

# NEW MEXICO REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR WINNER

## MENTORED BY UNM BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

### FACULTY & GRAD STUDENTS

**JAREK KWIECINSKI**, a 9th grader at the Albuquerque Institute for Math and Science, studied soil microbial activity for his science fair project under the leadership of University of New Mexico Department of Biology Drs. **Christina Takacs-Vesbach**, **Marcy Litvak** and **Robert Sinsabaugh** and Ph.D. students **Eva Robinson** and **Daniel Warnock**. Specifically, he looked at adding amendments to soil that improve soil quality and habitat, allowing for increased microbial growth with improved carbon use efficiency, better carbon retention in biomass and less CO<sub>2</sub> respiration. This is important because in the face of increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, controls on large, natural CO<sub>2</sub> sources need to be better understood.

On Friday, March 21, Jarek won several significant awards at the New Mexico Regional Science Fair competition, including:

- Senior Division top of category for Environmental Science—first place (\$100);
- Selected as regional representative to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles, CA, May 2014;
- Special cash awards from:
  - \* Allen Sigmon Real Estate—Sr. division first place (\$50);
  - \* American Society for Quality—Sr. division second place (\$100);
  - \* Austin Hudson LaPore BioChemistry award—Sr. division first place (\$100);
  - \* bigbyte.cc Corp—Sr. division first place (\$250);
  - \* Coldwell Banker Las Colinas—Sr. division first place (\$50);
  - \* Paula Hayden Award—Sr. division first place (\$125); and
  - \* Terracon—Sr. division first place (\$50).

Jarek will compete in the New Mexico State Science Fair in April 2014 at New Mexico Tech.

Jarek was introduced to these Biology Department researchers via **Jennifer Schuetz**, the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program (BEMP) science coordinator and an adjunct faculty member in the department. Two years ago Jarek and his classmates monitored a BEMP site in Albuquerque. After getting to know Jarek through that, Jennifer mentored his science fair project last year.

*Hats off* to all the future biological researchers and professors!



Jarek discusses his science fair project with guests at the Central New Mexico Regional Science Fair Open House.



Jarek's science fair board.