



# NEWSLETTER

## Pajarito Environmental Education Center

PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM  
[www.PajaritoEEC.org](http://www.PajaritoEEC.org)  
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3540 Orange Street  
(505)662-0460  
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## President's Message

by Randy Ryti

Since our last newsletter, PEEC's greatest accomplishment was to extend our initial one-year lease agreement with the Los Alamos Public Schools for more than three years – or until June 2009. The PEEC Board of Directors was represented by Chick Keller and me at the February 16<sup>th</sup> School Board meeting; Chick provided an excellent summary of PEEC activities from April 2005 to February 2006. Included in Chick's presentation were photographs of some programs that showed school children enjoying a variety of programs including the Valles Caldera summer day camp, the program at the Research Park pond, and other events at the Center. We were most pleased to have PEEC called “an extension of the Schools” by Board member Steve Girrens and to have this sentiment seconded by other members of the School Board.

Now that PEEC has a multi-year lease on the L-Wing space, we can make plans for collaborations to improve the interior and exterior of the facility. For the exterior of the building we have considered basic items like a sign at the Center. Other plans include further xeriscaping and water harvesting. We have also considered how to make the facility more handicapped accessible and ways to improve the energy efficiency of

the building. Each plan will incorporate education as well as improved function. For example, we started a collaboration with the County on xeriscape demonstrations at the Center, and we are working with the Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership on water harvesting. We are excited about the variety of ways that improvements to the Center can be used as pilot programs for efficiencies at other public and private buildings.

Another success was our seventh Earth Day Festival. As for the last three years, we celebrated Earth Day for ten days with a variety of activities around the community. The keynote event was a performance by the Green Chili Jam Band. This Earth Day included many community partners and corporate sponsors, notably Los Alamos National Bank, Neptune and Company, Portage Environmental, Shaw Environment and Infrastructure, Apogen Technologies, Bandelier National Monument through Friends of Bandelier, Los Alamos County, and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

We also started a new tradition with our first annual Earth Day fundraiser dinner at the Central Avenue Grill. Proceeds from the fundraiser went to the Michele Altherr Teacher Fund.

We appreciate your interest in PEEC and your continuing support. If you have any comments or ideas, please send me an e-mail at [rryti@mac.com](mailto:rryti@mac.com).

## Chick Keller Receives First LANL Vecinos Award

PEEC is proud that Chick Keller, our vice-president and a founding board member, has been chosen as the first winner of the LANL Foundation's Vecinos (Neighbor) award for lab workers or retirees who have been outstanding volunteers.

Part of Chick's nomination reads: *Chick continues to be in the forefront of PEEC's endeavors. He has acquired pressed plant collections from the US Forest Service and LANL with which he has created the Jemez Mountain Herbarium, a resource for the region. He has taught high school students to curate the collection and helped UNM-LA students write a wildflower identification brochure. Last fall, Chick planted four low-water demonstration lawns and a xeric garden. As a result PEEC has become an important resource to the Department of Public Utilities in its year-long education project to reduce water consumption. Chick currently serves as the vice-president of PEEC and the New Mexico Native Plant Society and volunteers with the NM Breeding Bird Atlas project.*

*Chick is molded in the likeness of the great naturalists of history and is respected for his vast knowledge. Yet the quality that sets him apart is the importance that he gives to helping other people, whether a child or an adult, connect with the natural world.*

### **Family Nature Connection: Trash Time Capsule**

by Michele Altherr

On Earth Day PEEC's Kinnickinnick Club kids unearthed a trash time capsule that they buried last October.

The garbage we chose to dig through was an assortment of lunch trash from the dumpster of Mountain Elementary School. We found whole sandwiches, celery and oranges lying limp among empty chip and candy wrappers. There were many "Yucks" and moans during the project but also equal amounts of laughter. Seven months later the children were amazed to find out that many things had disappeared, while some things didn't change a bit. We also discovered several bugs and a skink, which all seemed to like our burial spot, and a zip-lock bag that proved it really can keep things fresh—well, sort of.

So if you think it's time that your kids understand what it means to "take the trash out," try this activity at home. You are sure to have an interesting conversation or two on the topic of trash.

#### What you need:

1. Rubber gloves
2. Panty hose leg
3. Trash
4. Shovel

#### What to do:

1. Collect trash that is a mix of organic and non-organic materials typical of what your family throws away.
2. Cut one leg off of a panty hose.
3. With your gloves on, stuff the panty hose leg with trash, keeping a record of what you put in it.
4. Dig a hole and bury the whole panty hose. Bury it deep enough so that animals won't disturb it.
5. Dig up your trash time capsule in the fall and tell us what you find!

