

School Notebook: Envirothon winners

May 14, 2012 by MICHAEL R. EBERT / michael.ebert@newsday.com

Teams from Sachem North High School in [Lake Ronkonkoma](#) and [Wantagh](#) High School took the top spots last month for [Suffolk](#) and [Nassau](#) counties, respectively, at the 2012 [Long Island](#) Envirothon.

The annual competition consisted of written exams and outdoor challenges in the topics of aquatics, forestry, soil and wildlife, as well as an oral presentation about non-point source pollution, at the Usdan Center for Creative and Performing Arts in [Wheatley Heights](#). Thirty-eight Long Island teams competed.

For winning, team members received \$500 scholarships and Canon digital cameras, as well as a color printer for their school. They will compete at the state level this week in [Geneva](#).

"This is a team of students that are intrinsically environmentally aware," said Valarie Sebastiano, a Wantagh science teacher and team adviser along with Frances Galan-Pena. "They worked very hard and earned it. We're very proud."

Wantagh teammates are Teresa Clark, Ariane Jong, Jake Kaplan, Jillian Rodesk, Isabella Swyst and Danielle Tralongo. Sachem North's team is Tyler Breiffeller, Aly Gruber, Charlie Horn, Sharon Luebs, Ruchi Shah and Danielle White.

"The team met on weekends and vacations to practice, and I think this level of commitment is what really set them apart," said [John O'Neill](#), who with Monica Marlowe advised Sachem North's team. Sachem North has won the Suffolk title for the past eight years, he said.

The local competition was coordinated by the Soil & Water Conservation Districts of Nassau and Suffolk counties.