

Lexus and Scholastic Announce First Round of Winners in the 2011 - 2012 Lexus Eco Challenge

December 06, 2011

TORRANCE, Calif., December 6, 2011 – Sixteen student teams from 11 states have been named winners in the first round of the fifth annual Lexus Eco Challenge, an educational program and contest that inspires and empowers young people to learn about the environment and take action to improve it. Lexus will award a total of \$500,000 in grants and scholarships throughout this year's program.

Students across the country 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 secured each team an invitation to participate in the Final Challenge for a chance at one of two \$30,000 grand prizes and eight \$15,000 first-place awards. In addition, the winning action plans will be featured on a special Web page to inspire other students to take action in their communities at www.scholastic.com/lexus.

“Today's teens have the energy and dedication to make the world a better place,” said Mark Templin, Lexus group vice president and general manager. “At Lexus, we're proud to give them the opportunity to show their capabilities to others, as well as discover their own potential to improve the environment around them.”

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 are:

High School Teams:

- New York (LaGrangeville) – “Team S.A.L.T. (Save Another Living Tree)” – Arlington High** – Experimented with new road salt to minimize impact on plants and trees near roads.
- New York (LaGrangeville) – “Invasive Annihilators” – Arlington High** – Cleared a local park of invasive species to restore the natural habitat.
- New York (Jericho) – “The Green Musketeers” – Jericho High School** – Developed a water filtration system.
- New York (Stony Brook) – “Trash Talking Teens” – Stony Brook University High School** – Worked with local small businesses to survey recycling habits and develop a recycling plan.
- Massachusetts (Boston) “Climate Action Network” – Boston Latin School** — Created a zero-sort recycling program to cut trash at their school by 50%.
- Ohio (Chesterland) – “Environmental Discovery Project” – West Geauga High School** – Worked at their school and in their community to educate and implement composting ideas.
- Georgia (Atlanta) – “ECO (Westminster Environmental Campus Organization)” – The Westminster Schools** – Installed low-flush toilets, recycling bins and replaced the in-organic produce in their school cafeteria.
- California (Vista) – “The Preservation Foundation” – Guajome Park Academy** – Developed corridor drains to divert trash from their local wetlands.

Middle School Teams:

- New Jersey (Manahawkin) – “Get Mugged” – All Saints Regional Catholic** – Persuaded their teachers and parents to use refillable mugs instead of plastic-lined paper cups.
- New Hampshire (Meredith) – “Weedbusters” – Inter-Lakes Middle Tier School** – Rallied the community to reduce a non-native plant, milfoil, in the region’s lakes and ponds.
- Florida (Lakeland) – “Organic Waste” – Lawton Chiles Middle Academy** – Launched a campaign to prevent grass clippings from entering their storm drains.
- Kentucky (Lexington) – “Purpledinowolficorns” – Tates Creek Middle School** – Conducted fund raisers at their school to generate money to build a rain garden.
- Iowa (Charles City) – “The Batmen” – Charles City Middle School** – Educated their city about bats which installed bat houses to help minimize the negative impact of local insects.
- Michigan (Byron Center) – “SASS – Students Advancing Scientific Studies” – Byron Center West School** — Reduced paper use at their school by 50 percent.
- California (Arboga) – “Threatening Stingerz” – Arboga Elementary School** – Created awareness of the threat of mosquitoes and advised the community on how to reduce mosquito populations.
- California (Arboga) – “Team Aqua” – Arboga Elementary School** – Presented ways to increase water conversation to the community.

This year’s Lexus Eco Challenge launched on Sept. 26, 2011, and concludes with the announcement of the first place and grand-prize-winning teams in spring 2012. Challenge #2, which asks students to address the environmental challenges for air and climate, is currently underway and has an entry deadline of Dec. 19, 2011.

In addition to the ongoing contest, 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 \$5 million in donations each year for organizations that help build, shape and improve children’s lives.

#