

Asombro Insights

Science education for eager minds

A Quarterly Newsletter

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Moonlight Taste of the Desert

Imagine relaxing on a crisp fall night in beautiful Mesilla, surrounded by old and new friends, good music, and tasty food featuring desert plants and local game. Now imagine spending this relaxing evening with the purpose of helping bring the excitement of science to more than 14,000 local schoolchildren each year.

If this sounds like the place for you, get your tickets now for the Asombro Institute's first Moonlight Taste of the Desert fundraiser to be held on Saturday September 29, beginning at 6:30 PM.

Asombro Board member Gil Tellez and his wife Sally will host the event. A full, catered meal will be provided. Board and staff members will create and serve appetizers highlighting desert foods. Sample local game meat as well as recipes featuring prickly pears, mesquite, and more.

A flamenco guitarist will add fun, festive music to the fundraiser. There will also be a silent auction of unique gifts and experiences.

Tickets are \$50 each and are available from all Asombro Board members or by calling the Asombro Institute for Science Education office (575-524-3334). Get your tickets now - this will be a magical evening that you won't want to miss!



Reserve your tickets now for Moonlight Taste of the Desert, a fundraiser in support of the Asombro Institute for Science Education.



Moonlight Taste of the Desert will support Asombro's work toward increasing science literacy and bringing hands-on science to more than 14,000 local children each year.

Spring and Summer Science

Asombro staff were busy in June and July with several innovative science education programs. Here are the highlights.

Gen M Science & Art Institute

June 4-8, 2012

Twenty-four middle school students spent a week integrating art and science in this institute run by staff members from the Asombro Institute and Court Youth Center. The project was made possible through grants from the WalMart Foundation to the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico and the Albert I. Pierce Foundation. A seven-foot papier mâché praying mantis created during the camp was on display in Las Cruces City Hall in late June.



First Steps: Geocaching the Desert

June 9, 2012

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunt where treasure seekers use GPS coordinates instead of printed treasure maps. On June 9, nineteen visitors to the Nature Park got to learn more about this popular, outdoor adventure. Guides showed visitors how to use GPS units to locate caches placed for the event. Five lucky participants won prizes for their efforts.

There are several permanent caches still at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. To join the hunt, get their coordinates and clues on www.geocaching.org and see if you can find them yourselves. The Nature Park is open Tuesday - Saturday from 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM. Look for another geocaching event in the future!

Photos:

Left: Mr. Mantis created at Gen M.

Right: Doug Burkett with a grey banded kingsnake (*Lampropeltis alterna*).

Nightlife in the Desert

July 21, 2012

Participants explored the desert after dark at the Nature Park. Visitors took a night walk and discovered tarantulas, lizards, and scorpions which fluoresced under black light. The Burketts brought live snakes. A light trap attracted scarab beetles, moths, and other insects. Many thanks to Doug, Laura, Ryan and Eliot Burkett, Jack Barnitz, Graeme and Jenny Davis, Dave Griffin, and the Astronomical Society of Las Cruces for their generous donation of time and expertise.



Education Programs

Thanks to generous support from grants and Asombro members, 9,192 students and 1,111 adults have experienced the excitement of science with the Asombro Institute for Science in 2012. Here are the programs that took place from in April, May, and June.

2-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - pitfall traps	25-Apr	East Picacho Elem. - soil
2-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - biomes	26-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - microclimates
3-Apr	Mayfield HS - Desert Data Jam	27-Apr	White Sands Elem. - Earth Day Festival
3-Apr	Central Elem. - soil	1-May	Mesa MS - erosion
4-Apr	Cesar Chavez Elem. - habitat stats	3-May	Mesilla Elem. - science night
4-Apr	Mesilla Elem. - soil	4-May	Monte Vista Elem. - Desert Day
9-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - plant a seed	7-May	University Hills Elem. - arthropod identification
9-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - plants	9-May	Alameda Elem. - field trip
10-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - field trip	10-May	East Picacho Elem. - arthropod identification
11-Apr	Las Cruces Catholic - soil	11-May	White Sands Elem. - field trip
11-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - classify	11-May	Vista MS - health fair
12-Apr	Sierra MS - field trip	12-May	Nature Art in the Park
13-Apr	Mac Arthur Elem. - field trip	14-May	Columbia Elem. - field trip
16-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - senses (sight)	15-May	Mesilla Elem. - field trip
17&18-Apr	Mesa MS - revegetation plots	16-May	Mesilla Park Elem. - field trip
17-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - schoolyard ecology	18-May	Vista MS - New Mexico Day
19-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - field trip	21-May	Alpha School - arthropod identification
19-Apr	Mesilla Park Elem. - soil	2-Jun	Doris Van Dorn Library - animal adaptations
20-Apr	Doña Ana Elem. - arthropod identification	11-Jun	J Paul Taylor Academy - animal adaptations
21-Apr	Teacher Workshop at the Nature Park	11&12-Jun	J Paul Taylor Academy - soil organic matter
23-Apr	MacArthur Elem. - soil	13-Jun	Truth or Consequences Public Library - Get Batty
23-Apr	Tombaugh Elem. - colors	16-Jun	Memorial Park Library - animal adaptations
24-Apr	Monte Vista Elem. - field trip	23-Jun	Judge Marquez Library - earth movers
24-Apr	Mesa MS - phenology	27-Jun	Friends of Rockhound State Part - bears & mountain lions
25-Apr	Mesa MS - phenology	30-Jun	Irving Schwartz Library - earth movers

