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MEDIA RELEASE

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THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT: AVAQMD RECOGNIZES JOE WALKER STUDENTS FOR ASTHMA TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

Lancaster, CA – The Governing Board of the Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District today presented the Joe Walker Middle School STEALTH Academy in Quartz Hill with the 2016/2017 William J. “Pete” Knight Memorial AIRE (Achievement in Reducing Emissions) Award for developing an app which uses a wristband to help students with asthma to track and manage key physical symptoms and avert medical emergencies.

The AIRE award is bestowed annually to a local entity, group or individual which has made an outstanding contribution to the prevention or reduction of air pollution within the AVAQMD’s boundaries, which encompass the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, as well as unincorporated areas of North Los Angeles County. The award was accepted by Virginia Irvin and her students during the local regulatory air agency’s monthly Governing Board meeting in Lancaster.

According to the County of Los Angeles Public Health Department, the Antelope Valley has the county’s highest incidence of asthma diagnoses. Currently, approximately 150 students at Joe Walker Middle School have been diagnosed with asthma – roughly one in six students. According to experts, asthma has the potential to be managed effectively if symptoms are well documented. Unfortunately, maintaining such consistent records can be difficult for the average middle school age student, which can ultimately result in asthma symptoms escalating to emergency status.

In response, Joe Walker Middle School students in the Innovation and Possibilities elective class developed the StandByMe app, which uses an adjustable wristband to transmit automated, real-time recordings of students' physiological asthma symptoms - such as increased heartbeat/pulse, body/skin temperature and hypoxia (low blood oxygen) - to a mobile app. The pulse oximeter contact point on the wristband also helps to monitor inspiratory and expiratory ratios, a predictor of airway passage inflammation.

Appropriate treatment will be indicated on the app in accordance with the individual's pre-established medical action plan. While the app focuses on providing timely information to the student to help him/her self-monitor and seek appropriate health choices or medical care, alerts are also shared with the student's guardian and/or school nurse, as well as the treating physician for use in developing effective medical action plan adjustments. StandByMe also provides information about weather, pollution and pollen counts and contains medical alert data, emergency contacts and GPS location.

"When you consider that asthma is the third-ranking reason children are seen in an emergency room nationwide, the potential health benefits of this app for young people in our Valley and beyond is phenomenal," said AVAQMD Chairman Marvin Crist, who is also the City of Lancaster's Vice Mayor. "I applaud these extraordinary students for their commitment to protecting public health and their remarkable efforts in helping our residents breathe easier," added Crist.

The William J. "Pete" Knight Memorial AIRE Award is presented each year in conjunction with National Pollution Prevention Week, which is observed during the third week of September. In 2005, the AVAQMD's Governing Board renamed the District's highest honor after the late Senator William "Pete" Knight, in recognition of his pivotal role in the creation of the AVAQMD as a separate, locally governed air agency.

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