

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 20, Issue 1 (Jan. - March 2011)

Calendar of Events

Talks, field trips, and outside volunteer opportunities are available this month. Check out the calendar to see how you can get involved.

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Award for Asombro

Asombro Director Stephanie Bestelmeyer received the Innovator of the Year Award from the Society of Range Management, New Mexico Section.

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Your Help Needed

We're looking for volunteers to help with our communication plan for 2011. Learn small and large ways you can help.

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Volunteer Spotlight

Read about Lynn Mulholland, an Asombro volunteer extraordinaire. You'll be inspired by Lynn's volunteer service and all she does for the Asombro Institute.

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Nature Park Events

The 2011 calendar has been set, and there are lots of great events to enjoy at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Get dates and times and mark your calendars today!

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Nature Park Directions

Enjoy the cool, sunny winter days with a walk at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Check **page 6** for directions and hours.



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- Rink Somerday - Program Coordinator
- Paul Harper - Site Coordinator

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2010 - Learning, Teaching and Serving

We've all heard that a picture is worth a thousand words. If that's true, here is the equivalent of six-thousand words summarizing an amazingly successful 2010 at the Asombro Institute for Science Education.



13,557 students participated in Asombro Institute hands-on science programs in 2010. They experienced the wonder of science in classrooms, schoolyards, and at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.



Left: Program Coordinator Rink Somerday surprises volunteer Donna Yargosz with the announcement of her national Volunteer of the Year award.



Right: Volunteers Lynn Mulholland and Susan Vantress are two of the 100 volunteers who collectively donated 1,300 hours in 2010.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Seven hours and 38 minutes. The average American work day? No. My finishing time at the Las Cruces Half Marathon? Thankfully, no!

According to a recent report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, this is the amount of time per day that the average American child spends inside with electronic media exposure. That's 53 hours per week!

The health care community has been alarmed by these recent findings because of the many studies linking increased screen time with childhood obesity, diabetes, and other serious diseases.

At the Asombro Institute, we know we can play a major part in turning this trend around. The No Child Left Inside movement has concentrated on many ways that education organizations can get kids away from screens and out into nature. Richard Louv's book Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder and subsequent research shows the benefits of these simple actions.

The Asombro Institute began to focus some of our time on this issue in 2010, and we will expand these actions in 2011. We gave teacher workshops in mid January with other groups interested in teaching about health and nutrition. We focused on how easy and fun it can be to use the schoolyard to get kids outside, active, and learning about their surroundings. We'll offer more nature walks at the Park and join forces with more than 20 other organizations in Doña Ana County and Otero County interested in promoting family-friendly outdoor activities.

We'll highlight more of these activities in future newsletters. In the meantime, get outside with your kids, grandkids, and friends to enjoy our beautiful desert. Even 30 minutes outside a day can make a huge difference!

Stephanie Bestelmeyer
Dr. Stephanie Bestelmeyer

Calendar of Events

February 5 - Field Trip to Corralitos Road with Mesilla Valley Audubon. Meet at 7:30 at the NE corner of Branigan Library, 200 E. Picacho Ave. For more information, contact Mark (575-635-8711) or Wayne (575-528-8696).

February 9 - Talk by Curtis Monger on "Native Plants on the Move: How New Mexico's Grasslands, Shrublands, and Forests Expand and Contract in Response to Climate Change" for Native Plant Society of New Mexico - Las Cruces Chapter. 7 PM, Conference Room of the Social Center at the Good Samaritan Village (3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces).

February 12 - River Clean-Up with Southwest Environmental Center. Meet at 10 AM at southeast corner of Calle del Norte (Mesilla) Bridge. Bring gloves and water bottle. Call SWEC for more information and to sign up (522-5552).

February 12 - Field trip to Alamo Mt./ Otero Mesa to see plants and petroglyphs. Led by Lori Kae Schwab for the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, Las Cruces Chapter. Meet at east end of Rio Grande Bank parking lot on University and Telshor at 8:00 AM.

February 21 - Trail work day at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. Join other Asombro volunteers to help keep the trails looking great. 8:30 AM.