Meet Anna Keener - Asombro's Science Education Specialist

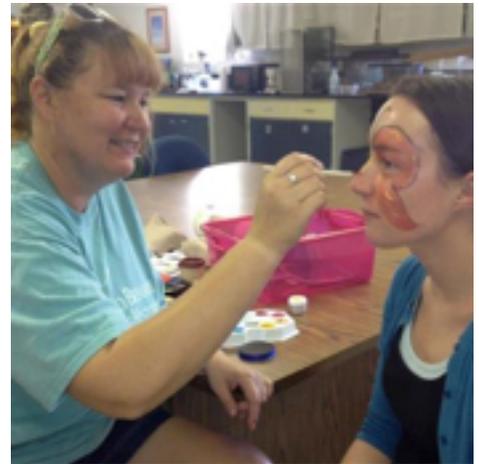
Last quarter, we introduced you to Stephanie Haan-Amato, our new Asombro team member who started in March. This month, we're delighted to introduce Anna Keener, who started on June 18 as our new Science Education Specialist. Anna will be working part-time, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Please stop by to welcome her to our team!

Anna grew up in Albuquerque where she earned a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of New Mexico. She lived in Ames, Iowa for three years while completing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Environment from Iowa State University. She has worked as an environmental educator and an English instructor at Iowa State. Here, in her own words, is a bit more about Anna.

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

I was lucky I had role models growing up who showed me that science is fun. My parents helped me explore aviation by building model rockets and chemistry through baking. I built hover crafts and a Rube Goldberg machine with my physics teacher. Those early experiences with science were essential to my development as a student and a human being. In school, I studied environmental science and then creative writing. As a teacher, I fused my experiences with science and the humanities to build lessons plans, and it was rewarding to see my students respond to interdisciplinary discovery. I joined Asombro to apply my love for science, communication, and teaching toward a mission that means a great deal to me.

Left: Program Coordinator Rink Somerday welcomes Anna to the Asombro team while also practicing face painting for the upcoming Butterfly Flutterby. Luckily, Anna was a willing participant in this unusual welcome!



What has been your favorite thing about the job so far?

It takes a village to do this kind of work, and this village shows up and works hard. I'm proud and thankful to operate as part of a supportive community.

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

So many people spend their lives capturing descriptions of New Mexico through scientific inquiry and art. Each addition of information and creative work about this place seems to uncover new questions and complexities about this landscape and the people who live here. It's enchanting to live in a place where the mysteries never run dry.

Red or green?

I do not discriminate. All chile may apply.

A Decade of Butterflies

2012 marks the 10th anniversary of the Asombro Institute's **Butterfly Flutterby** family education event. To celebrate this milestone, we're bringing you a bigger and better-than-ever event.

Join us on Saturday August 18 from 9:00 AM until noon at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park. You'll find ten activity stations to delight all ages. We'll have butterfly experts to answer your questions and show you a few of the approximately 20,000 species of butterflies. Expert gardeners will teach how to attract butterflies to your yard, and you'll have an opportunity to make a water dish just right for butterflies.

10th Butterfly Flutterby

Saturday August 18

9:00 AM - Noon

Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

\$2 admission

Participate in games like butterfly bingo and activities about butterfly flight and butterfly migration. Make-and-take crafts will highlight butterfly life cycles and symmetry.

*See you soon at the
Butterfly Flutterby!*





Asombro Institute
FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION

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We are grateful to the generous people who donated
between April and June 2012.

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