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Students not the only winners in the ‘Eco-My-Flat’ Competition

A DIY conversion of a diesel engine to run on vegetable oil was one outcome of the annual University of Canterbury Eco-My-Flat competition, which closed last night with a prize giving ceremony at the Dux de Lux.

UC’s Sustainability Advocate and competition overseer Dr Kate Hewson says there was a real sense of achievement when students from UC and Lincoln University stepped up last night to claim their prizes.

During the month-long competition, residents of more than 30 flats underwent eco-flat audits, attended sustainable living workshops, and blogged about their efforts. The winners were chosen by a panel of judges chaired by Dr Hewson,

The winner of the Best Overall Eco-Flat prize was Pri-uta from Lincoln University, which promoted lifestyle habits such as keeping chickens and growing vegetables. Couple Nicola Price and Jody Tuuta have 15 varieties of heritage tomatoes, preserve their own relish and jams, and are keen DIYers – often sourcing materials from off-casts around the neighbourhood.

Their prize pack includes a weekend’s stay in Picton at the Clarendon Off-the-Grid Ecostay with travel via the Tranzcoastal train, along with carbon credits donated by Carbon South.

The other major award for Most Improved Flat went to The Lotus Garden from Sockburn. Dr Hewson says the flat of seven UC students was led by vegan eco-warrior Paigan Butterfield.

“They really came together as a team, building an impressive home-made worm farm from scavenged materials, and instigating weekly vegan dinners and electricity-free evenings.”

With so many sponsors keen to donate eco-friendly products this year (see below), over half the flats entered in the competition received prizes for their efforts. Some of the awards acknowledged innovations such as Andrew Hughes-Games (Greasers) DIY conversion of a diesel engine to run on vegetable oil, while others recognised gardening, energy, transport, and shopping excellence. The students’ efforts are candidly – and often, humorously – outlined on blogs, which can be accessed via the competition website at www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecomylat.

“With most students indicating that the changes they have made will be permanent, the effects of Eco-My-Flat will have far-reaching results, making the Earth the biggest winner of all,” says Dr Hewson.

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