Students win Congressional App Challenge

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Students from across the region programmed their way to victory in the 2019 Congressional App Challenge for New Mexico's Third Congressional District.

Diana Vasquez, Ytzel Romo-Olivas, and Ruth Calija, won first prize the for their "Kids Against Racism (K.A.R.)" app which helps inform people about the adverse effects of racism in their communities, and offers suggestions on how to combat racism and resources where individuals can seek help.

"Not only did these students exercise great creativity, they did so with an eye toward social justice and eradicating disparities that exist for communities of color," says Congressman Ben Ray Luján. "I am proud that these students' hard work will reflect New Mexico values, and I look forward to seeing what all of this year's participants accomplish in STEM education."

Calija and Vazquez attend Mandela International Magnet School in Santa Fe, and Romo-Olivas attends Santa Fe High School.

Second place went to Santa Fe Indian High School students Marrissa DeAguero, Jazlynn Martinez, Tayler Martinez, and Alyssa Aguila for their educational app "Tiny Learners," that teaches toddlers and young children how to count from 1-10 and learn the alphabet.

Third place went to Eliana Lovato, Vinaya Kurapati (both from Santa Fe's Academy of Technology and the Classics), and Ruby Sallah (from Santa Fe Girls' School), with their app called "Grow your Smile," designed to help adults stay healthy by providing healthy eating tips and exercise plans that help them improve their health.

The first- and third-place teams developed their apps at nonprofit STEM Santa Fe's app development camp, which took place over the summer of 2019.

The Congressional App Challenge is a nationwide app creation competition for students of middle and high school age, with winners from each congressional district. Student apps were judged on the quality of their ideas, including creativity and originality.

—Kathy Keith
Director, Community Partnerships Office at Los Alamos National Laboratory