

Wing Beats

of the Florida Mosquito Control Association

I'm going in!



Wings locked in attack position!



Look at the size of that can!



Bug out, They're protected by a DEET shield!



Fight The Bite

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Fight the Bite: A New Approach for Reaching Children with Mosquito Bite Prevention Strategies by Susan Little

Check out the front cover of this month's issue. It's based on a poster created by Adam Carr, 12-year old artist extraordinaire from Tampa, FL. Adam was the winner from among all sixth graders who submitted entries in the 2010 Fight the Bite Poster Contest.

For his efforts, competing against nearly 900 other students, he took home a cool \$1,000 savings bond and treated his family to a trip to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) research facilities in Fort Collins, CO. There, on June 18, in front

of more than 100 CDC scientists, family and friends, he and the fifth-grade national winner, Devayani Varma, were lauded by Dr Lyle Petersen and his staff for their excellent work. Petersen heads the CDC's Vector-Borne Disease Division; see Figures 1 through 3.



Figure 1: Left to right: Susan Little, executive director, PIR Program, CSPA; Janet McAllister, CDC and 2010 AMCA president; Emily Zielinski-Gutierrez, Behavioral Scientist, CDC; Lyle Petersen, director, Division of Vector-borne Diseases, CDC; and Adam Carr, sixth-grade national Grand Prize 2010 Fight the Bite poster contest winner.



Figure 2: Devayani Varma and her parents attended the award ceremony.

Adam is homeschooled. According to his mother Kelly, "Adam does artwork everyday as part of his studies, including history, science and art history. He did lots of research on repellents and insects before he started drawing the poster." The design of Adam's poster reflects his affinity for the "Star Wars" movies.

Devayani attends Marguerite Montgomery Elementary in Davis, CA. Her teacher, Mary Schembri, said, "Devayani is an excellent all-around student. She's creative and shows real initiative, which is exemplified by this award." Her poster was inspired by books she'd recently read on the Middle Ages.



Figure 3: Devayani Varma's winning fifth-grade national 2010 Fight the Bite poster depicted knights in armor.



Figure 4: Left to right – Della Cummings, teacher at East Union Middle School in Marshville, NC; Angel Sanchez, NC 2010 sixth-grade winner; NC Lt Governor Walter Dalton; and Kim Vague, assistant principal at East Union.



Figure 5: Left to right – Dee Freeman, Secretary of the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources; Vladimir Zalakov, NC 2010 fifth-grade winner; and NC Lt Governor Walter Dalton.

Students participating in the contest were inspired by books they read, movies they watched, even video games they played. Entries included illustrations of outdoor activities such as camping and fishing, showed how families can work together to eliminate mosquito larval habitats in their own yards and communities, and emphasized the importance of applying insect repellents properly. They were encouraged to highlight the “Four Ds” associated with Fight the Bite – dress properly, avoid being outside at dusk and dawn, drain standing water near the home, and use insect repellents that contain DEET or other EPA-registered repellents.

As winners were announced, state public and environmental health agencies jumped on the bandwagon in celebrating their young artists’ creativity. North Carolina arranged an event, museum tour and lunch for two youngsters from the western part of the state. Among the 50 dignitaries and guests present were NC Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton; Terry Pierce, director of the NC Division of Environmental



Figure 6: The CA Department of Human Health Services held an event for fifth-grade national winner, Devayani Varma (right), and its two state winners, Arnon Erba (left) and Hannah Berenjfoorosh (center) and their families.

Health; and Nolan Newton, chief of the Public Health Pest Management Section, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); see Figures 4 and 5.

California invited 11-year old Devayani Varma, fifth-grade national winner from Davis, and its two state winners for a special awards event held on the grounds of the State Capitol in Sacramento; see Figure 6. Dr Mark B Horton, Director, California Department of Public Health (CDPH), applauded the young artists' efforts to help California residents prevent vector-borne disease spread in the state. California has reported West Nile virus (WNV) cases well into the fall and early winter months. "We just can't seem to knock down WNV easily," said Claudia Erickson, WNV education coordinator, CDPH. "Despite the excellent and innovative approaches our mosquito control districts employ, with so many *green pools*, agricultural waterways, and mosquito larval habitat locations, it can be difficult to keep mosquito populations in check. The citizens of California need to be a part of the solution." Erickson, along with her counterparts from other state public health departments, agrees that the poster contest is an important tool for helping youngsters become aware. "Talking about the contest and the posters is one way to make sure all families are getting important messages about what we each can do to reduce mosquito breeding habitat and to help take personal prevention measures. With budgets being cut, it helps us spread the word in an innovative low-cost way." California, like other states, also devoted lots of website attention to the contest and its winners at <http://www.westnile.ca.gov>.

