



STATE OF FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

"Dedicated to making Florida a better place to call home"

JEB BUSH
Governor

THADDEUS COHEN, AIA
Secretary

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Contact: Mike Stone, PIO
(850) 413-9883

2006 HAZARDOUS WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK KICKS OFF

~ More than 2000 students statewide participated in poster and essay contests ~

TALLAHASSEE - Lt. Governor Toni Jennings today joined officials from the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Education, Florida's American Red Cross Chapters and Florida's National Weather Service Forecast Offices, in partnership with the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association, the Florida Association of Broadcasters, the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes and the Florida Insurance Education Foundation, to announce the winners of the annual Hazardous Weather poster and essay contests during ceremonies held in the Capitol Rotunda.

"With so many residents and visitors enjoying Florida's great climate year-round, it is important that everyone is aware and prepared for potential weather hazards," said Lt. Gov. Jennings. "The events held this week will further our goal of instilling a 'culture of preparedness' in Florida."

More than 2000 students from 27 counties participated in the poster and essay contests. The top finalists' artwork and essays will be displayed in the Rotunda areas of the State Capitol during the third week of February.

"This year we received a record number of entries and the quality of the work was excellent," said State Meteorologist Ben Nelson with the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

The first place winner of the poster contest is Tyler Traniello, a 5th grade student at Deep Creek Elementary in Charlotte County. In second place is Lashodd Carey, a 5th grade student at Bethune Elementary in Broward County. In third place is Casey Ebeling, a 5th grade student at Atlantis Elementary in Brevard County.

The grand-prize winner of the essay contest is John Turner, an 11th grade student at Lincoln High School in Leon County. More than 700 students participated in the first annual event.

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2555 SHUMARD OAK BOULEVARD \$ TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-2100

Phone: 850.488.8466/Suncom 278.8466 FAX: 850.921.0781/Suncom 291.0781

Internet address: <http://www.dca.state.fl.us>

CRITICAL STATE CONCERN FIELD OFFICE
2796 Overseas Highway, Suite 212
Marathon, FL 33050-2227
(305) 289-2402

COMMUNITY PLANNING
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100
(850) 488-2356

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100
(850) 413-9969

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100
(850) 488-7956

The student contests are part of an annual public awareness campaign that included the distribution of more than 700,000 copies of the "*Hurricane Herald*" Hazardous Weather Guide in middle schools and counties across the state. The Florida offices of the National Weather Service will conduct an annual statewide tornado drill on Wednesday, February 15.

Additional events this week include "Just Read, Florida" classroom readings by state and local officials as well as partner organizations in St. Marks, Lakeland, Ft. Pierce and Coral Gables. The statewide reading events will also feature tours of the State Emergency Response Team's Mobile Command Vehicle, response equipment from the Florida National Guard, and local emergency management agencies.

For more information regarding "Hazardous Weather Awareness Week," and the cultural activities calendar, visit www.FloridaDisaster.org

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