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Transit buses feature Millbury girl's artwork

A Millbury fifth-grader is teaching the public about climate change as part of a UMass Lowell project that features the girl's artwork on Lowell Regional Transit Authority buses.

Megan Dunne, a Raymond E. Shaw Elementary School student, designed the campaign "What Can You Do?" for UMass Lowell's Cool Science contest, which asked students in kindergarten through college to create artwork that educates the public about climate-change issues. Megan's work can be seen on 9-foot-long placards on LRTA buses and displayed inside buses throughout February.

The Cool Science project includes research to gauge what students throughout Massachusetts know about climate change and measures how the campaign affects public awareness of the topic. The project is headed by David Lustick of Nashua, N.H., and Jill Hendrickson Lohmeier of Westford, both professors of curriculum and instruction in the UMass-Lowell Graduate School of Education, along with Professor Robert Chen of UMass-Boston.

Megan is the second of six first-place winners who will see their artwork displayed on LRTA buses through June.

"Climate change is the single greatest challenge to our generation. Cool Science aims to engage teachers, parents and students in climate-change science. Showcasing winning student artwork on city buses fosters informal learning about science among the riding public. Using children's artwork to communicate complex scientific issues is a powerful learning experience for both the artist and the audience," Lustick said.

Winning entries were selected for their clarity of message, scientific accuracy, creativity and artistic appeal. Among entries from elementary-school students, Megan's was deemed a winner because her engaging artwork conveys sound climate-change science, according to Lustick. The contest received nearly 600 entries from more than 25 schools from across the state, involving students and teachers in elementary through high school.

The LRTA and Anastas Advertising Associates have donated more than \$13,000 toward the project. Cool Science is funded by a \$32,000 grant from UMass President Robert Caret's Creative Economy Initiatives Fund, which supports faculty projects in the arts, humanities and social sciences that benefit the state's economy and improve quality of life.