

Famous Cartoonist Helps EASE Program Select the Next Pablo Picasso



Young eczema sufferers invited to share their true colours in national art contest

Toronto, September 29, 2009 - Pablo Picasso once said that “colours, like features, follow the changes of the emotions.” The Eczema Awareness Support and Education (EASE) Program, together with renowned Canadian cartoonist Lynn Johnston of the iconic “*For Better or For Worse*” series, invite Canadian children with eczema (12 years and under) to come together in an artistic effort and share their “true colours” about eczema by participating in a national art contest.

“I couldn’t help but be involved in this very special initiative by the EASE program,” said Johnston. “Creative art can provide such an amazing outlet to express our feelings about life’s ups and downs. What better way for a child to teach the world about eczema, and how it affects a young person, than through art.”

Twelve to 25 per cent of Canadian children suffer from eczema and its accompanying pain and constant itch which can distress children and disturb their sleep. It can interfere with school, cause low self-esteem, and make them feel self-conscious about their appearance. Some children even avoid social situations because of it.

The national art contest, titled “*My Life with Eczema*”, will allow children to express their feelings about eczema through painting or drawing. The selected piece will follow a template – available to download at www.eczemaCanada.ca – and will be judged using a five-scale rating system (5 being the best) that looks at the following criteria:

- Use of colour
- Use of space
- Uniqueness
- Personal story

The selected artwork will be showcased in Canadian dermatology clinics across the country as well as on the EASE program website – www.eczemaCanada.ca – during **Eczema Awareness Month** in February. The selected young artist will also receive a **\$1500.00 Canada Savings Bond** to assist in their future education.

Interested participants can visit www.eczemaCanada.ca to download a “My Life with Eczema” contest template and guidelines. The contest begins Monday, September 28, 2009 and comes to a close on Friday, December 18, 2009.

The EASE Program website, www.eczemaCanada.ca, offers information on eczema including tips on speaking to a child’s teacher about the condition and advice on easing children into life back to school. Amanda Cresswell-Melville, president of the Eczema Society of Canada says, “As a teacher and a mother of two children with eczema, I know the affect the condition can have on a young life. We want parents to know that there are resources out there to support them.”

About Eczema

Over two million children and adults in Canada suffer from eczema, a common, chronic, life-altering skin condition. Eczema (atopic dermatitis) is characterized by painful red, swollen, itchy and flaky skin.

The majority of eczema cases are diagnosed in early childhood, and it is estimated that while some children may eventually outgrow eczema, about 80 per cent will have dry, irritable skin throughout their lives. The condition is associated with the immune system's response to environmental irritants, as well as with respiratory allergies and asthma. Environmental triggers are the most common elements that cause flare-ups. In general, people with eczema often have hypersensitive skin that does not tolerate certain topical stimulants or environmental contaminants.

About the Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE[®]) Program

The Eczema Awareness, Support and Education (EASE) Program is a national and fully bilingual patient education program developed with the assistance of leading Canadian dermatologists to provide access to useful and accurate information about eczema. Supported through an education grant from Astellas Pharma Canada, Inc., the EASE Program has been recognized with four Public Education Awards from the Canadian Dermatology Association (2003, 2004, 2005, 2007).

For more information about eczema or the EASE Program, visit www.eczemaCanada.ca. Parents, teachers and young children can also visit www.pennysworld.ca – a friendly website that aims to help children understand eczema.

For more information contact:

Kristin Mills

kmills@meca.ca

Communications MECA

1-866-337-3362 ext. 223