Mississippi, Missouri, and New York also highlighted their state winners' success. In New York, winners threw out the first baseball of the season in their community's minor league baseball season; see Figure 7. In Missouri and Mississippi, state public health departments issued press announcements and coordinated school-based awards efforts.

"Judging the entries was both fun and challenging," said Joseph Conlon, AMCA's technical advisor. "These youngsters are extremely talented, and clearly did their homework when it comes to understanding what is needed to help protect against mosquito-borne diseases." Conlon was one of six judges who carefully reviewed both



Figure 7: Leona Lau, New York's 2010 5th grade winner prepares to throw out the first pitch of the season for the Hudson Valley Renegades, assisted by Michael C Caldwell, Dutchess County Commissioner of Health.

Missouri has been a consistent supporter of the Fight the Bite (FTB) Poster Contest. Alyce Turner, health educator, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, notes that her state experiences a double-whammy, since it has lots of mosquito issues, including WNV, and tick-borne diseases. "This poster contest has helped our youngsters across the state recognize the importance of avoiding both tick and mosquito bites and has given them useful tools to help them do so," she said.

national and state finalist entries. The judges represented key organizations such as the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the National School Nurses Association, CDC, and the Consumer Specialty Products Association (CSPA), Washington, DC. The CDC and the DEET Education Program, which operates under the auspices of the CSPA, were co-sponsors of the contest. Winning posters may be viewed on the contest website,

<http://fightthebitecontest.org>, for any mosquito control or public health organization to use in their community education programs.

Available domestically since 1957, DEET is the world's most widely used active ingredient in insect repellents. The CDC and other leading health authorities have long recommended these repellents. The American Academy of Pediatrics says repellents with up to 30% DEET can be used on children as young as two months of age. The DEET Education Program, <http://www.deetonline.org>, is sponsored by Clariant Corp, SC Johnson & Son Inc, 3M Company and Vertellus Specialty Materials.

The role of mosquito control organizations in drumming up awareness for the contest has been critical in several states. Florida and California are two examples where local vector control organizations interfaced with schools, working with science teachers to stimulate studies on the mosquito life cycle.

Cindy Mulla, Beach Mosquito Control District, Panama City Beach, FL, was a booster of the contest as she visited schools making presentations about mosquitoes; see Figure 8. The year Mulla initiated Beach MCD's educational outreach mosquito awareness program, Christina Gaillard, a student at St Bernadette Catholic School, Panama City Beach, won the 2007 state fifth-grade FTB poster contest.

Karen Mellor, Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District, Palmdale, CA, arranged for the 2009 California state winner from her area to meet the Mayor and City Council of Palmdale and to be part of a 2009 presentation as part of a city-wide awareness



Figure 8: Cindy Mulla, Beach Mosquito Control District, Panama City Beach, FL, shows children dog heartworms at Beach Elementary School.

campaign during the height of WNV incidence in the area (the highest in California that year). She incorporated information about the FTB Contest in her school presentations and generated many entries from her community. "The kids love this program and the awareness they help build is remarkable," Mellor said.

"Lesson plans are crucial for teachers who are pressed for time," said Marcee Toliver, Environmental Senior Specialist for the Public Health Pest Management Section, Division of Environmental Health, NC DENR. "We communicated with all of our school districts statewide early in the contest and shared



Figure 9: Adam Carr's family had never visited Colorado before they won the trip as part of the contest. Recently, they have decided to relocate to Colorado Springs. "It was such a marvelous experience," said Adam's father. "We're really excited and grateful the the FTB Poster Contest for helping us open up a new, exciting chapter in our lives," he said.



Figure 10: Teacher Sara Johnson, Disney Elementary School, Springfield, MO (left) and Meghan Zengel, 2009 national fifth-grade winner.



Figure 11: Peli Godden, 2008 national fifth-grade winner, also a student of Sara Johnson, Disney Elementary School, Springfield, MO.

special lesson plans and ideas on our website that teachers could adapt.”

