

NEWS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

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Winners of 'It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying' Video Contest Announced

(East Lansing, MI) – A team of students from Homer High School has been selected as winner of the "It's Not Okay–Kids Against Bullying Video Contest." The winning entry was announced March 19 at an award ceremony at WKAR on MSU's campus.

WKAR and area schools held the video creation contest for mid-Michigan teens in an effort to raise awareness about bullying and to let young people's voices be heard on this important topic. Each team produced a 30-second video that shows how one can reach out to help people who need support against bullying.

The winning entry from Homer High School depicts scenes of bullying, interspersed with facts and statistics, and ends with the tag line: "It's NOT okay!" Students Bradley Porter, Alex White and Tyler Ridgeway produced the video, under the guidance of Duane Sitkiewicz, who teaches media technology at the school.

"They really wanted to make sure that kids out there understand that bullying is still going on in schools and they wanted to send a message that, truly, it's not okay for kids to be bullied at school. So they took it to heart," said Sitkiewicz about the team project. "It made me proud as a teacher."

"The kids were so excited about getting to be heard and being involved – getting the word out about bullying," said WKAR's Jason Thomson, producer and coordinator of the overall project.

The Homer team received a GoPro camera for their school as the grand prize. With some finishing touches from WKAR TV professionals, the spot will air on the station at a later date.

Receiving honorable mention were video entries submitted by teams from Kinawa Middle School in Okemos and Everett High School in Lansing.

"This video project is a really great example of how to involve our students in exploring ways to better understand the strategies to stop bullying, long before it begins," said Lansing School District Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul. "Negative behavior is an issue that we find all over the country. So it's really important that we continue to work on promoting techniques and strategies for children and adults on ways to stop and think about their actions and how those actions affect the people around them."

"I just was thrilled tonight to see so many kids who participated and the thought that went into their messages," said WKAR TV Station Manager Susi Elkins, who hosted the ceremony. "I'm also thrilled that we could have a small part in coordinating that effort."

"The coolest thing was to hear directly from the kids who participated. What they think is the most important message and what other kids need to hear."

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Also awarded during the evening were two scholarships to MSU's Media Summer Camps offered by the Department of Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media (TISM). TISM outreach specialist Amanda Krueger presented the scholarships to Savannah Strobel and Manan Chaturvedi of Kinawa Middle School, who will attend either TV Production or Digital Cinema Camp in summer, 2014.

Elkins was impressed by the videos that were submitted.

"It was really special to me that kids would take the time to think of a script and think of a message and take the time to get their video cameras out and actually create something. Because I know how hard that can be," Elkins said.

Both WKAR and the schools are looking forward to holding the contest again next year.

"The Lansing School District is truly honored to be part of this project," Canul said.

"Kids Against Bullying–It's Not Okay" was funded in part by Lake Trust Credit Union Foundation and Capital Region Community Foundation - Youth Action Committee.

For more information on the contest, see the project web page at <http://wkar.org/its-not-okay-kids-against-bullying>.

Additional Resources

Photos described below are available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wkar/sets/72157642952470024>

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Homer High School Grand Prize winners. (l-r) Bradley Porter, teacher Duane Sitkiewicz, Alex White, Tyler Ridgeway. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest.

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Advisor Tim Case (back row) with the Kinawa Middle School Stop Bullying Club. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

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Everett High School (l-r) Eldon McGraw, Cathy Gowen, LSD Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul, award entrant Brandon Cassel, teacher Jim Allen. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

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Anti-bullying activist Kevin Epling speaks to guests. Also pictured: Maria Palmo, WKAR; Susi Elkins, WKAR TV station manager. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

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Lansing School District Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul speaks to guests. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

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TISM Media Camp scholarship winners with Amanda Krueger (center), Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media at MSU. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

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TISM Media Camp scholarship winners and parents with Amanda Krueger (center), Telecommunication, Information Studies and Media at MSU. Awards Ceremony at WKAR: It's Not Okay - Kids Against Bullying Video Contest

WKAR is part of Michigan State University's College of Communication Arts and Sciences and includes WKAR TV, WKAR Radio, WKAR.org, WKAR Radio Reading Service and WKAR Ready To Learn Service. WKAR is funded in large part by community viewer and listener contributions with additional support from Michigan State University and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

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