

EVENTS/CAUSES

Lexus authenticates sustainability focus with philanthropic initiative

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Lexus GS F

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Toyota Corp.'s Lexus is showing its commitment to youth and the environment with its long-running Lexus Eco Challenge.

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Together, Lexus and Scholastic rewarded half a million dollars in scholarships and grants to students, teachers and schools to make a greener, better world. Lexus' ongoing emphasis on education and sustainability will showcase its dedication to these causes, making it an appealing choice for today's ethically-minded consumer.

"Lexus came out with their first luxury hybrid vehicle in April 2005 and is the luxury hybrid leader; Lexus offers more hybrid models than any other auto manufacturer," said Jennifer Ishibashi, public relations specialist at **Lexus**. "Lexus environmental efforts have grown out of respect and concern for our planet.

"Beyond hybrid vehicles, Lexus maintains several LEED-certified facilities and continues with our successful environmental contest, Lexus Eco Challenge," she said. "We believe our efforts, along with everyone else's, can do a world of good.

"Through the Lexus Eco Challenge, we are inspiring young students to do the same and to take action and make change in their local communities."

Going green

The annual Lexus Eco Challenge empowers middle school and high school students across the United States to address an environmental problem in a practical way. In teams, students must clearly pinpoint an important environmental issue, concoct a plan, take the decided action and record the results.

A grand-prize winning group of high schoolers from LaGrangeville, NY combated endocrine-disrupting compounds, or EDCs, which prevent hormones from functioning normally. The team found that sunscreens, lotions and other household items contain these items and developed home made alternatives.

Most impressively, the team took their findings to local, state and national figures with the power to enact change.



Lexus Eco Challenge prizewinners

A middle school team from Jersey City, NJ sought to control algae bloom in local reservoirs. The group tested various plants in an attempt to find which would best absorb the phosphorus and nitrogen that algae feed on.

The group first developed a maize chinampa a "floating garden" Mesoamerican agriculture used to grow crops on shallow lakebeds that absorbed nutrients that caused algae to grow. Afterward, the team developed another that attacks algae directly.

The grand prize teams were each rewarded \$30,000, while 32 teams selected as finalists claimed \$10,000, all to be shared among the team, teacher and school.



Lexus Eco Challenge prizewinners

Lastly, all teams worked together to organize and communicate findings and solutions to community authorities and politicians, ensuring their work could make a difference on a larger scale.

"In its ninth year, the Lexus Eco Challenge has awarded more than \$5 million in scholarships and grants to students and schools," Ms. Ishibashi said. "We will continue to provide the opportunity to earn scholarships and grants and provide an educational program and contest to inspire and empower young students to make a difference.

"We will also continue to increase student participation and deeply engage students and teachers and support their efforts to develop solutions for their environmental concerns in their communities," she said.

The Lexus Eco Challenge is part of the broader Lexus Pursuit of Potential project, which focuses on providing opportunities for children.

In today's consumer climate, in which a brand's values are as significant to many consumers as its products, a long-running philanthropic initiative will look favorable to many consumers.



Lexus LF-FC concept

Similarly, the automotive world is currently undergoing a transformation, with Tesla's Model 3 success and the embrace of electric vehicles by brands known for sports cars showing that sustainability is more than a fad. By engaging in environmental philanthropy, Lexus is proving that it understands protecting the earth is about more than chasing revenue.

Taking a stand

Electric vehicles are growing, with the luxury class leading the way, but mass proliferation is still not close.

Electric vehicles will not make up the majority of the market for at least two more decades, according to a new report by Lux Research.

Currently, electric powertrains are limited in the class of vehicles they serve and are primarily limited to the luxury market and high price points. Luxury electric vehicles will eventually have a trickle-down effect, but there are still untapped markets to take advantage of in the electric vehicle segment ([see story](#)).

When they aren't competing in the electric vehicle space, other automakers also prioritize making the difference in children's lives.

For example, Jaguar Land Rover has increased the efficacy of arts education nonprofit P.S. Arts with a grant that falls under the brand's overarching corporate social responsibility platform.

The \$130,000 grant has helped the nonprofit expand its program capabilities and the number of children it reaches. Jaguar Land Rover's corporate social responsibility program aims to help 12 million people by 2020, including 2 million through education initiatives ([see story](#)).

"Giving back to communities has been part of Lexus' philosophy since we began in 1989," Ms. Ishibashi said. "Lexus believes children have the potential and desire to make the world a better place.

"To encourage children to pursue their dream, Lexus will support organizations that build, shape and improve children's lives."