

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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2012 Highlights

Every year brings changes to the Asombro Institute for Science Education. Yet 2012 seemed to bring more changes than ever before. Here's a look at a few of the staff members' highlights from 2012.

Executive Director Stephanie Bestelmeyer

"The addition of Stephanie Haan-Amato and Anna Keener to our staff and Gil Tellez to our Board of Directors was wonderful! They have all contributed so much already."

Program Coordinator Rink Somerday

"I was leaving an elementary school when a father held the door for me. He said with a grin, 'Oh, you're the one who inspires my kids to be scientists. Keep up the good work.' We know that students enjoy our programs, but it is with great pride that we accept credit for having our teaching become part of their lives."

Site Coordinator Paul Harper

"Completing the shrub removal experiment installation at the Nature Park was exciting. I can't wait to start getting kids out there to collect data and learn about habitat restoration."

Science Education Specialist Stephanie Haan-Amato

"We had a very successful first semester of Stepping Out for Science Inquiry with 7th grade students at six middle schools. Students learned hands-on about nutrient cycling, soil erosion, phenology, and how humans change the landscape. Our favorite greeting was 'Yay, the Asombro

people are back!' Fortunately, we heard those words often."

Science Education Specialist Anna Keener

"I thought a highlight of 2012 was the Nightlife of the Desert event. People were captivated by watching Doug and Laura Burkett with the snakes and Graeme and Jenny Davis with the scorpions and other arthropods captured in light traps."



Asombro staff provided science education programs for 17,138 students in 2012. Above, a 5th grader in Asombro's "Science Interns Project" shares her new knowledge with a younger student at her school.



Biologist Doug Burkett delights visitors to Asombro's Nightlife of the Desert event with close views and information on some of the desert's interesting reptiles.

Science Interns - “Near-peer” teaching at its best

On December 6, the halls and classrooms at Monte Vista Elementary School were full of hands-on activities about desert plants, arthropods, mammals, weather, and desert safety. Usually, this means that the Asombro Institute for Science Education staff members are visiting for a classroom or schoolyard science program. However, on this day, it was the 5th graders who were doing all the teaching.

Throughout the fall semester, these 5th graders as well as the 5th graders at J. Paul



5th graders get ready for a day of teaching young students about the desert.

Taylor Academy had become experts on the desert. With the guidance of Asombro staff and their teachers, they conducted full research studies on schoolyard biodiversity and the Chihuahuan Desert. Then they created hands-on activity stations to teach these topics to younger students at their school.

“We’re sold on near-peer teaching models like this one,” said Asombro Executive Director Stephanie Bestelmeyer. “Look around and you can see the benefits. The older students learn leadership and presentation skills while the younger students get terrific role models just a few years older than themselves.”

Key to the project’s success is the involvement of the 5th grade teachers. They integrated the project with language arts and math, even having students create books showcasing their new knowledge.

The pilot year of the Science Interns Project was funded by the New Mexico

Children’s Foundation (Santa Fe). Based on the early success of the project, Asombro will expand Science Interns to eight schools in the 2013/14 school year. Funding for the expanded program has already been provided by the Wolslager Foundation (San Angelo, Texas).



Science Interns become science experts throughout the semester and then share their knowledge with younger students. They gain science knowledge as well as presentation and leadership skills.

Education Programs

Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 773 hours of science programming for 17,138 students in 2012! Here are the 4th quarter programs.

