

Students Take on Public Policy!

May 27, 2010

“PROJECT CITIZEN” SHOWS OUR FUTURE IS IN GOOD HANDS Mesa Academy for Advanced Studies and Lineweaver Elementary School Recognized

[Phoenix, AZ] –On Friday May 7th, over 200 students from across Arizona presented their public policy work at the statewide Project Citizen Showcase. The presentations had issues ranging from the environment to driving while texting. The students presented portfolios displaying a summary of their project and student teams gave oral presentations in support of their public policy ideas before panels of volunteer judges.

While not identified as a competition, two schools were recognized for their achievements in portfolio display and oral presentation of their project before judges. In recognition of their achievements with the Project Citizen program the following schools were awarded top honors:

Project Citizen Statewide Showcase Award for Oral Hearings

Mesa Academy for Advanced Studies

“Thank you for not smoking”

Dawn Klingaman, Teacher

Project Citizen Statewide Showcase Award for Portfolio

Lineweaver Elementary School

“Drive Now, Text Later”

Heather Matchett, Teacher

The 50+ judges at the Project Citizen Showcase, representing civic and community leaders, listened to the students’ presentations and provided feedback to help them better understand the democratic process of change. One judge, Councilmember Stephanie Karlin of Avondale noted, “I found this to be an exciting and informative process! I would highly encourage that this program be introduced to more schools.”

“Project Citizen really highlights these young students’ ability to think critically, clearly articulate their ideas, and engage in their local communities,” stated Hayley Ivins, Program Specialist for the Foundation. “The problems they choose to tackle are quite remarkable – everything from plastic bag pollution to drugs in schools, to children left in cars.” Other schools and their portfolios included:

Country Meadows Elementary School (Peoria)

Lineweaver Elementary School (Tucson)

Mesa Academy for Advanced Studies (Mesa)

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Pistor Middle School (Tucson)

Rhodes Junior High School (Mesa)

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“Time to Start Doing Our Part”

“Children & Vehicle Safety”

“You Spray, You Pay”

“Nutritious School Lunches”

“Drug Use Near Schools”

“Obesity in Youth”

“Banning Plastic Bags”

“Well Water to Namibia”

About Project Citizen: Project Citizen is portfolio-based civic education project for middle grade students sponsored nationally by the Center for Civic Education (CCE) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). It is supported locally by the Arizona Supreme Court and the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education. The program teaches young people to monitor and influence public policy. Students work cooperatively to identify a public problem in their community. They then research the problem, evaluate alternative solutions, develop their own solution in the form of a public policy, and create a political action plan to enlist local or state authorities to adopt their proposed policy. Participants develop a portfolio of their work and present their project in an oral hearing before a panel of civic-minded community volunteers.

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education

The Foundation provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups working toward “access to justice for all Arizonans” through law-related education and free legal services. The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education plays a leading role in preparing Arizona students for civic responsibility. The Foundation reaches more than 100,000 children each year by training teachers, school resource officers and probation officers about our laws, justice system and the foundations of democracy. It is also home of *LawForKids.org*, America’s first Web site dedicated to teaching students about the law.

Helpful Websites/More Information:

- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education: <http://www.azflse.org>
- Arizona Project Citizen: <http://www.azflse.org/pcitizen>
- Arizona Supreme Court: <http://azcourts.gov/AZSupremeCourt.aspx>
- Center for Civic Education (CCE): <http://www.civiced.org>
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL): <http://www.ncsl.org/>

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