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**American Student Assistance Announces Winners of the 2022 ASA Solve Together
Digital Career Exploration Challenges**

Middle School Classrooms and Direct Learner Teams represent states from across the country, including New Jersey, Missouri, California, Washington, New York, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania

BOSTON – June 14, 2022– American Student Assistance® (ASA), a national nonprofit changing the way middle and high schoolers learn about careers and navigate education-to-career opportunities, announced during a virtual ceremony on May 19 that a team of students from the Franklin Avenue Middle School in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, has won the second annual, national [ASA Solve Together: Tomorrow's Leaders Tackling Today's Challenges](#) online career exploration competition. The school was awarded \$10,000, and the team of students won \$1,500. In addition, middle school teacher Alicia Ray from Meadowview Magnet Middle School in Mount Airy, North Carolina, was recognized with the ASA Solve Together Educator Award of \$1,000 for her work in engaging students across 27 teams to participate in various challenges.

ASA Solve Together is a national competition designed to encourage career exploration and skill-building for middle school students in the classroom and direct learners through project-based learning and teamwork. Organized in partnership with the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), the national contest enables grades 7 through 9 educators to easily embed career exploration and 21st century skill development in their classrooms. In addition, direct learners, ages 13-16, outside of the classroom, with the support of caring adults, participated in the challenges.

The virtual classroom contest ran from January 3 through March 18, 2022. The top three winning classroom teams, the educator award winner, the top three direct learner teams, and honorable mention recipients, were selected from more than 500 registered teams across 49 states nationwide. Participants chose from four challenges, including Public Health, Climate Change, Colonizing Mars, and a Passion Project, based on a problem they care about. Overall, the experience helped learners build foundational skills, including communication, critical thinking, and collaboration; discover passions and explore different paths; and get credit with participation certificates, boosted college applications, and monetary prizes.

The submissions were reviewed by a panel of judges that included representatives from AMLE and ASA. In addition to the first place prize, second place winner Wydown Middle School, and third place winner Alvarado Intermediate School, were awarded monetary prizes of \$5,000 and \$2,500, respectively, for their schools. An additional \$1,000 (second place), and \$500 (third place) cash prize was awarded to be split among the winning teams. In addition, the first place direct learner team, *Sinnfanclub*, was awarded \$1,500, the second place

direct learner team, *Ironpeople*, received \$1,000, and the third place direct learner team, *Pollution Patrol*, won \$500.

Based on a 2021 ASA research survey of more than 2,000 students in grades 7 through 12 on overall attitudes around careers and exploration, less than half of students feel like they have enough information to decide on a career. "Within every student lies a passion waiting to be discovered, and we know that discovering this passion is key to creating a roadmap to the career they want," said ASA CEO Jean Eddy. "We congratulate all of the *ASA Solve Together career exploration* competition participants and winners, inside and beyond the classroom, on their outstanding achievements which will help them to make informed, confident choices to accomplish their postsecondary education and career goals."

"Congratulations to the winners and to all students and educators who participated in this year's *ASA Solve Together* competition," said AMLE CEO Stephanie Simpson. "We know that middle grades students thrive when they're engaged in solving real-world problems and developing skills that prepare them for the 21st century workforce. We are proud to be a partner of this opportunity that allows students to be adventuresome, curious explorers."

First Place, Franklin Avenue Middle School (Franklin Lakes, New Jersey): A team of seventh grade science students known as *Team Passion Project*, with the help of their teacher, Alyssa McAloney, created a prototype and blueprint to enhance transportation systems, after learning that transportation conditions are a leading cause for the declining bee population. As part of their winning submission, they also interviewed a current bee transporter and an agricultural professor from Cornell University.

Second Place, Wydown Middle School (Wydown, Missouri): A team of eighth grade students known as the *Magnificent Meteorites*, with the help of their teacher, Frankie Synovec, developed a solution to utilize Lagrange points to shorten the time it takes to travel from Earth to Mars. This was designed to assist with the transportation to and from Mars, which illustrated understanding of the challenge, research, and problem solving.

Third Place, Alvarado Intermediate School (Rowland Heights, California): A team of eighth grade English students known as the *Bright Teletubbies*, with the help of their teacher, Rachel Jung, developed a four-pronged approach to deliver mental health support after the COVID-19 pandemic, and used each Teletubby to represent each proposed solution. Jung's former school also won third place in the inaugural 2021 *ASA Solve Together* competition.

First Place Direct Learner Team (Tacoma, Washington): A group of teens, known as *Mr. Sinnfanclub*, including Emma McGee, Evelyn Luippold, Kincaide Wilborn, Tivoli Snowmassara, and Mira Nimura-Parmenter, produced a podcast with characters representing different opinions about how to best create a society on Mars, based on their careers (e.g., mayor, professor, and attorney).

Second Place Direct Learner Team (Los Angeles, California): A team of teens known as *Ironpeople*, led by Gabe Cooper, created a supplement for people with iron deficiency, complete with profit margins and distribution processes.

Third Place Direct Learner Team (Tacoma, Washington): A team of teens known as *Pollution Patrol*, led by Carsyn Stolz and Kashton Korsmo, took on the point of view of an environmental lawyer to help in discussing the variety of solutions and barriers they presented.

In addition to the top winners of the *Solve Together* competition, ASA also recognized two teams as honorable mentions:

Honorable Mention – Most Advanced 3D Model, Half Hollow Hills Central School District (Long Island, New York): A team of eighth grade STEM students known as *Team CAMI*, with the help of their teacher, Chris Regini, designed a system that would be capable of growing various foods autonomously in outer space.

Honorable Mention – Most Well Researched, Marple Newtown High School (Newtown Square, Pennsylvania): A team of ninth grade science students known as *MarsLand*, with the guidance of their teacher, Brian Isselmann, presented a proposal to utilize compost, LED grow lights, and water gathered from Mars' natural ice formations, to grow the necessary plants for survival.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping students know themselves, know their options, and make informed decisions to achieve their education and career goals. ASA believes all students should have equitable access to career readiness learning, starting in middle school, so they can develop a plan for their future. ASA fulfills its mission by providing digital-first programming, resources, and experiences, including [Futurescape™](#), directly to millions of students, in addition to support for educators and intermediaries. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us.