

Lexus and Scholastic Announce First Round of Winners in the 2009-2010 Lexus Eco Challenge

January 06, 2010

Challenge #2 Entries Due January 19

TORRANCE, Calif., Jan. 6, 2010 ? Sixteen middle and high schools from 12 states have been named winners in the first round of the third annual Lexus Eco Challenge, an educational program and contest that empowers young people to make a positive difference for the environment. Lexus will award a total of \$500,000 in grants and scholarships throughout this year's program.

From New York to Hawaii, students demonstrated their commitment to the planet with programs aimed at protecting land and water. Each winning team has earned \$10,000 in scholarships and grants to be shared among the students, teacher and school. Their win has also secured each team an invitation to participate in the Final Challenge for a chance at one of two \$30,000 grand prizes and 14 \$15,000 first-place awards.

?With more than 170 entries in the Lexus Eco Challenge #1, it's clear that the program is achieving its goal of inspiring and empowering teens to learn about the environment and take action to improve it,? said Mark Templin, Lexus group vice president and general manager. ?This first round of entries showed innovation, creativity and a commitment to making a positive impact. We can learn a lot from these young people.?

For each of the challenges, teams are required to 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. The Challenge #1 winning teams that best addressed environmental challenges associated with land and water were:

High School Teams:

- California (Vista) ? ?Guajome Girls Preservation Foundation? ? Guajome Park Academy ? Led a massive cleanup effort at the two-mile corridor that protects the wetlands ecosystem near their school. Over a month's time, the members and various groups of volunteers recycled 1,500 pounds of trash on their school's campus, preventing it from littering the corridor.
- Florida (Newberry) ? ?P.A.N.T.H.E.R. ? Providing a New Way to Help Environmental Restoration? ? Newberry High School – Zeroed in on deforestation and forest destruction. Hosted a tree photography contest, delivered public service announcements, planted more than 600 trees, and distributed more than 1,300 seedlings at their local harvest festival.
- Hawaii (Honolulu) ? ?P.O.W.E.R. – Protecting Our Water and Environmental Resources? ? Farrington High School – Focused on water pollution, specifically marine debris and dumping. Developed a number of presentations for nearby middle schools and partnered with local organizations to assist in local stream and bay cleanup projects.
- Kentucky (Stanville) ? ?EeK-o Addicts? ? Betsy Lane High School – Took on public awareness of land and water pollution as well as pollution prevention methods. School-wide trash collecting project yielded nearly 100 aluminum cans, more than 200 bottles, and five full bags of paper.
- Missouri (Kingdom City) ? ?North Callaway Digital Outreach Program? ? North Callaway High School - Targeted recycling and electronics waste. Organized a collection drive and gathered nearly three tons of used electronics from the community for recycling.

- Missouri (St. Louis) ? ?Team ECH2O? ? Parkway North High School – Focused on informing the community about water conservation in general and water-saving techniques. Worked in the school rain garden, installed water-saving devices in the school, and penned articles for local media outlets about conservation.
- New York (Farmingdale) ? ?Restoration and Preservation? ? Farmingdale High School – Embarked on an extensive monitoring and preservation project to help bring their local parklands to a healthy, stable condition. Built a relationship with nearby elementary schools to spread the word about the project, and secured grants to help continue their research.
- New York (LaGrangeville) ? ?En-Viro-Forcers? ? Arlington High School ? Researched and addressed the local area?s lack of awareness regarding the threatened Blanding?s Turtles. Conducted research at their wetlands, held presentations at nearby middle schools, posted a Facebook page, and organized a Turtle Awareness Day.

Middle School Teams:

- Connecticut (Newtown) – ?Men In Green? ? Newtown Middle School ? Spent more than 300 hours tackling deforestation with a mass communication effort, planting and mulching, and utilizing various social networking platforms to spread their message.
- Florida (Lakeland) ? ?The Green Team? ? Lawton Chiles Middle Academy – Addressed endangered species and loss of biodiversity, with a specific focus on relocating the gopher tortoise. After researching the tortoise, spreading awareness within the community, and preparing a DVD presentation for an environmental symposium, the team awaits news on some tortoise relocation.
- Illinois (Manhattan) ? ?X-treme Green Growers? ? Manhattan Junior High School – Organized an ?Old T-shirt Drive? and event in their district?s elementary school, where they created 132 bags from the old shirts and delivered 264 ?rags? to a local animal shelter.
- Iowa (Charles City) ? ?Eco Dudes? ? Charles City Middle School – Focused on improving energy efficiency in local hotels. Two hotels participated in a program that involved placing bags for recycling and signs promoting water conservation in each of the guest rooms.
- New Jersey (Phillipsburg) ? ?A.R.O.T ? America Runs on Trees? ? Phillipsburg Christian Academy – Focused on composting and methods of keeping trash from populating landfills. Successfully constructed a compost site and put together a flier campaign to address composting within their community.
- Texas (Austin) ? ?Texbridge Eco Leaders? ? Burnet Middle School – Directed their efforts toward landfills, waste management, and recycling. Organized and promoted a free market for their school community, where an estimated 65 participants donated between 400 and 500 reusable goods at the event.
- Utah (Holladay) ? ?Leaf Terminators? ? Olympus Junior High – Distributed 200 fliers to their community that detailed environmentally friendly leaf-disposal methods. The members also managed to gather and bundle more than 3,000 pounds of leaves from local lawns.
- Utah (Holladay) ? ?R.S.V.P. ? Recycle at Sports Venues Please? ? Olympus Junior High – Organized and promoted a recycling program to address land conservation. Collected 1,175 bottles and cans for recycling, encouraged a local recreation area to incorporate a recycling plan, and collected Pledges to Recycle from 350 people.

This year?s Lexus Eco Challenge launched on Sept. 28, 2009, and concludes with the announcement of the first place and grand-prize-winning teams during Earth Month in April 2010. Challenge #2, which asks students to address the environmental challenges for air and climate, is currently underway and has an entry deadline of Jan. 19, 2010.

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 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.

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