



Protecting Our Environment

Virginia Students Win Top Prize In Conservation Contest



Where in the world are we facing conservation issues? A new contest wanted to know.

(NAPSA)—It may be a wild world, but it needs our protection and respect. This was the lesson learned by winners of a national “Wild World” conservation contest for middle-school students.

Seventh graders at Dublin Middle School in Dublin, VA, took top honors in the “Wild World” contest, developed by the National Geographic Society, World Wildlife Fund and Ford Motor Company to test students’ awareness and understanding of conservation issues.

First prize was \$10,000 in educational equipment and a visit to Dublin Middle School by marine biologist and National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence Sylvia Earle and World Wildlife Fund Chief Scientist Eric Dinerstein.

Contestants were challenged to use an ecoregions “Wild World” map—sent to all U.S. schools—and the map’s Web component, www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld to compare their own ecoregion with one of 200 priority conservation areas determined by World Wildlife Fund scientists.

These areas are among the richest, rarest and most endangered terrestrial marine and fresh water natural regions on the earth.

The contest was part of the “EarthPulse” initiative, a public awareness campaign launched by the National Geographic Society

in alliance with Ford Motor Company to address conservation issues facing the planet.

Dublin Middle School’s winning entry was an online comparison of freshwater and saltwater ecoregions in Virginia and Hawaii.

The second prize, \$6,000 in educational products, went to an eighth-grade class at Bloomsburg Christian School in Bloomsburg, Pa. Their entry online compared the forest ecoregions of the Blue Ridge and Madagascar.

Two schools tied for third place, each winning \$3,000 in educational products. Eighth graders at B.F. Grady Elementary School in Albertson, N.C., created a scrapbook comparing the river basins of the southeastern United States with the floodplain of the Amazon. Keiller Middle School eighth graders, in San Diego, Calif., drew a comparison between the California woodlands and chaparrals and the Amazon rain forests.

“The winning entries demonstrated an enthusiasm and concern for conservation that goes to the heart of our EarthPulse initiative,” said Earle, one of the Wild World contest judges.

A total of 143 entries were received from locations that included Los Angeles, Oklahoma City, Pensacola, Fla. and New Braunfels, Texas. Besides Earle, the judges included two teachers and two students.