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Returning to In-Person Workshops with Wildfire

By Abigail Miller

Last week, Asombro hosted our first in-person teacher workshops since November of 2019. Educators came to Las Cruces from all over New Mexico to learn about the Wildfire and Climate Change curriculum we developed in coordination with the USDA Southwest Climate Hub.

The workshop started with a field trip to Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, where we met with a ranger who led us on a hike through a recently burned area.

One participant from Ruidoso described how the McBride fire affected her community. Although wildfire doesn't occur frequently in the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem, we discussed how fires burning in other places can still have indirect effects here.

After the field trip, we returned to the Asombro office, and teachers participated in hands-on demonstrations of three activities from the Wildfire and Climate Change curriculum unit. They showed their creativity by creating necklaces, 3D infographics, and hanging wall art to show wildfire data during Wildfire Data Jam. Teachers built model ecosystems and set them on fire to explore how increased evapotranspiration due to climate change is affecting wildfire frequency in the southwest. In the final activity, teachers played a cooperative board game and discussed how to design a wildfire-safe community.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who joined us for this in-person workshop. Asombro staff were inspired by the creative ideas shared during the workshop, and feedback from teachers was fantastic.

In an evaluation, one teacher shared that, "Staff was so well prepared, friendly, and inclusive – I really appreciate this opportunity." In an email after the workshop, another participant said, "Thanks so much for a time-worthy workshop!"



Workshop teachers took a field trip to Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park to learn how wildfire affects the bosque ecosystem.



Asombro staff modeled activities from our Wildfire and Climate Change unit.



Are you a creative problem-solver dedicated to making a difference for the planet? If so, we need you on Asombro's new "Green Team." We will increase Asombro's environmental sustainability, reduce our carbon footprint, and have a lot of fun too!

Please contact Steph
(stephanie@asombro.org) for more details
on joining the Green Team.

Work With Asombro!

Are you interested in a rewarding career and passionate about science education, or do you know someone who is? We are seeking applicants for two positions on our staff.

Visit asombro.org/careers for detailed job descriptions and instructions on how to apply!

Science Educator

We are seeking an exceptional, full-time K-12 Science Educator! The Science Educator works with other staff members, professional scientists, teachers, and volunteers to deliver Asombro's award-winning, inquiry-based science education programs (primarily classroom and schoolyard lessons and some field trips) to the diverse student population of the border region in southern New Mexico.



Science Educator Gabriela Franco shows a grasshopper to field trip participants.

Operations and Communication Coordinator

The Operations and Communication Coordinator is an essential member of the Asombro leadership team who ensures that the organization can bring meaningful and innovative science education to more than 22,000 K-12 students each year.

This detail-oriented, exceptional communicator will work with Asombro's Executive Director and Education Director to (1) oversee daily operations and the office to ensure successful work toward our mission and (2) communicate about Asombro's science education programs that are delivered to the diverse student and teacher population of New Mexico.

Thank You!

Thank you to our generous supporters who donated items from our Amazon wishlist! Teacher workshop participants received these items in kits for their classroom, and are excited to use them to teach hands-on science to their students!

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Wonder Award: Steve Loring

By Kelly Steinberg

There was a lot of uncertainty about how schools would operate last year, which made dependable people even more special. This month, the Wonder Award goes to someone whom we could always count on to volunteer to join us in the classroom and on field trips, Steve Loring!

Steve first started volunteering with Asombro at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. Recently retired from a position as the associate director for the NMSU Agricultural Experimental Station, Steve has an incredible knowledge and passion for the landscape we live in. Not only has he been a constant in the classroom, he has also put in a lot of time building trails and digging shrubs out of our new parking lot at the Nature Park.

Thank you Steve. We think you're WONDERFUL!



Wonder Award recipient Steve Loring removes shrubs at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

Join Asombro in the Classroom

Have you ever walked into a room of 20 people and been greeted with gasps and cheers? Because Asombro volunteers do all the time in classrooms all over Las Cruces!

Asombro is looking for people who love to have fun with kids and share the excitement of learning to assist Asombro staff members in local classrooms. Whether you can join us one morning a month or three days a week, we need your help to keep delivering fun, hands-on, desert science to the students of Las Cruces.

Contact Kelly Sayanagi at (575) 524-3334, or kelly@asombro.org to talk about how you can be part of the great work Asombro does every day.

Solving Science Mysteries

By Kelly Steinberg

In a school year when public health was at the top of everyone's mind, Asombro asked high school students to solve a disease transmission mystery. Students were given a scenario:

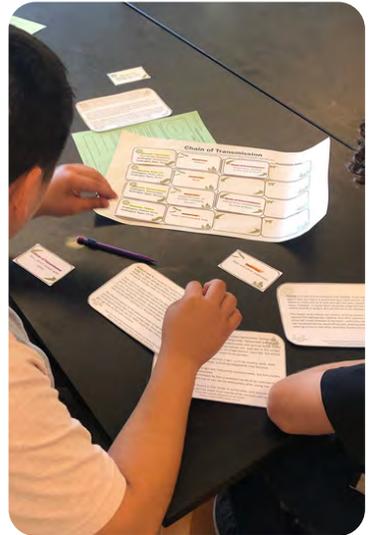
Several cases of a new disease have been identified in the area. The disease is spreading fast, and doctors suspect this is not a typical flu. You are an epidemiologist for the public health department. Your goal is to identify what pathogen is causing this disease, what reservoir it came from, and determine how to prevent the spread.

Armed with a few clues, a lot of data and their critical thinking skills, students must solve the mystery.

Asombro was able to create and share this new high school lesson thanks to a partnership with Drs. Teri Orr and Karen Mabry of the NMSU Biology Department and their recent National Science Foundation grant studying how bat behavior affects disease transmission.

The research team provided background knowledge, expert advice and inspiration to the Asombro team as we explored the world of zoonotic diseases, or diseases that can be carried and spread by animals.

When we met with Dr. Orr, she asked us to help tell the story that, although animals like bats can spread diseases, they are really cool. Because we live in a world where novel zoonotic diseases are predicted to appear more frequently, it is important to understand the animals, the pathogens they carry, and how they spread.



In an introductory activity, students identify the reservoir, mode of transmission, and host for common diseases.

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors from the second quarter of 2022.

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What Is That?

At The Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park



Have you visited the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park recently and noticed these big piles of dirt? In May, we installed a parking lot near the entrance to the park. Part of the "Gateway To The Desert" project, this parking lot will allow field trip students to spend more time exploring the desert closer to the main road. Plans are in the works to move this large quantity of dirt left over from the parking lot installation and use it to improve other trails in the park.

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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.

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