



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: May 2, 2024

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### **Las Cruces 7<sup>th</sup> Grader Wins Asombro's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Desert Data Jam Competition**

Salome Simon-Cadena from Sierra Middle School took home first place in this year's Desert Data Jam competition with her project, "Leaf Litter Decomposition." The competition, held every spring by the nonprofit Asombro Institute for Science Education, turns the concept of a "science fair" on its head, asking 7<sup>th</sup>-grade students from across Las Cruces to analyze local and national scientific data collected by scientists and find creative ways to communicate it to the public. Students work on the projects over a series of class visits by Asombro staff and with support from their teachers, not only practicing valuable and transferable STEM skills like isolating a data trend and making graphs but also practicing how to explain scientific concepts to a non-science audience.

Of the over 400 students who participated this year, many stated that the creative project portion of the competition was the most fun and challenging. Students used their talents and interests to make any type of creative project, but all projects needed to use the data and include a scale, key, or legend. Students chose to display their data through music, creative writing, physical models, and more.

First-place winner, Simon-Cadena, and others were honored at the Annual Desert Data Jam Award Ceremony on Thursday, April 5. Second place was awarded to Ava Spackman and Emily Carrillo from Picacho Middle School for their project "Home Sweet Habitat" and third place was a tie between Sierra Middle School students Danica White for "Playing in the Dirt" and Demetryous Griffith for "Let's Wrap this Beef Up."

Asombro would like to thank the many teachers, parents, judges and of course, student participants, who made this competition a great success.

The Asombro Institute for Science Education is a non-profit that specializes in place-based, hands-on science education in Las Cruces and the Southwest. They serve over 24,000 students annually through classroom programs, field trips, and more. For more information, call 575-524-3334 or visit [asombro.org](http://asombro.org).