Dr Emily Zielinski-Gutierrez, Behavioral Scientist, at CDC’s Division of Vector-Borne Diseases in Fort Collins, and creator of the FTB contest, is another advocate of lesson plans. “We posted special lesson plans on the FTB Poster Contest website, hoping

that teachers would be able to use this extra assistance. In this year’s contest there was a dramatic increase in the number of students who got the details right in terms of scientific accuracy,” Zielinski-Gutierrez said. Assessing errors young artists made in previous years’ entries flagged key areas of potential misunderstanding that were emphasized on the website for

this year’s contest. “We saw real improvement in the visual and written content. It supported the idea that the contest develops students’ understanding of vector-borne diseases and how to help friends and family avoid the mosquitoes and ticks that transmit them,” she said.

Sara Johnson, health, science and math teacher at Disney Elementary School, Springfield, MO, has the distinction of having produced not one but TWO national winners in the contest, with back to back wins in 2008 and 2009 and the Missouri fifth-grade state winner in 2010; see Figures 10 and 11. “We saw the poster contest as a logical extension of lesson plans on mosquitoes,” she said. She counsels her young charges to look carefully at previous years’ winners, to get a sense of the types of posters that were state and national finalists. Johnson noted that the poster contest reinforced in-school efforts with a website created and maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “I encouraged my kids to study the FTB Poster Contest website for suggestions and ideas of appropriate themes and messaging. That really paid off for them.”

Want to learn more about the contest for 2011? Just visit <http://fightthebitecontest.org>. Anyone who needs handouts for schools can call 800-789-3300. The contest coordinators will send them to you free of charge. The contest deadline is April 18, 2011, so now’s the time to alert teachers, fifth- and sixth-grade students, school principals, families and others who can help encourage students to submit a poster. You never know – perhaps YOUR efforts will help a deserving student to come home with the top state or national prize in 2011.



Figure 12: 2010 Fight the Bite contest winners, Adam Carr and Devayani Varma look at an emergence cage during their visit to CDC Ft Collins.

Here, in their own words, are some final comments from the 2010 FTB Poster Contest national winners:

Adam Carr: "I hate itchy mosquito bites! What's even worse is when someone gets sick from a disease carried by a mosquito or tick. Living in Florida, I've heard a lot about West Nile Disease and how important it is to control the mosquito population. When I heard about the Fight the Bite Poster Contest, I thought it would be a great opportunity to help spread the word about insect repellents and DEET - plus maybe win a great trip! And WOW - it really was great visiting the CDC facility in Fort Collins, Colorado. I met lots of nice people and learned a lot about how different organizations are working together to educate people about insect control. I even got to participate in a laboratory class with real CDC scientists. I learned all about the life cycles of mosquitoes and ticks and watched fish gobble up mosquito larvae. It was awesome! There was also a nice awards ceremony and refreshments. My

favorite was the delicious cake with a giant mosquito made out of frosting. I'm glad my poster was chosen as a winner in the contest. My whole family enjoyed the trip to beautiful Colorado - so much, in fact, that we're moving there!"

Devayani Varma: "The Fight the Bite poster contest is important because it helps people be aware of diseases carried by mosquitoes and how to prevent them. Since children are the future citizens, if they practice Ds from their childhood, it can help make a healthy world for the present and future generations.

I'm really happy that through my poster, I can spread the word nationwide to fight the bite. I have won several local poster contests but being the National winner was exciting and unexpected. I was fortunate to visit CDC, Colorado and meet with scientists and learn about the bugs in detail. I am thankful to the CDC staff and the DEET Education Program for the wonderful award ceremony that they organized at the CDC

facility in Fort Collins, Colorado. I was also honored at the California State capitol, Sacramento by California Department of Public Health (CDPH). I am also thankful to CDPH, my school teachers, friends, and above all my parents for their encouragement and support.

I will Fight the Bite by practicing all the Ds myself. I will also encourage everyone to practice the Ds. When I grow up, I would like to volunteer for the mosquito control campaigns and make people aware of the diseases caused by mosquito bites. I would like to donate the \$1,000 savings bond that I had received - for winning the Fight the Bite poster contest - to a developing country for a good cause, possibly for their mosquito eradication program.

I would encourage every student to participate in the Fight the Bite contest as well as practice the Ds for making a healthy world."



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