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Area Students Honored for Anti-Tobacco Billboard Designs

Lewis and Clark Public Health honored teen winners Thursday of a billboard design contest aimed at discouraging the use of tobacco, especially among their peers.

The “Talk Back to Tobacco” competition was funded through a grant from reACT, which stands for React Against Corporate Tobacco. reACT is a Montana youth-led movement that aims to motivate students to take a stand against “Big Tobacco.” Thirty-seven students from Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties submitted entries.

Award winners were:

First Place. Alayna Kranich, Samantha Hill, and Evan Martin, Helena High School. Their design featured a steel-toothed trap and was captioned “Tobacco Companies Kill Their Best Customers: It’s a Trap.” The design will appear on a billboard on the east side of East Helena for the next eight weeks.

Second Place. Ronnie Steele, Broadwater High School. Her botanical design urged peers to “Outgrow Tobacco.” It will appear on a billboard near Clancy for the next four weeks.


Fourth Place. Kylee Gardipee, Helena Middle School. Her sports-inspired entry reads “Kick Butts in Sports, Not in Cigarettes.”

Public health professionals from the three participating counties judged the entries based on the creativity and effectiveness of their designs and messages. This is the second year that the health department has sponsored the contest.

“Empowering youth to make healthy, informed choices about their bodies while they’re young is critical to their lifelong health and well-being,” said Sarah Shapiro, a health educator for tobacco-use prevention with Lewis and Clark Public Health. “Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in our nation.”

She noted that about 9 of 10 adult tobacco users started before the age of 18.
“That’s why teens are such an important audience for tobacco-use prevention messages,” she added. “It’s also important to have teens be the messengers, since teens are heavily influenced by their peers. reACT’s whole focus is on just that.”

For more information about tobacco-use prevention or reACT, contact Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8924 or publichealth@lccountymt.gov, or visit www.reactmt.com.