

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**“A GIFT OF GREEN” WINS 21ST CARING FOR THE KENAI COMPETITION FOR KELSIE LEAF OF COOK INLET ACADEMY...**

Kenai, April 22, 2011- With a plan to bring together a team of her peers to replant the trees that were cut down for the Wal-Mart store construction in Kenai, **Kelsie Leaf**, a Cook Inlet Academy student, won top honors and \$1,600 dollars cash at the Caring for the Kenai environmental awareness competition last night. “I practiced my presentation a million times, but my biggest obstacle for my project was overcoming my own inertia and fear of reaching out,” said Leaf, who also composed an original song to accompany her winning idea, **“A Gift of Green.”**

The CFK essay prompt challenges high school students to respond to the question, “What can I do, invent, or create to better care for the environment of the Kenai Peninsula, or to improve the area’s preparedness for a natural disaster?” Taking second place and earning \$1,100 was the team of **Dylon Holloway and Melinda Hampton** of Nikiski high whose project to protect the **Kasilof River dunes** started two years ago when they were in Phil Morin’s science class “We knew it was a really good idea and thought we could make it happen and it is happening thanks to all the people we have worked with. We plan to help install the protective fence in a month or so,” they said.

In third place and claiming a \$900 prize was **Bradley Hamilton**, a freshman at KCHS in Kristin Davis class with a plan to put **mile markers on the banks of the Kenai River**, “My dad who works at CES gave me the idea and I learned that it was something that I could make happen and will help emergency responders arrive on scene much faster when needed,” said Hamilton.

Taking fourth place honors and \$750 was **Courtney Stroh** also from Ms. Davis’s class at KCHS with an idea to encourage personal use fishers to “Respect Our Community,” when visiting or what she calls the **“ROC the Kenai.”** Coming in fifth and winning \$650 was **Katy Knackstedt**, Mr. Frederic’s student at KCHS with an original idea called **“Keep your Butt’s to Yourself,”** a plan to keep toxic cigarette butts from polluting the environment. In sixth place and winning \$500 was **Greyson Hansen** with a brilliant **“Keep it Simple”** DVD production to teach the next generation environmental lessons.

**Thank you sponsors...**

In addition to the \$7,500 in cash awards for the finalists this year Tesoro, Chevron, the Kenai River Sportfishing Assoc, and the Kenai River Raven Lodge

awarded \$17,500 to the science departments of schools that participated in CFK 2011. This year SOHI, Nikiski, Ninilchik, Kenai, Skyview and Cook Inlet Academy all used CFK as part of their classroom curriculum. Each school receives \$500 for participating and the remainder of the \$17,500 will be allocated proportionately to how their students placed this year. Additionally, 35 some semi-finalist entries received special recognition awards from community sponsors.

Other CFK finalists who earned \$350 cash each for their oral presentations were **Austin Frederic**, a KCHS freshman with a program called “**Let the Big Ones Go!**” to protect the large female halibut stocks. **Kelci Benson** from Pat Nolden’s class at SoHi created a **fish waste chopper** to help sport fishers properly dispose of fish carcasses and prevent bear encounters. **Ruscia-Lea Colton** from Mr. Adair’s class in Nikiski designed an action plan to **eradicate invasive plant species**. **Koey Dixon** also from Mr. Adair’s class in Nikiski promoted a “**Winter-Fest**” **musical concert** to raise funds for scholarships for youth attending a new environmental day camp.

**River Colloway** a SoHi student from Mr. Hanson’s class created a “**Bear Bell Board**,” for hikers and campers to pick up bells at trail heads and help prevent bear encounters. The team of **Kierstyn Matthews, Palakiiya and Naomi Rogers** from Skyview and Amanda Williams class made a **coloring book for environmental education in elementary schools**.

In addition to the cash awards all finalists received a 21st CFK Anniversary hooded sweatshirt. Saturday April 30th, all finalists and guests will attend an awards banquet hosted in their honor by Chevron and Tesoro at Central Peninsula Hospital. Lt. Governor Mead Treadwell will be present to honor this year’s winners. All of the more than 400 students who participated in this year’s CFK program will receive a hand knit mountain hat from Nepal.

**Thank you to judges...** CFK Oral Presentation Judges included Soldotna City Mayor Peter Micciche, KPBSD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Steve Atwater, John Zager, Chevron Alaska General Manager, Denise Newbould, Aware environmental consulting, Monica English Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation waste water engineer, Richard Erkeneff Kenai River Sportfishing Association & Kenai River Raven Lodge, Dr. Paula Martin assistant director Kenai Peninsula College and last year’s CFK 1st Place winner Freya Chay.

Other CFK details are available at [www.caringforthekenai.com](http://www.caringforthekenai.com) as well as

[www.facebook.com/caringforthekenai](http://www.facebook.com/caringforthekenai) and [www.twitter.com/cfkenai](http://www.twitter.com/cfkenai).

Recorded actualities with top students are available on MP3 file by request from [sikorski@caringforthekenai.com](mailto:sikorski@caringforthekenai.com)