March 9 - Talk by Donovan Bailey on "Following the Flowers from Spring to Fall: A Botanical Transect across Northern California" for the Native Plant Society of New Mexico - Las Cruces Chapter. 7 PM, Conference Room of the Social Center at the Good Samaritan Village (3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces).

Celebrate the Season

There are several upcoming "holidays" that you may not know about. Celebrate these holidays and the whole season in fun and interesting ways.

February

National Bird Feeding Month - Put up some feeders for the year-round residents and migrating birds that might be making their way back to our area.

National Green Week (7th-11th) - During the 2010 celebration, sponsored by the Green Education Foundation (www.greeneducationfoundation.org), more than 2 million children participated in sustainability education programs and activities. Check the website for ideas to try at home.

March

National Kite Month - We can't beat the typical March winds in the desert, so why not take advantage of them by flying a kite?

Sing with a Child Month - And while you are flying your kite, don't forget to burst out in song with a child!

Innovator of the Year

On January 7, Executive Director Stephanie Bestelmeyer was awarded the Innovator of the Year Award from the New Mexico Section of the Society for Range Management. Stephanie was honored for her leadership in developing hands-on programs that educate more than 13,000 children and thousands of adults each year about Chihuahuan desert rangelands. Congratulations to the entire Asombro Institute for Science Education for this award!





Education Programs

In 2010, YOUR donations helped us provide education programs for 13,557 K-12 students, 638 teachers, and 1,738 other adults. Here are the programs we ran in the last quarter of 2010. Thanks for supporting these programs!

- Oct 6 Las Cruces Catholic School - arthropod identification
- Oct 6 Las Cruces Catholic School - pitfall traps
- Oct 8 EEANM annual conference
- Oct 11 Las Cruces Newcomers - information about Get Batty
- Oct 12 Tombaugh Elem. - living organisms
- Oct 12 Monte Vista Elem. - scientific method and scavenger hunt
- Oct 13 Tombaugh Elem. - living organisms
- Oct 14 Hillrise Elem. - field trip
- Oct 15 Las Cruces Catholic School - field trip
- Oct 18 Camino Real MS - vegetation measurements
- Oct 19 Camino Real MS - vegetation measurements
- Oct 20 Las Cruces Catholic School - animal adaptations
- Oct 20 Las Cruces Catholic School - pitfall traps
- Oct 20 Las Cruces Catholic School - scientific method
- Oct 21 Sonoma Elem. - field trip
- Oct 21 Sunrise Optimist Club - Asombro Institute general information
- Oct 26 Tech20 - water festival
- Oct 27 Tech20 - water festival
- Oct 27 Doña Ana Elem. - desert plants
- Oct 28 Tech20 - water festival
- Oct 28 Central Elem. - desert plants
- Oct 28 MacArthur Elem. - weather
- Oct 29 Get Batty public program
- Nov 2 Schoolyard Desert Discovery teacher workshop
- Nov 5 Sonoma Elem. - field trip

- Nov 6-7 Renaissance Faire - sea shell necklace and sand discovery
- Nov 9 Riverside Elem. - career day
- Nov 11 Hermosa Heights - I'm a scientist, too
- Nov 15 Camino Real MS - soil components & water infiltration
- Nov 16 Camino Real MS - soil components & water infiltration
- Nov 16 Hillrise - Elem. - I'm a scientist, too
- Nov 17 Doña Ana Elem. - animal adaptations
- Nov 18 MacArthur Elem. - classification
- Nov 18 Highland Elem. - science night
- Nov 18 Central Elem. - animal adaptations
- Nov 19 Desert Hills Elem. - weather
- Nov 19 Central Elem. - field trip
- Nov 22 East Picacho Elem. - classification
- Nov 23 Alameda Elem. - desert plants
- Nov 30 Monte Vista Elem. - arthropod identification
- Dec 1 Region 19 El Paso School Districts - teacher expo
- Dec 2 Las Cruces Catholic School- field trip
- Dec 2 Mesilla Valley Oral History Club - Asombro Institute
- Dec 3 Desert Hills Elem. - field trip
- Dec 6 East Picacho Elem. - animal adaptations
- Dec 6 East Picacho Elem. - arthropod identification
- Dec 7 Hillrise Elem. - desert plants
- Dec 8 Columbia Elem. - animal adaptations
- Dec 8 Monte Vista Elem. - weather
- Dec 9 Hermosa Heights Elem. - desert plants
- Dec 9 Central Elem. - arthropod identification
- Dec 10 Mayfield High School - science fair
- Dec 13 Camino Real MS - phenology
- Dec 14 Camino Real MS - phenology
- Dec 15 Doña Ana Elem. - arthropod identification
- Dec 23 Winter Nature Walk

