



**LifeSmarts**  
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## Faces of LifeSmarts | Matthew Lamontagne

LifeSmarts Student of the Year



### The thrill of the competition

How LifeSmarts helped to boost confidence and build leadership

The students at Barrington High School in Barrington, Rhode Island found themselves in the middle of a school network-wide phishing attempt. All of the emails within the network got hacked. Matthew Lamontagne's friends looked to him for advice. "Is this email legitimate?" they asked Matthew, who they knew was knowledgeable in a variety of topics including personal finance, consumer rights, and technology. Lamontagne assured his friends that the email was not legitimate

because of the warning signs of fraudulent online activity that he learned about through the LifeSmarts program.

This LifeSmarts Student of the Year recalled not really understanding what he was getting into when he joined the team his sophomore year. Things have taken a 180-degree turn since then: Lamontagne has since become a member of the national LifeSmarts Student Advisory board; his team has won every Rhode

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Island state competition he's been to, earning a spot at Nationals each year; and he has placed first in individual topic champion competitions for two consecutive years, first in consumer rights and then in personal finance.

Lamontagne, who was captain of his team last year, has become a leader in every way. When the team's coach retired, Lamontagne helped a new coach transition into the program. "Matt worked with me frequently to help the team prepare, understand what has worked in the past, and share his own personal resources with the team. Our team would not have been as successful without Matt's leadership," said Coach Samuel Schachter, who nominated Lamontagne for Student of the Year.

Although Lamontagne's team has been to Nationals all three years he has participated, they never took the crown, coming very close each year. "It was very disappointing to be so close to winning and not winning my sophomore year, when we came in second and my junior year, when we came in third. But we weren't disappointed for long because it was still a great time and a great experience," he explained. In 2015, they again finished second to another returning team—from Florida.



*Lamontagne accepts his 2015 LifeSmarts Student of the Year award from Outreach Coordinator Seth Woods and Program Director Lisa Hertzberg.*

Lamontagne added, "In terms of my knowledge, I've learned a whole lot more about relevant life topics, like personal finance and consumer rights." He also cited stronger leadership skills and more confidence as things he's taking away from the program. "Answering questions and articulating answers in front of an audience in a succinct and comprehensive way definitely also helped to improve my public speaking skills."

As he looks forward to starting college at Northeastern University in the fall, Lamontagne knows that he will take the valuable knowledge he has gained through LifeSmarts with him. "I see myself using the skills I've learned to help me navigate my way when I'm off to college and as an adult, like how to budget my money and stay healthy on campus. I've also learned to think a lot faster under pressure, which will help

me when I'm taking tests," said Lamontagne.

Lamontagne described LifeSmarts as a great opportunity to show off how much you know, test your knowledge, and have a fun time in a competitive setting. "You're learning important information you may not learn in other classes, and some high schools don't offer those classes, like personal finance or waste management."

"Matt is precisely what the term 'LifeSmart' is all about. He has a wealth of consumer knowledge that is important for the transition to adulthood, which makes him an outstanding member of society," said Coach Schachter.