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### High School students to present research at UM air toxics symposium

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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May 8, 2007

**Contact:** Nancy Marra, education coordinator, or Diana Vanek, outreach coordinator, UM Center for Environmental Health Sciences, 406-243-4030.

### **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PRESENT RESEARCH AT UM AIR TOXICS SYMPOSIUM**

#### **MISSOULA -**

Students who have conducted research in their own homes and backyards will present their findings Thursday, May 17, during the Air Toxics Under the Big Sky Symposium at The University of Montana.

About 120 high school students from Western Montana and college students from the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho will attend the event, which runs from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the North Underground Lecture Hall. High school students and teachers from **Missoula, Corvallis, Whitefish** and **Libby** will participate.

In preparing for this third annual symposium, students worked alongside UM scientists to examine important components of air pollution. They measured levels of volatile organic compounds inside and outside their homes to provide a better picture of how they vary seasonally and geographically and to evaluate their potential human health effects.

Another research topic is the role of particulate matter -- or  $PM_{2.5}$  -- which is a significant source of air pollution in communities where wood-burning stoves and thermal inversions are common.

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The Air Toxics Under the Big Sky Program is designed to bring student-based scientific inquiry into the classroom, give students real-world experience on problems relevant to their communities and encourage young people to seek further education and careers in environmental and biomedical sciences.

The symposium's celebrity judges will be introduced at 9:30 a.m. They are KPAX meteorologist Russ Thomas, KECI news anchor Heidi Meili, 1998 Olympic gold medalist Eric Bergoust and UM chemistry Professor Garon Smith (also known as "G. Wiz" the science wizard).

Presentations by individual schools will run from 9:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. First-place awards for the highest-scoring team from each of the schools and a grand-prize award for the overall best score will be presented during an awards ceremony from 1:10 to 1:45 p.m.

A community health fair, chemistry "magic" presentation and poster session follow the symposium from 1:45 to 3 p.m.

The symposium was organized by UM's Department of Chemistry and the Center for Environmental Health Sciences. Funding was provided by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, National Institutes of Health Science Education Partnership Award Program, National Science Foundation's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research and 3M Corporation.

For more information, call Nancy Marra or Diana Vanek at 406-243-4030.

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