come up with something they care about. Then they learn all the things I want them to learn in math and science, but the difference is that now they care. It’s a wonderful program.”

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.

This year’s winners emerged from the 265 registered teams representing 1,775 middle and high school students nationwide. The 10 winners were selected from 31 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](#)):

- Connecticut (Newtown) – **“Men in Green”** – Newtown High School
- Florida (Newberry) **“P.A.N.T.H.E.R. – Providing a New Way to Help Environmental Restoration”**–
Newberry High School
- Illinois (Manhattan) – **“X-Treme Green Growers”** – Manhattan Junior High School
- Missouri (Kingdom City) – **“North Calloway Digital Outreach”** – North Calloway High School
- Missouri (St. Louis) – **“Team Neon”** – Parkway North High School
- New York (Farmingdale) – **“Restoration and Preservation”** – Farmingdale High School
- South Carolina (Hanahan) – **“HMS Hawks”** – Hanahan Middle School
- Utah (Holladay) – **“R.S.V.P. – Recycle at Sports Venues Please”**– Olympus Junior High

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 fourth year in fall 2010. 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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