



Asombro Insights



July August September 2009

Volume 18, Issue 3

A publication of the Asombro Institute for Science Education (home of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park)

In This Issue:

- 2 Notes from the Director
Leaving a Legacy
- 3 2009 - Year of Science
- 4 Site Development Corner
Membership Challenge
- 5 Chihuahuan Desert Expo
Education Programs
- 6 Calendar of Events
Albertsons Comm. Partners
- 7 Membership Form
New & Renewing Members
- 8 Map to the Nature Park

Butterfly Flutterby

Saturday August 15
9 AM - 12 PM

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Asombro Insights is published quarterly by the Asombro Institute for Science Education, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing scientific literacy by fostering an understanding of the Chihuahuan Desert.

Asombro Institute
for Science Education
P.O. Box 891

Las Cruces, NM 88004
575-524-3334 (Voice)
575-646-2315 (Fax)

E-mail: information@asombro.org
Web site: www.asombro.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Justin Van Zee, President
Mary Beth Harper, Vice President
Mark Sechrist, Secretary
Donna Yargosz, Treasurer
Joel Brown, Board Member
Michael D. Ferguson, Board Member
Sally Hunt, Board Member
Omar Montoya, Board Member

STAFF

Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Ph.D., Director
Rink Somerday, Program Coordinator
Paul Harper, Site Coordinator
Cate Schneider, Education Technician

Asombro Institute Wins Another Award

The Asombro Institute for Science Education recently received the Rio Grande Award for Excellence in Education from the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico (CFSNM). This award recognizes excellence among nonprofits tackling the many educational needs in our region.

"We have tremendous respect for the CFSNM and their great work in our community, so we are extremely honored by their recognition of our work," said

Asombro Institute Executive Director, Dr. Stephanie Bestelmeyer.

In the award presentation, CFSNM leaders said that the

Asombro Institute for Science Education "has exemplified outstanding leadership in lighting the way through education for the people of southern New Mexico by providing opportunities to continue learning outside the traditional classroom." They added that the Asombro Institute "has demonstrated an outstanding passion for sharing knowledge with others" and understanding "that education is the pathway out of poverty and the journey into a quality of life."

The Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico is a charitable resource that links donors with our community's needs. They offer resources, services, and community

knowledge to help donors achieve their philanthropic goals.

For example, the CFSNM holds and manages the Asombro Institute's endowment fund. This permanent fund provides long-term income to continue the Asombro Institute's successful programs.

The Asombro Institute for Science Education's Board of Directors is working to increase the size of the organization's endowment. You can help achieve this goal by making a donation to

the endowment; simply indicate how much you would like to contribute to this permanent fund on the membership form on page 8. You can also

read more on page 2 of this newsletter about making other kinds of planned gifts that will continue the Asombro Institute's award-winning programs for years to come.

Rio Grande Award for Excellence in Education



The Asombro Institute for Science Education was recognized for excellence in education programming such as day-long field trips to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

Notes from the Director

Field Trips Open Students' Eyes to the Wonder of Science and the Desert

By **Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Ph.D.**

"Wow! When you get outside and walk, the desert is a lot better than what it seems like when you just look out the window!"

The six-year-old who excitedly told me this recently captured the essence of our field trip program. By getting students outside for a day-long field trip, we give them an opportunity to explore this unique ecosystem, opening their eyes to the wonder that was there all along.

Since the start of this year, we have run 38 field trips for 2,841 students. Each trip requires a minimum of four, and often up to seven, educators. With only two full-time and two part-time staff members, many of these trips would not happen without support from dedicated, talented Asombro Institute for Science Education volunteers.

On May 11, we formally thanked these volunteers with a luncheon at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Our volunteers are usually accompanied by 60-100 students when they are at the Nature Park, so a quiet lunch in the desert was a rare treat.

While a single lunch can, in no way, express our gratitude, we hope these volunteers know just how much they mean to us and to the 2,841 students they have already helped to "get outside and walk" in the desert this year.



Top and Middle: Volunteers enjoy a quiet luncheon honoring their dedication to the field trip program.

Bottom: A more typical day at the Nature Park includes volunteers leading students on guided investigations.

LEAVING A LEGACY

By **Mary Beth Harper, Board Member**

With our difficult economic times, non-profit organizations are struggling to stay afloat. Most, including Asombro Institute for Science Education, rely on donations and grants, both of which have dropped in the last eight months. Yet, we are clicking right along, providing quality informal science instruction to over 13,000 students of all ages this year.

