

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 29, Issue 3 (July - September 2020)

Celebrating 30 Years of Wonder

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

Thirty years ago, on August 27, 1990, our articles of incorporation were submitted, officially launching the organization. This was the same year that the Berlin Wall fell, the Hubble telescope was put into orbit, and a popular movie at the theater was Home Alone. It was a long time ago!

The dream for an organization and nature park celebrating the Chihuahuan Desert was actually

borne 12 years earlier. Ron Hudson enlisted a group of community members to join him in the hard work of creating a nonprofit organization. Ron was joined by

Denise Barela, Beverly Denney, Paul Hyder, Paula Johnson, Jaime Lucero, Mike Morrison, Dia Taylor, and many more.

Now, thirty years later, the current Board and staff members you see listed at the left feel privileged to take our own place in the history of this organization we love.

In 1990, the organization needed a site. After much work and a few dead ends, the current Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park site was selected, and we officially got an easement on the land in 1998. Sometimes we forget all the planning, sweat, and work that went into the network of trails, 150-seat amphitheater, picnic areas, rainwater harvesting system, art installations, and other amenities at the Park. The majority of this work has been spearheaded by Justin Van Zee, a longtime volunteer and now President of our Board of Directors.

The K-12 education efforts of the organization got a big boost in 1998 when our organization partnered with the USDA-ARS Jornada Experimental Range to lead the new education efforts for the Jornada Long-Term Ecological Research Program. Since then, Asombro staff have provided hands-on education for more than **315,000 students!**

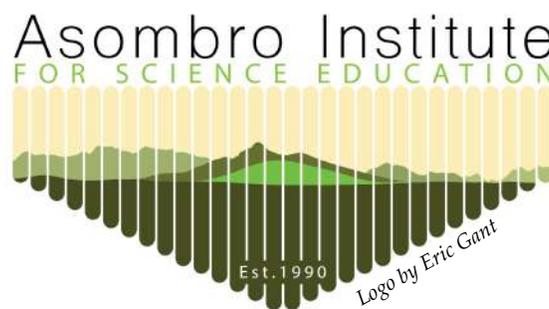
Asombro leaders have always had big dreams and a long-term mindset. This

means that we think not just about the lesson we will deliver to a student today but about how that lesson will connect with lessons we teach that same student as s/he moves through the K-12 system. I have been delighted many

times by former students who can still tell me vivid anecdotes (more than 10 years later!) about something they learned to appreciate about science and the desert from me or other staff members.

This long-term thinking has allowed our organization to make it through some difficult times as well - from vandalism at the Nature Park to school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have no doubt it will also be the key to our future success.

In 30 more years (2050!), what will the Executive Director be celebrating for our organization? I can't predict the details, but I suspect Asombro and our dedicated Board, staff, volunteers, and donors will still be instilling a sense of wonder about the desert and science for the next generation of children in our community. Here's to another 30 wonder-filled years!



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Make a Difference Through the Asombro Booster Club

Do you support Asombro's mission? Why not give us a helpful boost by joining the Asombro Booster Club, a.k.a. ABC? ABC is our monthly giving program, and monthly donations are very important for us as a nonprofit. We're able to more effectively plan for our work with local youth when we have regular donations.

Join this important group of supporters, including ABC member Jean Davis. Jean supports our work with students because "they see themselves as scientists! The hands-on, locally relevant science education Asombro provides is key to developing science literacy and a love of learning." She decided to join ABC because she "wanted to give more to Asombro than an annual membership. So by giving monthly, the program can depend on my support and plan for the future."

