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Riverside County students urged to take part in 'Fight the Bite' poster contest

Fifth- and sixth-graders in Riverside County can educate the community about the health impacts of mosquito-borne illnesses and earn some money for themselves and their school by entering the "Fight the Bite" poster contest.

The national grand prize winners will earn \$1,000 while state winners will bring home \$50. All entries must be postmarked by April 18, 2012. The winners will also earn \$250 for their respective schools.

The contest is co-sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the DEET Education Program. Students are urged to create a poster that helps others understand how to prevent mosquito and tick bites by using insect repellents and other measures. Health officials warn that mosquito and tick bites can lead to diseases such as West Nile Virus and Lyme disease.

In 2011, there were six cases of human West Nile Virus infection in Riverside County. There were 161 human West Nile Virus infections reported in California, including six fatal cases, during that same period.

"The contest is a fun way of reminding the community of a serious subject," said Barbara Cole, head of Disease Control for the Riverside County Department of Public Health. "It also provides a way for younger students to learn the steps they can take to protect themselves from a potential health hazard."

To learn more about the contest or obtain an entry form, go to www.fightthebitecontest.org call 888-NO BITES (888-662-4837). Entries should be mailed to: DEET Education Program, 1289 Fordham Blvd., Suite 235, Chapel Hill, NC, 27514.

One entry per student. Please mail your poster in a tube or in a large envelope. If you must fold it, please fold it just once.