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THROUGH ART, VIDEO, AND ESSAY, STUDENTS EDUCATE PEERS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF MRSA IN WEB CONTEST

Sponsors IBC, The Franklin Institute, and The Health Care Improvement Foundation announce winners

Philadelphia, PA – March 10, 2009 – Fighting a dangerous superbug that can cause serious illness and even death is anything but child’s play, but kids can do a lot to help prevent infection in their schools and community, as demonstrated by Brent Bagdon and Carly Mannon, seventh graders from Log College Middle School in Warminster, PA, and winners of the Students Fight MRSA contest announced today.

Sponsored by Independence Blue Cross, The Health Care Improvement Foundation, and The Franklin Institute, Students Fight MRSA is a grassroots effort to raise awareness about MRSA, or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, among students in grades 3-12 through an online web contest. Contest entrants submitted a graphic design, essay, or video that educated other kids about MRSA and how it’s contracted and prevented.

Bagdon and Mannon received the most votes from visitors to the contest website for their poster entries in the middle school, graphic/written category. They were selected from several other finalists from their school. They will receive first- and second-place cash prizes of \$500 and \$250, respectively. The contest judges chose finalists based on the educational value, creativity, and quality of their work, as well as its appeal to diverse audiences.

“We are excited how innovative these kids were in tackling a subject as weighty as MRSA,” said Dr. Richard Snyder, senior vice president of Health Services for Independence Blue Cross. “The winners clearly took the time to learn about MRSA and did a terrific job presenting the material in a fun and educational way. We encourage educators and parents to download the submissions and to use them to help teach their students or children about MRSA.”

“I learned a lot about MRSA through this contest and thought it was a really fun and cool experience,” said Brent Bagdon. “For example, before the contest, I didn’t always cover my cuts, but after learning that MRSA can get into open sores, I’m now going to make sure I keep them covered all the time.”

In addition to the winners and finalists from Log College Middle School, the following students received an honorable mention for their work:

- Rebecca Archambault, Lionville Elementary, graphics/written category
- Jill DeWoody, Tredyffrin-Easttown Middle School, audio/video category
- Dan Drzewiki, Log College Middle School, audio/video category
- Stephen Garbesi, Delaware Valley High School, audio/video category

- Maranda Piccirilli , Abraham Lincoln High School, audio/video category
- Sarah Taylor, Greene Street Friends School, audio/video category

The winning entries can be seen by visiting the Students Fight MRSA website at www.studentsfightmrsa.com.

About MRSA

MRSA has become a serious health issue for schools across the country, and outbreaks of the infection have resulted in widespread fear, school closures, student illness, and even death on rare occasion. For more detailed information about MRSA and how it's prevented, transmitted, and treated, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html

ABOUT THE STUDENTS FIGHT MRSA SPONSORS:

Independence Blue Cross

Independence Blue Cross is a leading health insurer in southeastern Pennsylvania. IBC and its affiliates provide coverage to nearly 3.4 million people. For more than 70 years, Independence Blue Cross has offered high-quality health care coverage tailored to meet the changing needs of members, employers, and health care professionals. Independence Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans. Independence Blue Cross also works closely with the Health Care Improvement Foundation through its sponsorship of the Partnership for Patient Care, an innovative multi-year initiative created in 2005 designed to improve patient safety at all hospitals in southeastern Pennsylvania.

The Health Care Improvement Foundation

The Health Care Improvement Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to building partnerships for better health care in southeastern Pennsylvania, with a multi-dimensional focus on health care safety.

The Franklin Institute

Founded in honor of America's first scientist, Benjamin Franklin, The Franklin Institute is a renowned and innovative leader in the field of science and technology learning, as well as a dynamic center of activity. It is dedicated to creating a passion for science by offering new and exciting access to science and technology in ways that would dazzle and delight its namesake. For more information, please visit www.fi.edu.