

A Note from the Executive Director:
Calling All Trailblazers!

When I took this picture months ago, I knew we were in for a long, unpredictable ride. From my experience as a backpacker and back-road wanderer, I know that breaks, bumps, and hurdles are inevitable, but the journey is priceless!



Our journey's been a bit bumpy and we've had some detours along our route since the schools closed in mid-March. Because our Board of Directors adopted a policy to deliver all our services remotely to ensure that our program participants and volunteers stay safe, we've called on many of our volunteers and classroom teachers to help us identify new ways to support students and teachers in their new remote learning environments.

Letting go isn't easy. Letting go of old ways, 'tried and true methods' of doing business, or patterns of thinking often takes time and patience. Our organization, like every other business, has been faced with many challenges in the past 7+ months. We've had to embrace layers of uncertainty and make difficult decisions. And that'll continue for some time.

Yet, thanks to my eagle's eye viewpoint in the Alliance, I'm lucky because I get to see the relentless passion, energy, and resourcefulness among our volunteers as we continue to blaze new trails together. We're still bringing scientists and STEM experts to the schools, but in new ways. For example:

- Our **Adopt-A-School** team has created more than 25 interactive STEM videos that teachers or parents can access through the Santa Fe Public Schools website.
- Our **Discovering CS** (Computer Science) team worked with teachers in spring to co-create virtual lesson plans for the district's 21st Century After-school Program.
- Our **Adopt-A-Scientist** program, which pairs a STEM expert with a teacher all year, allows us to partner with educators to support young STEM learners with enrichment activities and small group tutoring.

I hope this and future newsletters give you a better sense of what we're doing, how we're making a difference, and how you can get involved. While we discover new

ways of doing business, our essence remains the same. We exist to **inspire the scientist in every student!** Join us as we blaze new trails. We need your involvement and support whether you're an educator, volunteer, donor or trailblazer!



Diane Smogor, Executive Director

Teamwork to Meet the Covid-19 Challenge



Back in the old days, before March, the Santa Fe Alliance for Science's programs were entirely school-based, but COVID-19 turned our delivery model upside down. Students still needed science education and teachers still wanted professional support, so we pivoted, creating action teams to determine how best to reach children and teachers, safely and effectively.

We formed a **Creative Partnerships Team** to bring volunteers and teachers together to support kids in remote settings. At the request of many teachers, they will be focusing on science and math tutoring. Volunteers are invited to partner with one teacher and classroom for the remainder of this year, tutoring two or three students at a time for 30-40 minutes through Google Meet. Interested volunteers are asked to contact Board Member Suzanne Roepke, suzanne.roepke@sfafs.org.

Our **Adopt-a-School Team**, which had been working closely with Nina Otero Community School students during and after school, shifted to remote learning. To date they've produced more than 25 short videos, vetted by teachers, for at-home science activities and investigations. Produced with kids in mind, these videos embed best practices of building vocabulary and problem-solving skills. This growing library can be accessed through the [Santa Fe Public Schools Distance Learning](#) page; then follow the link, Click here for educational videos from various partnering community organizations.

We convened a **Virtual STEM Fair Team** to develop resources for teachers and kids in preparation for the virtual fairs we hope to host this year. Details on these Fairs are being worked out with the school district.

As Caren Shiozaki, SFAFS Board President summed it up, "When the pandemic pushed the schools into a remote operating mode, it amplified areas of need that had always existed, but it also amplified the consequences of not addressing them. More than ever, organizations supporting youth and education must symbiotically partner with

the schools to help them face the challenges of our time.”

Get Involved

Solidifying Our Partnership with the Santa Fe Public Schools

Santa Fe Alliance for Science took a giant leap forward in its mission of inspiring the scientist in every student when we signed a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Santa Fe Public School district (SFPS) on July 1.

This MOU for the first time formalizes and elevates our longstanding partnership with SFPS, through a cooperative agreement that outlines our activities to enhance STEM learning for students and teachers.

Specifically, the MOU spells out SFAFS’s scope of work in our Adopt-a-School Program at Nina Otero Community School, where SFAFS volunteers provide STEM learning and enrichment opportunities to K-8 students during school, after school and in summer programs. These programs are now being offered through videos and online tutoring because of the pandemic.

The memorandum also recognizes our start-to-finish STEM fair support, from conducting classroom experiments that model scientific method, to mentoring K-12 students on their projects, to serving as judges in school STEM fairs and the district-wide Expo.

“I can’t overstate the value of Santa Fe Alliance for Science,” said Rae Sue Vigil, Nina Otero third-grade teacher, “and the support I and my classroom have received from their expert and generous volunteers.”

Dr. Melissa Lomax, SFPS Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, said at a recent Zoom meeting, “Your partnership with the Santa Fe Public Schools is priceless and so important.”

Thanks to the MOU, we look forward to continuing this work with SFPS at least through June 2023.

Our Impact in a Year



Click on image to read full report.

The Santa Fe Alliance for Science made a significant impact in Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) in the 2019-2020 school year, despite the turmoil caused by COVID-19.

- More than 3,300 students in 26 public schools had direct contact with a Santa Fe Alliance for Science volunteer scientist or STEM expert, in a wide-ranging partnership program. When the pandemic forced schools to close, the volunteers rallied to support students and teachers by creating a library of digital STEM resources for remote learning.
- Our cadre of more than 80 volunteers gave students 4,250 hands-on experiences.
- More than 250 K-8 students took part in classroom science experiments, and over 200 K-12 students had the invaluable opportunity to discuss their school STEM project with an Alliance expert.
- More than 90 SFPS teachers partnered with Alliance volunteers to strengthen STEM learning in their classrooms and build their capacity to motivate the students.

One of these teachers, from Nina Otero Community School said, “Students were able to see that their work matters outside of the classroom. That is a powerful thing!!! It was an experience they continued to talk about and something they will always remember.”

Student-led science or STEM projects gave kids a chance to practice critical life skills such as solving problems, making observations, collecting data, and practicing teamwork. SFAFS judges assessed over 1,500 student STEM fair projects at 20 schools, providing not only evaluations but an opportunity to talk with a “real scientist” and observe how they think. “I couldn't believe how easy they were to talk to!” gushed one student.

SFAFS also continued its Adopt-a-School program this year, where volunteers work in the classrooms directly with students and teachers at Nina Otero Community School, in which 100 percent of students qualify for free lunch. Students participated in 40 STEM programs, resulting in 1,500 hands-on STEM exploration experiences with a scientist or STEM expert.

Nina Otero's Principal Dr. Angelia Moore said, "Our students were thrilled to be working directly with local scientists, engineers, and other STEM professionals in their community. And when schools closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the SFASF volunteers quickly responded to our need for remote learning resources."

New Board Member



Board Member Barb Bianchi with enthusiastic young scientists at Expo 2020.

We're delighted to welcome Barbara Bianchi to the Santa Fe Alliance for Science Board of Directors. Barbara has volunteered with us for eight years and brings tremendous expertise to our team, as a former elementary school teacher and New Mexico Public Education Department Administrator/Manager.

Barb currently leads our Virtual STEM Fair Team and can be contacted at barbara.bianchi@sfafs.org.

Read more [here](#).

Partnering to Support Young STEM Learners

Thank you to the generous individuals who support our work, and to the following organizations and businesses who make this all possible.



- Buckman Family Fund
- Celia Lipton Farris & Victor W. Farris Foundation
- Covid-19 Response Fund
- Dollars 4 Schools
- Susan & Conrad De Jong Fund



Help us to inspire more young STEM learners by making a gift today!

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