

Asombro Insights



A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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... And We're Back! Asombro Returns to Classrooms

By Abigail Miller

Walking into a classroom and being greeted with loud cheers and students exclaiming, "Yay, Asombro is here! We get to do science today!" is one of the most rewarding feelings to an Asombro staff member. Our work is more important now than ever. After over a year of remote learning, students are as delighted to participate in hands-on science lessons as we are to teach them. During a lesson, a 4th grade student pulled me aside and asked what time it was. After I responded, she excitedly whispered, "I know recess is next and that's fun, but I really don't want science to end!"

"I know recess is next and that's fun, but I really don't want science to end!"
-4th Grade Student



2nd grade students complete their first science experiment to explore seed dispersal.

The school year started off with a bang, and in typical Asombro fashion, we were visiting classrooms almost every day of the week. Second grade students did their first science experiment using fans to explore desert seed dispersal. Fourth graders learned about desert plant adaptations by dropping beads through a model leaf and dressing up as an ocotillo. Our middle school visits started with 8th graders investigating how energy moves throughout the food web including a kangaroo rat.

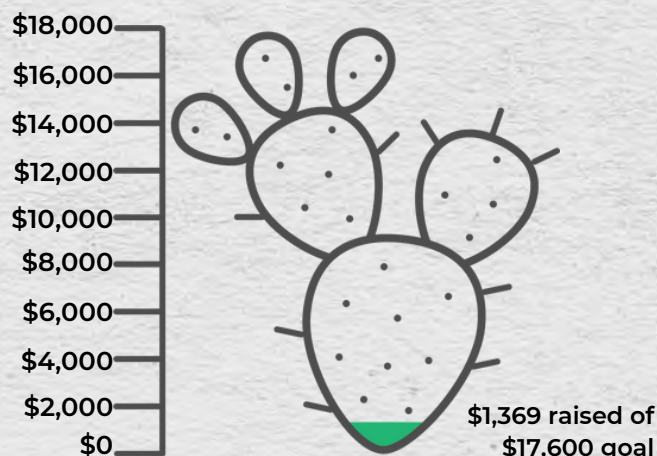
While a return to normal operations has been refreshing, this year has also provided an opportunity for us to try new things. At Vista Middle School, 7th graders used a computer program to analyze water use data and present it in a creative way. A student who created an animation to show his water use data said, "I figured out how to make science fun, like video games!" Students now have reliable access to technology and we can use it to enhance our programs.

Providing underserved students with opportunities to do hands-on, relevant science is Asombro's mission. We are elated to continue fulfilling that mission with students in their classrooms, on field trips, and virtually throughout our state. We look forward to an exciting year of exploring new possibilities and returning to what we all know and love - teaching science in-person to enthusiastic children.

Can you help Asombro reach our 2021 fundraising goal?

With one quarter left in the year, we need to raise \$17,600 to reach our 2021 goal. Please donate today to help ensure that our students receive a high-quality science education.

To help us reach our goal, please go to <https://bit.ly/Donate2Asombro>



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Asombro Institute for Science Education
PO Box 891
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575-524-3334 (voice)
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Restoring Connections

Expanding our field trip program to include more middle school students has been a longtime dream for many of our staff. We are thrilled to announce that thanks to the generosity of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the New Mexico Outdoor Equity Fund, Asombro is developing a new field trip program for 6th and 7th graders.

The program centers on the BLM's Restore New Mexico initiative, a project that aims to restore native rangeland habitats. Asombro staff will visit students before their field trip and engage them in exploration of their own schoolyard environment. During the field trip at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, students will collect data in demonstration plots modeling the Restore NM project. We look forward to developing this program and are excited for the opportunity to show the wonders of the desert to even more students!



Middle school students measure shrubs at the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park

Wonder Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service: Cathy Kemmer

By Kelly Steinberg

Sometimes you meet someone, and you just know they're a great person, and then they turn around and immediately prove you right. Well, that is exactly what happened with one of our newest volunteers, and that is why this quarter, the Wonder Award goes to Cathy Kemmer!

Last spring, Cathy got in touch to see how she could help support Asombro. She was quickly immersed in the making of at-home science kits for students during remote learning. As we returned to classrooms this fall, Cathy has dedicated an incredible amount of time and passion to supporting Asombro and our students in classrooms. A retired physician, Cathy has been a longtime supporter of high-quality education in Las Cruces, and we are so lucky to have her as part of our team! Thanks Cathy, we think you're WONDERFUL!