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|-----------|---|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-Oct | White Sands Elem - field trip | 26-Oct | Sunrise - field trip | 15-Nov | Lynn MS - soil/wind/air |
| 2-Oct | Tombaugh - plants | 26-Oct | Natural History of the Gila Symposium - Ecological Literacy | 15-Nov | Sierra MS - field trip |
| 3-Oct | LC Catholic - plants | 27-Oct | Wild Rumpus at the Nature Park | 16-Nov | Sonoma - field trip |
| 3-Oct | LC Catholic - pitfall traps | 29-Oct | Valley View - field trip | 20-Nov | Vista MS - soil/wind/air |
| 3-Oct | LC Catholic - numbers and counting | 30-Oct | Monte Vista - pitfall traps | 27-Nov | Central - animal adaptations |
| 9-Oct | Monte Vista - plant/arthropod biodiversity | 31-Oct | Sierra MS - carbon cycle | 28-Nov | Sierra MS - soil/wind/air |
| 10-Oct | Water festival - animal adaptations | 1-Nov | J Paul Taylor Academy - soil | 30-Nov | J Paul Taylor Academy - field trip |
| 11-Oct | J Paul Taylor Academy - plant/arthropod biodiversity | 1-Nov | LC Catholic - soil/wind/air | 4-Dec | Central - arthropod identification |
| 11-Oct | J Paul Taylor Academy- carbon cycle | 2-Nov | J Paul Taylor Academy - owl pellets | 4-Dec | Vista MS - Wildlife CSI |
| 11-Oct | LC Catholic - carbon cycle | 2-Nov | Monte Vista - pitfall trap examination | 5-Dec | LC Catholic - arthropod ident. |
| 15-Oct | Doña Ana - plants | 3 & 4-Nov | Renaissance Faire - fossil dig | 5-Dec | LC Catholic - food web/biodiversity |
| 16-Oct | Central - plants | 7-Nov | LC Catholic - animal adaptations | 5-Dec | Sierra MS - landscape |
| 16-Oct | Vista MS - carbon cycle | 7-Nov | LC Catholic - See It Little/Big | 6-Dec | Vista MS - Wildlife CSI |
| 17-Oct | Booker T Washington - plants | 7-Nov | Sierra MS - soil/wind/air | 6-Dec | J Paul Taylor Academy - landscapes |
| 17-Oct | Sierra MS - carbon cycle | 8-Nov | Riverside Elementary - career day | 6-Dec | LC Catholic - landscapes |
| 18-Oct | J Paul Taylor Academy - pitfall traps | 8-Nov | Lynn MS - soil/wind/air | 10-Dec | Doña Ana - arthropod identification |
| 18-Oct | Lynn MS - carbon cycle | 8-Nov | J Paul Taylor Academy - Science Interns | 11-Dec | Vista MS - landscapes |
| 18-Oct | Alameda - weather | 8-Nov | Columbia - safety night | 11-Dec | Tombaugh - arthropod identification |
| 19-Oct | Central - field trip | 9-Nov | Monte Vista - Science Interns | 12-Dec | Sierra MS - landscapes |
| 19-Oct | Mesa MS - carbon cycle | 9-Nov | Mesa MS - soil/wind/air | 13-Dec | Lynn MS - landscapes |
| 20-Oct | TX State Parks - Sort Like a Scientist | 12-Nov | Doña Ana - animal adaptations | 14-Dec | Mesa MS - landscapes |
| 23-Oct | Vista MS - carbon cycle | 13-Nov | Vista MS - soil/wind/air | 14-Dec | Tombaugh - field trip |
| 24-Oct | Sierra MS - carbon cycle | 13-Nov | Tombaugh - animal adaptations | 15-Dec | Light Up the Desert luminaria event |
| 25-Oct | Sunrise - field trip | 14-Nov | Sierra MS - soil/wind/air | 18-Dec | Vista MS - landscapes |
| 25-Oct | Lynn MS - carbon cycle | 14-Nov | Booker T Washington - animal adaptations | 19-Dec | Sierra MS - landscapes |
| | | | | 19-Dec | Booker T Washington - arthropod id |
| | | | | 20-Dec | Lynn MS - landscapes |

Volunteers

Asombro has the hardest working, most dedicated, talented volunteers on the planet (yes, we are completely biased!). In 2012, more than 100 volunteers donated 2,447 hours total. That's the equivalent of more than an entire full time position! We are grateful to each and every one of our volunteers. You are the stars of Asombro! Here are the 24 incredible people who logged the most hours last year:



| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Donna Yargosz | Lynn Mulholland |
| John Bunn | Karen Gunther |
| Justin Van Zee | Kirsten Romig |
| David Hutchinson | Mary Beth Harper |
| Brad Cooper | Mark Sechrist |
| Tom Packard | Steph Preciado |
| Sally Tellez | Gene Gant |
| Gil Tellez | Jean Davis |
| Kathy Groves | Jim Greene |
| Ericha Courtright | Susan McDaniels |
| Hilary Dutcher | John Anderson |
| Susan Vantress | Thomas Bestelmeyer |

2013 events

There will be plenty of reasons to get out to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park in 2013. In addition to being open from 7am - 5pm Tuesdays through Saturdays, the Park will also serve as the venue for several exciting public programs. Check the Asombro website or future newsletters for more details about future events. Here's what to expect at the Nature Park:

January 21 - Annual membership meeting was held.

February 14 - Fall in Love with the Desert nature walk at 10:00 AM

March 23 - Egg Trek Family Education Event (time TBA)

May 11 - Desert Walk and Movie Night (time TBA)

July (date to be announced later) - Nightlife of the Desert

August 17 - Butterfly Flutterby from 9 AM - noon

September 14 - Geocache the Desert

November 9 - Desert Dash 5K race

December 14 - Luminarias Light Up the Desert

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous people who donated between **October and December 2012.**

Monthly Donors

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

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Hundreds of luminarias lit the paths at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park on December 15. Photo by Will Keener.



Stephanie Haan-Amato, Rink Somerday, Paul Harper, and Anna Keener show their excitement about Asombro's new vehicle and laptops made possible by a generous donor. Photo by Stephanie Bestelmeyer.

YES! I want to support the
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