To help ensure we will be around in 15 years, we started an endowment with the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico a couple years ago. Our endowment has a principal that is invested that we cannot touch, ever. Once it grows to a large enough size, we can use the interest it generates to help finance our award-winning science education and outreach programs. Our endowment is growing slowly, but the Board is committed to increasing it during the next year. Donations earmarked for our endowment are always gladly accepted. The fastest way to increase our endowment, however, is to receive money or property through planned giving.

The term planned giving may or may not be familiar to you, but since AISE is about education, and we need information to make decisions, here is a brief summary. Planned gifts can come in many forms: money or property from an estate left in a will, life insurance policies, charitable trusts, charitable gift annuities, or retirement fund assets. These are not gifts that come to AISE during a person's lifetime, but rather after they pass on. Planned gifts go directly into an endowment, so the legacy is one that supports science education for years after death. If you really are not fond of the IRS, you might be interested to note that, since AISE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, all gifts earn the maximum tax deduction for charitable contributions. Endowments can fund scholarships, replace or renew physical facilities, allow the organization to respond to unforeseen challenges or opportunities, or support new programs or special projects. What an endowment does is carry out an individual's charitable commitments by providing a long-term future income for the organization.

Members of the Board have not only made a commitment to increase our endowment this coming year, but also to provide for planned giving in our own wills as we are able. It seems the right thing to do because we are all so committed to our mission of science education. If you are interested in exploring planned giving to support the Asombro Institute for Science Education, please speak with your attorney and contact the office at 575-524-3334 for more information.

2009: The Year of Science

By David B. Richman
New Mexico State University

In 2009 scientists and science teachers throughout the country are taking part in the Year of Science. The Year of Science commemorates several science-related dates in history and is coordinated by the Coalition on the Public

Understanding of Science (COPUS; <http://www.copusproject.org/index.php>.) COPUS is in part supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS).

Among the anniversaries celebrated are:

- 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth (1809)
- 150th anniversary of the publication of The Origin of Species (1859)
- 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth (also 1809 on exactly the same day as Darwin!). Lincoln signed the legislation creating both the National Academy of Sciences and the Land Grant system of agricultural colleges).
- 400th anniversary of Johannes Kepler's first two Laws of Planetary Motion (1609)
- 400th anniversary of Galileo's first use of a telescope to study the heavens (1609)

Here at New Mexico State University, we are celebrating by having interviews on KRWG-FM (see: http://www.publicbroadcasting.net/krwg/news.newsmain?action=section&SECTION_ID=6467) and by several events on and off campus.



I played an older Charles Darwin for an open Seminar on Darwin's Birthday (February 12), which was well received by the 30 or so people who attended. I spoke as Darwin on "The Origin of Species". We held our first open house at campus museums and laboratories on April 21, 2009, and plan to hold another on October 22, 2009. From September 30 to October 4, 2009, the Year of Science will be a theme of the Southern New Mexico State Fair. Brian Ellis of "Fox Tales International" will play Charles Darwin having just returned from the Voyage of the Beagle. The presentation will start at 10 AM in the Corbett Center Auditorium on November 10, 2009. Brian will be flying out from his home in Illinois to give this presentation, which is open to the public.

The main purpose of all of these activities is to make the public aware of science, what scientists do, and how the public can be involved in science and science education.

The Committee for the Year of Science at NMSU is primarily made up of the members of the Center for Natural History Collections. Members of the Committee are:

Rani Alexander, Dept. of Anthropology and Sociology; Kurt Anderson, Dept. of Astronomy; Donovan Bailey, Dept. of Biology; Rebecca Creamer, Dept. of Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science; Carol Sutherland, Dept. of Extension Plant Sciences; David B. Richman, Contact and Chair of YOS Committee, Dept. of Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science.

About the Author

Dr. David B. Richman is a College Professor in the Department of Entomology, Plant Pathology and Weed Science at New Mexico State University. He is also curator of the NMSU Arthropod Museum.

Tel: (575) 646-7082

FAX: (575) 646-8087

E-Mail:

nmbugman@taipan.nmsu.edu

Site Development Corner

By Paul Harper
Site Coordinator

We have had many big changes in the first half of 2009! We are most excited about the decrease in vandalism, our new arroyo trail and some upcoming programs at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park for the community to enjoy.

To decrease vandalism, we established park hours, began locking gates, and hired evening security. These measures have dramatically decreased vandalism at the main trailhead and restrooms. Most of the vandalism at the park has been by people trying to pass through our property. Our gates have been damaged on several occasions, and we have replaced seven cut locks. Our barbed wire fences seem to be in constant repair, aided by the tremendous staff at the Jornada Experimental Range Ranch. Other property owners in the Doña Ana Mountains have also seen considerable property damage and trespassing. Rink Somerday and Mark Sechrist have met with Doña Ana user groups and the Bureau of Land Management to begin working together to prevent unauthorized use while encouraging responsible recreation in the Doña Anas.

