

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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CONTACT US

Asombro Institute for Science
Education

PO Box 891
Las Cruces, NM 88004

575-524-3334 (voice)

575-646-2315 (fax)

information@asombro.org

www.asombro.org

4th and 5th Graders Get a “Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert”

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

This semester, 4th and 5th grade dual language students throughout the Las Cruces Public School District are participating in hands-on science activities created by Asombro educators for the new [Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert](#) curriculum.

More than 30 teachers spent January 5th at the Asombro office to gain familiarity with the seven new activities. Both the curriculum and workshop got rave reviews. On an anonymous evaluation, one teacher said, “I learned a lot and am excited to get started with my students. Thank you for thinking of bilingual students.”

All activities are based on the bilingual book [Glimpse of the Chihuahuan Desert](#) by retired Las Cruces teacher Pat Mihok. When school district administrators saw the book, they asked Asombro to develop a series of hands-on activities in English and Spanish to accompany the books. Asombro staff worked with volunteers Pat Mihok and Donna Yargosz to write the activities, each including a teacher’s guide, sample tables and graphs, student reproducible

pages in English and Spanish, and a glossary.

Asombro educators also created kits of equipment and consumable supplies that will travel to all participating elementary schools throughout the spring semester. The goal was to make it as easy as possible for teachers to implement these lessons with their students.

Activities guide students through hypothesis testing, engineering, and modeling to learn about desert plant and animal adaptations,

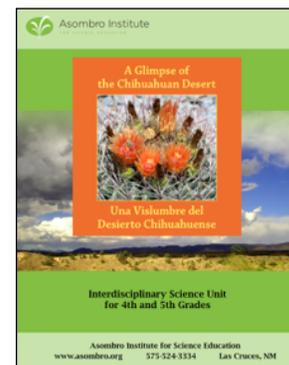
fossils, geology, desert playas, and the creation of rain shadow deserts. Each activity addresses multiple math and language arts standards from the Common Core State Standards as well as the new Next Generation Science Standards.

We know students will want to learn even more after getting this “glimpse” of the Chihuahuan Desert.



4th and 5th grade teachers learn about tadpole shrimp, clam shrimp, and other organisms that live in desert playas as part of the Playa Food Web activity.

Photo by Anna Keener.



Luminarias in the Desert

By Anna Keener

The December 12th "Luminarias in the Desert" event was brilliant fun with 115 visitors. People enjoyed a peaceful moonlit night in the middle of a hectic season. Many thanks to Tom Packard for leading visitors in singing Christmas carols by the fire. Visitors enjoyed hot chocolate and cider while walking the trails. Many noticed the wonderful stillness of the desert when it is dark and the luminarias are beautifully visible. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers Jean Davis, Donna Yargosz, John Kimtis, Susan Vantress, Thomas Bestelmeyer, Linda Keener and Will Keener for making this event possible.



Photos by Will Keener.

Volunteers Honored at Annual Meeting

By Paul Harper

When we prepare for the annual meeting and take a look back at the last year, we are always amazed at the number of students we work with and educate. There are several reasons that we are able to do so much with so little, and our volunteers are a big part of it.

Every year we recognize our amazing volunteers as part of our annual membership meeting. This year, we recognized the 21 volunteers who each donated more than 25 hours in 2014. They edited documents, prepared programs, did bookkeeping, worked at events, listened to us rant, and went into schools with us. They donated more than 2,000 hours and managed to do so with a smile. We thank you and hope you know that we cherish your help!



Board Vice President and volunteer, Mary Beth Harper, addresses members, volunteers, and staff at our 2015 annual meeting.

Education Programs

Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 871 hours of science for 17,884 students in 2014!

