4th and 5th Graders Get a “Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert”

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

This semester, 4th and 5th grade dual language students throughout the Las Cruces Public School District are participating in hands-on science activities created by Asombro educators for the new Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert curriculum.

More than 30 teachers spent January 5th at the Asombro office to gain familiarity with the seven new activities. Both the curriculum and workshop got rave reviews. On an anonymous evaluation, one teacher said, “I learned a lot and am excited to get started with my students. Thank you for thinking of bilingual students.”

All activities are based on the bilingual book Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert by retired Las Cruces teacher Pat Mihok. When school district administrators saw the book, they asked Asombro to develop a series of hands-on activities in English and Spanish to accompany the books. Asombro staff worked with volunteers Pat Mihok and Donna Yargosz to write the activities, each including a teacher’s guide, sample tables and graphs, student reproducible pages in English and Spanish, and a glossary.

Asombro educators also created kits of equipment and consumable supplies that will travel to all participating elementary schools throughout the spring semester. The goal was to make it as easy as possible for teachers to implement these lessons with their students.

Activities guide students through hypothesis testing, engineering, and modeling to learn about desert plant and animal adaptations, fossils, geology, desert playas, and the creation of rain shadow deserts. Each activity addresses multiple math and language arts standards from the Common Core State Standards as well as the new Next Generation Science Standards.

We know students will want to learn even more after getting this “glimpse” of the Chihuahuan Desert.
Luminarias in the Desert

By Anna Keener

The December 12th “Luminarias in the Desert” event was brilliant fun with 115 visitors. People enjoyed a peaceful, moonlit night in the middle of a hectic season. Many thanks to Tom Packard for leading visitors in singing Christmas carols by the fire. Visitors enjoyed hot chocolate and cider while walking the trails. Many noticed the wonderful stillness of the desert when it is dark and the luminarias are beautifully visible. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers Jean Davis, Donna Yarosh, John Kimtis, Susan Vantress, Thomas Bestelmeyer, Linda Keener and Will Keener for making this event possible.

Volunteers Honored at Annual Meeting

By Paul Harper

When we prepare for the annual meeting and take a look back at the last year, we are always amazed at the number of students we work with and educate. There are several reasons that we are able to do so much with so little, and our volunteers are a big part of it.

Every year we recognize our amazing volunteers as part of our annual membership meeting. This year, we recognized the 21 volunteers who each donated more than 25 hours in 2014. They edited documents, prepared programs, did bookkeeping, worked at events, listened to us rant, and went into schools with us. They donated more than 2,000 hours and managed to do so with a smile. We thank you and hope you know that we cherish your help!

Board Vice President and volunteer, Mary Beth Harper, addresses members, volunteers, and staff at our 2015 annual meeting.

Photos by Will Keener.

Education Programs

Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 871 hours of science for 17,884 students in 2014!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-Oct</th>
<th>J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Oct</td>
<td>LC Catholic - Rock It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Oct</td>
<td>Zia MS - Desert Data Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Oct</td>
<td>LC Catholic - plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Oct</td>
<td>Lynn MS - Desert Data Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Oct</td>
<td>Sierra MS - Carbon Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Oct</td>
<td>J Paul Taylor Academy - Plant Adaptations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Oct</td>
<td>Camino Real MS - field trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Oct</td>
<td>Vista MS - Plant Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Oct</td>
<td>J Paul Taylor Academy - Carbon Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Oct</td>
<td>J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Oct</td>
<td>North Valley Elem - Plant Adaptations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Oct</td>
<td>East Picacho Elem - Animal Adaptations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Oct</td>
<td>Sierra MS - Desert Data Jam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Oct</td>
<td>Zia MS - field trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Oct</td>
<td>J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-Oct</td>
<td>NMSU Ecology Club - Asombro Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Oct</td>
<td>Agobberfest - Sort Like a Scientist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Oct</td>
<td>Mesa MS - Plant Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Oct</td>
<td>Vista MS - Arthropod Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Oct</td>
<td>LC Catholic - Numbers &amp; Counting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Oct</td>
<td>LC Catholic - Classify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Oct</td>
<td>Sierra MS - Carbon Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Oct</td>
<td>Sunrise Elem - Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Oct</td>
<td>Zia MS - Plant Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Oct</td>
<td>Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Oct</td>
<td>Mesa MS - Arthropod Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct</td>
<td>Camino Real MS - Plant Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct</td>
<td>Zia MS - Arthropod Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct</td>
<td>J Paul Taylor Academy - Greenhouse Gases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct</td>
<td>Fairacres Elem - Plant Adaptations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct</td>
<td>Deming Library - Bats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Oct</td>
<td>Sierra MS - Plant Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Oct</td>
<td>Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Oct</td>
<td>Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13-Nov | LC Catholic - Field Trip |
13-Nov | Sierra MS - Soil Erosion |
14-Nov | Alameda Elem - career day |
14-Nov | Picacho MS - Soil Erosion |
17-Nov | North Valley Elem - Plant Adaptations |
17-Nov | Mayfield HS - Greenhouse Gases |
18-Nov | Vista MS - Soil |
18-Nov | East Picacho Elem - Life Cycles |
18-Nov | Mayfield HS - Weather vs. Climate |
19-Nov | J Paul Taylor Academy - Transpiration game |
19-Nov | Mayfield HS - Water Cycle |
19-Nov | Vista MS - Soil Erosion |
20-Nov | Camino Real MS - Soil Erosion |
20-Nov | Mayfield HS - Evaporation Experiment |
20-Nov | Zia MS - Soil Erosion |
20-Nov | NMSU AXED - Climate Change/Water Cycle |
21-Nov | Mayfield HS - Transpiration |
24-Nov | Fairacres Elem - Animal Adaptation |
25-Nov | University Hills Elem - Animal Adaptation |
1-Dec | J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Change |
2-Dec | North Valley Elem - Arthropod identification |
3-Dec | Picacho MS - Climate Change |
8-Dec | Fairacres Elem - Arthropod Identification |
9-Dec | Vista MS - Climate Change |
9-Dec | East Picacho Elem - biome vs. ecosystem |
10-Dec | LC Catholic - Arthropod Identification |
11-Dec | Sierra MS - Climate Change |
11-Dec | J Paul Taylor Academy - Arthropod ID |
12-Dec | Mesa MS - Soil Erosion |
12-Dec | Luminarias in the Desert |
15-Dec | MacArthur Elem - Arthropod Identification |
16-Dec | University Hills Elem - Arthropod ID |
17-Dec | Sierra MS - Climate Change |
THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors in the fourth quarter of 2014.

