

Play and live tobacco-free, say students



By Jeff Doner

Local high school students have a clear message ? play, live, tobacco-free.

That message was loud and clear at the Aurora Youth Soccer Club (AYSC) last Thursday, where winners of a multimedia contest had their videos and print ads showcased.

Louise Dyer, promo-tions and sponsorship coordinator at the AYSC, said the program is meant to promote healthier living within youth in the community.

Cameron Richard, Alex Scott and Ali Perciballi were the student volunteers for the AYSC who helped get the program running and recruit participants. Students had to produce a video and/or print ad targeted toward youth against using tobacco products.

To help with funding for the program, the AYSC applied for and received a grant from The Central East Tobacco Control Area Network.

Matthew Watt, an AYSC employee and one of the youth organizers of the project, said students were given free rein on how they wanted to approach the topic.

?Judging was based on creativity, presentation, and thematic resonance,? said Watt. ?Our grand prize winner was arguably the most polished and most persuasive. The second place submission used sports and humor to be relatable to teens. Third place was both shocking and a technically impressive Photoshop piece and all three conveyed a unique message about the hazards of smoking.?

Patricia Teasco, a Grade 9 student at Newmarket's Sacred Heart Catholic High School, won a new iPad for her first place video.

?The theme was inspired by a project that I had done before,? Teasco said after her video was played in front of an audience. ?Last year in grade eight I did an anti-tobacco project, but this year I decided to take it to the next level. That was a project involving actors and filming and that's not really what I do.

?On YouTube, I discovered this new trend called, ?draw my life' and it's just basically drawing on a whiteboard and taking a video and talking with a voiceover in the background. I used that idea and instead of drawing my life, I drew the life of a teen smoking tobacco and all the consequences of it.?

The poetry in the video was a mashup of different poems that Teasco found and mixed with her own writing.

Second place winner was Grade 12 Sir William Mulock High School students Ryan Harley, Juan Rincon-Restrepo, Malcolm McNish and Kheang Taing, who each won a \$100 Best Buy gift certificate.

This group tackled the dangers of using tobacco products and how they affect those striving to be athletes.

“The idea was to find kids in our school that use tobacco products and play sports and we wanted to figure out why they were doing it and get the message across that it's not safe for them and they are risking their health and lives,” said Harley. “That was our main message that we wanted to get across.”

This group's print ad was a great representation of the negative effects of tobacco on athletes, with a blurred image of athletes and the message, “Don't Let Your Dreams Fade Away.”

In third place was another grade 12 group from Mulock High who submitted both a video and images of a rapidly aging woman holding a cigarette.

Mykayla MacNamara, Jenna Centra, Rachel Ashbourne and Kristen Lucas were the concept creators and artists behind it.

“When we found out that it had to be directed toward teens, even though we made it for the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, we wanted to gear it towards what teens would be able to relate to in general, rather than just the ones who play sports,” said MacNamara.

“We found that it was really easy to target girls who start smoking, because we understand them. We targeted the visual appeal of smoking and how it really isn't as glamorous as it seems.”