

EMERALD AWARDS



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CHALLENGE ACHIEVES ITS TARGETS

The annual Green Commuting Challenge (GCC) at Captain Nichola Goddard School in northwest Calgary hits three targets — reducing environmental impacts, reducing traffic around the school and increasing students' daily physical activity through active transportation.

The three-year-old program encourages students in grades 4-9 to walk or bike to school.

In the program's first year, 80 of the school's 500 students registered. In the second year, the school modified the program to address concerns about students walking or biking alone. GCC set up "green commuting hubs," spots around the community where students could meet in the morning and walk to school with a group. That increased registration to 200 of about 700 students at the school that year.

This year, the program has added five drop zones so parents can drop off their children at a hub to walk the rest of the way to school with the group. Within the first two weeks, an average of 493 students participated—more than half of the students attending Captain Nichola Goddard School this year.

"From our six-week challenges in the first two years, students offset approximately 1,500 pounds of carbon dioxide and travelled approximately 4,000 kilometres by green commuting to school," says Debbie Rheinstein, a teacher and GCC champion. "Currently, in our third year, we hope to meet and surpass these benchmarks as we continue to grow our project."

GCC is run by about 15 students who market the project around the school, encourage their peers to be green commuters, collect and analyze data and plan various components of the program.

Awards celebrate excellence

People across Alberta feel passionate about the need to balance the development of the province's rich resources with careful stewardship of the environment, and every year, Albertans celebrate that balance with the Emerald Awards.

The 24th annual Emerald Awards will be presented on June 4 at the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton.

From small entrepreneurs to big energy producers, the Alberta Emerald Awards recognize and applaud dozens of environmental leaders, showcasing projects that demonstrate environmental excellence and set an example for everyone across the province.

"We are really excited about and inspired by the examples of environmental leadership from around Alberta that make up this year's list of finalists," says Gregory Caswell, communication and outreach manager at Alberta

Emerald Foundation. "The Emerald Awards recognize and reward outstanding environmental initiatives undertaken by individuals, not-for-profit associations, large and small corporations, community groups and governments from across Alberta."

Since 1992, the Emerald Awards has shared more than 2,500 examples of creative thinking and innovation in environmental management systems, technologies and education programs. By celebrating this excellence with the Emerald Awards, the Alberta Emerald Foundation is helping to raise the public's awareness of the growth in these different areas in recent years.

Every year, the Alberta Emerald Foundation receives nominations in 10 established cross-sectoral categories with a panel of impartial judges reviewing the nominations and choosing a maximum of three finalists in each of the categories.

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to consider entering their projects that may seem "everyday" to them, but could be extraordinary to someone else.

"Often, organizations engage in an environmental practice that seems commonplace to them, but it's likely that their hard work and dedication could inspire others," Caswell says. "The Emerald Awards aim to be the catalyst to raise the expectations and performance of environmental stewardship."

Since its inception 23 years ago, the Emerald Awards has recognized more than 450 finalists and 250 recipients. Over the years, each of the organizations or individuals nominated, made a finalist or awarded a winner of an Emerald Award has, in their own unique and individual way, helped Alberta balance its growth and resource development with the preservation of the environment.