

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 21, Issue 2 (April - June 2012)

Board & Staff

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Justin Van Zee - President

Mary Beth Harper -
Vice President

Mark Sechrist - Secretary

Donna Yargosz - Treasurer

Gene Gant - Board Member

Mohammad Nash -
Board Member

Gil Tellez - Board Member

STAFF

Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Rink Somerday
Program Coordinator

Paul Harper
Site Coordinator

Stephanie Haan-Amato
Outdoor Education Specialist

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

New Additions to the Asombro Institute Team

Wildflowers weren't the only arrivals this spring. March and April also brought several new faces to Asombro.

The youngest addition is Ezra Tapia Harper, born in early April to Paul Harper and his wife Susana. Welcome, Ezra!

We were also lucky to have two talented people join our Board of Directors. Gil Tellez is a master electrician and project manager for B&H Mechanical. Mohammad Nash is a hydrologist with the Bureau of Land Management. We are so glad they have volunteered their time and talents.

TWO new part-time staff members joined Asombro's

team recently - Anna Keener and Stephanie Haan-Amato. Anna is finishing her Master's degree in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University and will join us in June. Stephanie Haan-Amato, Outdoor Education Specialist, began in March. We invite you all to come meet her in person. We also did a quick interview as a brief introduction.

What led you to your new position with the Asombro Institute for Science Education?

I have had a fascination with nature since early childhood, and when it was time for me to choose a major in college, it was easy - biology. While getting my bachelor's degree at the University



Outdoor Education Specialist, Stephanie Haan-Amato, helps middle school students with a schoolyard ecology project. Stephanie joined the Asombro team in March.

of California, Santa Cruz, I completed an undergraduate thesis on ants and discovered that I enjoyed doing research. After working as a field biologist, I decided to get a Master's degree in Wildlife Science at NMSU. It was when I was a teaching assistant in graduate school that I realized the rewards of teaching and decided to pursue a career in environmental education. After a stint as a research assistant at the Jornada Long-Term Ecological Research Program, I went back to NMSU for a Master's degree in Education with secondary licensure in science. I then taught high school biology until the opportunity with



Asombro's Board of Directors (left to right): Donna Yargosz, Mary Beth Harper, Justin Van Zee, Mark Sechrist, Gil Tellez, Mohammad Nash. Not pictured is Gene Gant who was in Santa Fe improving education for New Mexico students.

Combining Science and Art

Last year, Asombro staff had the pleasure of working with talented artists from the Court Youth Center. We're teaming up once again this year with two projects that combine the best of science and art.

Nature Art in the Park (May 12, 2012)

Explore the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park in a whole new way. We'll have hands-on activity stations for visitors of all ages.

Investigate the desert through storytelling, songs, and poetry. We'll also screen print using the sun, make plant fiber paper, and create arthropod art. FREE fun for all!



Gen M Science & Art Institute

(June 4-8, 2012)

Calling all students entering 6th through 8th grades in the fall. Join the Asombro Institute and Public Allies artists at the Court Youth Center for a week of science and science-inspired art projects. The project is partially funded by a grant from the WalMart



Foundation to the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico. Applications are being accepted now. Call the Court Youth Center (575-647-2585) or Asombro Institute (575-524-3334) for an application and more information.

Education Programs

Thanks to generous support from grants and Asombro members, we brought the excitement of science to 5,861 students and 686 adults in January, February, and March 2012. Thanks for your support!

