



Contact: Wendy Fifield
All Saints Regional Catholic School
609-597-3800
fifieldfam@yahoo.com

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

Project Developed by Manahawkin Students to Protect Trees in Their Community Wins Gold Medal in National Science/Community Service Competition Held at Walt Disney World®

Students conduct multifaceted research project on gypsy moths designed to protect trees from infestation.

AUBURN, N.Y.—June 18, 2010—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won four students from All Saints Regional Catholic School in Manahawkin, N.J., 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 Joseph Ferraro, Sean Fifield, Jon Kubricki and Jonathan Login, and their coach, Wendy Fifield, made it to the finals last month by conducting a detailed study of the gypsy moths that have defoliated thousands of acres of trees in the students' community and across their state. The infestation threatens tree-bearing fruit crops, limits shade provided by trees, contributes to noise pollution, and creates a buildup of waste on outdoor surfaces.

The students contacted the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and local public works officials to learn more about the gypsy moth and existing suppression programs aimed at controlling gypsy moth populations. They discovered that many of these programs are being terminated or scaled back due to reduced government funding. Based on their findings, the students developed and carried out four experiments to determine the most effective methods for controlling gypsy moths. They also conducted an observational study using correlation analysis to find out if there is a relationship between gypsy moth infestation and temperature or precipitation patterns. Finally, they carried out an egg mass projection study in their community.

The team intends to create a gypsy moth outreach program that can augment or replace state and local initiatives, arming residents with information and tools to deal with the gypsy moth problem in their backyards and neighborhoods.

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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 14th year and has attracted more than 18,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the U.S. The program is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (www.columbusfdn.org) and is endorsed by the National Middle School Association.

Past winners have included a team from San Diego that has secured a provisional patent for a specialized seat cushion design that uses sensory feedback to train people to maintain a healthy posture while sitting at a computer, and a group of students from Illinois who developed a multifaceted recycling awareness campaign that has increased recycling in their community by 60% in just four months.

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 nearly a 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, innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honor teachers. These programs include the *Agriscience Awards*, *Christopher Columbus Awards*, *Homeland Security Awards* and *Life Sciences Awards*.

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

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