**Science fair project idea:** Try burying a time capsule in different areas—for example, a wet area versus a dry area. Remember, kids learn best through experience. Have fun!

## **Grass Identification Class Offered in July**

Dorothy Hoard will offer a class on basic grass identification for four Mondays in July--July 10, 17, 24, and 31. Each class will run from 5 to 7 p.m. and will involve indoor work as well as outdoor walks.

Because of the need to use microscopes, the class is limited to a maximum of 12. The fee is \$40 for PEEC members or \$45 for non-members. Register at PajaritoEEC.org.

## ***Summer Sundays Fun at PEEC***

PEEC's Summer Sundays program has a variety of entertaining talks. Most are appropriate for families, and all will help you connect with nature. Come listen, explore, and learn!

**July 9**, 7 p.m., Hari Viswanathan, "From the Galapagos to the Ecuador Rainforest: Birds and Wildlife" (photos and videos)

**July 16**, 7 p.m., Jeanne Fair (LANL wildlife biologist), "Avian Flu: What To Worry About"

**July 23**, 7 p.m., Larry Bryant, "Who Eats Whom?--a New Perspective on the Ecology of the Pajarito Plateau"

**July 30**, 7 p.m., Steve Fetting (Bandelier wildlife biologist), "Birding Adventures in Honduras" (lots of photos)

**August 13**, 7:30 p.m., Chris Judson, "Bats in Los Alamos"--talk and photos indoors followed by bat discovery outdoors (note the later starting time)

**August 27**, 7 p.m., Astronomy Fun In the Star Lab. Steve Becker will lead an exploration of the night sky in this portable planetarium.

## ***Join PEEC's Parade of Gardens on July 8***

From 10 to 1 on Saturday, July 8, PEEC is presenting a **free** tour of several spectacular Los Alamos gardens that show innovative ideas for xeric planting, water harvesting, and attracting wildlife. Follow the parade of gardens and take home some ideas for making your own garden more environmentally friendly. Maps are available at PEEC, CB Fox, and Village Arts.

\*Joel and Ronnie Moss's Xeric Garden: 3533 Arizona Ave.

\*Charles and Yvonne Keller's Native Plant Garden: 4470 Ridgeway.

\*Charles and Mary Zemach's Permaculture Garden: 740 Canyon Rd.

\*Selvi and V. K. Viswanathan's Wildlife Friendly Garden: 690 Los Pueblos.

\*Don and Elaine Morris's and Louis and Dawn Jalbert's Water Harvesting and Xeric Garden: 1951, 1961 North Rd.



## **New Programs for Children and Families**

Kinnikinnick Club continues through the summer, but with the day changed to Friday, not Monday, with our wonderful new teacher Beth Holtzman. In addition, we'll have several new programs. For costs and registration, see the PEEC Web site, PajaritoEEC.org.

### ***Rock On: Making Sense Out of Your Rock Collection***

Bring in your rock collection and put it in order. You'll learn to identify the

easy rocks, get some help with the harder ones, organize your collection into a box, and make labels and a key. If time permits, we'll go over some of the area geology. Parents are welcome to help. Designed for children first grade or higher. The teacher is Rachel Cowan.

Session 1: Wednesday, June 28, 1-3 pm

Session 2: Monday, July 17, 1-3 pm

### ***A Little Night Science***

Saturday, July 22, 7-9 pm

Come for an interesting evening of fun science activities you can do when the sun goes down! Bring your family of little night owls to PEEC ready to do science in the dark (or nearly so!).

Teacher is Rachel Cowan.

### ***Caving Expedition***

Families and adults will meet at PEEC for an introduction to caving in general, Alabaster Cave in particular, and equipment preparation. Then we will caravan/car-pool to Alabaster Cave near San Ysidro for lunch and caving. Each participant will need to bring a small flashlight with working batteries; small candle with matches; lunch and drink; additional water bottle; long pants and long-sleeved shirt; bandana; kneepads if available. We will get very dirty! Each parent will need to provide transportation for self and child and/or family.

Leader is Rachel Cowan.

Session 1: Saturday, July 15, 9 to 5.

Session 2: Saturday, August 5, 9 to 5.

