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**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

## NEWS RELEASE

### *Teens respond: What can I do, invent, or create?*

**Soldotna, April 28, 2016—More than 300 KPBSD students competed in the Caring for the Kenai (CFK) competition this year, with \$28,000 awarded to students and classrooms. The CFK essay prompt challenge is, “What can I do, invent or create to better care for the environment of the Kenai Peninsula or improve the area’s preparedness for a natural disaster?”**

“I am very proud of all the finalists for Caring for the Kenai,” said Sean Dusek, superintendent. “This program allows the students and staff in our district to extend learning beyond the classroom in a meaningful way. These types of projects are the true measure of education in our district and exemplify what is happening on a daily basis in our classrooms. Congratulations to all of the participants and I look forward to the students taking the next step with their projects by making them happen in our communities.”

After several rounds of judging, the top 12 ideas were presented in a live competition, before a panel of community judges.

- In first place, Evangeline & Marguerite Cox [Nikiski Middle-High School] claimed \$1,600 with “Breath for Pets.” Their project places pet oxygen masks in the hands of first responders on the Kenai Peninsula. “Animals are a big part of our lives, not just domestic pets but wildlife as well, and these respirators can save both in emergency situations,” said Evangeline.
- Second place and earning \$1,100 is freshman Hunter Hanson [Kenai Central High School] who plans to put drones into service for environmental research, “My plan is to use drones to survey moose on the Kenai Peninsula using thermal imaging,” said Hunter.
- Third place and claiming a \$900 prize is Alicia Steiner [Homer High School] who is implementing a program at her school to reduce Styrofoam tray waste, “My project is to limit the amount of Styrofoam trays by implementing ‘Tray-less Tuesday’ which is one day of the week that we don’t use any Styrofoam only paper products,” said Steiner.

#### **KPBSD: ONE DISTRICT, FORTY-FOUR DIVERSE SCHOOLS**

The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to develop productive, responsible citizens who are prepared to be successful in a dynamic world.

ANCHOR POINT COOPER LANDING HOMER HOPE KACHEMAK SELO KENAI MOOSE PASS NANWALEK NIKISKI NIKOLAEVSK NINILCHIK PORT GRAHAM  
RAZDOLNA SELDOVIA SEWARD SOLDOTNA STERLING TUSTUMENA TYONEK VOZNESENKA

- Fourth place and claiming \$750 is Rowan Biessel [Homer High School], whose idea is to install algae photo bioreactors in buildings on the Kenai to combat climate change.
- Fifth place and winning \$650 is Victoria Giles [Soldotna Prep] who wants to convert common trash into energy with a bio-digester that could be used in homes or landfills.
- Sixth place and winning \$550 is Jacob Nabholz [Kenai Central High School] who is teaching the bio-cultural connection between people and nature by learning the meaning of ancient language of our host Dena'ina culture that reveals knowledge of local ecology.

In addition to the \$8,000 in cash awards for the finalists, this year \$20,000 will be awarded to the schools science departments, thanks to the CFK signature sponsor Tesoro Alaska and the community partners Kenai River Raven Lodge, Hilcorp Energy, ASRC Energy Services, Peninsula Community Health Services, and Peninsula Radiation Oncology Center.

Other finalists that earned \$400 each for making it to the final 12 out of over 300 entries were:

- Robert McGinnis of Ninilchik with his mobile recycling unit
- Elise Webber a Homer senior who has begun a program for disaster alert registration of cell phones
- Chelsea Oberle-Lozano of Ninilchik with a project called "Facing your Feces," an idea to provide poop-bags at trail heads
- Samantha Graves from Homer has a plan to save more otters with volunteers
- The team of Katelyn Moore and Drew Davis from Nikiski prepared emergency "To Go" bags for disaster preparedness
- Owen Myer also of Homer is starting a sleeping bag drive to collect no-longer used sleeping bags to be used in case of an emergency

High schools using CFK as part of classroom curriculum are Homer High School, Kenai Central High School, Nikiski Middle-High School, Ninilchik School, Seward High School, Soldotna Prep, and Voznesenka School. Each school receives \$750 for their participation and the remainder of the \$20,000 was allocated proportionately to how the students ranked in the CFK competition. Additionally, twenty plus students received special recognition awards from local businesses and individuals.

On Saturday, April 30, 2016, finalists, teachers and guests will attend the CFK V.I.P. Awards banquet hosted in their honor by Tesoro at the Challenger Learning Center in Kenai. This year's April 21, 2016, oral presentation judges included Borough Mayor Mike Navarre, Cameron Hunt, Tesoro vice president Kenai Refinery, KPBSD Superintendent Sean Dusek, Ray Chumley, ConocoPhillips LNG plant superintendent, Marnie Olcott, CEO Challenger Learning Center of Alaska, Monica Adams PCHS chief executive officer, Amanda Millay, Environmental Program Technician Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and last year's CFK 1<sup>st</sup> place winner Keira Stroh. Caring for the Kenai is administered as part of the Challenger Learning Center of Alaska educational programs.

Questions? Contact Merrill Sikorski, contest creator and coordinator, (907)-262-4949

Caring for the Kenai [website](#)

Caring for the Kenai on [Facebook](#)

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