
NEWS RELEASE

May 9, 2008

PEI STUDENT ATTENDS NATIONAL BIOTECHNOLOGY COMPETITION

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI -- Prince Edward Island high school students are benefitting from hands-on experience in research laboratories as part of the annual Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge.

Aaron Zidichouski of Charlottetown Rural High School was recently awarded a \$2,500 prize for first place in the provincial science competition. The seventeen year old student also represented Prince Edward Island at the national biotechnology competition at the National Research Council in Ottawa, Ontario. The Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge raises awareness among students, educators and the public about Biotechnology and its applications in human and animal health, agriculture and the environment.

Aaron was one of six students to compete in the 4th annual challenge that encourages the pursuit of studies and careers in the exciting field of biotechnology. His winning project entitled "Lipid Adhesion to Surfaces that Resist Protein Absorption" looked at surfacetreatments to make your body's replacement parts last longer. Real life applications of this technology would be in the area of transplant organs or devices such as pace makers. Aaron was mentored at the NRC Institute for Nutrisciences and Health. He worked with Dr. Bob Chapman, Aleks Spurmanis, Alicia Cochrane and Dr. Jim Johnston.

Aaron's school, Charlottetown Rural High, will receive a prize of \$2,000 toward its science programs. Four of the six students participating in Sanofi-Aventis program will be attending UPEI's science program in the fall of 2008.

Minister of Innovation and Advanced Learning Richard Brown said biotechnology is a key sector in the provincial government's new innovation strategy, Island Prosperity: A Focus For Change.

"Exciting career opportunities are available in the field of bioscience," said Minister Brown. "As new programs are developed for post-secondary training and education, it is important to introduce this information to high school students so they can evaluate career options at an early age. As more students gain valuable experience in biotechnology, they will consider pursuing a career in this emerging field in Prince Edward Island."

Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Gerard Greenan said the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge is an incredible opportunity for students to work and learn in professional labs under the guidance of highly qualified researchers.

"The experience that students gain at science competitions like BioTalent adds a great deal of value to their learning," said Minister Greenan. "By stimulating their interest in bioscience and research at an early age, we hope that more students will move on to take advantage of exciting opportunities in this growing sector."

For additional information, visit the website at www.sanofibiotalentchallenge.ca.

BACKGROUNDER

2008 Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge Provincial Winners:

1st place: Aaron Zidichouski, Charlottetown Rural High School
2nd place: Remeesha Ali, Charlottetown Rural High School
3rd place: Shelby McCarron, Three Oaks Senior High School
4th place: Rebecca Wolfe, Three Oaks Senior High School
5th place: Aira MacCaul & Desiree Perry, Three Oaks Senior High School

About the Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Competition:

The Sanofi-Aventis BioTalent Challenge (SABC) encourages young Canadians to pursue studies and careers in the exciting field of biotechnology.

SABC programs are hosted annually in 13 regions across Canada by local biotech and educational organizations in partnership with universities, colleges, government and industry. The cities hosting SABC events include Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, London, Montreal, Moncton, Halifax, St. John's and Charlottetown. The program's national sponsors include Sanofi Pasteur Ltd and Sanofi-Aventis, BioTalent Canada, Human Resources Social Development Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Genome Canada and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation . Local sponsors include universities, colleges, school boards, biotech organizations and industry. More than 100 organizations are partnered with Sanofi-Aventis in supporting this educational outreach initiative.

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For more information, contact Major Stewart, Innovation and Advanced Learning by email at mbstewart@gov.pe.ca or phone (902) 620-3508.

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