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Young designers share glory in poster contest

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WILMINGTON — Two 12-year-olds were recognized Tuesday as winners in an anti-smoking poster contest, but the top design was disqualified from appearing on billboards.

Anna Evans, a sixth-grader from Independence School, north of Newark, originally won with her parody of Virginia Slims marketing. But the billboard firm involved in the sixth annual contest refused to use her design — picked from about 1,500 entries — because it slams a specific brand.

So billboard honors went to Natalie J. Watson, a seventh-grader from Wilmer E. Shue Middle School, near Newark.

Both girls received winners' plaques.

Dr. Lester N. Wright, state public health director, said Tuesday he was "impressed that both winners were women, since the number of women starting to smoke in the state is rising."

The contest sponsors — Delaware DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) and the Department of Health and Social Services — unveiled Natalie's billboard and Anna's poster Tues-

day at the Acme supermarket parking lot at 16th and Du Pont streets.

Five other New Castle County billboards also display her design, showing a globe and the message: "When you smoke, the world smokes with you."

Natalie, of Newark, focused on second-hand smoke because she said the problem "affects all of the world."

Anna, who lives near Hockessin, said she was "very disappointed" to be disqualified from billboards in the "Superhealth 2000 Pro-health Poster Contest."

Her poster shows a cigarette smoker's body melting. Taking off on the "You've come a long way, baby" campaign, her slogan said, "Virginia Slime — You haven't gotten anywhere!" Anna said she mocked Virginia Slims because it is "a very high-selling product."

Contest sponsors didn't fight the billboard ban, but medical group president Dr. Mark Glassner was critical. Citing "perceived pressure" from cigarette makers on agencies, he asked, "If ... [Revere National] wasn't under any pressure, then why didn't they run it?"

A Revere spokesman denied there was any pressure.



Anna Evans, 12, of Independence School, displays her rejected design.



The News Journal/CHUCK MCGOWEN
Natalie J. Watson, 12, of Shue Middle School, with her winning anti-smoking poster.