Asombro Insights

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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School and District Partnerships

"Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver and the other, gold."

This old Girl Scout song lyric is also a great description of Asombro's relationships with school districts and schools in the 2026/2027 school year.

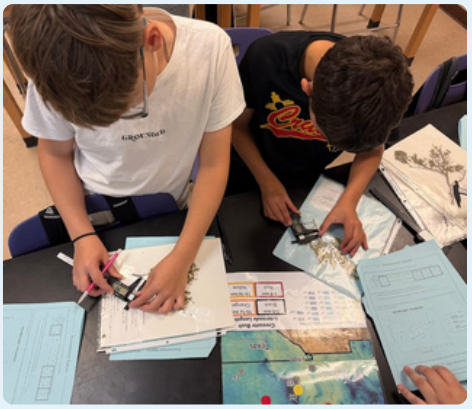
We're delighted to continue partnering with "old friends," including:

- All middle schools in **Las Cruces Public Schools** - This is Asombro's 13th year providing one or two hands-on science lessons for the more than 5,000 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the district.
- **Columbia Elementary School** - Each kindergarten through 5th grade student at Columbia receives two to four one-hour science lessons with Asombro. This is the 9th year of this partnership.
- **Hermosa Heights Elementary School** - After the Assistant Principal at Columbia became principal at Hermosa Heights in 2021, she asked Asombro to set up a similar partnership with her new school. We've worked with every student at the school since then.

Asombro is also making "new friends" this year to expand our science education programming. New partnerships include:

- **University Hills Elementary School** - Every student is participating in one to four lessons with Asombro this school year.
- **Gadsden Independent School District** - We just signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide Asombro's award-winning lessons throughout the district, focusing especially on 5th and 8th grade students.
- **Raices del Saber Xinachtli Community School** - Starting in February, we're partnering with this school to provide training and resources to help teachers engage in outdoor learning with their students.

We're incredibly grateful to these schools and districts for trusting Asombro to bring the wonder of science to their students. We look forward to another great school year!



Left: 7th graders in every Las Cruces middle school work with Asombro to test hypotheses about genetic and environmental influences on creosote bush size in three deserts.



Columbia Elementary School 4th graders use a model to investigate wind erosion in areas covered by grasses and shrubs in Asombro's "Let it Blow" lesson.

Three New Board Members Ready to Help Asombro Thrive

Asombro was fortunate to receive three fantastic new applicants for the Board of Directors. All three have been appointed as interim Board members, with full powers and responsibilities of other Board members until they can offically be voted in by Asombro members in January. Here's a bit about them.



Lisa Amantche

Lisa has lived in Las Cruces for 2.5 years. She is a Project Manager with Capital One and has vast experience in risk management and project management. Lisa served as a volunteer for the Seattle Aquarium for 15 years, and she has become a Master Herpetologist since moving to Las Cruces.

Jill Blocher

Jill taught 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade students in Indiana and Oklahoma for 27 years. She graduated from the Indiana Master Naturalist class and volunteered at the Wellfield Botanical Gardens in Indiana for many years. Jill has continued her volunteer work here in Las Cruces with the Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum and Cruces Creatives.





Regina Li-Armijo

Regina has a background in both organizational management and environmental stewardship. She worked in various roles for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority for 29 years, including as Director of Finance and Administration. Regina has volunteered with Asombro at monthly volunteer gatherings and assisted staff in classroom programs.

Celebrating NIGHTLIFE OF THE DESERT *at the* CHIHUAHUAN DESERT NATURE PARK



Owls and bats and coyotes - oh my! Asombro's **Nightlife of the Desert** event on October 16 at the Nature Park helped visitors celebrate the often unseen animals that appear at night.

Visitors met a live great horned owl, vulture, and red-tail hawk and learned about these fascinating creatures from the New Mexico Raptor Foundation.

They also viewed the moon through a telescope, learned from Dark Skies New Mexico volunteers, met bat expert Meredith Dalton from the BLM, saw wildlife skins and skulls with NMSU's Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology, made bat masks, collected trading cards for the Endless Forms biology-based strategy card game, and enjoyed snacks and drinks donated by Natural Grocers.



Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers and partners for helping us celebrate Nighlife of the Desert.



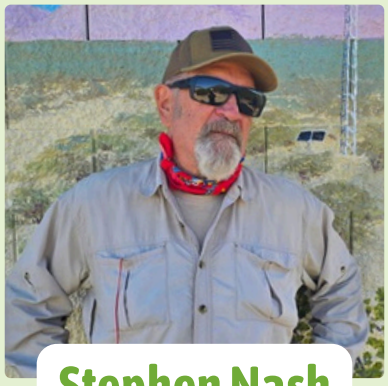




Photos by Brad Cooper and Natalie Wells.

WONDER AWARD

for Volunteer Service



Stephen Nash

Stephen Nash started volunteering at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park in February. Since then, he has already donated 94 hours, faithfully helping William almost every Wednesday.

When the Park received nearly 7 inches of rain in September, Stephen helped maintain the roads as well as the trails.

Stephen has a great admiration for our desert, taking quality photos of our wildlife and sharing many of his observations through his personal social media about the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

Thank you, Stephen, for spreading the word about Asombro and the Nature Park and your many hours making our park look WONDERful!

Emma Varela



Meet Emma Varela, Asombro's undergraduate intern for the Fall 2026 semester. Emma will earn her Bachelor's degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation Ecology from New Mexico State University this December. After graduation, she plans to continue her education at NMSU and pursue a Master's degree starting in January.

Since she was a kid, Emma has always had a deep passion and love for nature and the outdoors. Growing up in Albuquerque, she took any chance she could get to go camping or stay with her grandparents in their nature-surrounded house in Pecos, New Mexico. Over time, as this passion grew, Emma decided that she needed to share this passion with others, so teaching became that tool for her.

Throughout college, Emma sought outreach opportunities to share her love for wildlife and the natural world. While interning with the USDA Forest Service in Ruidoso, she helped create the first "Smokey's Classroom," where K-12 students could learn about navigation, animal tracks and scat, and pollination.

Working for Asombro as an intern is Emma's next step in expanding her teaching experience, and she is excited to work with young people and teach about the wonders of the natural world with fun hands-on activities and lessons.

MORE SHADE AT THE NATURE PARK

If you've been to Asombro's Nature Park lately, you may have noticed our newest addition: a large, cantilevered shade structure over the new amphitheater. The project was completed on October 15.



We're so grateful to the NM Outdoor Recreation Division's Trails+ program and the American Academy of Dermatology Association for grants to support this much-needed new park feature.

THANK YOU! *We are grateful to our generous donors from July-September 2026*

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Asombro means WONDER

To **donate online**, scan the QR code:

Giving Tuesday on December 1st



Mark your calendars now for Giving Tuesday, a worldwide day of collective generosity to make the world a better place.

This year, Asombro's goal is to raise $10,000 from Giving Tuesday through the end of the year to support our science education programs.

One of the most frequent comments we get from teachers in their post-lesson evaluations is, "**Please come more often!**" Your support can help us fulfill those requests!

GIVING TUESDAY

Use the form or QR code to the right, or click DONATE on the Asombro website. **Thank you!**

YES! I want to support the Asombro Institute for Science Education!

- ☐ **Quartz** *($15+)*
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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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