

College Park Academy of Science and Technology wins at 2011 Texas Envirothon

The Texas Envirothon was held March 26 through 28, 2011 at the Eastman Chemical Company facilities in Longview, Texas. Envirothon is an academic, extra-curricular environmental and natural resource education program and competition designed for high school students. Teams of five students work together to answer questions focusing on five areas of study: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and the current environmental issue, which was salt and fresh water estuaries. In addition to the field experience, students also participate in an oral component focusing on a real-world environmental problem. Seven schools for a total of 13 teams participated in the competition. Those included were: Carnegie Vanguard High School (Houston – Teams A & B); College Park Academy of Science and Technology (The Woodlands – Teams A & B); John Cooper High School (The Woodlands – Teams A & B); John Tyler High School (Tyler – Blue Team & White Team); Klein Collins High School (Spring); Richardson High School (Richardson – Teams A & B); and Rio Hondo High School (Rio Hondo – Teams A & B). The overall winner of the 2011 Texas Envirothon was College Park Academy of Science and Technology, Team A. Students on the winning team were: Xinyi Wang, Emily Eichelberger, Surabhi Reddy, Sebastian Munoz, and Rachel Reid. College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team B was second place, while, Carnegie Vanguard, Team A took third place. College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team A will represent Texas at the Canon Envirothon competition to be held in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 24- July 29, 2011.

In addition to the overall winners, awards were given to the top scoring teams on the field/written exam by topic and for the top team in the oral presentations during a ceremony held at the Eastman Park on Monday afternoon. The winners were Rio Hondo Team B in Aquatics; Carnegie Vanguard Team A and John Cooper Team A tied in Forestry; College Park Academy of Science and

Technology Team B in Soils and the Oral Presentation; and College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team A in Wildlife and Current Issue.

The fun began on Saturday afternoon with optional student training workshops presented by a variety of professionals. Presenters included Michelle Holyfield and Alex Stanton from Eastman Chemical Company, Charlie Muller from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, John Boyette, Daniel Duncum, Philip Gates and Matt Wright from the Texas Forest Service, Dennis Brezina from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Donna Work from the Texas Forest Service. During these presentations, students received training in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and oral presentation skills. The competition officially began on Sunday afternoon at the Eastman Nature Trail. There were 64 students as well as 14 team advisors participating in the field testing. Questions on the field test ranged from identifying animal tracks, aquatic invertebrates, and tree measurements to describing soil textures and discussing the benefits of wetlands. Over 65 volunteers assisted with a variety of jobs including monitoring the field stations, leading students to each station, grading the field tests and serving as judges for the oral presentations, etc.

To help students prepare for Sunday evening's challenge, which was to develop a proposal addressing Freshwater Inflows in Galveston Bay, three guest presentations were held on Sunday morning. Dr. George Guillen, from the Environmental Institute of Houston, presented on "Lone Star Estuaries". Donna Work with the Texas Forest Service presented on "Salt and Fresh Water Estuaries" and Dr. Anna Armitage of Texas A&M University at Galveston compiled a DVD for the students entitled "A Virtual Trip to an Estuary". After the field testing on Sunday, the students were then sequestered for three hours to work on their presentations. The presentations were delivered to a panel of five judges on Monday morning.

Sponsors of the 2011 Texas Envirothon include: Eastman Chemical Company, Enbridge Inc., University of Houston-Clear Lake, Environmental Institute of Houston, Canon USA, Gulf Coast Waste

Disposal Authority, Texas Association of Environmental Professionals, Association of Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Texas Association for Environmental Education, Chevron Matching Gift Program, Blue Bell Ice Creameries, Harris County Soil and Water Conservation District, Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District.

For more information about the Texas Envirothon, contact Wendy Reistle, Environmental Institute of Houston/UHCL, at (281) 283-3045 or visit www.texasenvirothon.org.

College Park Academy of Science and Technology Team A pictured with Mark Bogle and Michelle Holyfield of Eastman Chemical Company.