### ***Mommy and Me Series***

This series is designed to encourage togetherness with 1- to 2-year-olds while introducing them to basic science concepts. Class topics include colors, sense of touch, bubbles, birds, and sounds of nature. This is a great way to spend a fun, educational time with your child. Cindy O'Hara is the teacher.

Bubble Time, July 14, 10-11 am

We will use bubbles to see different shapes and how they feel. We will also add color to the mixture to see how bubbles can paint.

Birding for Toddlers, August 25, 10-11

We will explore the birds of the area.

Using age-appropriate materials, we will practice picking up items using our bird beaks, read a book on birds, and make our own bird feeders.

Make Music with Nature, September 8, 10-11. We will discover how to make music with the objects we find in nature. We will use instruments and songs. We will make our own maracas and conclude the class by going outside to listen for the sounds of nature.



### ***Science Fun for Preschoolers***

Each month at PEEC a new and exciting class will be geared toward stimulating children's interest in science. By participating in activities, crafts, and stories, children can explore their world and connect what they have learned to what they already know. Each month a different topic has been chosen to

encourage children to make observations and ask questions, learn through hands-on activities, and become more curious about science and the world around them. Cindy O'Hara is the teacher.

Up Close with Insects, June 24, 9:30-11  
Slither and crawl to explore the insect world. Learn what an insect is, how its body changes as it grows, and even how earthworms move. Use critter cages and magnifying glasses to get an up-close look at our friends, then use your imagination to create your own insect.

Water Splash, July 29, 9:30-11

Join us for water exploration. Find out what will absorb water, dissolve in water, and what floats. This will be a messy class, as we will be using dirt and water together.

Rocks and More Rocks, August 26, 9:30-11. Join us to learn more about rocks and minerals. Explore the outdoors to find rocks that are similar. Find out how rocks change, if and how we can draw with rocks, and how we can make fossil prints. We'll also use rocks to make rock critters, mosaics, and sand paintings.

Animal Homes, September 16, 9:30-11

Join us to learn about the habitats of animals. We will be discussing and observing the houses in which some animals live and how they make or choose their house. We will observe the changes in mud "clay" as it hardens, go on a slug and salamander safari, and create an indoor pond.

## **PEEC Selects Eight Science Fair Winners**

Congratulations to the following students, who won awards from PEEC at this year's Science Fair:

*Anna Trugman*, 11th grade, "Solar Engineering of Pogonomymex Harvester Ants."

*Tom Witherell*, 10th grade, "The Effects of Car Exhaust on Plant Growth."

*Aubrie Powell*, 8th grade, "Fire and Earth."

*Emily Funsten*, 6th grade, "Dense Forests: the Competition for Sunlight."  
*Sophie Click*, 6th grade, "Pollution Solution."

*Toni Batha*, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, "The Magic of Worms."

*Bryce Theesfeld*, 5th grade, "Effects of Water Usage on Lake Powell's Water Level."

*Thomas Mosier*, 4th grade, "Will the Seeds Grow?"

## **Earth Day 2006**

by Peter O'Rourke

The highly successful 2006 Earth Day Festival was held on the true Earth Day, April 22, at Pajarito Environmental Education Center under almost ideal weather conditions. The Festival featured a concert by the Green Chili Jam Band, over thirty displays by local community groups, five vendors from farmers' market, and two food vendors. Approximately 500 people attended the Festival, which ran from 10 am to 3 pm.

The Green Chili Jam Band captivated the audience with their calypso rhythms and whimsical lyrics aimed at the younger audience members.

## ***New Teachers Join the PEEC Family***

Thanks to our NM Community Foundation grant for early childhood education programs, we are welcoming three wonderful new teachers at PEEC, Rachel Cowan, Cindy O'Hara, and Beth Holtzman. They join Jennifer Moss and Margaret Blewett, who have been

teaching the Wonders of the Earth and Sky program this winter and spring, and Michele Altherr, who has been teaching the Kinnikinnick Club for a year. In this newsletter, we profile Beth.

**Beth Holtzman** hails from Chicago, where her love for the natural world began with walks on the shore of Lake Michigan and visits to the aquarium and the zoo with her family. She developed her interest and passion for all things wild and natural as a university student in the northern Rockies of Montana, and while studying and traveling abroad in Central and South America. She has worked as a public school educator in Wisconsin and with Americorps VISTA promoting community gardens and food security for underserved communities. She spends her summers as a field biologist in the Valles Caldera.