Your Help is Needed

We need your help getting information out about the Asombro Institute for Science Education. Whether you are a Facebook fanatic, read the Las Cruces Sun-News daily, or frequent one of many coffee shops in the region, we have a task for you. If you are willing to help be part of the Asombro 2011 communication plan in either a small or large way, please contact Stephanie (stephanie@asombro.org or 575-524-3334).

"I have had numerous hours in science professional development. I did a lot with NASA, a workshop about winter in Lake Placid, the original Fast Plant curriculum at the University of Wisconsin, etc. I just wanted to let you...know that you rank at the top of all the hours I have accumulated. You two ladies are a class act all the way. Thank you for the opportunities you provided for me to attend the workshop."

Asombro teacher workshop participant

November 2010

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park



Volunteer spotlight

Lynn Mulholland arrived in Las Cruces on New Year's Eve in 1974 with her husband, who was seeking an advanced degree from NMSU. Thirty years later, Lynn is an incredible asset to our community and is one of our valued Asombro volunteers.



Lynn taught at Alameda Junior High for ten years before it was closed down and that faculty opened Sierra Middle School. Three years later, she helped open Vista Middle School, which is where she retired.

Lynn and her husband enjoy traveling and try to fit in as much international travel as possible. It is always exciting to hear about their adventures. Their six grandchildren are their delight and keep them busy. Lynn is also a self-proclaimed Sudoku addict.

She discovered the Asombro Institute while looking for a volunteer opportunity in conservation. She

stumbled upon us, and it has evolved into a perfect fit. Lynn helps with classroom programs, field trips, and many of our monthly programs at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

When asked what keeps her volunteering for the Asombro Institute when there are so many other choices, she replied, "I can't sing high enough praises for Asombro and its staff. It is one of the most efficiently run NPOs in town. The staff is so knowledgeable with just the right amount of humor and fun to keep the children learning and experiencing the world around them. I learn something new every time I go on a field trip or help in the classroom."

Lynn also volunteers with SNAP and is a member of AAUW and the GFWC Progress Club. We are very glad she continues to share her time with us.

2011 Programs at the Nature Park

Mark your calendars now for an exciting line-up of activities with the Asombro Institute for Science Education. A couple more programs are in the planning phases, but the following events are set. Hope to see you all there!

February 18 - Afternoon Nature Stroll at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (1:30 PM)

April 30 - Alamogordo Earth Day Festival. Visit the Asombro Institute's booth for hands-on science.

June 3 - Sunset Walk at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (7 PM)

August 20 - Butterfly Flutterby at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (9 AM)

September 17 - Kids Desert Passport event at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (9 AM)

October 15 - Desert Ramble at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (9 AM)

December 21 - Winter Nature Walk at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (9 AM)

Become a Monthly Donor

Monthly donors are incredibly valuable to the Asombro Institute! Please consider joining our monthly donor club. Click on the "Donate Now" button on the Asombro website (www.asombro.org) and choose to give monthly. You can pay through credit card, PayPal, or your bank account. Giving can be easy, and please know that your money will be put to good use. Thank you!



Asombro Institute for Science Education
P.O. Box 891, Las Cruces, NM 88004-0891

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:

- | | |
|--|--|
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Many Thanks

Our sincere thanks go to the individuals and businesses that made contributions in the fourth quarter of 2010 (October - December).

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In Memory

Larry Ludwig in memory of Larry DeLaO

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Tom Packard
Mark Sechrist
John Smith
Justin Van Zee
Susan Vantress
Mike Weiss
Donna Yargosz

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Open Tuesday - Saturday, 7:00 AM - 5:00 PM

- 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 2 miles, the road is unpaved.
- Turn left at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park sign.
- Follow the entrance road to the parking area and trailhead.

