

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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Our Supporters and Volunteers Were the Silver Lining of 2020

By Stephanie Haan-Amato

In southern New Mexico, students haven't been in their school buildings since March 2020. Children have been learning remotely, which has been challenging for them and their teachers. However, with your help, Asombro was able to spring into action to help teachers and students.

We developed a large menu of elementary, middle school, and high school remote-learning science lessons that are hands-on and fun. Students have a great time learning about a fascinating science topic while teachers get a much-needed break from planning and preparing another lesson (asombro.org/remote). You can learn more about two of these innovative programs on page 2.

This is how you all, our amazing volunteers and supporters, directly made a big impact in the lives of children in our community and their teachers. Because many of you were willing to volunteer your time to assemble dust collectors and tape seeds to specimen cards, together, we were able to put together thousands of kits to pass out to students. Because of your amazingly generous donations, we were able to provide these new engaging remote lessons and science kits at no charge so that even

students and teachers who were struggling could experience the wonder of discovery.

Even with the unprecedented circumstances, Asombro reached 16,131 students in 2020 with engaging, place-based science lessons.

Not only did your support allow us to help thousands of children in 2020, you also positioned us to emerge in 2021 with the increased ability to take hands-on science to thousands more students. With our new

remote lessons, we can reach students in even farther corners of the region in more remote and underserved areas than ever before.

As we rang in the new year at Asombro, we raised a glass in gratitude to YOU, our silver lining of 2020. Here's to a wonderful 2021 filled with science literacy!



It has been said that every cloud has a silver lining. For Asombro in 2020, the silver lining was YOU, our wonderful supporters and volunteers.



Thank you for enabling students to engage in place-based science lessons from home in 2020!

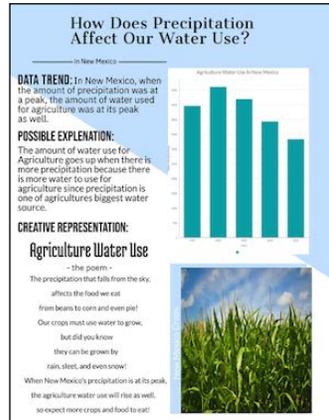
Reaching Students in Albuquerque and Beyond with Water Conservation Data Jam

By Emilia Linley

In our unique Water Conservation Data Jam program, students identify a trend in New Mexico water data, develop a creative project (like a song or model) to communicate the trend to a nonscientist audience, and then design an action project to conserve water.

When schools transitioned to remote learning in spring 2020, we quickly decided to transform the program into a remote-learning module. Since that time, a total of 300 students in 15 classes have participated remotely.

After delivering the program locally, we recognized that we could expand our reach beyond southern New Mexico with this engaging remote module. We put the word out about this exciting program to teachers in other areas, and we will be bringing it remotely into six classrooms in the Albuquerque area this spring. We can't wait to see how many students we can reach statewide with this fun program!



A middle school student's Water Conservation Data Jam poster from fall 2020, which includes a poem about their water data trend

Seeds on the Move: Remote Science Fun for Second Graders

By Ryan Pemberton

One year ago, it would not have been unusual to walk into a classroom full of bright-eyed second graders and have them hop around their classroom like a drove of jackrabbits to disperse pompoms that they wear on a velcro bracelet to model seed dispersal. Their unadulterated joy while they do this is a delight to experience as an educator. In this most unusual school year, the challenge before us is to inspire this kind of excitement through a computer screen.

One solution is to use a tried and true method to invoke wonder, getting students outside. In the reimagined, remote version of the seed dispersal



Example of a sock used by a 2nd grader during the remote Desert Stories experiment

activity, second grade scientists pull a sock over their shoe (provided in a free science kit from Asombro) and walk around their backyards or neighborhoods collecting "seeds" along the way. They get to experience first hand the phenomenon of how animals help seeds disperse, as well as complete a science experiment and have fun, of course!

Annual Membership Meeting Goes Virtual

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

2020 looked different than any other year, so it makes sense that our annual membership meeting looked different too. We held this year's meeting by video conference, rather than in person, on January 18, 2021.



