

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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Reset Your New Year's Resolutions with Us!

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

How are you doing on your New Year's resolutions? Approximately 80% of people give up within a month of setting a lofty goal, but Asombro can help you fight the trend. Here are a few resolutions and how we can help.

Get More Exercise

The 1.3-mile loop at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park is calling for you. Enjoy fresh air and desert beauty as you get your exercise. I especially recommend the trail to the top of Vista Hill. The view is well worth the climb. The Nature Park is located at 56501 North Jornada Road in Las Cruces. You can get more information at www.asombro.org.

Volunteer More

Volunteers are the heart of the Asombro Institute for Science Education. We are fortunate to have 80 volunteers who donate from 1 to 200 (!) hours each year to help us thrive. We have many different volunteer opportunities to suit your interests, including assisting staff in classrooms, preparing science materials, and assisting with projects at the Nature Park. To find out more, contact our volunteer coordinator, Kelly Steinberg (kelly@asombro.org).

Learn Something New

Would you like to learn to identify the 10 most common plants at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park? Check out the Native Plant Scavenger Hunt, which we developed last year with the support of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Signs along

the Desert Experience Mini-Trail tell you the scientific name, common name (in English and Spanish), and a bit about 10 common plants. Fill out a Scavenger Hunt booklet, located in the literature box at the Park, if you want to also earn a prize. You'll be amazed how many of these same plants you'll find throughout Las Cruces.

Make a Difference

Asombro set a lofty goal for donations this year, and we need your help to achieve it. When you invest in the Asombro Institute by making a donation, you get the satisfaction of knowing that you are making a difference. Together, we are opening thousands of students' eyes to the wonder of science and the fascinating place we call home.



Spectacular views make the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park a great place to exercise and learn about the desert.



Volunteers are crucial to Asombro's success, and volunteering with us can help you succeed in your goals.

We've resolved to make 2020 the best year ever at Asombro. Let us help you with your New Year's resolutions too. Here's to a healthy, happy, and wonder-filled 2020!

Luminarias: Light Up the Desert

By Ryan Pemberton

Luminarias: Light Up the Desert is one of the favorite events of Asombro staff each year, and it is not hard to see why. The lovely glow of the luminaria candles intermixed with the twinkling stars, the mysterious shadows of creosote bushes, and the alluring aroma of hot chocolate and cookies are irresistible. This year was no exception.



Luminarias lit up the Nature Park on a peaceful December evening.
Photo credit: Brad F. Cooper

More than 70 visitors enjoyed 450 luminarias surrounding the Desert Discovery Mini Trail, lighting the way for visitors to experience the desert in a whole new light. We are grateful for the support of the community to keep such a beloved event going year after year, and we hope to see you all on a perfect desert night in December 2020.

A Teacher's Guide to the Desert's Fascinating Flora

Third and Fourth Grade Teacher Workshop

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

What's the best way to get young students excited about the desert's fascinating flora? In November, local third and fourth grade teachers learned first hand with Asombro staff and our partners from the NMSU

Herbarium, Curators Sara Fuentes-Soriano and Zach Rogers.

Professor Rogers instructed teachers in plant collection, pressing, and mounting techniques. Teachers practiced their skills and then received a plant press of their own to make a classroom



Zach Rogers, NMSU Herbarium Co-Curator, in the field with teachers



Teachers practice new skills mounting plant specimens

herbarium with their students.

Teachers also experienced several hands-on lessons and received supplies to teach them to their students. One teacher said that it was "the best workshop I've ever attended!"

We are excited to follow up with a visit to each teacher's classroom to teach a fun herbarium-focused lesson and help inspire students to discover the wonder of the desert's fascinating flora.

Education Program Highlight

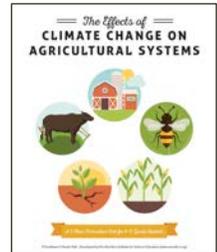
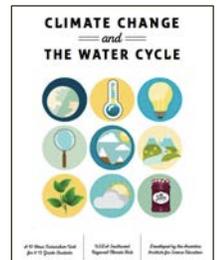
USDA Southwest Climate Hub Curriculum

