

Asombro Insights

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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2025 and 2026 Highlights from Asombro Staff

2025 was a busy year, and we have even more exciting science education in store for 2026. Here are a few highlights from the Asombro staff.

In June 2025, Asombro hosted an Agrivoltaics workshop for middle school teachers. After months of developing, tweaking, and piloting our three new lessons, it was fantastic to see teachers excited to use new content in their classrooms. *-LuAnn*



I'm looking forward to Art in the Park on April 11 (see page 2). Our murals and art installations are already inspired by the Chihuahuan Desert, and I can't wait to see the new and creative ways the desert continues to spark our imagination. *-Tara*

Our staff very much enjoyed developing four new wildlife conservation lessons for 3rd - 5th grade. In order to address the engineering standards that teachers must cover, we highlighted some of our favorite species of greatest conservation need in New Mexico. *-Natalie*

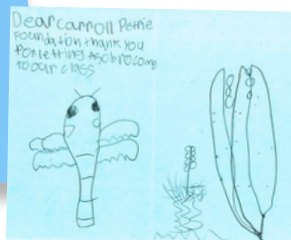


The new amphitheater at our Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park will be great for school field trips and will also serve as a general gathering area for the public and our larger events. *-William*

As a team, we created a new kindergarten lesson this year focused on how animals change their environment to meet their needs. "Who Made This?" introduces students to millipedes, termites, kangaroo rats and more. It was fun to see the kids' excitement as they opened a model burrow to discover a Box Turtle. *-Bonnie*



In 2026, I'm looking forward to growing relationships with schools outside of Las Cruces with a grant from the Carroll Petrie Foundation. I'm excited that 3rd-graders who don't usually receive science and nature by experiencing Asombro's lessons about the yucca and yucca moth life cycle. *-Gabriela*



Despite 2025 being a very tough year for nonprofits, Asombro showed great resilience and provided quality education for **19,226 students and 1,925 adults**. I'm so proud of our team! *-Steph*

Welcome to Asombro!

Meet Asombro's newest team member: Science Educator **TARA RUSSELL**

My name is Tara, and I am excited to be the newest member of the Asombro team. I graduated from New Mexico State University with a degree in Elementary Education and endorsements in 6-8 Science and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

I began my teaching career at the start of the pandemic as a preschool teacher, where I continued building my confidence in the classroom. I became a teacher because I believe the greatest gift you can give someone is knowledge and skills.

Science has always fascinated me, and as I grew older, my love for New Mexico nature deepened. Passion is contagious, and I wanted to pass it on. After a year, I felt ready to take on my own classroom and was hired by Las Cruces Public Schools at Vista Middle School. I started as a language arts teacher and, after a year, transitioned into teaching my true passions - science and agriculture. During my time there, I also coached boys' and girls' soccer and served as an FFA advisor.

As my teaching career progressed, I decided to explore my growing interest in conservation. That path led me to Arizona, where I worked as a State Park Ranger at Roper Lake, further strengthening my love and appreciation for the outdoors and wildlife. Family changes eventually brought me back home, and I became an aunt to my first nephew. Whether in the classroom or in the field, I've always been drawn to exploring nature - hiking, camping, identifying plants and animals, or diving into niche topics simply to learn more about the world around me.

While teaching, I had the opportunity to have Asombro visit my classroom and present hands-on lessons that truly captivated my students. When I saw there was an opening on the team, I was



thrilled to apply. This role brings together all my interests - New Mexico, education, science, conservation, and wildlife.

In my work with Asombro, I hope to inspire as many young scientists as possible and to share a love and respect for our ecosystems and wildlife so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

ART IN THE PARK Saturday, April 11

Come celebrate art and nature with Asombro at Art in the Park, a free event at the Nature Park.

Hands-on, family-friendly activities and demonstrations will showcase watercolor painting, fiber arts, and murals, all inspired by the desert.

Stations and demonstrations will run continuously from 9 AM - 11 AM. At 10:00, we'll have an official ribbon cutting for the new 75-seat amphitheater as well as the surrounding permanent art installations.



Open House & Volunteer Celebration

More than 30 people helped us get 2026 off to a great start at Asombro by attending the Open House and Volunteer Celebration on Monday, January 19, 2026.

Participants chatted with staff and Board members, browsed displays of some of Asombro's new lessons and Nature Park facilities, and helped elect the officers of the Board of Directors for 2026.

Staff members most enjoyed celebrating the volunteers who collectively donated more than 1,000 hours in 2025!



Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service *Christine Medina*

Asombro has been visiting Hermosa Heights Elementary for years and was a frequent visitor in Christine Medina's 2nd grade classes. We loved going to Christine's class as she made us feel right at home, and her students were fantastic.

After retiring from teaching, Christine started volunteering at Asombro and began helping with our Desert Stories modules. She wouldn't help just one day, but two or three days, visiting the same classes several times. If you were teaching with Christine, there were always students that had her as their 2nd grade teacher.



Christine also helps with events and attends volunteer gatherings, where her attention to detail can't be beat. Thank you for being so WONDER-ful, Christine! We couldn't do what we do without you!

PAINTING FUNDRAISER RAISES SKILLS, FUN, AND FUNDS

On January 24, local artist Kay Gross donated her time and talents to host a step-by-step watercolor lesson to raise funds for Asombro.

Ten lucky participants increased their watercolor skills and created beautiful Great Horned Owl paintings. Thanks to Kay's expert instructions, even beginners went home with gorgeous paintings.

Asombro is so grateful to Kay for hosting such a great fundraiser!



THANK YOU! We are grateful to our generous donors from October 2025 through mid-January 2026.

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Volunteer with Asombro in 2026

Are you looking for a way to give back in 2026? Asombro needs you! We have many volunteer opportunities to suit diverse preferences and schedules. For example,

- Attend volunteer gatherings on the second Tuesday of most months to do behind-the-scenes work to prepare for Asombro education programs.
- Assist Asombro educators in local classrooms and schoolyards; we're teaching almost every school day!
- Help keep the Nature Park looking great with work days most Wednesday mornings.

Get more details and discuss all the options by contacting LuAnn Kilday at **575-524-3334** or luann@asombro.org.



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Have you considered putting Asombro in your estate plan? Please contact Steph Bestelmeyer (575-524-3334) if you are interested in learning more.

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