



PRESS RELEASE

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OCCA Sending Middle-School Students to DEC Camp This Summer

OTSEGO COUNTY – Following a competitive essay contest, the Otsego County Conservation Association has awarded nine students from three participating schools the opportunity of a week-long stay at New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Education Camp.

Working with the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, OCCA selected the winning submissions from more than 70 essays written by Cooperstown, Milford and Oneonta middle-school students. The top three essay writers, and alternates in the event that they cannot attend camp, are:

Cooperstown: Lydia Williams, John Kelley, Grace LeCates (Catherine Thompson, alternate)

Milford Central School: Toby Harmon, Finn Hall, Lauren Saggese (Grace Brennan, alternate)

Oneonta Middle School: Joshua Grimm, Hafsa Mohammad, Gabriella Basdekis (Emma Tavarone, alternate)

OCCA will sponsor the campers at \$350 per student, thanks to funds provided by DOAS and a private donor. Alternates will be rewarded for their hard work as well with a small cash prize, and Emily Kuhlmann of Oneonta Middle School – who authored the best essay written by a student not applying to attend camp – will receive \$50.

Otsego and Delaware county students ages 11-13 were invited to compete for camperships via the essay contest. In 750 words or less, they were asked to consider “Why Environmental Stewardship is Important” and to examine why a healthy, well-managed environment is essential to them now and in the future. Middle-school teachers were welcome to incorporate the essay contest into their lesson plans.

“Many thanks to middle-school teachers Kathy Hardison, Eamonn Hinchey and Amy Parr, who were willing to make the essay-writing exercise part of their class work,” said Darla M. Youngs, OCCA executive director. “We went from less than 20 entries last year to more than triple that number.”

“Thanks as well to Jim Hill and Susan O’Handley, who joined me in reading all these wonderful essays. The students’ work provided great insight into how they feel about the environment and their concerns about the issues that face not only their generation but also those to come.”

The authors of the winning essays will enjoy a week at NYSDEC camp this summer, where they will spend their time immersed in the natural environment and will enjoy a balance of environmental education, sportsman education, and outdoor fun.

OCCA is a private, non-profit environmental membership organization dedicated to promoting the appreciation and sustainable use of Otsego County's natural resources through education, advocacy, resource management, research, and planning. For more information on OCCA, or to support programming, call; 607-547-4488 or visit www.occainfo.org

COOPERSTOWN – The Otsego County Conservation Association and Mohican Farm will conduct a horticultural plastic container recycling initiative on three Saturdays in June at the Cooperstown Farmers’ Market.

Used plastic growing containers can be dropped off on June 15, 22 and 29 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the farmers’ market, 101 Main Street (in Pioneer Alley next to KeyBank), where they will be collected and sorted by a Cooperstown high-school student. The materials will later be shipped and processed into clean regrind which is then manufactured into new horticultural containers.

All excess soil, rocks, paper, metal hangars and other foreign materials must be removed from the containers; adhesive labels are fine. Mixed color and printed containers are acceptable.

Most containers being collected – plastic garden pots, cell packs and trays – have the appropriate recycling symbol molded into the bottom (#2, #5, #6).

“The Missouri Botanic Gardens, working with retailers, landscapers and the gardening public, has recycled more than 1 million pounds of horticultural plastics since 1998,” OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs. “It makes both economical and environmental sense to keep these plastics out of the landfill.”

This program is made possible locally by New York State Flower Industries, Inc. For more information, contact OCCA at (607) 547-4488 or admin@occainfo.org.