

Student Artists Drive Home Message in Tobacco Free Poster Contest

Twelve striking posters ringed the wall of St. Vincent's Medical Center lobby last week as the 12 winners of the Tobacco Free student poster contest received their prizes at a reception, timed to coincide with the recognition of the Great American Smoke-out Day. The contest, sponsored by St. Vincent's, General Electric and the Bridgeport Board of Education, drew more than 200 entries.

At the reception for winners and their families, which followed an awareness fair at the hospital, St. Vincent's President/CEO Susan L. Davis, RN, EdD, and GE Chief Medical Officer and Director of Global Health Care Robert Galvin, MD, both expressed gratitude for the new partnership and for the work of Teen Smoke Stoppers instructors Mary Ellen Bolcer and Susan Richardson.

The contest was the brainchild of Maureen Pelletier, RN, a nurse navigator at St. Vincent's and also an occupational health nurse at GE, and Beverly Doran, RN, Associate Director of Nursing at GE. The pair were motivated by a harsh reality that they discovered: in Connecticut more teens smoke than adults.

"We wanted to do something to blunt the effect of this devastating statistic," said Pelletier. Doran praised the cooperation of the Bridgeport Board of Education, saying "The art teachers have been unbelievable and all the students did a wonderful job in producing thoughtful and creative posters with the tobacco-free theme."



Contest winners gather during the reception held in their honor to display their art work with a message. Front row kneeling: Joey Sollami, Bungay School, Taylor Casine of St. Mark's; Britney Bondos, Guilford Lakes School. Middle row: Jose Ortiz of Blackham, Alexander Cascella of Central High School; Sergio Escobar of Central, Melissa Rafferty of St. Joseph's. Back row: Guichard Francois of Blackham, Carlos Vrena of Blackham, Vinajah Hendrick of Blackham, Albertine Davis of Central, and Caitlin Bonenfant of Notre Dame.



Contest organizers congratulate top winner Sergio Escobar (center) of Central High School in Bridgeport. L to R: Central art teacher Patty Church, Dr. Ken Grossman of GE, Beverly Doran, RN, of GE, Dr. Robert Galvin, GE Director of Global Health Care; Escobar, Maureen Pelletier, RN, of GE and ST. Vincent's, Ralph Buzzard, Director of Visual Arts for Bridgeport Board of Education; and Blackham art teacher Terri Marturano

The contest was open to students at Blackham Elementary and Central High School in Bridgeport, both GE's adopted schools, and to the children of GE employees.

The two nurses enlisted the help of Teen Smoke Stoppers instructors Mary Ellen Bolcer and Susan Richardson who visited the classrooms at Central and Blackham, with the students later incorporating what they had learned into their art. The two Smoke Stopper instructors made a huge impression on the students with their graphic portrayal of the dangers of smoking, displaying preserved healthy and diseased lungs and also allowing the students to smell the foul liquid in a jar of cigarette butts. Teen Smoke Stoppers is a smoking prevention and cessation program now in more than 85 schools made possible by St. Vincent's Swim Across the Sound.

The top prize winning poster showcased a graffiti style of art while others utilized the Japanese anime style and still another, a dark versus light approach in pencil. Posters will be on display in St. Vincent's lobby for several weeks.

Winners came from Blackham, Central, St. Joseph High School in Trumbull, Notre Dame High School in Fairfield, St. Mark's School in Stratford, Bungay School in Seymour, and Guilford Lakes School in Guilford.

The project really hit home for St. Joseph High School freshman, Melissa Rafferty, whose grandmother died from smoking related illness. "I hope that this helps children and teens to avoid smoking, stay healthy, and live a long life."

In addition to co-chairpersons Pelletier and Doran, the following served on the contest committee: Sandy Reyes, Ronald J. Bianchi, Michael Bisciglia, Laura Flavell, Mary Ellen Bolcer, and Susan Richards, all of St. Vincent's; Gus Serra, Susan Carroll, Dr. Ken Grossman, all of GE; and Ralph Buzzard, Patty Church and Terri Marturano of the Bridgeport Board of Education.

Tobacco Free poster contest winners 2008

Ages 15 – 18 (swiss army watch for #42 & #44)

#43 Sergio Escobar (lap top)	Central HS	Grade 12
#44 Alexander Cassella	Central HS	Grade 10
#42 Caitlin Bonenfant	Notre Dame HS	Grade 10

Ages 12 – 14 (swiss army watch)

#37 Albertine Davis	Central HS	Grade 10
#36 Guichard Francois	Blackham	Grade 7
#28 Melissa Rafferty	St. Joseph's HS	Grade 9
#22 Jose Ortiz	Blackham	Grade 8

Ages 9 – 11 (tickets to Downtown Children's Cabaret)

#16 Vinajah Hendrick	Blackham	Grade 6
#15 Carlos Vrena	Blackham	Grade 7

Ages 6 – 8 (tickets to Downtown Children's Cabaret)

#7 Taylor Casine	St. Mark's School	Grade 1
#4 Britney Bondos	Guilford Lakes	Grade 2
#1 Joey Sollami	Bungay	Grade 3