We are pleased to announce that the newest trail at the park is complete! The Arroyo Trail is a 0.4-mile spur that starts along the entrance road and

heads up to the main Desert Discovery Trail. The trail weaves in and out of a large arroyo. Visitors can view a wide diversity of plants and animals unique to the arroyo microclimates.

Though you can visit the trail anytime, the grand opening will be held on October 17 at the *Don't Know Much About the Desert* event. We will offer guided tours throughout the day. A special thank you goes out to Justin Van Zee and Arlene Tugel for all of their help with the trail.

Just around the corner is our 8th annual Butterfly Flutterby event on August 15. There will be butterfly specialists, games, face painting, a butterfly release and arts and crafts. This is our most popular event all year. It is loads of fun for all ages!

We would also like to introduce our first *Don't Know Much About the Desert* event on October 17. This will be a great chance to get out to the park and learn more about Chihuahuan Desert plants, animals, landforms, and climate. Whether you are a newcomer or a have lived here for years, we have something new for you to learn.

We are always working hard to provide our community with an enjoyable and educational place to both relax and have fun. We hope you enjoy it!



The Arroyo Trail is now open at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park!

Winners of the Membership Challenge Honored

On May 9, everyone who successfully brought in three new members in early 2009 was invited to a special breakfast at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Sunny, beautiful weather accompanied the good food, great conversation, and the peace of a desert morning. Following breakfast, participants received a tour of the new Arroyo Trail by Justin Van Zee, President of the Board of Directors and Chair of the Site Development Committee.

Even if you missed this challenge, please invite your friends to join our organization. The events you see highlighted in this newsletter are only possible thanks to you, our generous donors. Our goal this year is for 20% of our income to come from individuals like you. As of June 30, we were halfway to this goal. Please help us reach the goal by telling everyone you know about our organization. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of thousands of people.



Members received a special, behind-the-scenes preview of the new Arroyo Trail with Board President Justin Van Zee (center).

Return of the Chihuahuan Desert Expo

After a year's hiatus, the Asombro Institute for Science Education's Chihuahuan Desert Expo returned on April 30, 2009. This was the 10th Expo hosted by our organization for the children of southern New Mexico.

This year, more than 500 kindergarten through 3rd grade students came to the Las Cruces Downtown Mall to participate in 14 activity stations. They played games, listened to puppet shows, collected data, and made art projects to learn about science and the unique Chihuahuan Desert.

Teachers once again raved about the quality of the event. Eunice Zemek, a 3rd grade teacher at Central Elementary School said, "I thought this was the best of all the Expos - the booths were all excellent as they always are... Thank you for a great Expo!"

The Asombro Institute for Science Education staff would like to thank the 71 people who volunteered their day to run the activity stations. We are especially grateful to Evelyn Smith and her students from Las Montañas High School. In addition, we would like to thank Albertsons, Coas My Bookstore, Domino's Pizza, H&R Block, Papa John's Pizza, and Sonic for donations that helped keep our volunteers fed and happy as they worked to educate 582 children.



Top: Volunteer Tom Packard shows students high-tech and low-tech weather instruments.

Middle: Students investigate the smaller parts of the desert.

Bottom: Volunteer John Boeker shows students how to sieve soil to see sand, silt, and clay particles.

Education Programs

Here are the programs your donations helped us provide in April, May, and June. Schools are in El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), Gadsden Independent School District (GISD), and Las Cruces (unmarked).

