



NMSR Reports

The Newsletter of the New Mexicans for Science and Reason

NMSR Reports, David E. Thomas, Editor, 1201 N. Avenida de Chamiso Pl., Socorro, NM 87801 © 2026

JUNE MEETING:
NEW MEXICANS FOR SCIENCE AND REASON will hear
Luis Contreras-Vidal,
on “Data Centers: Promises vs. Reality”
Wednesday, June 17th, 2026
7:00 PM on ZOOM

FUTURE MEETINGS ANNOUNCED!

Luis Contreras-Vidal, on “Data Centers: Promises vs. Reality”



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17th, 2026 7:00PM on ZOOM

Fortunately, an ill-conceived proposal for a massive Data Center in Socorro has been put on hold for now, after facing considerable opposition in the community. Luis will be sharing some important lessons learned over the past few months.

Luis Contreras-Vidal, Ph.D. holds a Ph.D. in Experimental Physics and a Bachelor's degree in

Physics with a concentration in Atmospheric Physics from the New Mexico Tech. His graduate research focused on measuring high-energy photons produced by thunderstorms and high-voltage electrical discharges. He currently develops instrumentation for scientific vacuum systems and laser spectroscopy in private industry. As an outdoor enthusiast, Luis is also a trail runner and climber who enjoys exploring and protecting New Mexico's landscapes.

Passing of Alan Hale, 1958-2026



Astronomer extraordinaire Alan Hale passed away on June 6th, 2026. He was a co-discoverer of Comet Hale-Bopp, and a passionate advocate for science and critical thinking. He spoke to NMSR about his famous comet discovery in February of 1996. Here is a snippet about that talk:

“Hale then turned to a discussion of the “hype” surrounding Hale-Bopp and other comets. Richard Hoagland (of “Face On Mars” fame) has declared that Hale-Bopp is under the control of a mysterious alien. Quatrains written by Nostradamus in the 16th century, as well as Hopi Indian prophesies, are now being cited as predicting the appearance of Comet Hale-Bopp. In the 1910 appearance of Halley's Comet, unscrupulous individuals hawked “Comet Pills” to counteract the ill effects of poisonous gases in the comet's tail, even though the total amount of such gases was actually extremely small.

Dr. Hale plans to take advantage of his comet's fame to promote increased science literacy. He cautioned against complacency about asteroid/comet impacts on the Earth. Although Hale-Bopp will miss Earth by more than 1 AU, the newly-discovered Comet Hyakutake will come within 0.102 AU of our planet. Hyakutake's near-miss of Earth will occur in late March of this year; it was discovered in late January. That's not very much advance warning.”

New Mexicans for Science & Reason (NMSR)

NMSR is a non-profit group with the goals of promoting science, the scientific method, rational thinking, and critical examination of dubious or extraordinary claims. NMSR meets at 7 PM on a quarterly basis, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at a variable location. NMSR Reports is its official newsletter.

NMSR officers:

Dave Thomas, President

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Marilyn Savitt-Kring, Science Mom

Membership: \$25/year (hardcopy newsletter), or \$15/year (downloadable PDF), make your check payable to NMSR, send to treasurer (Debbie Thomas).

NMSR Advisors:

- *Mark Boslough*,
Adjunct Professor, University of New Mexico.
- *John Geissman*
Professor of Paleomagnetism
- *Alan Hale*
Southwest Institute for Space Research

Cyber-Cypher Clue: Y = W.

Bonus Puzzle Clue: Think Logically!

WANTED: READER ARTICLES & COMMENTARY

Got something to share with NMSR members? **Send it in!** ATTN: Dave Thomas, Editor, NMSR Reports.

REMEMBER, our next NMSR meeting is **June 17th at 7PM on ZOOM!**

PUZZLE TIME!

[Please send solutions to Dave Thomas at: nmsrdave@swcp.com, or at 1201 N Avenida de Chamiso Pl., Socorro NM 87801.]

June 2026 Bonus: "Losing Either Way"

Submitted by Dave Thomas

The Puzzle: You have been captured by the henchmen of the Mango Mussolini, and dragged before the Court. The Supreme Judge informs you that you must provide a statement about an observable fact. If the statement is True, you will be killed by a Firing Squad. If the statement is



False, you will be killed by Lethal Injection. After you make your statement, however, the Judge reluctantly sets you free.

The June Bonus: What was your statement?

May 2026 Bonus Solution: "Pirate Gold"

Submitted by Dave Thomas

The Puzzle: There are 5 islands in a row. The Pirate known as the Mandarin Menace has a ton of gold hidden on one of them. During the day you have enough time to sail to just one island to find the gold. But, every night, the pirate moves all that gold exactly one island over. If it was on island 3, it gets moved to either island 2 or 4.