6-Jan	Hillrise - weather	23-Feb	Mesilla Park - solar system
9-Jan	Mac Arthur - weather	23-Feb	Desert Hills - science night
9-Jan	Jornada - animal adaptations	24-Feb	Mesa MS - field trip
10-Jan	Mesa MS - microclimates	25-Feb	STEM conference - environmental literacy planning
11-Jan	LC Catholic - weather	27-Feb	Mac Arthur- solar system
11-Jan	Mesa MS - microclimates	28-Feb	Sunrise (Gadsden) - career day
12-Jan	Mesilla - weather	29-Feb	LC Catholic - See It Little/Big
13-Jan	North Valley - arthropod identification	29-Feb	LC Catholic - biomes
17-Jan	Central - weather	29-Feb	LC Catholic - soil organic matter
17-Jan	Boys & Girls Club - colors	1-Mar	LC Catholic - soil organic matter
18-Jan	Monte Vista - weather	1-Mar	Alameda - earth movers
19-Jan	LC Catholic - science fair judge	2-Mar	Mesilla Park - earth movers
19-Jan	Vista MS - zoology	5-Mar	Jornada - field trip
20-Jan	PLT Teacher Workshop	6-Mar	Sonoma - weather
20-Jan	Boys & Girls Club - biomes	7-Mar	LC Catholic - earth movers
23-Jan	Monte Vista - senses	8-Mar	Mesilla - earth movers
23-Jan	Boys & Girls Club - biomes	9-Mar	Sonoma - field trip
24-Jan	Desert Hills - biomes	9-Mar	SEMAA event at NMSU- NM wildlife
24-Jan	J. Paul Taylor Academy - disease transmission	12-Mar	Monte Vista - plant a seed
25-Jan	LC Catholic - weather	12-Mar	Tombaugh - animal adaptations
25-Jan	Boys & Girls Club - bats/color	13-Mar	Central - earth movers
26-Jan	Mesilla Park - weather	13-Mar	Mesa MS - pitfall traps
26-Jan	Boys & Girls Club - bats/color	14-Mar	Mesa MS - track plates
3-Feb	Hillrise - biomes	14-Mar	Monte Vista - rock and mineral identification
4-Feb	Health & Fitness Expo – Asombro programs	15-Mar	Water Festival - animal adaptations
6-Feb	Monte Vista - animal adaptations	16-Mar	Sierra - vegetation measurements
7-Feb	Mesa MS - track plates	20-Mar	Kid's Passport to the Desert at the Nature Park
7-Feb	Monte Vista - food web/biodiversity game	21-Mar	Girl Scouts Desert Day
8-Feb	East Picacho - earth movers	23-Mar	Red Mountain MS (Deming) - soil fractions & compaction
8-Feb	Mesa MS - track plates	26-Mar	Mac Arthur - earth movers
9-Feb	Mesilla - solar system	26-Mar	Tombaugh – arthropod life cycles
10-Feb	Mesilla Park - field trip	27-Mar	Sierra - field trip
13-Feb	Monte Vista - weather	28-Mar	Tombaugh - weather
15-Feb	LC Catholic - solar system	30-Mar	Cesar Chavez - habitat stats
15-Feb	LC Catholic - food web/biodiversity game	31-Mar	Archaeology Day at Branigan Cultural Center
16-Feb	Alma d'Arte - rock and mineral identification		
16-Feb	Monte Vista - animal adaptations		
21-Feb	East Picacho - I'm a Scientist Too		
21-Feb	Central - solar system		
22-Feb	Mesa MS - field trip		
23-Feb	Mesa MS - field trip		

Explore the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Hedgehog cacti are flowering, and temperatures are inching up - there's nothing like spring in the desert! In the last month, we have seen some beautiful displays of flowers, including a few staff favorites like desert chicory (*Rafinesquia neomexicana*), miniature woolly-star (*Eriastrum diffusum*), and feather dalea (*Dalea formosa*). You can see these flowers yourself by visiting the Nature Park during a public event such as Nature Art in the Park on May 12 or enjoy the serenity of the desert when fewer people are there during normal hours (Tuesday through Saturday, 7AM - 5PM).

Spring is also time for a lot of planning and projects at the Nature Park. It's an interesting time for our ongoing phenology study. Asombro staff members collect weekly data on creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*) and honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) to look for dates of first leaves, first flower buds, and more. Students will assist with data collection in the fall.

Art is in the air this spring too. We're working with local artist Steph Preciado on a tile mural that will be installed in early fall near the parking area. Local students will assist Steph on the project.