Wonder Award recipient Cathy Kemmer

Meet Asombro's Newest Staff Member, Gabriela Franco

In late September, Asombro was delighted to welcome Gabriela Franco to the Asombro team. Gabriela is a native of El Paso. She received her B.S. and M.S. from the University of Texas at El Paso, where she studied the ecology of the greater earless lizard. Gabriela will be working part time at Asombro until January, when she will move into a full-time position.

What led you to your new position?

As a native of the Chihuahuan Desert, the sunsets and mountains hold a special place in my heart. I have always enjoyed inspiring locals to appreciate our unique environment through presentations or guided hikes. As a herpetologist, I enjoy speaking for the most misunderstood creatures of the desert and often find myself excitedly talking about adaptations exhibited by reptiles and amphibians. I was always searching for educational outlets; I volunteered at the El Paso Zoo, mentored the EPCC Biology Club, and delivered classroom programs on behalf of a local exotic pet shop. I have spent 7 rewarding years teaching community college courses, but having the opportunity to coordinate STEAM programming at a mobile museum gave me a new perspective on the potential for science outreach. I am excited to be part of a team that promotes science literacy in such a captivating way.

What is your favorite thing about your job so far?

I already look forward to every day. I have always been passionate about teaching science. Now I get to impact students of all grade levels across the city and virtually across the state (with Asombro Anywhere). I like that our lessons are intentionally based in the scientific method, and the best part is the connection to our desert. I love seeing students have fun making genuine connections with their home and developing skills that will empower them to possibly become the scientists of the future. The staff are so enthusiastic and caring about each project and produce such quality material. I also love being part of an organization that is so involved with the community, especially the schools.

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

As a child, White Sands was an escape to an alien world, but as an adult I now have a fond appreciation for the ecology of White Sands. Among the unique creatures, one of my favorite NM endemics is the special Bleached Earless lizard, which is a relative of the Greater Earless lizard I studied for my thesis.

Red or Green?

Enchiladas? Green with chicken, and red with extra cheese please!



Gabriela Franco, Science Educator

Asombro Anywhere: Expanding Asombro's Reach Throughout New Mexico

By Stephanie Bestelmeyer

"I wish we had an organization like Asombro in my town." Hundreds of educators say this to the Asombro staff after they hear about our award-winning education programs. With generous support from the Lineberry Foundation, we now can help these teachers and their students through our new Asombro Anywhere initiative.

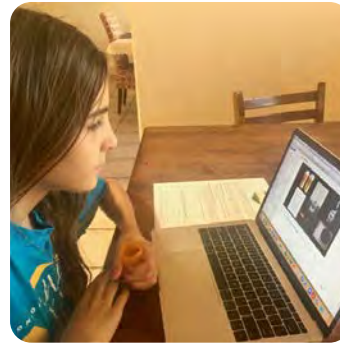
During the pandemic, Asombro staff learned best practices for educating from afar to ensure that hands-on science education continued when face-to-face programs were not possible. These engaging lesson modules now allow us to engage with students in some of the most underserved regions in New Mexico.

The grant supports our efforts to distribute Asombro Anywhere lessons. These lessons can be taught by classroom teachers, by Asombro staff via videoconference, or assigned for independent student work. Many include kits of individually packaged materials to make sure that every student has supplies for a hands-on experience.

Asombro staff members have worked with students and educators in New Mexico towns as far as Clayton, Grants, Hobbs, Santa Rosa, Shiprock, Silver City, and Tierra Amarilla this year. Even though there is no organization like Asombro in those towns, students can still experience the wonder of science with Asombro Anywhere!



3rd grade students in Las Cruces explore yucca seed pods during an Asombro Anywhere lesson.



Asombro Anywhere lessons can take place in classrooms, at home during remote learning, or as homework assignments.

“ I wish we had an organization like Asombro in my town! ”

THANK YOU!

We are grateful to our generous donors from the third quarter of 2021.

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Asombro is seeking volunteers! There is no minimum time contribution. Help when you can.

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for more
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Asombro volunteers participate in a training day where they conducted an experiment to model jackrabbit adaptations, part of an Asombro 4th grade lesson..

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