The May Bonus: What is the best strategy for finding the gold? Is it possible to be *sure* of finding the gold?

Answer: Searching islands 2, 3, 4, then 2, 3, 4 again is guaranteed to find the gold. It's amazing!

Congrats to: Mike Arms, Keith Gilbert and Harold Gaines.

Cyber-Cypher: JUNE 2026 PUZZLE

(Submitted by Dave Thomas)

The following letters are a simple substitution cypher. If R stands for L, R will stand for L everywhere. Your Cyber-Cypher Clue: Clue? Oh, well - if you must, see p. 2.

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" D I J P J O L - U K E           J V J H L I N O M H
A I K M O P   K I J   H N C D V J L J   C N I N O P ,
A B L       L W J E       Y M V V       P L K I L       L N
L W M O X ,   K O U   J Z J O L B K V V E ,   L W J E
Y M V V       H N C D V J L J V E       N B L - L W M O X
L W J M I   C K X J I P . "   -   K I L W B I   H .
H V K I X J
```

SUPER SECRET WORD!

However you prefer to do the cypher itself (above or below), simply duplicate those actions on the alphabetized row of cypher letters below. You'll build an answer key, and you'll also reveal - the Super Secret Word!

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

APRIL 2026 CYPHER SOLUTION

"AMERICA CANNOT FUNCTION IF PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS TO DEAL WITH CO-EQUAL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT HAVING THE ABILITY TO CHECK HIS POWER." - PRESS SECRETARY KAROLINE LEAVITT

Esteemed April Code Crackers: Mike Arms* and Austin Moede*!

***Secret Word:** "LIB FOUNDERS WHACKY"

SOCORRO STUMPER

Need more Secret Word Cryptograms? New puzzles every week at www.nmsr.org/SocorroStumper.htm

Science Fair Winners!

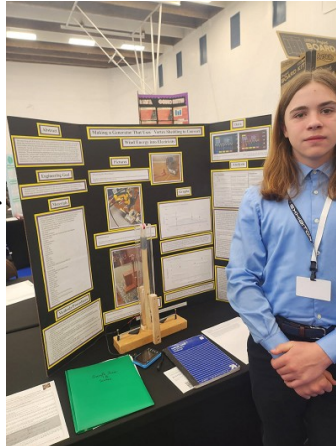
INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR

A PROGRAM OF THE SOCIETY FOR SCIENCE & THE PUBLIC

Here are the Special Award winners from the 2026 International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) for the state of New Mexico, which took place on April 12th:

The Officers of the New Mexicans for Science and Reason are pleased to present a \$200 Cash Award to

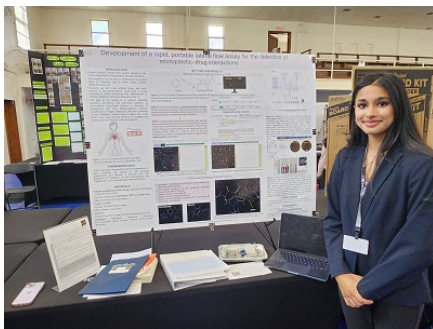
Gareth Jones, Albuquerque Institute of Math & Science, For an Outstanding 2026 New Mexico Science & Engineering Fair Project in Junior Engineering Technology: Statics and Dynamics, “Making a Generator that uses Vortex Shedding to Convert Wind Energy into Electricity.”



The Officers of the NMSR’s sister group, the Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education

(CESE), are pleased to present a \$200 Cash Award to **Ahana Koushik**, Albuquerque Academy, For an Outstanding 2026 New Mexico

Science & Engineering Fair Project in Senior Chemistry, “Development of a Rapid Portable Lateral Flow Assay for the Detection of Microplastic-Drug Interactions”



SkeptiCamp a Success!

Following up on the success of the last *SkeptiCamp New Mexico* in June 2024, a second Skepticamp event took place on Saturday, May 2, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at UNM’s Continuing Education Conference Center. Several attendees also went on a field trip on Sunday, May 3.

The event began with Ruth Frazier’s delightful tales of her many adventures with Ken Frazier, long-time editor of the *Skeptical Inquirer*. Next up was Melanie Trecek-King, a speaker, writer, and educator dedicated to helping people think more clearly. She talked about her project “Thinking Is Power”, and presented many effective examples of ways to encourage critical thinking.



Frazier

Trecek-King

Susan Gerbic took the stage to describe how professional psychics employ a technique called cold reading, and showed vivid examples of people being fooled into thinking these psychics could learn about them from dead people. Susan runs the popular YouTube channel “Psychics Explained - Grief Vampire Edition.” She has posted several videos from Skepticamp on her “About Time” YouTube channel, and these can be found via links at the main website, <https://www.skepticampnm.com>.



