
MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Alberta Junior High Students Ignite Awareness About Tobacco Use!



(Edmonton, Alberta) To celebrate World No Tobacco Day (May 31) and recognize the commitment of Alberta youth to be tobacco free, The Lung Association, Alberta and NWT (“TLA”) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2011 “BLAST Off.... to a Tobacco Free Life!” T-shirt design contest.

During the months of April and May, The Lung Association’s BLAST program (Building Leadership for Action in Schools Today) challenged Alberta youth in Grades 7-9 to get creative and design a T-shirt telling the world why they choose to be tobacco free. Students were invited to be positive in their approach, encouraging their peers and others in their community to choose not to use tobacco.

The contest sparked the imagination of 110 students from 19 schools across Alberta, producing a total of 122 entries. In addition to online voting, a panel of judges from the tobacco advocacy and communication fields evaluated each entry based on positive messaging, aesthetic and technical quality, creativity and immediate impact and have selected the winners. Representatives from TLA will present the First Place award to student Monica Mitton and John D. Bracco School in Edmonton on Tuesday May 31 at 2:00 pm. In addition to having her design printed and used as an advocacy and promotional tool, Monica will receive a \$300 cash prize. John D. Bracco School will also receive a Youth Action Grant worth \$3000 to be used for health and wellness initiatives.

Monica Mitton’s humorous entry “Ask Your Girlfriend” was selected by judges and students alike as the favourite. The Second Place prize will be awarded to Kalle Price of St. Thomas Aquinas Middle School in Red Deer. Her entry “Blast Off to a Tobacco Free Future” displayed many facts and statistics regarding tobacco use in a creative and eye-catching design. Third place will be awarded to Grace Wijaya of Queen Elizabeth Jr./Sr. High School in Calgary. Her entry “Smoke Free Zone” proved that language isn’t a barrier when choosing to be smoke free.

The use of Social Media to extend the outreach of tobacco free messaging has proven to be an important tool in tobacco education. The “BLAST Off.... to a Tobacco Free Life!” T-shirt design contest

Website www.blastobacco.ca received over 3,350 views from 7 countries with 707 votes cast for the most popular designs. The support of Alberta educators and tobacco reduction staff has also helped to make this project successful.

The BLAST program asks youth in Grades 7-9 to think critically about the tobacco industry, its products and the social, global and health effects of tobacco use. BLAST offers many opportunities for teachers and students to become actively involved in tobacco education. From half-day in-school Mini-BLAST workshops and teacher professional development opportunities, to a 2.5 day tobacco awareness conference in November 2011, participants are encouraged to build school and community leadership, project planning and advocacy skills.

The Lung Association is a leader in lung health education, prevention and advocacy throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories. For more information regarding programs and services provided by The Lung Association, please visit our website www.ab.lung.ca or call 1-888-566-5864.

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