A, B, C ... easy as 1, 2, 3. Joining ABC is easy! Visit our giving website, and choose "monthly" for the donation frequency:

asombro.networkforgood.com



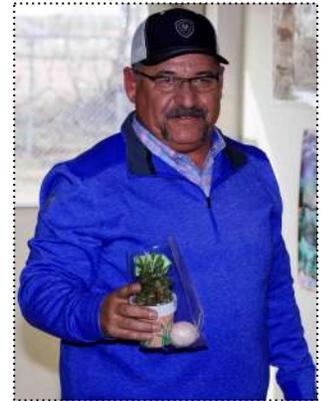
Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service: Gil Tellez

By Kelly Steinberg

We are thrilled to award the Wonder Award to board member Gil Tellez this quarter. Gil has always been dedicated to Asombro's mission of getting kids learning and moving outside. Over the years, he has worked hard to amplify Asombro's message and reach by hosting fundraiser dinners at his home and enlisting friends and family to support the organization.

We are so grateful to have Gil's perspective at board meetings, where his business sense, kindness, and respect for the entire Asombro team make him a pleasure to work with. He is always offering to help out and check up on things. At least once a week, Gil can be found out at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park to open and close the gates and look around. Say hello if you see him out there.

We can't thank Gil enough for his support! We think he's absolutely WONDER-ful!



Gil at the Annual Meeting in January 2020

Engaging Students from a Distance

School is going to look different in the fall. How can teachers and Asombro staff make sure that we're still engaging students in hands-on science when we can't be in the classroom or at the Nature Park with them?

Asombro staff has been working hard to answer this question. On July 22, we shared what we've learned so far with more than 40 teachers from the Las Cruces Public Schools in a virtual professional development workshop.

We shared tools we've developed to make sure all Asombro lessons we deliver adhere to best practices for remote learning, align to all dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards, and put diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of lesson development and delivery.

One teacher said that the workshop gave her hope that she can still make science fun, hands-on, and accessible in a remote learning format. Another wrote:

"Nicely done workshop! It was very well run, well thought out, and ran very smoothly!"

Education Program Highlight

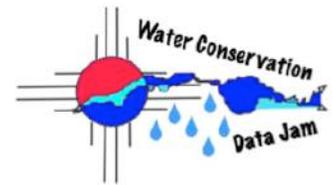
Online Water Conservation Data Jam

By Emilia Linley

The Water Conservation Data Jam challenges students to creatively communicate scientific data to nonscientists. Although it is similar to our traditional Data Jam program, it goes one step further by requiring students **to turn knowledge into action** in the form of an Action Project to conserve water. We are eagerly looking forward to offering this Environmental Protection Agency-funded program to New Mexico 8th – 12th grade students in the upcoming school year.

In the spring, we were scheduled to pilot test the five-part, in-class module with students when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. In response, we created a modified, seven-part, remote-learning module. Now we have a flexible program in which students can either participate in the program online, with a supporting teacher, or through an in-class module.

In either format, students are challenged to make sense of regionally-relevant datasets about water. They then showcase the data through creative projects (e.g., poems, physical models, games) that highlight the need for water conservation and come up with actions, such as a campaign, model, or public service announcement, that they could enact to become stewards of our water resources. Students will collaborate with classmates to engage with and communicate about water data, regardless of school setting, in the 2020-2021 school year.



30 for Asombro: Virtual Move-a-thon Challenge for Supporters of All Ages

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

What's your favorite way of moving? Dancing? Yoga? Running? Why not do it for Asombro during the month of August? Celebrate our 30th anniversary with us by participating in our 30 for Asombro virtual move-a-thon challenge!