Congratulations to Justin Van Zee and Donna Yargosz, who Asombro members approved for new, three-year terms on the Board. We are also grateful to our new Board officers, listed on page 1 of the newsletter. We are all in for an exciting year ahead, and we're so thankful for the consistent, dedicated service of our Board.

At the meeting, all seven Asombro staff members shared the most significant accomplishments from 2020, including many of the new remote learning products created by our staff in 2020 and featured on asombro.org/remote. We're proud of what we accomplished in 2020 and look forward to the new year.

Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service: Gene Gant

By Kelly Steinberg

One of the best things about Asombro volunteers is that their dedication seems to be never-ending! Many of our supporters have been active for years, and this quarter, Asombro's Wonder Award for volunteer service goes to one of those long-standing champions.

Gene Gant has long been an advocate of excellence in education in New Mexico. He has served the students of Las Cruces for years through his work with many community organizations. A long time board member, Gene is stepping into the role of board president in 2021. He brings a great deal of expertise to the board, along with his with deep ties in the community.



Wonder Award recipient for 1st Quarter 2021, Gene Gant

We are incredibly lucky to have Gene on the board. The thoughtfulness and warmth of Gene and his wife, Maureen, are felt by all the Asombro staff through holiday cards and friendly notes throughout the year and an enthusiastic helping hand.

Remotely Jamming: Bringing Desert Data Jam to Middle Schoolers Online

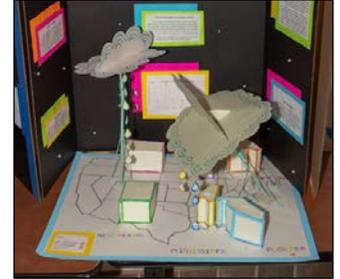
By Kelly Steinberg



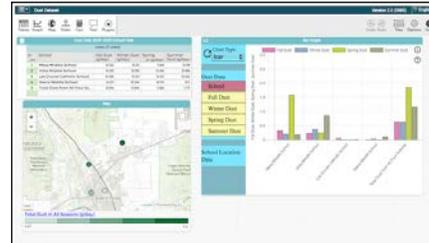
When school buildings closed last year, we were in the middle of helping students prepare for the Desert Data Jam. With half completed workbooks and projects left at school, we sadly had to cancel the data jam competition. But, over the last nine months of developing remote lessons, we've gained skills and found many new tools. We are excited to launch Asombro's first digital Desert Data Jam! Asombro educators will spend February, March, and April logging in to virtual classrooms to help students explore desert datasets and submit creative projects to the competition, which will be held in late April.

In a data jam, students find a creative way to communicate a data trend to a nonscientist audience. Students will work with real-world data collected by scientists in New Mexico and around the world to identify relationships within the data. They communicate their data trends through creative projects, such as stories, physical models, videos, tie-dye t-shirts, cakes, and so much more! Because the program is now remotely delivered, we hope to be able to bring the Data Jam to students all over New Mexico. We can't wait to see what they create this year!

You can be a part of the Desert Data Jam! We need help judging the many projects we expect to receive at the end of April. Judging will be completely online and at your own pace between April 27th and May 5th. [Click here to sign up](#) or email kelly@asombro.org.



Above: A Data Jam physical model from 2019 competition



Left: A screen shot of CODAP, an interactive online data analysis platform students will use in 2021.

We Need YOU: Volunteer to Make a Difference

Asombro is seeking volunteers! 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 from the fourth quarter of 2020.



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*It's a beautiful time to get out to the
Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park*

One of the perks of winter in the desert is the moderate weather. There's no need to avoid the afternoon blistering winds of spring or heat of summer. Go ahead! Sleep-in or take a brain-break from work. You can take a hike at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park when the time suits you!



The top of Vista Hill provides a spectacular view of the amphitheater and volcanic dike.

The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park is open Tuesday through Sunday from 7:00am - 5:00 pm. Plan your visit, check the local conditions, and get directions by visiting www.asombro.org.

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