DC Students Place in 2014 EnvironMentors National Fair

Three DC students place in the national competition

The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) EnvironMentors has announced the winners of the State Science Fair for the District of Columbia and the national competition. Taking the top honor for state was Xiu Chen, and second place went to Beza Dagnachew, both from the School Without Walls. Tianna Solomon took third place. The three D.C. champions participated—and placed—in the national competition held May 19, which was moderated by Dr. Dwane Jones, director, Center for Sustainable Development.

Tianna Solomon placed third nationally with her project: “The Effect of Air Pollution on Blackworm Skin Cells” and received a scholarship valued at $800. Placing fifth was Xiu Chen with “The Effects of Heavy Metal Toxins in Drinking Water on *Lumbriculus variegates*: Heart Rate, Cell Regeneration and Mortality,” for which she received $500. Beza Dagnachew also received the Leach Environmental Stewardship $500 award for “Portable Charger: Thin-film and Nanotechnology.”

“I watched with pride as the three DC winners also placed in the national competition,” said Dr. Jones, who also served as the keynote speaker. “This is an extraordinary achievement and I’m confident that all three will continue to make great achievements in the field of environmental science.”

Founded in 1992 as an environment-based mentoring program, EnvironMentors has 12 chapters across the country. The program encourages underserved youth to explore environmental education by using a hands-on, integrated program where scientific methodology is used to identify environmental issues.

Throughout the academic year, students work with mentors to develop environmental science projects based on relevant environmental circumstances in their communities. Upon completion of their research projects, they develop lesson plans and present to an elementary school class, at local science fairs and the state fair. The top three students from each chapter travel to Washington, D.C., to present their project at the National EnvironMentors Fair, where they have a chance to compete for college scholarships.

“This was an exciting competition and all of the participants were extremely well prepared to compete by their mentors,” said Rebecca Bankhead, director, the Center for 4-H and Youth Development.
Over the past 10 years, EnvironMentors has connected over 1850 students with mentors, has awarded over 150 scholarships worth $130,000, and has expanded to include 12 chapters across the country.

DC Environmentors is affiliated with the Center for 4-H and Youth Development, a division of UDC’s College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences. For more information, contact Ms. Rebecca Bankhead at rbankhead@udc.edu.

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**About EnvironMentors**
An initiative of the National Council for Science and the Environment, EnvironMentors is a national college access initiative that prepares high school students from under-represented backgrounds for college degree programs in environmental and related science fields. EnvironMentors is a collaborative effort of colleges and universities, our mentors, aspiring high school students, science teachers, government agencies, community organizations, foundations and businesses who generously support our work. The program matches minority high school students with college and university faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and science and environmental professionals, in one-to-one mentoring relationships. Working together, students and mentors develop rigorous environmental science research projects over the course of the academic year.

**About 4-H**
CAUSES is committed to building strong, vibrant communities of active and engaged citizens. The Center for 4-H and Youth Development develops innovative programs that emphasize experiential learning opportunities for young people and their families. Through “hands-on” interactive programming, participants develop life skills, leadership abilities, and an ethic of civic stewardship. The center offers the following programming to support and engage District youth.

**About the University of the District of Columbia**
An HBCU, urban land-grant, and the only public university in the nation’s capital, The University of the District of Columbia is committed to a broad mission of education, research and community service. Established by abolitionist Myrtilla Miner in 1851, the University of DC offers Associate’s, Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees and a host of workplace development services designed to create opportunities for student success. The University is comprised of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Business and Public Administration, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, a Community College and the David A. Clarke School of Law. To learn more, visit [www.udc.edu](http://www.udc.edu). The University of the District of Columbia is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. Minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply. For a full version of the University’s EO Policy Statement, please visit: [http://www.udc.edu/equal_opportunity](http://www.udc.edu/equal_opportunity). The University of the District of Columbia is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education - 3624 Market Street - Philadelphia, PA 19104 - 267.284.5000.