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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NIKISKI WINS 26TH CARING FOR THE KENAI COMPETITION

Kenai, April 21, 2016 As Caring for the Kenai stepped into its second quarter century it was Evangeline & Margeurite Cox that took one small step for canines and claimed the first place prize of \$1,600 in the annual environmental and natural disaster preparedness contest. “Breath for Pets” was the title of their entry and their project placed pet oxygen masks in the hands of first responders on the Kenai Peninsula. “Animals are a big part of our lives not just domestic pets but wildlife as well and these respirators can save both in emergency situations,” said Evangeline. The Nikiski seniors are college bound and said the winnings would go directly to help pay for school.

The CFK essay prompt challenges high school students to respond to the question “What Can I do, invent or create to better care for the environment of the Kenai Peninsula or improve the area’s preparedness for a natural disaster?” Taking second place and earning \$1,100 was a freshman from Kenai High, Hunter Hanson who plans to put drones into service for environmental research, “My plan is to use drones to survey moose on the Kenai Peninsula using thermal imaging,” said Hunter. In third place and claiming a \$900 prize was Alicia Steiner from Homer High School who is implementing a program at her school to reduce Styrofoam tray waste, “My project is to limit the amount of Styrofoam trays by implementing ‘Tray-less Tuesday’ which is one day of the week that we don’t use any Styrofoam only paper products and I look forward to implementing in the future,” said Steiner. Taking fourth place honors and \$750 was Rowan Biessel from Homer, whose idea was to install algae photo bioreactors in buildings on the Kenai to combat climate change. Coming in 5th and winning \$650 from Soldotna Prep was Victoria Giles who wants to convert common trash into energy with a bio-digester that could be used in homes or landfills. Winning \$550 and 6th place was Jacob Nabholz from KCHS who is teaching the bio-cultural connection between people and nature by learning the meaning of ancient language of our host Dena’ina culture that reveals knowledge of local ecology. *-more-*

(CFK cont.)

In addition to the \$8,000 in cash awards for the finalists, this year \$20,000 will be awarded to the schools science departments. Thanks to the CFK signature sponsor Tesoro Alaska and the community partners Kenai River Raven Lodge, Hilcorp Energy, ASRC Energy Services, Peninsula Community Health Services and Peninsula Radiation Oncology Center. High schools using CFK as part of state standards curriculum were: Ninilchik, Nikiski, KCHS, Seward, Homer, Voznesenka and Soldotna Prep. Each school receives \$750 for their participation and the remainder of the \$20,000 will be allocated proportionately to how the students ranked in the CFK competition. Additionally, twenty plus students received special recognition awards from local businesses and individuals.

Other finalists that earned \$400 each for making it to the final 12 out of 300 some entries were: Robert McGinnis of Ninilchik with his mobile recycling unit. Elise Webber a Homer senior who has begun a program for disaster alert registration of cell phones. Chelsea Oberle-Lozano of Ninilchik with a project called “Facing your Feces,” an idea to provide poop-bags at trail heads. Also from Homer is Samantha Graves who has a plan to save more otters with volunteers. The team of Katelyn Moore and Drew Davis from Nikiski who prepared emergency “To Go” bags for disaster preparedness. Owen Myer also of Homer is starting a sleeping bag drive to collect no-longer used sleeping bags to be used in case of an emergency.

In addition to cash awards the finalists received the 2016 CFK hooded jacket. Saturday, April 30th finalists, teachers and guests will attend the CFK V.I.P Awards banquet hosted in their honor by Tesoro at the Challenger Learning Center in Kenai. All of the more than 300 participants that entered CFK will receive a camo knit mountain hat of their choice. This year’s oral presentation judges included Borough Mayor Mike Navarre, Cameron Hunt, Tesoro vice president Kenai Refinery, KPBSD Supt. Sean Dusek, Ray Chumley, ConocoPhillips LNG plant superintendent, Marnie Olcott, CEO Challenger Learning Center of Alaska, Monica Adams PCHS chief executive officer, Amanda Millay, Environmental Program Technician Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and last year’s CFK 1st place winner Keira Stroh. Caring for the Kenai is administered as part of the Challenger Learning Center of Alaska educational programs.

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(Actualities from an interview of the top 3 winners is available upon request or calling 907-262-4949)