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 1-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth | 21-Oct J Paul Taylor Acad. - Weather vs. Climate | 13-Nov LC Catholic - Field Trip |
| 1-Oct LC Catholic - Rock It | 22-Oct Camino Real MS - Arthropod Diversity | 13-Nov Sierra MS - Soil Erosion |
| 1-Oct Zia MS - Desert Data Jam | 22-Oct Picacho MS - Carbon Cycle | 14-Nov Alameda Elem - career day |
| 1-Oct LC Catholic - plants | 22-Oct Sunrise Elem - Earth | 14-Nov Picacho MS - Soil Erosion |
| 2-Oct Lynn MS -Desert Data Jam | 22-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Water Cycle | 17-Nov North Valley Elem - Plant Adaptations |
| 2-Oct Sierra MS - Carbon Cycle | 23-Oct Sierra MS - Arthropod Diversity | 17-Nov Mayfield HS - Greenhouse Gases |
| 2-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Plant Adaptations | 23-Oct J Paul Taylor Acad. - Evaporation Expt. | 18-Nov Vista MS - Soil |
| 3-Oct Camino Real MS - field trip | 24-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Transpiration | 18-Nov East Picacho Elem - Life Cycles |
| 6-Oct Vista MS - Plant Diversity | 24-Oct Mayfield HS - field trip | 18-Nov Mayfield HS - Weather vs. Climate |
| 6-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Carbon Cycle | 27-Oct Lynn MS - Plant Diversity | 19-Nov J Paul Taylor Academy - Transpiration game |
| 6-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth | 27-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Data Nuggel | 19-Nov University Hills Elem - Water Cycle |
| 7-Oct North Valley Elem - Plant Adaptations | 27-Oct MacArthur - Plant Adaptations | 19-Nov Vista MS - Soil Erosion |
| 7-Oct East Picacho Elem - Animal Adaptations | 28-Oct Picacho MS - Plant Diversity | 20-Nov Camino Real MS - Soil Erosion |
| 8-Oct Sierra MS - Desert Data Jam | 28-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Data Jam | 20-Nov Mayfield HS - Evaporation Experiment |
| 8-Oct Zia MS- field trip | 28-Oct University Hills Elem - Plant Adaptations | 20-Nov Zia MS - Soil Erosion |
| 8-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Earth | 29-Oct Monte Vista Elem - Field Trip | 20-Nov NMSU AXED - Climate Change/Water Cycle |
| 9-Oct NMSU Ecology Club - Asombro Institute | 29-Oct Sunrise Elem - Earth | 21-Nov Mayfield HS - Transpiration |
| 10-Oct Agotoberfest - Sort Like a Scientist | 29-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Data Jam | 24-Nov Fairacres Elem - Animal Adaptation |
| 14-Oct Mesa MS - Plant Diversity | 30-Oct Lynn MS - Arthropod Diversity | 25-Nov University Hills Elem - Animal Adaptation |
| 14-Oct Vista MS - Arthropod Diversity | 30-Oct Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter | 1-Dec J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Change |
| 15-Oct LC Catholic - Numbers & Counting | 30-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Data Jam | 2-Dec North Valley Elem - Arthropod Identification |
| 15-Oct LC Catholic - Classify | 30-Oct Vista MS - Carbon Cycle | 3-Dec Picacho MS - Climate Change |
| 15-Oct Sierra MS - Carbon Cycle | 31-Oct Picacho MS - Arthropod Diversity | 8-Dec Fairacres Elem - Arthropod Identification |
| 15-Oct Sunrise Elem - Earth | 31-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Climate Data Jam | 9-Dec Vista MS - Climate Change |
| 16-Oct Zia MS - Plant Diversity | 3-Nov MacArthur Elem - Animal Adaptation | 9-Dec East Picacho Elem - biomes |
| 16-Oct Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter | 3-Nov J Paul Taylor Academy - Soil | 10-Dec LC Catholic - Arthropod Identification |
| 17-Oct Mesa MS - Arthropod Diversity | 5-Nov Sunrise Elem - Earth | 11-Dec Sierra MS - Climate Change |
| 20-Oct Camino Real MS - Plant Diversity | 5-Nov Sierra MS - Soil | 11-Dec J Paul Taylor Academy - Arthropod ID |
| 20-Oct Zia MS - Arthropod Diversity | 5-Nov LC Catholic - Animal Adaptation | 12-Dec Mesa MS - Soil Erosion |
| 20-Oct J Paul Taylor Academy - Greenhouse Gases | 6-Nov Sierra MS - Soil | 12-Dec Luminarias in the Desert |
| 20-Oct Fairacres Elem - Plant Adaptations | 6-Nov Lynn MS - Soil Erosion | 15-Dec MacArthur Elem - Arthropod Identification |
| 20-Oct Deming Library - Bats | 6-Nov J Paul Taylor Academy - Animal Adaptation | 16-Dec University Hills Elem - Arthropod ID |
| 21-Oct Sierra MS - Plant Diversity | 7-Nov Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter | 17-Dec Sierra MS - Climate Change |
| 21-Oct Sunrise Elem (GISD) - Matter | 12-Nov Picacho MS - Soil | |

Organization Going Strong After 25 Years!

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

In August 1990, Ron Hudson and a group of community members created the organization that is now known as the Asombro Institute for Science Education. That makes 2015 our 25th anniversary!



While a lot has changed in 25 years, the organization's commitment to education has never wavered. Throughout 2015, we'll take some time to reminisce about the founding of the organization as we look forward to another quarter century of science education.

Thank You, VFW Post 6917

The Board of Directors, staff, and especially the students who participate in hands-on science with Asombro would like to thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6917 for their generous \$500 donation. For more than 100 years, the VFW has worked to foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts; to serve our veterans, the military, and our communities; and to advocate on behalf of all veterans.



VFW Post 6917 has been a long-time supporter of Asombro and our work with local children, and we are so grateful for their generosity!

Desert Dash: Racing for Asombro

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

Our second annual Desert Dash Trail Race fundraiser was a dashing success! On a beautiful November 8th morning, 284 people ran and walked for Asombro at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. The participants were wonderful, the refreshments were delicious, and our amazing volunteers made sure that everything went off without a hitch. Through entry fees and generous sponsorships and donations, we raised more than \$8000 for Asombro's education programs! An enormous thanks to our sponsors, donors, participants, and volunteers for bringing fun, hands-on science education to many more local students.

We hope that YOU will plan to join us for our third annual Desert Dash on November 14, 2015! Like us on Facebook for race news and updates.

 /DesertDashTrailRace



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors in the fourth quarter of 2014.

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Critter Corner

By Paul Harper

This badger (*Taxidea taxus*) was a bit curious about our trail camera. We think that he just wanted a close-up! Badgers are short legged with long claws and can weigh up to 20 pounds. They are in the same family (Mustelidae) as weasels and skunks. These carnivores use their claws to dig up all kinds of tasty meals from honeypot ants to ground squirrels. Keep up to date with our Critter Cam by following us on Facebook!



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