Finally, plans are coming along nicely for the amphitheater we have planned near the parking area. This addition has been designed by Vistas Unlimited and will seat approximately 75 guests during field trips and public events.

There's a lot to discover in the desert this spring, so get out to the Nature Park to see it all for yourself!



Miniature woolly-star (*Eriastrum diffusum*).
Photo by Justin Van Zee.



We are collecting ONE MILLION DIMES in 2012!
Dimes for the Desert is the Asombro Institute's 2012 fundraising campaign that will help us bring the excitement of science and the beauty of the desert to thousands of people.

Make a donation to the campaign (in dimes, other coins, or by check). We've already collected more than 127,000 dimes. Together, we can reach a million!

Keeping Up with Asombro

Want to hear Asombro's latest funny stories, event announcements, fundraising campaign progress, and more? It's now easier than ever by following Asombro Institute for Science Education on Facebook. Staff and volunteers post updates several times a week, so you'll never miss out.

Additions to Asombro Team (cont. from page 1)

Asombro came along. I am very excited to be able to combine my enthusiasm for science with education.

What's your favorite thing about the job so far?

The opportunities to interact with students have been extremely rewarding. In my first week, we had a great field trip at the Nature Park with 6th grade students who inspired me with their strong curiosity about the natural world and sharp ability to connect concepts.

New Mexico is the Land of Enchantment. What do you find enchanting about our state?

Our desert surroundings are beautiful! I have been amazed by the Organ Mountains every day since moving here in August 2002. I love the fall, and the mild winters are great. Plus, New Mexico has excellent places to do my favorite things: running, hiking, camping, and nature watching. My husband and two young children are also quite fond of New Mexico, and we will certainly stick around to enjoy it for many years.

Red or green?
Green!



Asombro Institute
FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

PO Box 891
Las Cruces, NM 88004-0891

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Las Cruces, NM

Permit No. 2014

Many Thanks

We are grateful to the generous people who have donated so far this year.

Monthly Donors

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

Turquoise

Mark Sechrist & Beth Morgan
Donna Yargosz

Peridot

Anonymous (1)
Full Circle Heritage Services
Cliff Pelton
Arlene Tugel

Obsidian

John Bunn and Sue Merrick
Paul Bussan
Native Plant Society of NM,
Las Cruces Chapter
Heather Throop
Mike Weiss
Heidi Ziegler

Jasper

Stephanie Haan-Amato & Jeff Amato
David Lee Anderson
Doug & Laura Burkett
Courtright Family
Michael D. Ferguson
Neil Fuller
Aravamudan and Champa Gopalan
Jim & Ginny Herrick
Julia Laney
J. Donald McKittrick
John & Angela Mortland
Tom Packard
Mary Philp
Robert Schooley
Arthur M. Scott
Tom & Paula Sechrist
Norman Todd

Gypsum

Anonymous (1)
Leoniece Beatty
Rebecca Creamer & Rich Richins
Mike & Diane Gilman
Patrick M. Graham

Elaine Hampton
Diana & Bill Howard
James & Margret Leverett
Marjorie D. Little
David & Mary Lucero
Nick Miller
Robert & Pamela Pick
April R. Rogers
Elba Serrano
Zanah & Bill Stotz
Daisan Taylor-Glass
Jim & Kathy Vorenberg
Mary Ann Willson
Naida Zucker & Rich Spellenberg

Quartz

Anonymous (3)
Stanley & Kathryn Bardwell
Lehman & Marianne Barnes
Larry Brenner
Marilyn J. Brewer
Bill Brown
Doug Burke
Skip & Patty Clark
Godfrey Crane

Kathy Groves
Susan Jensen
Joan Keeney
Luan Kilday
Larry Ludwig
Pat Mihok
Mohammad Nash
Kim O'Byrne

Teri Root
Burton Schwartz
Robert Severance
J. Paul Taylor
John & Eunice Zemek

In Memory of Bruce Van Zee & Lois L. Rattenborg
Jolaine Mills

