

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

Still Serving Students: Adapting Asombro Programs for Remote Learning

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

How do you take hands-on science lessons designed to be delivered in classrooms, schoolyards, and at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park and make them work when students are learning from home? That's the challenge Asombro faced on March 27 when the Public Education Department announced they were closing all schools in New Mexico through the end of the school year to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

While our staff members are known as incredible teachers, we are also excellent problem solvers. These skills were employed quickly to adapt our content and assist school districts and teachers with science education in this new format.

Within three days, our team had created a remote-learning plan for three of our highest priority spring projects. Each plan includes multiple videos and suggested activities students can do in their own home, yard, or neighborhood to engage with the content themselves.

For example, we're encouraging elementary students to watch a four-video series that includes reading of One Day in the Desert, a children's book written by former Asombro staff member Anna Keener. Since the

book follows a student who takes a field trip to Asombro's Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, Ryan and Anne include footage from the Nature Park in the video.

Our spring would normally be filled with hundreds of in-class lessons to teach 8th graders about Water Conservation in New Mexico. To convert that lesson to the new format, Kelly and Abi created a three-video series on waffle gardens, rainwater harvesting, and data interpretation. These aired on the Las Cruces Public Schools YouTube Enrichment channel starting on April 20.

Our EPA-funded Water Conservation Data Jam was going to be pilot tested in four classrooms this spring. To adapt to remote learning, Emilia turned the five-lesson module into nine videos with supporting documents. One class of local students will be participating in the pilot program in April and May.

All these new products will allow us to continue to fulfill our mission of increasing science literacy and supporting teachers and students through this unprecedented time.



Videos with suggested hands-on activities to try at home are part of Asombro's new programs to support teachers and students.

Help Asombro While You Dine and Shop

Did you know that you can support Asombro by picking up takeout food and doing your regular shopping?

Panda Express Fundraiser for Asombro

Wednesday May 6, 2020

10:00 am - 9:30 pm

1400 University Avenue

Order your favorite takeout dish, and 20% of your purchase will be donated to Asombro. Order online and enter **314412** in the promo code box. In person, present a paper or digital copy of the event flyer with your order.

Print or snap a photo of the flyer from our website:

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Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service: Ellyssia Forbes

By Kelly Steinberg

Several times a year we stop to reflect on all the WONDER-ful volunteers who make our work a bit easier and a lot more fun. For years Ellyssia has been one of those amazing volunteers, supporting Asombro educators in classrooms all over Las Cruces. As an NMSU pre-med student, she has shared her love of science with hundreds of young students.

It is always a pleasure to have Ellyssia's help in the classroom. Her patience and care for students of all ages and her get-it-done attitude are just icing on the cake that is her cheery disposition. Ellyssia is working on her final semester at NMSU. Selfishly, we hope she doesn't wander too far from Asombro, but we are so excited to see what she does next!



Ellyssia Forbes, 2020 Second Quarter Wonder Award Recipient

Education Programs

By the Numbers

7,317

Number of Students Reached in 2020

322

Number of Education Hours Provided in 2020

1st Quarter of 2020

Elementary Programs Delivered

3,716 Students

178 Classes

14 Schools

Secondary Programs Delivered

3,459 Students

134 Classes

14 Schools

Science Literacy - More Important Than Ever

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

The COVID-19 global pandemic highlights the incredible value of science literacy - the cause Asombro has been championing for thirty years. Everyone is learning quickly about virus transmission, exponential growth, antibodies, and what it means to "flatten the curve."

At the start of the crisis, our first priority was making sure that Asombro's staff, volunteers, and the students and teachers we serve were supported. We made a commitment to keep all seven staff members employed and get everyone set up for teleworking in March.

Next, we focused on converting lessons to a format that works for remote learning (see cover story). Our goal is to support administrators and teachers as they take on the monumental task of keeping student learning going when students are no longer at school.

These changes mean increased expenses due to program shifts and unexpected decreases in revenues due to cancellations of the many field trips and classroom lessons that were on our spring calendar.

Several of our supporters have already made generous donations to help Asombro make it through this challenging time. If you want to help too, please consider a donation today. Together, we will make it through this unsettling time and continue to promote the value of science literacy for all.

asombro.networkforgood.com

Meet Asombro's Newest Staff Member, Anne Hoylman

On March 2, Asombro was delighted to welcome our newest Science Educator, Anne Hoylman, to the team. Anne has a Ph.D. in Ecology from the University of Tennessee and 15 years of teaching experience in a range of classrooms from elementary to university. We asked her a few questions so that you can get to know her.

What led you to your new position?

When my husband and I made the move to New Mexico, I made a deal with myself to take some time to get to know the community of Las Cruces by volunteering before looking for a job. My first volunteer position was with Asombro, and I submitted my application for the Science Educator position by the end of that same week! There was such a positive energy and enthusiasm for science and teaching at Asombro that I wanted to get back in the classroom. And more importantly, I wanted to be part of this team of educators whose mission aligned so well with my own – increasing the understanding and wonder about the natural world.

What is your favorite thing about your job so far?

My first couple of classroom visits covered a wide range of grade levels but each class was a positive experience with students engaged and cooperating. Students greeted us



Anne Hoylman,
Science Educator

enthusiastically and by the second week I got my first hug. I have only been able to experience a small fraction of the classroom material Asombro has developed, but based on what I have seen so far, I am confident future classroom visits will be engaging and thought provoking. I am excited about the camaraderie and team spirit of my colleagues and I am looking forward to learning more about the art of science education.

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

The people of New Mexico, the landscape and visual complexity of the skyline, and the natural wonders of the state are all enchanting. I have only been honked at once while I was navigating this new city, and EVERY business person I have met has been extremely nice and helpful. I can't get enough of the sun coming up over the Organ Mountains or the spectacular sunsets. I am looking forward to finding spring birds, especially seeing young Gambel's quail, and exploring this amazing state.

Red or Green?

I am still undecided, so I usually go for the Christmas option. My favorite combination is green with chile rellenos. I did practically die when I took a bite from a raw jalapeño in my salad... so I need to work on my heat tolerance.

Special Thanks to the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico

Asombro was the recipient of funding through the Nonprofit Emergency Fund, administered by the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico (CFSNM). The fund was set up to assist nonprofits experiencing a loss of revenues due to COVID-19. This is an enormous help for us, and we're very thankful to CFSNM and the caring donors who made the funding possible.



THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors from the first quarter of 2020.



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Asombro Institute

FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

PO Box 891

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While we're at home, we're finding beauty nearby. Check out Asombro's social media to see some of the wonders that we've found. We want to know what you're finding in your neighborhood! Share your neighborhood wonders with us on social media with the hashtag:

#neighborhoodwonders

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Have you considered putting Asombro in your estate plan? Please contact Steph Bestelmeyer (575-524-3334) if you are interested in learning more.

Asombro Institute for Science Education,
P.O. Box 891, Las Cruces, NM 88004