

Thoughts and Comments on Running a Success Radon Poster Contest

Getting the Entries

1. It was suggested that we don't require every poster entry be signed by the parents. This makes it more difficult to get submissions because parents are busy and children frequently forget to bring the form home. We have changed the Artwork Submission and Release Form to just an Artwork Submission Form. For those children who make it to the national contest, Kansas State University will send a separate release form prior to announcing the winners.
2. We have found that addressing the brochures to the science teacher is not always the way to go. We have had an equal number of science teachers and art teachers do the poster contest. Also, if a school doesn't have a specific science teacher, the brochure has been thrown away in some instances. This year, we will address the brochure to the principal and allow him/her to decide who should receive it.
3. After mailing the brochure to the school, it is a good idea to contact the school supervisors in the school districts. By contacting the science supervisors, it might be possible to move the issue to classrooms. There is an attempt nowadays to have students become more interested in science to keep up with the rest of the world and this might fit in.
4. Contact the teachers associations NEA, AFT and the School Board Association. You might want to hand deliver the materials to the principals and superintendents at schools in your county to encourage participation.
5. You might also try reaching out to students in your state who are home schooled.
6. Try offering money for classroom supplies as an incentive, i.e., \$50 for the teacher with the most entries.
7. Also a competition between schools can increase participation. The school with the most entries can receive art supplies, science equipment, or other appropriate prizes.
8. To make this as easy as possible on the teachers, we are opening the contest for submissions from March 1, 2010 to October 31, 2010 to give greater flexibility in the timing. Teachers can do the contest during the spring and submit posters at any time.
9. Place announcements in the school PTA's newsletters. Highlight that the parents of the winning child also receive part of the prize. Encourage them talk about the issue at home. Encourage them to test their homes, making it a family project.
10. Place announcements about the contest in your public library. Children can enter on their own – not only through their schools. The libraries might even be willing to create a Radon Awareness display with copies of the brochure. You can also use part of the \$1,000 reimbursement to make foam board

displays about radon and the contest which can be displayed in the libraries and other public spaces.

11. If people hear about radon from more than one source, they are more likely to take action. If you are able to place radon PSAs in the local newspapers or have them aired on the radio or TV, then when they hear about the radon poster contest, it is more likely to have an impact.

Growing the Program

1. A program has a better chance of growing from year to year if there are rewards. One type of reward is to have the posters displayed at the State Capitol, for instances during National Radon Action Month in January.
2. If you are not able to display the winners at the State Capitol, see if the public library near the winning schools will display some of the posters during January.
3. Also, encourage all the schools with entries to display them in hallways during January to highlight National Radon Action Month.
4. Another type of reward is making sure that every child who enters receives a Certificate of Participation. Certificates of Appreciation can be sent to teachers who work with their students to produce entries.
5. Make sure that the winning students get a mention in the local newspaper and possible on local radio or TV. We have provided sample press releases on this CD-ROM. There can be more than one press release. For example, there can be a winner from each school, with a press release in the local paper and/or the PTA newsletter. There should also be a press release for the state, territory, or tribal nation winner.
6. Use your winning poster to advertise next year's poster contest. We do this on a national scale with our brochure, but you can also do this on a local level.
7. Doing an award ceremony either on a local level, for instance at the school or mayor's office, or at a state level always heightens awareness of the contest and encourages future entries. This toolkit also contains information on conducting an award ceremony.
8. If your award ceremony is in the fall (October or November), you can keep radon in the news by obtaining radon proclamations from local government officials for a city wide Radon Action Week. You can work with your local extension coordinators because they are likely to have personal contacts with their local mayor and other local government officials. Call on these local extension coordinators to help you obtain a local radon proclamation for January and to leverage it effectively. For example, get the proclamation published in the local paper.
9. Ask for time on the agenda of the city council meeting when the proclamation is being signed and awarded. Use this time to showcase your winning posters and to distribute a radon goody bag filled with the Citizens Guide, a radon zone or zip code map, a free test kit, pens, and other items

pertaining to radon. Kansas State University can provide radon collateral to be included in the bag.

10. Prior to the signing of the proclamation, offer to provide the official with a free test kit – and follow up to make sure it is done. Then ask the local official to discuss this experience as part of their remarks at the proclamation signing ceremony. Try to get your local media to cover the event.