



California Science Center  
**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR**  
**2001 PROJECT SUMMARY**

**Your Name** (List all student names if multiple authors.)

**Marie D. Weber**

**Science Fair Use Only**

**J1714**

**Project Title** (Limit: 120 characters. Those beyond 120 will be ignored. See pg. 9)

**Poisonous Pots: A study of the public health risk of imported Mexican terra cotta pottery.**

**Division**

**J Junior (6-8) J Senior (9-12)**

**Preferred Category** (See page 5 for descriptions.)

**17 - Social Sciences (Junior Division Only)**

**Abstract** (Include Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusion. See samples on page 14.)

Use no attachments. Only text inside these boxes will be used for category assignment or given to your judges.

My objective was to determine if a significant public health threat exists from the use of imported Mexican terra cotta pottery in a small agricultural city in Central California.

**Methods & Materials** # Last year, I was able to show that the glaze in Mexican pottery sold in Watsonville, CA frequently contained lead.

This year, I randomly surveyed people in downtown Watsonville, a city that is over 60% Hispanic, to find out if they actually use this type of pottery to cook and serve food. I also tried to find out if they knew lead is poisonous, if they knew these pots could contain lead, if they had seen warning labels on the pottery, and if they would change their behavior in the future.

**Results** # So far, I have found that 23.8% of the respondents use this pottery for food preparation. The majority of those surveyed knew that lead is poisonous and almost half of them knew this pottery could contain lead. However, only a third of those actually using the pottery knew this. In addition only 19% had seen warning labels. Only half of those using this pottery said they would change their habits after this interview.

**Conclusion** # My study showed that about a quarter of the population of Watsonville may be at risk from the common practice of using potentially poisonous pottery to cook their food.

**Summary Statement** (In one sentence, state what your project is about.)

My study showed that lead containing Mexican pottery poses a health risk to the people of Watsonville.

**Help Received in Doing Project** (e.g. Mother helped type report; Neighbor helped wire board; Used lab equipment at university X under the supervision of Dr. Y; Participant in NSF Young Scholars Program) See Display Regulation #8 on page 4.

Carol Starks, Public Health Dept: lead resource packet. Grandmother translated for survey. Parents helped with boards.