



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Chamizal News Release

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Chamizal National Memorial has a New Mascot: Chami the Ground Squirrel.

A new member of the Chamizal National Memorial team has just reported for duty - the memorial's new mascot, Chami the Ground Squirrel. The story of Chami began a few years ago in relation to a concern that has been challenging the staff. One of the common misconceptions about urban units of the National Park System is that they do not have wildlife. And while it would be a surprise to see a black bear lumber across the memorial's grounds, there is a thriving community of spotted ground squirrels. There have long been challenges with people trying to capture them to keep as pets, and visitors hurting or killing them. The staff came up with the brilliant idea to create a mascot to teach about the memorial's natural resources and the idea of Chami was born!

As with many great ideas, it started to grow and spread. Chami was also enlisted to promote and be the face of the memorial's new Junior Ranger program. He made his first appearance as part of the memorial's bilingual Web Ranger program. The memorial also has developed a new Junior Ranger booklet featuring Chami. The memorial tapped into the El Paso art scene and put out a call for artwork for the booklet. Six different artists submitted work. Nacho Garcia, an artist and book illustrator, was chosen. Mr. Garcia created a portfolio of wonderful images that are now the heart of the new Junior Ranger Booklet/program.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

The booklet is divided into four different sections, providing a way for Jr. Ranger's of all ages to learn about the Chamizal Story:

The Friendship section - 5-6 year olds

The Cooperation section – 7-9 years old

The Diplomacy section – 10-12 years old

The Unity section - Friends and families of any age!

Chami's Junior Ranger Booklet is most definitely challenging, but a rewarding experience. Junior rangers will be awarded an official Junior Ranger patch and badge. The booklet is designed to further promote the park's mission of cultural understanding and encourage stewardship of the memorial and the whole National Park System.

Finally the staff felt Chami should be more than just an image on a page; he should be a physical presence that could spread the memorial's message of goodwill, cooperation, and cultural understanding. So now that effort has come in full effect. Chami's birth certificate has him at 6' 1" and 250 lbs. Wearing his Junior Ranger vest and, of course, the unmistakable Park Ranger Stetson, Chami will be helping spread the story of Chamizal National Memorial and the National Park Service at memorial events big and small. He is sure to become a well recognized and well loved part of the El Paso community.

On your next visit to the memorial, keep your eyes open for Chami the Ground Squirrel

Ask a Park Ranger for a Junior Ranger booklet!

Chamizal NM Visitor Center hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10am to 5pm. Call (915) 532-7273 for more information or visit our website <http://www.nps.gov/cham/>.

Images Available