Mark Boslough took a very critical look at claims of an ancient asteroid impact popularized by the “Cosmic Tuskers”, and how this evolved into sensational papers claiming evidence of the Biblical story of “Sodom and Gomorrah.” The paper has since been withdrawn for numerous errors and false claims, but his hasn’t dampened the zeal of comet believers.



Kurly Tlapoyawa, an archaeologist, ethnohistorian, and filmmaker, spoke about “Debunking New Mexico’s ‘Hispanic’ Myth.” While some New Mexicans believe they are descended directly from residents of Spain, Kurly presented several lines of evidence that their ancestry stems from Mexico itself.



Dave Thomas gave an update on the flat Earth movement, focusing on “The Final Experiment,” which saw four Flat Earth proponents and four “Globers” travel to Antarctica in December of 2024 to witness the 24-



hour sun there. While the sun made a complete circle around the team in Antarctica, it could not possibly do so on the “flat earth pizza” described by believers. Dave also talked about the flat earth cries of “Hoax!” regarding the recent Artemis moon flyby.

David Weinberg MD, a retired academic physician and Professor Emeritus at Medical College of Wisconsin, discussed the bizarre practice called “Eating the Sun.” While some actually believe they can create nutrients by staring at the sun, David showed hilarious videos of the leader of this movement sneaking off to a restaurant to enjoy a scrumptious meal of real food.



Weinberg

Loftus

Matthew Lee Loftus gave a stirring presentation on his forays into social media to combat pseudoscience and disinformation via his “Credible Hulk” postings and videos. He provided some vivid examples of bunk on the internet, and how he counters such attacks on science.

Ben Radford’s talk was about the August 2016 sighting of a mysterious figure at a gas station south of Lima, Peru at about 3:50 AM. Ben showed that this was almost certainly a loose “helium bunny” toy, and showed that it was even acknowledged as such in the original video. Those clips were left out by producers, to give the impression of a truly strange floating “entity.”

The conference concluded with a nice dinner in Old Town. On Sunday, five plucky attendees visited the site of the “Los Lunas Decalogue,” a supposed pre-Columbian rendition of the 10 Commandments in archaic

Hebrew. Ben explained to the hikers how this was most likely a hoax connected to UNM archaeologist Frank Hibben.



Videos of past meetings are available at <http://www.nmsr.org/meetings.htm>.

Skeptiverse Haiku for June! by Keith Thomas

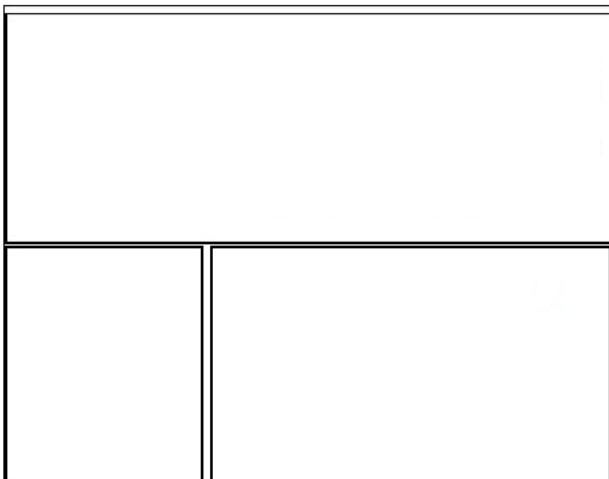
The Cruise Industry May find itself haunted by The Hanta Virus.	The Jack-In-The-Box Wants toy Collectors to know He’s no Spring Chicken!
Weather Disasters Will sometimes precipitate a Flood of Rumors.	Have Waffle House Guests Ever teleported to A FEMA Event?
Good to seek skeptics Pouring cold water over Ice bath wellness claims.	Don’t worry! There’s still A reliable flow of Old-fashioned Snake Oil.

The NMSR e-mail list is fun! It’s an e-mail list with news announcements of interest to NMSR members, discussions about news of the times, and more. To join, send a request to nmsrdave@swcp.com.

DUES check the date on your mailing label. If it's time for you to renew, or to make a contribution, please make your check **payable to NMSR**, and send it to Debbie Thomas, NMSR Treasurer, 3205 Alcazar NE, Albuquerque., NM 87110
 Name _____
 Address _____
Membership \$25 per annum (hard copy newsletter), or \$15 per annum (online newsletter).

Thanks to: John Covan, Debbie Thomas, Keith Thomas and all of our Puzzlers!

NMSR.ORG IS GOING TO BE UPDATED SOON! VISIT NOW TO ACCESS ARTICLES BEFORE THEY’RE GONE!



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IN THIS ISSUE:
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SKEPTICAMP-NM Summary

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