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3 Area Students Honored for Anti-Tobacco Billboard Designs

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department this week recognized three students for winning a local billboard design contest aimed at discouraging the use of tobacco.

The grand prize winner was Christina Ward, 17, a junior at Capital High School. Madeline Taylor, 12, from East Valley Middle School, won the prize for Lewis and Clark County. Miranda Gower, 18 and a senior at Broadwater High School, won the prize for Broadwater County. A total of 59 students submitted design entries.

The three winning designs target the tobacco industry's deceptive marketing toward youth. The grand prize design depicts a teen wearing music ear buds to help her "tune out" the sharp and strident advertising of the tobacco industry.

Each design will be displayed for three months on a billboard near Lake Helena Drive heading toward Townsend. Ward's design went up Monday.

The Townsend Youth Council, Helena Youth Advisory Council, and health department's Chronic Disease Prevention Programs teamed up to offer the billboard contest. It was funded with grant money through reACT, a Montana youth-led movement to motivate students to take a stand against "Big Tobacco." reACT stands for React Against Corporate Tobacco.

"Empowering youth to make healthy, informed choices about their bodies while they're young is critical to their health and well-being throughout their lifetime," said Katie Wagner, a health educator for tobacco use prevention with the health department. "Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in our nation. Considering that roughly 90 percent of adult tobacco users started using tobacco before the age of 18, now is the time for prevention, and reACT's whole focus is on just that."

For more information about reACT and tobacco-use prevention, contact the Tobacco Use Prevention Program at 457-8924 or visit www.reactmt.com.

