

# Asombro Insights

*Science education for eager minds*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 26, Issue 1 (January - March 2017)

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## 2016 Reflections

While we are anxious to get busy with exciting plans for 2017, we wanted to pause briefly to reflect on our many accomplishments of 2016. Here are a few highlights:



Asombro's **Desert Stories** project received generous grants, allowing us to expand this program to 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades. Students learn fascinating desert stories, while engaging in hands-on lessons that cover science, math, reading, and writing.



Photo by Gene Gant.

The Asombro Institute's fourth annual **Desert Dash Trail Race** brought awareness and funds to the organization. More than 300 participants dashed through the Nature Park in the 5K, 10K, half marathon, and 1-mile children's event.

2016 was the first year Asombro "brought" students to Mars! In partnership with the Las Cruces Public Schools' Challenger Learning Center, we worked on a **Mars Summer Camp** that challenged students to use what they knew about plants on Earth to design systems for growing food on Mars.

Our newest program, **New Mexico Climate Champions**, launched in 2016. In this extensive project funded by the EPA's Environmental Education grant program, students learn about climate change and New Mexico water and energy issues. They then develop and complete their own plans to take action on these important issues.

We have the pleasure of bringing hands-on science to **every 7th and 8th grader in the Las Cruces Public Schools** this school year! Students participate in inquiry-based labs on carbon cycling, plant adaptations, wildlife CSI, kinetic energy, and human impacts on the environment with Asombro educators.

## Harvesting the Rain at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

While we don't get much rain at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, we have long wished for a way to capture the rain that does fall and store it for later use.

Thanks to the very hard work and expertise of volunteer Justin Van Zee, our wish has come true! On



December 15, we completed installation of a 500-gallon rainwater storage tank. Using new gutters, this tank collects water that falls on one small section of the roof of the storage building near the parking lot. Even this small catchment area of 112ft<sup>2</sup> can result in 70 gallons of water

stored for every inch of rain that falls on the roof. After just a small rain in early January, the tank already contained more than 75 gallons of water.

You won't be surprised to hear that we've already developed educational programs related to this new water conservation feature! Every 8th grade student in the Las Cruces Public School District will conduct a hands-on experiment using a small-scale model of rooftop rainwater harvesting as part of a lesson. Asombro will deliver this spring. We will also develop an interpretive sign and field trip station to help others learn how to "harvest the rain" too.