**Organized Going Strong After 25 Years!**

*By Stephanie Bestelmeyer*

In August 1990, Ron Hudson and a group of community members created the organization that is now known as the Asombro Institute for Science Education. That makes 2015 our 25th anniversary!

While a lot has changed in 25 years, the organization’s commitment to education has never wavered. Throughout 2015, we’ll take some time to reminisce about the founding of the organization as we look forward to another quarter century of science education.

---

**Thank You, VFW Post 6917**

The Board of Directors, staff, and especially the students who participate in hands-on science with Asombro would like to thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6917 for their generous $500 donation. For more than 100 years, the VFW has worked to foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts; to serve our veterans, the military, and our communities; and to advocate on behalf of all veterans.

VFW Post 6917 has been a long-time supporter of Asombro and our work with local children, and we are so grateful for their generosity!

---

**Desert Dash: Racing for Asombro**

*By Stephanie Haan-Amato*

Our second annual Desert Dash Trail Race fundraiser was a dashing success! On a beautiful November 8th morning, 284 people ran and walked for Asombro at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. The participants were wonderful, the refreshments were delicious, and our amazing volunteers made sure that everything went off without a hitch. Through entry fees and generous sponsorships and donations, we raised more than $8000 for Asombro’s education programs! An enormous thanks to our sponsors, donors, participants, and volunteers for bringing fun, hands-on science education to many more local students.

We hope that YOU will plan to join us for our third annual Desert Dash on November 14, 2015! Like us on Facebook for race news and updates.

---

**Monthly Donors**

- Stephanie & Brandon Bestelmeyer
- Carolyn Gressit & John Freyermuth
- Marcella Newman
- Deb Peters
- Justin Van Zee
- Walt & Linda Whitford

**Turquoise**

- John Bunn
- Southwest Kettle Korn
- Las Cruces Rodrunners
- Donna Yargosz

**Peridot**

- Catherine Kemmer, MD
- VFW Post 6917

**Obsidian**

- (2) Anonymous
- Paul Bussan
- Corky & Edie Courtright
- GFWC Progress Club
- Howard & Julia Laney
- Al Rango
- Heather Throop

**Jasper**

- Larry Brenner
- Ronnie Fischer
- Aravamudan & Champa Gopalan
- Laura Huenneke & Stephen Warburton
- Will & Linda Keener
- Don McKittrick
- Angela & John Mortland

**Tom Packard**

**April Rogers**

**Bob Schooley**

**Tom Sechrist**

**John Sproul**

**Jim & Kathy Vorenberg**

**Quartz**

- Beverly Denney
- Nancy Greene
- Mrs. Sally Harper
- Michael & Diane Lilley
- Lawrence Losleben
- Ceil & Jerry Phillips
- Susan Philip & Orin Heend
- Dr. Robert Severance
- Dia & Mel Taylor
- VFW Post 6917 Ladies Auxiliary
- Eunice & John Zemek

---

**Gypsum**

- (2) Anonymous
- Leoniice Beatty
- Doug Burke
- Neil Fuller
- Leilani Horton
- Marjorie Little
- Greg & Julie Magee
- Rich Richins
- Marlys Shearman
- Bill & Zanah Sto

---
Critter Corner

By Paul Harper

This badger (*Taxidea taxus*) was a bit curious about our trail camera. We think that he just wanted a close-up! Badgers are short legged with long claws and can weigh up to 20 pounds. They are in the same family (Mustelidae) as weasels and skunks. These carnivores use their claws to dig up all kinds of tasty meals from honeypot ants to ground squirrels. Keep up to date with our Critter Cam by following us on Facebook!