April 1	Sierra Middle School - conceptual modeling	April 29	La Union Elem. (GISD) - arthropod identification
April 2	Picacho Middle School - field trip	April 30	Chihuahuan Desert Expo
April 2	Picacho Middle School - conceptual modeling	May 1	Canyon Hills Middle School (EPISD) - field trip
April 3	Sierra Middle School - field trip	May 1	Chaparral Elem. (GISD) - field trip
April 6	Valley View Elem. - biomes	May 4	Canyon Hills Middle School (EPISD) - field trip
April 6	Hillrise Elem. - field trip	May 4	La Union Elementary (GISD) - weather
April 7	Canyon Hills Middle School (EPISD) - field trip	May 5	Hillrise Elem. - field trip
April 7	Sunrise Elem. - soil	May 6	Desert View Elem. (GISD) - arthropod identification
April 8	Sunrise Elem. - soil	May 6	MESA advisors teacher training
April 8	Highland Elem. - arthropod identification	May 7	Desert Trail Elem. (GISD) - field trip
April 9	Doña Ana Elem. - field trip	May 7	Fairacres Elem. - biomes
April 9	Valley View Elem. - soil	May 8	Chaparral Elem. (GISD) - field trip
April 9	Valley View Elem. - pitfall traps	May 12	Mesilla Valley Christian - field trip
April 14	LC Catholic School - arthropod identification	May 12	Riverside Elem. (GISD) - arthropod identification
April 15	LC Catholic School - arthropod identification	May 13	Vado Elem. (GISD) - field trip
April 15	Central Elem. - soil	May 14	Santa Teresa Elem. (GISD) - arthropod identification
April 18	Stepping Out for Science teacher workshop	May 16	Star Gaze at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park
April 24	Mesilla Elem. - arthropod identification	May 28	Riverside Elem. (GISD) - field trip
April 24	MacArthur Elem. - soil	June 13	Dorris Van Dorn El Paso Library - bats
April 24	Jornada Elem. - pitfall traps	June 17	Claudy Fox El Paso Library - animal adaptations
April 25	Earth Day Festival in Alamogordo	June 24	Rock Hound State Park - bats
April 27	Alameda Elem. - field trip		
April 29	Booker T. Washington Elem. - soil		

Calendar of Events

Summer and early fall will be filled with exciting events in our region. Mark your calendars now!

August 5 - 7 White Sands Institute's "By the Dune's Early Light Photography Workshop" at White Sands National Monument. Taught by Jim Spencer. More detailed information, including course descriptions, agendas, and instructor background is available online at www.nps.gov/whsa. Cost is \$175 per person.



August 7-9 Annual Native Plant Society of New Mexico State Meeting in Taos. For more information, visit <http://npsnm.unm.edu/>

August 15 Butterfly Flutterby, hosted by the Asombro Institute for Science Education at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Hands-on activity stations teach visitors of all ages about butterflies. 9AM - Noon. \$1 per person.

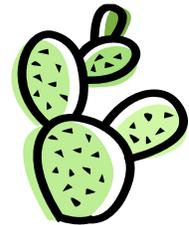
August 19 - 21 White Sands Institute's "White Sands Water Colors" at White Sands National Monument. Taught by Dan Stouffer. More detailed information, including course descriptions, agendas, and instructor background is available online at www.nps.gov/whsa. Cost is \$175 per person.

September 9 Presentation on the vegetation types of White Sands Missile Range by David Anderson for the Las Cruces Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Program begins at 7 PM in the Conference Room of the Social Center at the University Terrace Good Samaritan Village, 3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces.

Sept. 30 - Oct. 4 Southern New Mexico State Fair. Be sure to visit science exhibits in Quonset huts set up in support of the Year of Science theme. More information on the fair can be found at <http://www.snmstatefair.com/>. Entrance fee.

October 17 Don't Know Much About the Desert, hosted by the Asombro Institute for Science Education at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. In this brand new event, staff and volunteers will run hands-on activities to teach visitors about all aspects of the unique Chihuahuan Desert. There will be stations for visitors of all ages. Families are welcome. 9AM - Noon. \$1 per person.

November 10 Brian Ellis of "Fox Tales International" will play Charles Darwin having just returned from the Voyage of the Beagle. The presentation will start at 10 AM in the Corbett Center Auditorium on the New Mexico State University campus in Las Cruces.



Albertsons Community Partners Program

The Asombro Institute for Science Education received \$447 from the Albertsons Community Partners program last quarter. Please call the Asombro Institute office today (575-524-3334) to join this quick and easy fundraiser. We will mail you an Albertsons Community Partners card. Show the card to the cashier when you shop at any Albertsons, and they donate a percentage of your bill to the Asombro Institute. Just think - your everyday grocery shopping can translate into valuable science education programs for children and adults and new additions at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. For those of you already using your cards, thank you for your continuing support!



YES! I want to support the Asombro Institute for Science Education's efforts to increase scientific literacy by fostering an understanding of the Chihuahuan Desert. All donations are welcome. Please sign me up in the following category:

- Quartz (\$15 +) One-year subscription to *Asombro Insights*.
- Gypsum (\$50 +) One-year subscription to *Asombro Insights* and tickets to the Butterfly Flutterby.
- Jasper (\$100 +) Everything above plus invitations to a VIP event at the site.
- Obsidian (\$250 +) Everything above plus invitations to a VIP tour.
- Peridot (\$500 +) Everything above plus a limited-edition print of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.
- Turquoise (\$1000 +) Everything above plus a custom cactus garden planter.

I would like \$_____ of this donation to go to the Asombro Institute for Science Education endowment fund.

