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Shapiro Administration Announces Student Winners of Art Competition Helping Others Avoid Lyme Disease through Art Competition

Art contest raises awareness of Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses and encourages people to avoid ticks when safely enjoying Pennsylvania's great outdoors.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, Shapiro Administration officials from the **Departments of Health (DOH), Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Environmental Protection (DEP)** announced 29 student winners of the 2024 **“Protect. Check. Remove. Lyme Disease Student Art Competition.”** The contest promotes awareness of the prevalence of ticks and encourages people to enjoy the great outdoors safely.

“Spending time outdoors is important for our health, and we encourage Pennsylvanians to enjoy the outdoors safely as often as possible,” said **Acting Secretary of Health Dr. Debra Bogen**. “This student art competition offers a hands-on, creative opportunity for students and their families to learn how to prevent tick bites and Lyme disease. The contest is part of the Shapiro Administration’s commitment to promoting healthy behaviors and preventing diseases.”

In addition to the art contest, and to better inform Pennsylvanians about tickborne diseases, the Department of Health launched a [new online dashboard](#) earlier this week for residents to see where ticks are prevalent and be prepared to take appropriate precautions while enjoying outdoor activities.

The Lyme Disease Student Art Contest is a crucial educational initiative that teaches children about where ticks are found, how to prevent tick bites, and the symptoms of Lyme disease.

More than 253 students in first through sixth grades across the Commonwealth submitted posters and videos to the Department of Health in March 2024.

The winning artwork will serve as a testament to the creativity of Pennsylvania’s students, will be on display in the Pennsylvania State Capitol near the cafeteria outside the Senate Fountain Area through the end of May.

Leaders from the DOH, DCNR, and DEP joined in the presentation of winners.

“Tick bites can ruin a good time out in nature so it’s important to take commonsense measures to protect yourself, your family, and your pets,” said **Department of Environmental Protection**

Deputy Secretary for Field Operations John Ryder. “Lyme disease has been found in ticks in all 67 Pennsylvania counties, and other tick-borne illnesses are being found every year.”

“Pennsylvania is a beautifully diverse state with many opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation,” said **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Executive Policy Specialist Ali Bowling.** “DCNR recognizes that getting outside can come with risks including exposure to ticks and Lyme disease. A key way to help Pennsylvanians enjoy the outdoors but remain safe is through education and personal protective equipment. Raising awareness through this competition is a fun and creative way to engage all Pennsylvanians, especially our younger generations about this important public health issue.”

A total of 15 posters and three video submissions were selected from the following grades:

First and second grade winners:

- 1st place: Anwitha Ajith, Chester County
- 2nd place: Valkyrie Lindberg, Berks County
- 3rd place: Waylon Johnson, Wayne County
- Honorable mention: Brennen Bentz, Columbia County
- Honorable mention: Scarlett Boyle, Columbia County

Third and fourth grade winners:

- 1st place: Destrey Jones, Greene County
- 2nd place: Lennox Berrier, Juniata County
- 3rd place: Beckett Blouir, Greene County
- Honorable mention: Reagan Sunshine Betzler-Hafner, Delaware County
- Honorable mention: Paisley Midkiff, Chester County

Fifth and sixth grade winners:

- 1st place: Kaitlyn Courtwright, Greene County
- 2nd place: Addyson Cardillo, Luzerne County
- 3rd place: Caia Miller, York County
- Honorable mention: Mia Acosta Aranda, Luzerne County
- Honorable mention: Grey de Paula de la Rosa, Luzerne County

Video Contest Winners

- Grades 1 & 2: Neelia Parraga, Lancaster County
- Grades 3 & 4: Paul Cooley, Allegheny County
- Grades 5 & 6: Gabbi Pericci, Dylan Kohn, Aralyn Hatten, Lauryn Hatten, Adam Shamaski, Stella Styczen, Emily May, Mary Matthews, Cian Hummer, Raegan Jayne Paisley, Jillian Weidner, Braden Rutkoski, Luzerne County

Pennsylvania typically ranks in the top 10 in the country for Lyme disease cases per 100,000 residents. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a short course of antibiotics. However, if the infection is left untreated, it can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system.

Ticks are found in urban and rural settings, usually in shrubs, weeds, leaf litter, and tall grasses, but they can be found anywhere there is foliage. So, taking the proper steps to decrease the chances of getting bitten is important.

TIPS FOR TICK PREVENTION

When outside, cover exposed skin, wear light colors to help detect ticks, and use insect repellent that is EPA-approved for tick prevention. Before spending time outdoors, spray permethrin on shoes, clothes, and gear.

After being outside, check yourself, your kids, and your pets thoroughly for ticks and remove any attached. Then, shower to help remove any ticks you may have missed. You can also throw your clothes in the dryer using high heat to help kill any remaining ticks.

The Shapiro Administration reminds Pennsylvanians of the health benefits of safely enjoying the outdoors, including:

- Improving cardiovascular health;
- Strengthening muscles and bones;
- Reducing chances of suffering chronic diseases;
- Reducing stress levels and improving mental health; and
- Becoming more socially connected.

For more information on Lyme disease, visit the Department of Health's [Tickborne Diseases webpage](#).

Editor's Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference are available on **PAcast**.

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