## Education Programs

**Thanks to your support, Asombro staff provided 908 hours of science for 18,752 students in 2016!**

3-Oct	Mesa MS - Carbon Cycle	4-Nov	Hillrise Elem - Science Interns	30-Nov	Mesa MS - Kinetic Energy
4-Oct	White Sands MS - Carbon Cycle	4-Nov	Zia MS - Ready, Set, Grow	1-Dec	Mesa MS - Data Jam
5-Oct	Mesa MS - Carbon Cycle	7-Nov	Lynn MS - Kinetic Energy	1-2 Dec	J Paul Taylor Acad. - NM Climate Champions
5-Oct	LC Catholic - Habitat Stats	7-Nov	Hillrise Elem - Science Interns	2-Dec	Mesa MS - Data Jam
5-Oct	LC Catholic - Biodiversity	7-Nov	Vista MS - Ready, Set, Grow	2-Dec	Camino Real MS - Kinetic Energy
6-Oct	Sierra MS - Data Jam	9-Nov	Picacho MS - Ready, Set, Grow	5-7 Dec	J Paul Taylor Acad. - NM Climate Champions
6-Oct	Zia MS - Carbon Cycle	9-Nov	LC Catholic - Life Cycles	5-6 Dec	Vista MS - Greenhouse Effect
11-Oct	Zia MS - Data Jam	9-10 Nov	Highland Elem - Desert Stories	6-Dec	Mesa MS - Kinetic Energy
11-Oct	Doña Ana Elem - Desert Stories	9-Nov	Native Plant Society of NM - Las Cruces Chapter	7-Dec	Alameda Elem - Science Interns
12-Oct	LC Catholic - Mineral ID	10-Nov	Silva Health Magnet HS , El Paso- Desert Safety	7-Dec	Vista MS Data Jam
12-Oct	LC Catholic - Kinetic Energy	10-Nov	Picacho MS - Ready, Set, Grow	8-Dec	J Paul Taylor Acad. - Arthropod ID
13-Oct	Doña Ana Elem - Desert Stories	14-Nov	Vista MS - Kinetic Energy	9-Dec	Alameda Elem - Science Interns
13-Oct	Optimist Club	14-Nov	Lynn MS - Ready, Set, Grow	9-Dec	J Paul Taylor Acad. - NM Climate Champions
14-Oct	Doña Ana Elem - Desert Stories	15-Nov	Sierra MS - Data Jam	9-Dec	Camino Real MS - Kinetic Energy
15-Oct	EEANM Conference	15-Nov	Lynn MS - Data Jam	9-Dec	Luminarias at the Nature Park
17-19 Oct	LC Catholic - Desert Stories	15-Nov	Lynn MS - Ready, Set, Grow	12-Dec	J Paul Taylor Acad. - NM Climate Champions
18-Oct	Sierra MS - Data Jam	16-Nov	Hillrise Elem - Science Interns	12-Dec	Camino Real MS - Data Jam
19-Oct	LC Catholic - Animal Adapt.	16-Nov	Picacho MS - Kinetic Energy	12-Dec	Alameda Elem - Science Interns
20-21 Oct	Highland - Desert Stories	16-Nov	Zia MS - Ready, Set, Grow	13-Dec	Sierra MS - Data Jam
20-Oct	Vista MS - Kinetic Energy	17-Nov	J Paul Taylor Acad. - Life Cycles	13-Dec	Lynn MS - Data Jam
20-Oct	J Paul Taylor Acad. - Animal Adapt.	17-18 Nov	Camino Real MS - Greenhouse Effect	14-Dec	LC Catholic - Desert Plants
20-Oct	Lynn MS - Data Jam	18-Nov	Hillrise Elem - Science Interns	14-Dec	Mesa MS - Ready, Set, Grow
20-Oct	LC Catholic - Science Night	21-Nov	Picacho MS - Kinetic Energy	14-Dec	Vista MS - Kinetic Energy
21-Oct	LC Catholic - Field Trip	21-22 Nov	Camino Real MS - Data Jam	15-Dec	Alameda Elem - Science Interns
24-Oct	Zia MS - Kinetic Energy	28-30 Nov.	J Paul Taylor Acad. - NM Climate Champions	15-Dec	Mesa MS - Ready, Set, Grow
25-27 Oct	Sierra MS - Ready, Set, Grow	28-Nov	Sierra MS - Kinetic Energy	16-Dec	Sierra MS - Kinetic Energy
26-Oct	Zia MS - Kinetic Energy	29-Nov	Desert Hills Elem - Field Trip	19-Dec	Alameda Elem - Field Trip
1-Nov	Zia MS - Kinetic Energy	29-Nov	White Sands MS - Ready, Set, Grow		
1-Nov	J Paul Taylor Acad. - Color & Camo.	29-Nov	White Sands MS - Kinetic Energy		
2-Nov	Vista MS - Data Jam				
2-3 Nov	Highland Elem - Desert Stories				
3-Nov	Zia MS - Ready, Set, Grow				



## Meet Volunteer Mark Sechrist

Mark Sechrist is one of many amazing Asombro volunteers. Mark has volunteered for Asombro since 2001. He currently serves as the Secretary of the Board of Directors. He uses his expertise as a professional archaeologist to survey the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. We can always count on Mark to step in to help wherever it's most needed - from hosting a party to raise funds for Asombro to lighting luminarias at Asombro's annual event. We posed a few questions to Mark so you could all get to know him a bit better:

### Why did you get involved with the Asombro Institute for Science Education?

To help make a way for our children to know the truths of this world so they can feel at home in it, excited by it, at peace with it.

### Best memory of an event at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park:

*Desert Dash...and pre-run runs there beforehand*

To move through that world with only the same things all the other creatures are born with - our arms, legs, feet, and hearts (with shoes, shorts, and a hat). To be among them on the rocky earth soaring, sort of, among the creosote bushes.

### What do you wish everyone knew about Asombro?

How much its lessons can light kids up and thrill them with the joy of learning and becoming a part of something great.

### How do you feel you are making a difference as an Asombro volunteer?

By little contributions of all sorts to enable the pros to do their magic. By remembering, when I can, the mission and living it and being an example of it.

## Volunteer with Asombro!

We are always looking for more volunteers to help with office work, science programs, and projects at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. We'll find a task that is rewarding for you and fits your schedule - from one hour a month to much, much more.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Haan-Amato at 575-524-3334 or [s.haan-amato@asombro.org](mailto:s.haan-amato@asombro.org).

## THANK YOU!

We are grateful to the generous donors in the fourth quarter of 2016.

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**Asombro Annual Meeting - January 16, 2017**



Photos by Brad Cooper.

Above: Asombro staff thanked Tom Packard and other volunteers.

Below: Members heard about 2016 highlights and plans for the upcoming year.



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