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

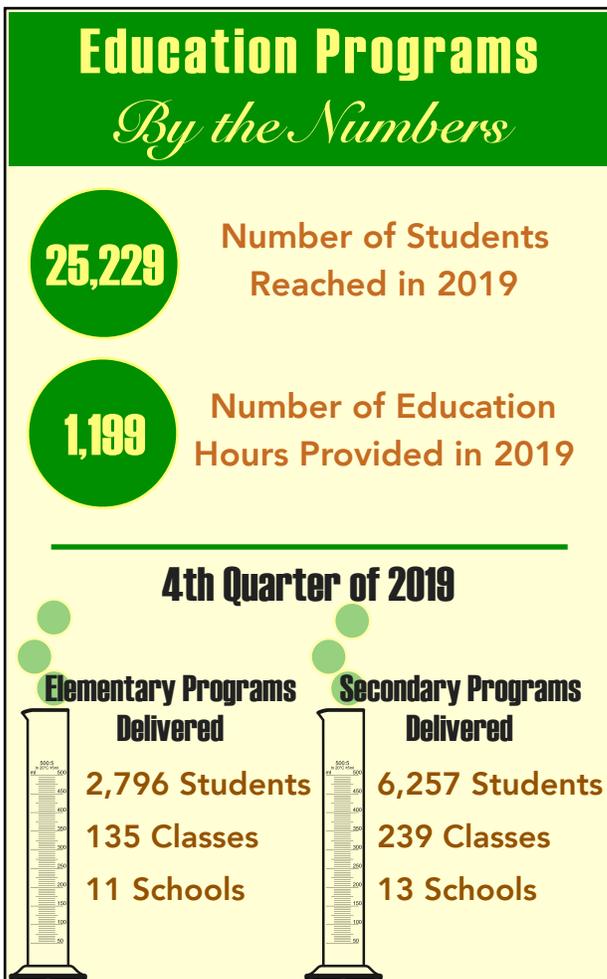
In partnership with the USDA Southwest Climate Hub, we have developed two engaging, free, online curriculum units for educators throughout the southwest. We are eagerly looking forward to soon launching a third unit focused on the effects of climate change on the carbon cycle.

The new unit, which will consist of three hands-on lessons for high school students, is currently undergoing the fourth and final round of pilot testing in a local high school. Students start by interacting with data through a NOAA Online Visualization Tool and then conducting an experiment using their own bodies to model global warming. In the second lesson, students create scale models of Earth's carbon reservoirs with string and then toss bean bags between them to model the carbon cycle. They then practice with the processes that result in carbon fluxes with a card-sorting activity. In the final lesson, students quantitatively model carbon cycling through the biosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and geosphere with a board game focusing on how human activities are affecting the cycle and finish by considering mitigation strategies to lessen the impacts.

These units aim to help prepare the next generation to tackle this complex issue.



Two existing units, *Climate Change and the Water Cycle* and *The Effects of Climate Change on Agricultural Systems*, are available for free download online: asombro.org/free-curriculum-resources



Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service: Brad Cooper

By Kelly Steinberg

There are so many little things that make coming into work in the morning a joy, not the least of which is knowing you have a nice space full of lovely people to come to. That's why the first Wonder Award of 2020 goes to someone whose presence and hard work make a huge difference around Asombro, **Brad Cooper!**

Brad, a Senior Program Specialist at the Jornada Experimental Range, has been a great partner of Asombro for years and a friendly face who stops in just to say hi. He has been a part of many Asombro events and judged Desert Data Jam. Brad has shared his fantastic photography skills with us during Luminarias, Desert Dash, and Data Jam many times over the years. Recently, he spent countless hours cutting weeds, trimming trees and repairing fences around the Asombro office, making sure we have a nice place to work, welcome guests, eat lunch outside or even just park the cars.

Brad's smiling face, cheerful, get-it-done attitude and hard work make every day just a little better around Asombro, and that's why we think he's WONDER-ful!



Brad Cooper, 2020 First Quarter Wonder Award Recipient

We Need YOU: Volunteer to Make a Difference

Asombro is seeking volunteers for our classroom lessons, field trips, and public programs! There is no minimum time contribution. Help when you can. Please call 575-524-3334 or email information@asombro.org for more information.

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors in the fourth quarter of 2019.



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On January 20, 2020, participants at Asombro's Annual Member Meeting helped us observe Martin Luther King, Jr Day by focusing on service. Along with our volunteers and members, Asombro is dedicated to serving local students, and participants learned more about our service through highlights of our activities in 2019 and plans for 2020. Members also voted to elect the State of Officers for our Board of Directors.

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