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Westwood Student A Finalist in NASA Contest

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 22, 2020 – Westwood, MA – Westwood student Amira Shanshiry, a 4th grader at the Hanlon Elementary School, has been selected as a finalist in NASA's nationwide contest to name the space rover which will head to Mars this year. Shanshiry is the **only** finalist from Massachusetts. NASA received over 28,000 submissions from across the United States for the "Name the Rover" contest. Those were narrowed to 155 semifinalists and then to 9 finalists after an online poll. Shanshiry suggested the rover be named Promise. In addition to conceiving a name, students were also required to submit an accompanying essay explaining why they feel the name they chose is worthy.

"Amira is a bright and dedicated student," said Sarah Cronin, Principal of the Hanlon School. "We are proud and excited to see what her future holds. It makes perfect sense that she suggested the name 'Promise' since Amira and her fellow classmates are full of such promise."

The Mars 2020 Rover is in its final stages of launch preparation. The currently unnamed rover is a robotic scientist weighing more than 2,300 pounds. It will search for signs of past microbial life, characterize the planet's climate and geology, collect samples for future return to Earth, and pave the way for human exploration of the Red Planet. NASA is targeting a July 2020 launch for the rover with touchdown expected on Mars in February 2021.

"This competition is an amazing experience for me," said Shanshiry. "I believe this Mars rover will help humans with our knowledge about Mars, and I am so happy to be supporting that process."

Should Shanshiry's entry be selected as the winner, she will be awarded the grand prize – a trip to the rover's launch at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

"This rover is the first leg of a round-trip mission to Mars that will advance understanding in key science fields like astrobiology," said Lori Glaze, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division. "This contest is a cool way to engage the next generation and encourage careers in all STEM fields. The chosen name will help define this rover's unique personality among our fleet of Martian spacecraft."

In the final part of this competition, Shanshiry and the other 8 finalists will talk with a panel of experts, including [Glaze](#), NASA astronaut [Jessica Watkins](#), NASA JPL rover driver [Nick Wiltzie](#) and [Clara Ma](#), who proposed the name for the Mars Science Laboratory rover, Curiosity, as a sixth-grade student in 2009. The grand prize winner will be announced in early March 2020.

For more information about the mission, go to: <https://mars.nasa.gov/mars2020/>

For more about NASA's Moon to Mars plans, visit: <https://www.nasa.gov/topics/moon-to-mars>

Shanshiry's essay submission can be found [HERE](#)

MEDIA CONTACT:

Matt Ellis
Ellis Strategies, Inc.
617.777.3776
matt@ellisstrategies.com

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