

May 5, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER A WINNER AS WATERWISE CONTEST DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Kelowna, B.C. – For nearly 1 ½ months, the *Okanagan WaterWise Challenge* has been open for Okanagan youth to learn about water in our valley, and have an opportunity to win a Pool and Pizza Party. With the contest closed as of Tuesday and our winners now determined, Okanagan WaterWise sees the potential for one more winner – Okanagan water itself.

The Okanagan WaterWise Challenge was an online scavenger hunt for 5 to 15 years olds, which began in late March with World Water Week and wrapped up this week, during Drinking Water Week (May 1 to 7). Okanagan WaterWise is the outreach and education initiative of the Okanagan Basin Water Board aimed at informing valley residents about local water issues.

“The purpose of the contest was to encourage kids to learn more about our water, to recognize that we are all part of ‘One Valley. One Water.’ and to inspire them to conserve and protect it,” explained Corinne Jackson, Communications Coordinator for the Okanagan Basin Water Board and the WaterWise program’s champion. “We’re thrilled with the results of this contest,” she added.

Hundreds of young people completed the WaterWise Challenge, and nearly 100 more people took the survey without entering to win a prize. “I had some adults admit to taking the survey,” added Jackson, noting “it was a great – and fun – way to heighten awareness around water in our valley and what we can all do to make a difference, being careful to keep our water clean and conserve what we have.”

As a reward for their participation, contestants were entered in a draw to win a pool and pizza party for themselves and nine friends. Prizes were awarded in the North, Central and South Okanagan. Winners of the Okanagan WaterWise Challenge are: Victoria, 9, from Armstrong; Avery, 10, from Peachland, and Caitlyn, 11, from Penticton.

Participation in the contest came from nearly every community in the valley, from larger centres but also smaller ones like Coldstream, Ellison, Naramata and Okanagan Falls. Of particular note was the very strong participation from Penticton. As it turns out, KVR Middle School celebrated Earth Month in April and had students (including the South Okanagan winner, Caitlyn) take the WaterWise Challenge as one of their activities.

“It’s phenomenal how much water we use,” said young Caitlyn. Indeed, when you average it out, Okanagan residents use 675 litres of water per person per day. The majority of this is used in the summer, and is used on our lawns. The Canadian average is 329 litres. As a result of taking the WaterWise Challenge, Caitlyn said that she is trying to cut her showers to 5 minutes long and is

encouraging her siblings and parents to reduce their water use as well. “I also learned that it’s better to take your car to a car wash that recycles water, or wash it on your lawn. I learned a lot,” she added.

“Most kids spent an average of 15 minutes on the survey. That’s impressive,” added Jackson, saying those kids are now even more WaterWise and will hopefully help spread the word, on how to care for Okanagan water.

A number of events are occurring around the valley this week as part of Drinking Water Week, added Jackson, inviting people to visit www.okwaterwise.ca and click on the DWW poster for more information.

Special thanks to Vernon Aquatic Centre, the YMCA-YWCA in Kelowna, and Summerland Parks and Recreation for their participation and support of the Okanagan WaterWise Challenge.

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT: Corinne Jackson, OBWB – Communications and Research Coordinator
Office: 250-469-6271
Mobile: 250-718-7249
E-mail: Corinne.Jackson@obwb.ca