### *Congratulations, Sophia Ross!*

Jessie Ross, PEEC's first administrative assistant, has sent us the following birth announcement:

*Miss Sophia Ruthann Ross was born March 20, 2006 at 5:48 p.m. She weighed 6 lbs. 14 ounces.*

## **First Grades and Preschools Take Field Trips to PEEC**

This spring has seen lots of small visitors to PEEC, from Los Alamos first grades, local preschools, and a Brownie troop. All told, 17 groups visited PEEC, with transportation costs paid by our NM Community Foundation grant. PEEC's new environmental education teachers, Rachel Cowan and Cindy O'Hara, helped Michele Altherr and many PEEC volunteers organize activities.

Indoors they explored learning centers on fossils, worms, and birds. Outdoors each

group went on a nature-based scavenger hunt, looking for items such as spider webs and feathers.

## **Join the PEECalerts!**

PEECalerts are a benefit to our members. If you are a PEEC member in good standing who is reading this newsletter but is not getting our regular PEECalerts, then here is what to do. Send a message from your e-mail account to Randy Ryti, [rryti@mac.com](mailto:rryti@mac.com). Randy will add your e-mail address to the list and you'll start receiving PEECalerts. If you do not have an e-mail account, you cannot receive the PEECalerts.

If you have information about an event or an environmental activity that is appropriate for a PEECalert, please e-mail your synopsis to Randy. PEECalerts are typically sent weekly on Saturday or Sunday for activities in the coming week—PEEC events are always listed.

## **Time for a Name Change?**

Now that PEEC has a new newsletter editor, it's time for a new newsletter name. The editor's name is easy: Jen Witt. The newsletter's name needs some inspired brainwork. The board of directors tried its best but could only come up with a few rather feeble ideas.

So we're inviting PEEC members of all ages to send their submissions to Diane Noveroske, our administrative assistant, at [center@PajaritoEEC.org](mailto:center@PajaritoEEC.org). Send as many submissions as you like, but include your name, address, and phone number. That way we can reach the winner with the good news of the prize, a \$25 gift certificate for the PEEC gift shop. The deadline is August 1.

## Become a PEEC Member – Annual Membership

### Basic Memberships

<b>Living Lightly</b>	<b>\$20</b>
<b>General</b>	<b>\$35</b>
• Both levels receive the PEEC Newsletter, PEEC Alerts, 10% discount on classes and programs.	
<b>Kinnikinnick Club</b>	<b>\$10</b>
• Kids under 12 join the club and receive a nature journal, magnifying glass, and invitations to Kinnikinnick Club events. Kinnikinnick is an evergreen ground cover also called Bearberry.	
<b>Non-profit Organization Sponsor</b>	<b>\$50</b>
• Newsletter and PEEC Alerts for 3 organization members.	
<b><u>Become part of the PEEC meadow by joining at a higher level.</u></b>	
<b>Penstemon</b>	<b>\$60</b>
<i>Ensure a greater appreciation of our land graced by the beardtongues by becoming a penstemon donor.</i>	
• Basic membership benefits plus t-shirt or canvas shopping bag	
<b>Sunflower</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<i>Bask in the sunlight of having given to the success of the PEEC when you become a Sunflower donor.</i>	
• Above benefits plus additional t-shirt or canvas shopping bag	
<b>Wild Iris</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<i>Cast many hues of happiness among children learning from nature when you become a Wild Iris donor, named for Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow.</i>	
• Above benefits plus David Muench landscape photo book	
<b>Skyrocket Gilia</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<i>Soar among the stars of community leaders by becoming a Skyrocket Gilia donor.</i>	
• We will contact you to determine how to recognize this generous level of donation.	
<b>Wood Lily</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
<i>Wood Lily Donors are rare and remarkable like this beautiful, endangered plant.</i>	
• We will contact you to determine how to recognize this generous level of donation.	

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Send the form below with your check to PEEC, PO Box 547, Los Alamos, NM 87544

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- Please contact me about volunteering.
- Living Lightly Member
- General Member
- Kinnikinnick Club Member (under 12)
- Non-profit Organization Sponsor
- Penstemon Donor
- Sunflower Donor
- Wild Iris Donor
- Skyrocket Gilia Donor
- Wood Lily Donor

Besides the rewards of contributing to an effort you believe in, member benefits include interpretive hikes, electronic updates of local natural occurrences and events, and a quarterly newsletter.

PEEC is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax-deductible.

PEEC (Pajarito Environmental Education Center)

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