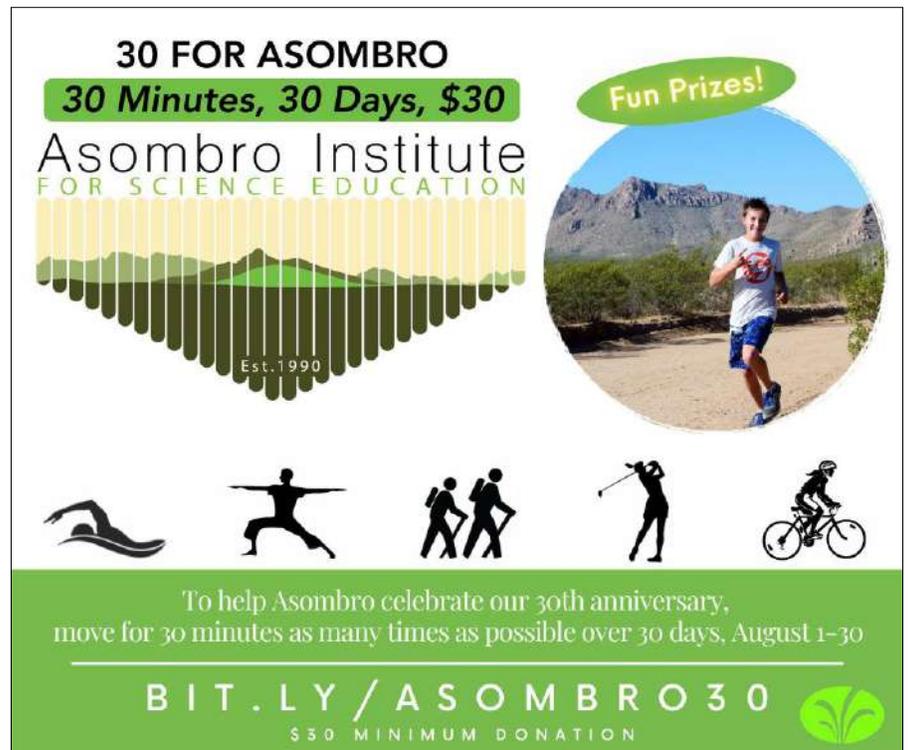
Move for 30 minutes as many times as possible over 30 days, August 1 - 30. You can play golf, go on a hike, take a walk in your neighborhood, do an exercise class at home, ride a bike, or do anything else you enjoy to get moving. It all counts!

We request a minimum donation of \$30 to participate in 30 for Asombro, but why not make your donation a multiple \$30, such as \$60, \$90, or \$120 to support our work with local youth?

All participants will receive a beautiful 30th anniversary sticker and will be entered in frequent raffles for terrific prizes throughout the challenge. Raffle prizes include Asombro t-shirts, Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park photo magnets and patches, notecards featuring desert wildlife painted by a local artist, handcrafted jewelry, and more! We will also award prizes for the most minutes logged for the top three adult and youth participants and for some fun categories, such as most unusual activity. These prizes will include a tent, binoculars, a game camera, a national parks book, a hydration backpack, and an arthropod catching kit.

Participate in one of two ways. Sign up and track your movement online, or use a paper log to track your movement. Visit bit.ly/asombro30 for the online option, or request a paper log by emailing s.haan-amato@asombro.org.

Let's get moving for science education!



The graphic features a green and white color scheme. At the top, it says "30 FOR ASOMBRO" in bold black letters, followed by "30 Minutes, 30 Days, \$30" in white text on a green background. Below this is the "Asombro Institute FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION" logo, which includes a stylized mountain range and the text "Est. 1990". To the right, a circular photo shows a young boy running on a dirt path with mountains in the background, with a green speech bubble above it saying "Fun Prizes!". Below the photo are silhouettes of various activities: swimming, yoga, walking, golfing, and cycling. At the bottom, a green banner contains the text: "To help Asombro celebrate our 30th anniversary, move for 30 minutes as many times as possible over 30 days, August 1-30" and the URL "BIT.LY/ASOMBRO30" with a small green plant icon to the right. Below the URL, it says "\$30 MINIMUM DONATION".

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors from the second quarter of 2020.



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In early June, Team Asombro delivered two online teacher workshop sessions at the 2020 NM Public Education Department STEM Symposium. In the first session, we shared Asombro's model for developing high-quality remote learning programs. In the second session, we engaged educators in a Data Jam experience and then gave them the tools to conduct Data Jams with their own students. We had the honor of having the highest educator-rated session of the symposium!

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

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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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