Chautauqua County Students do their part to make a difference.

Nearly 200 Chautauqua County students did their part to raise alcoholism awareness this year. One walked away $100 richer last March with more recognition on the way.

Sherman Central School junior Julia Rater won the 11th annual Chautauqua Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Council Alcohol (CASAC) Awareness Month Poster Contest. She beat out 11 fellow finalists and 195 total entrants to win the prize.

"It's awesome," said Rater, upon accepting the honor. "I didn't expect it at all. This contest advertises alcoholism prevention, so it's definitely an honor to win."

Rater's poster will be featured on several billboards throughout the county prior to next year's contest, which will begin in January, 2013. Clymer Central School senior Justin White's poster, the 2011 contest winner, is currently

Justin White displayed on five billboards thanks to donations from local businesses. The 12 finalists' posters will also be featured on 25,000 bookmarks to be distributed to county schools and libraries to announce the 2013 poster contest.

Students in grades 3-12 created posters based on the theme, "It only takes ONE to make a difference. I can be the one!"

"As the students designed their posters with this theme in mind, they had the opportunity to express how they can make a difference," said Patricia Z. Munson, Executive Director of CASAC.

The contest's theme is a coordinated effort to coincide with a year-long campaign, "One Too Many", an awareness campaign originating from NCADD. The message of the "One Too Many" campaign is that although the victims of alcohol-related problems number in the tens of millions, it ultimately comes down to one thing and one thing only..."One Too Many."

Each month during 2012, CASAC is focusing on a One Too Many theme. For example, February focus was "One Too Many Will Answer Yes...A Message to Children of Alcoholics."

As stated by Robert Lindsey, President of NCADD, "Our challenge to find a solution comes down to one." It comes down to making a commitment for raising awareness of the problems and the solution in our family, our community, our schools, our church, our college, our workplace...through a focus on prevention, treatment and recovery of alcohol-related problems.

The 11th annual contest concluded prior to the start of Alcohol Awareness Month, held each April. Munson described the importance of the month and the contest.

"Alcohol use by youth is a complex problem, one that can only be solved through a sustained and cooperative effort," she said. "If we care about the health and well-being of our children, we need to do everything we can to prevent anyone under age 21 from drinking alcohol, and to delay the first drink as long as possible. Therefore, if it only takes one to make a difference, may we all join the challenge and "Let it start with me!."

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