Please make checks payable to Asombro Institute for Science Education or charge to:

Visa MasterCard Account Number: _____
 Expiration Date: _____
 Signature as it appears on card: _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ Zip _____ PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____ Check here if you do NOT want to be listed in Asombro Institute publications _____

New and Renewing Members

Our thanks go to last quarter's donors. We are so grateful for your support!

Turquoise

Al Rango
Donna & Michael Yargosz

Obsidian

Lynn and George Mulholland



Jasper

Anonymous
Margaret Lucile de Boer
Martha Duran
Brian & Mynell Harper
Don McKittrick
Jim & Kathy Vorenberg
Alice & Gene Ward
Marthe Wygant

Gypsum

Ross & Julia Bruner
Barbara Kauffman
Juanita Kientz
Tom & Sue Schmugge
Mike & Marilyn Simione
Rink Somerday & John Holloway
Dr. Barbara Starfield &
Dr. Neil Holtzman
Kathryn & Eric Takeuchi
Ken Warner & Tanya Dawson

Quartz

Anonymous
George Biles & Janet Frame
Christopher Brown & Carol Placchi
Marcia Corl
Ron & Carmen Decker
Jeff Freeborn
Robert & Sharon Glazier
Kathy Groves
Mike Groves Photography
Mohammad Hadavi

Mrs. Sally Harper
Charlene Harrison
Lisa & Tom Murphy
Kristine Newman
Lloyd Newman
Marcella Newman
Richard Newman
Sandra Tatum
Geri and Rob Tillett
Harriett Wagner
Don Welch



Asombro Institute
FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

P.O. Box 891
Las Cruces, NM 88004-0891

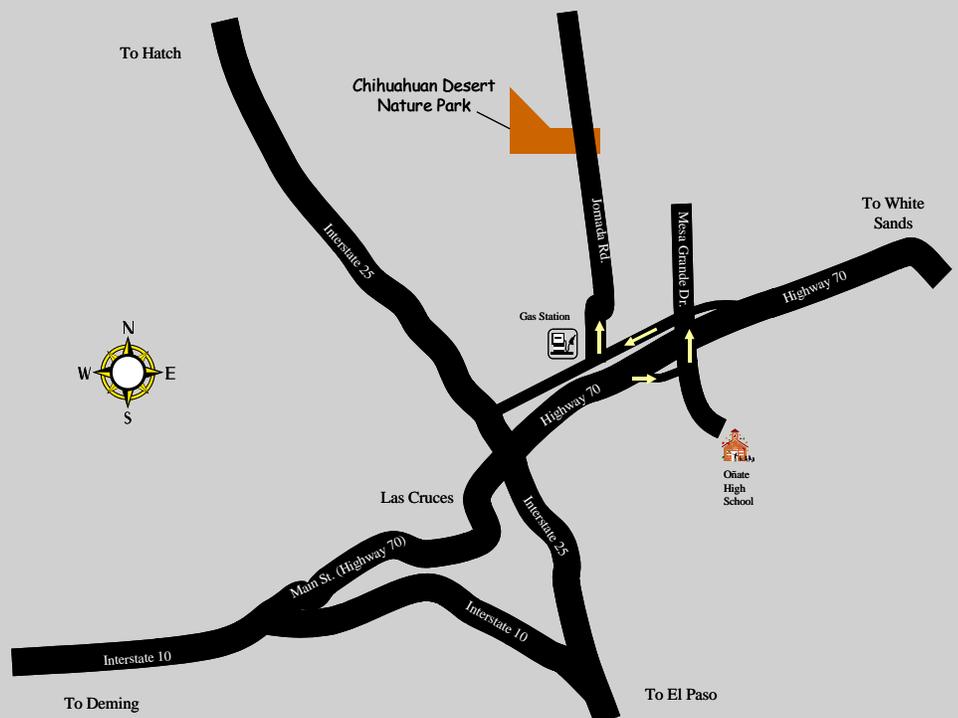
Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Las Cruces, NM
Permit No. 2014

OR CURRENT RESIDENT

© 2009 Asombro Institute for Science Education

Directions to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park Open Tuesday - Saturday, 7AM - 5PM

- From I-25 in Las Cruces, head east on Highway 70.
- Take the Mesa Grande Drive exit (at Oñate High School).
- Make a U-turn under the highway to head west. After the U-turn, stay in the right lane.
- Turn right (north) on Jornada Road.
- Follow Jornada Road north for 6.5 miles. After approximately 1.5 miles, the road is unpaved.
- Turn left at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park sign.
- Follow the entrance road to the parking area and trailhead.



ENJOY!