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News from Amphi

March 31, 2016

Lulu Walker Named Top Science Elementary School

Amphitheater Public Schools Has 73 Winning Projects at SARSEF

Tucson, AZ - Lulu Walker Elementary School was recently named the Top Science Elementary School for 2016 by the Southern Arizona Research, Science and Engineering Foundation (SARSEF). This is the second year in a row that the school has achieved the honor, beating out hundreds of schools from across the region. In addition to earning the Top Science Elementary School recognition, Amphitheater Public Schools students had a total of 73 winning projects at the competition.

More than 1,900 projects were registered for this year's Southern Arizona Science and Engineering Fair (SARSEF) held at the Tucson Convention Center in March. Walker Elementary submitted a total of 30 projects and took home a total of 24 awards. Nineteen of the projects were named "exemplary." The school with the most winning projects earns the title of Top Science Elementary School of the Year.

"We are so proud of our students and the dedication our teachers show in the classroom every day," said Michael McConnell, Lulu Walker Elementary principal. "Earning this award for two years in a row shows that our teachers are able to encourage critical-thinking and curiosity in students, and inspire them to imagine doing things they never thought would be possible."

For fifth grader, Kaylynne Garner, what began as a family dilemma (worried about relatives who vape), has now become her passion. She was determined to prove the harmful effects of vaping and e-cigs on health as compared to cigarettes and smoking. Being able to set up a measurable, controlled test was tricky at first, until she was invited to the University of Arizona's Bio5 lab. She had guided access to the lab and was given the opportunity to insert cartridges into a spectrometer for more specific chemical analysis. She tested and compared the chemical output alongside some of the most influential researchers in Tucson. She is excited to continue the development of this inquiry for years to come.

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"We are excited about opportunities to engage with the community, especially young students interested in our research endeavors," said Dr. Shane Snyder, professor of chemical and environmental engineering at the University of Arizona. "These potential Wildcats are inspiring to all of us and we hope to find future opportunities to collaborate with schools."

More than 1 in 4 of the winning projects from Walker have been submitted for advancement to the state competition (AzSEF), which is open to fifth graders and above. The students will present their research in Phoenix on April 7.

"This honor further demonstrates the district's commitment to excellence in education and is a testament to the additional focus we have placed on science education in our schools," said Patrick Nelson, superintendent of Amphitheater Public Schools. "We are so proud to be leading the way in the areas of science, engineering, technology and math across Southern Arizona."

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