



Contact: Dawn O'Brien
630-285-0335
familyob@sbcglobal.net

Or: Stephanie Hallman
Christopher Columbus Awards
800-291-6020
shallman@mmseducation.com

Project Developed by Addison Students to Increase Community Participation in Recycling Programs Wins Gold Medal in National Science/Community Service Competition Held at Walt Disney World®

Students launch recycling awareness campaign.

AUBURN, N.Y.—June 19, 2009—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won three students from St. Philip the Apostle School, in Addison, Ill., a Gold Medal and a \$2,000 Savings Bond in the Christopher Columbus Awards, a nationwide program that challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities.

Seventh-graders Dana Gattone, Angel Loizzo, and Maggie O'Brien, and their coach, Dawn O'Brien, made it to the finals last month by testing several community awareness-generating tactics to determine which would have the greatest impact on residents' recycling behavior.

To most environmentalists, recycling is old news, but as the students discovered, there are still many households that do not recycle. Because failing to recycle can increase air and water pollutants, as well as exacerbate the greenhouse gas effect as unrecycled waste sits in landfills for decades, the students chose to encourage greater participation in their community's recycling program among families in their neighborhood.

The team consulted with SCARCE (School and Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education), the Village of Addison's Public Works Department, Allied Waste Services, and ISTEP (Illinois Sustainable Education Program) to learn about the negative environmental impact of landfills and the benefits of recycling. Through field observations conducted in a six-block area, the students found that only 23% of their neighbors were recycling.

The team hypothesized that it could improve the rate of recycling by making neighbors aware of the local recycling program. Applying the scientific method, the students experimented with five

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105 Terry Drive, Suite 120 · Newtown, PA 18940-3425 · tel: 800-291-6020
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different approaches—(1) dropping off one of three informational flyers, (2) dropping off a flyer and explaining the program personally, (3) selling recycling bins, (4) dropping off a free bin, and (5) dropping off a free bin and explaining the program personally. They discovered that the latter approach resulted in 86% of the non-recycling households converting to recycling households.

A panel of community leaders, scientists and experts in science education judged this idea as one of the top eight entries in the U.S. More than 600 students and coaches participated nationwide.

Team Wins a Trip to Walt Disney World®

The team and their coach won an all-expense-paid trip to the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, where they competed in the **Christopher Columbus Awards' National Championship Week**, and participated in the **Christopher Columbus Academy**, a custom-designed educational program conducted by scientists, engineers and educators, the program reveals the science and technology behind the thrills and excitement of *Epcot®* and the *Magic Kingdom®*.

Positive Community Change

The Christopher Columbus Awards challenge teams of middle-school students to explore and discover opportunities for positive change in their communities using science and technology. The program is now in its 13th year and has attracted nearly 16,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the U.S. The program is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (www.columbusfdn.org), a Federal government agency, and is endorsed by the National Middle School Association.

Past winners have included: a group of Ohio students who developed a plan to use methane gas produced at landfills as an alternative source of energy; a group of Native American girls who built a study hall out of straw on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana; and a group of students from Pennsylvania who developed a video/motion sensor device for school buses that deters motorists from trying to pass illegally.

Strong Participation from Girls, Minorities

The program attracts many students who may not typically enter a science competition. More than half of the entrants are girls, and more than one-fourth are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, statistics that are higher than those of most science competitions. The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation believes the teamwork aspect and community focus draw a broader range of students to enter.

About the Sponsor

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is an independent Federal government agency created by Congress in 1992 to encourage and support research, study and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind. The Foundation has established *Frontiers of Discovery—Work in Progress* and *Discover the Future*, programs that recognize “cutting edge” innovations and innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honor teachers. These programs include *Life Sciences Awards*, the *\$25,000 Homeland Security Award*, *Christopher Columbus Awards*, and the *\$10,000 Freida J. Riley Teacher Award*.

For more information on the Christopher Columbus Awards, call 1-800-291-6020 or visit www.christophercolumbusawards.com.

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