

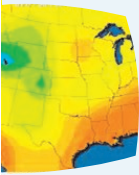


▶ EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT:
MEET OUR ELECTRONIC TECH-
NICIAN, RON EIMILLER 2

○ ISSUE 4 | ○ Autumn | ○ 2013



▶ LEARN ABOUT OUR PART-
NERSHIP WITH OUR TV AND
PRINT MEDIA PARTNERS... 3



▶ CLIMATE RECAP FOR
SUMMER AND OUTLOOK FOR
THE UPCOMING AUTUMN .. 4

Tallahassee *topics*

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

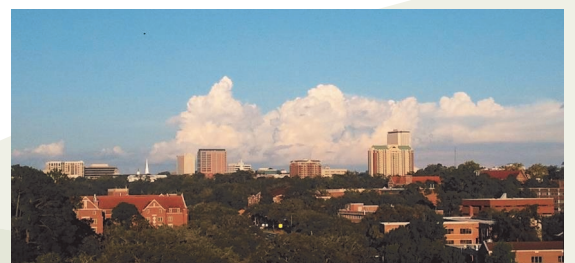
The NWS Tallahassee Mentor Program

By Ron Block, Michael Navarro & Andy Lahr

The NWS Tallahassee is co-located with the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences at Florida State University, which facilitates professional interactions between NWS meteorologists and students. There are three main programs through which students can gain direct experience in our office: the volunteer, mentorship, and research programs. Initiated in 2007 by forecaster Kelly Godsey, the mentorship program has evolved into one that pairs highly motivated upper level undergraduate or graduate students with NWS meteorologists during an intense three and half month summer season. The students are assigned training modules to increase understanding of operational concepts while shadowing assigned staff in their rotating shifts. They gain knowledge and responsibility in the routine and non-routine tasks, increasingly assisting the forecasters in the performance of their duties. This highly successful program also provides an opportunity to experience rotating shiftwork and become immersed in the NWS culture. This is critical in helping students determine if an NWS career would fit their life and career goals. Those that have completed the program gain confidence and abilities that make them highly competitive when pursuing career opportu-

nities. Some recent success stories from the program include meteorologists Katie Moore (NWS Tallahassee), Jimmy Taeger (NWS San Diego), Matthew Bloemer (NWS Key West) and Tiffany Hersey (Florida Division of Emergency Management).

During this summer, graduate students Michael Navarro and Andy Lahr participated in the mentorship program. For Michael, learning directly from experienced and knowledgeable forecasters was the greatest advantage he gained. "Much of this simply cannot be gleaned from a textbook or classroom, but only by direct one-on-one student and forecaster interactions. I was able to gain experience in everything from public outreach to tropical storm operations". Andy Lahr agrees and adds "experience gained in understanding how to interpret and update grids, write forecasts and launch weather balloons was particularly noteworthy". He also lauds the forecaster support in helping prepare a competitive resume. Both hope that this program will serve as a springboard to a career as an NWS meteorologist and highly recommend it to all students interested in pursuing a career with us.





Employee Spotlight

Ron Eimiller

Electronic Technician (ET) here since 1996

Interviewed by Katie Moore (below right)

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NOAA Weather Radio Frequencies

- ◆ KIH-24 Tallahassee (162.400 MHz)
- ◆ KGG-67 Panama City (162.550) MHz
- ◆ WWF-86 Eastpoint (162.500 MHz)
- ◆ WWF-88 Salem (162.425 MHz)
- ◆ WNG-63 Sneads (162.425 MHz)
- ◆ WWH-20 Homes Co. (162.450 MHz)
- ◆ WXM-79 Hahira (162.500 MHz)
- ◆ WXK-53 Pelham (162.55 MHz)
- ◆ KZZ-70 Blakely (162.525 MHz)
- ◆ KWN-50 Ashburn (162.450 MHz)

Q: You're our radar specialist here at the office. What first got you involved in working on radars?

A: As for Radars, it is only one of the systems I work on. The NWS ET is multifunctional, meaning we work on everything, so radar is just one of the specialty items I get to work on. Radars, at least Doppler Radar were new when I was in the military and I have always liked the fact we could see things so far away, with what would be equal to a flashlight beam. It's like seeing things in the dark, seeing what no one else could.

Q: What's your typical day like?

A: The ET is like a fireman; he is expected to perform in all situations. No matter what the electronic problem, he is the only one that stands between total and utter failure of a system. Our forecasters work extremely hard to perfect their forecast and need all the systems operational to deliver that product. It's up to the ET to make sure they have what they need in operational systems and resources. So my typical day is never typical, always something new happening.

Q: What's your favorite part of the job?

A: Getting paid is a good part of the job (laughs), but in all seriousness it's about the people. We have some of the most educated and professional people in the world working for the weather service. Everyone supports everyone here in the weather service; we have national support, regional support and local support. Everyone working hard for a common goal. For instance, we have a local management system that works hard to ensure the public is informed about what we do here. We have our own administrator to keep up with the paperwork and process payroll. Then we have the forecasters working hard to reach out and inform the public of dangers that they may not see coming. We have the HMT's working hard to interface with people out in the field and keeping data collection up to date with our CO-OP program. Then we have the ET's making sure all systems are available for 24/7 use. It's like one big team effort.

Q: What's the most challenging part of the job?

A: Time, is the simple answer. When a electronic system becomes unstable or not operational at all; time is now an ET's enemy. Like I pointed out earlier, the forecasters needs all the resources they can get, to make a valid assessment of the incoming weather or flooding; in fact, lives very well may depend on a forecaster delivering that warning out in

the proper amount of time for some family to get out of the way of an incoming storm. So if a system fails, that is one less resource for a forecaster to make a sound assessment of a possible threat to the public; so it is imperative the systems be restored as fast as possible. In summary, the forecaster needs as much time and information as possible, to ensure the best forecast or warning possible, and the ET's are on the front line ensuring that they have the resources they need, when they need them.

Q: How has the ET job in general, and your job in particular, evolved since you joined the NWS?

A: Electronics has been really molded by the computer area. Everything is controlled by computers now. If you do not feel comfortable with computers, then electronics is going to feel the same way. ETs are always training on new systems and new types of computers. The NWS strives to maintain a pretty good set of data collection and communication devices. Today's forecaster utilizes more info today than 20 years ago, so the computer systems are bigger and faster than 20 years ago, not to mention more numerous. There are more systems and more connectivity around the USA than ever before and that is accomplished by new computer systems always being updated, which in turns means the ET's are always being trained with new information, learning more and more systems than ever before. Today's computer systems get more complex every year, which is a challenge for everyone in the NWS. Forecasters and management alike strive to keep up with all the new updates and program changes. We now have more connectivity to other offices, managers, the public, and other forecasters with video, audio, and other computer interfaces than ever before. This is all new technology and systems that need to be maintained. The ET shop is no longer just electronic techs that swap out wind bottles. They have evolved to become system engineers which are responsible for maintaining, modifying, installing, and programming electronic solutions for the NWS.

Q: What do you like to do when you're off duty?

A: Love the beach and all the nice things that go with it. I am on the NWS TAE bowling team and have been part of the NWS softball team which is on hold at the moment. Mostly, I love team sports and hope in the future the office finds more sports to compete in as a team. It's always nice to work hard and play hard as a team, it builds up a real camaraderie with your coworkers. Some of the nicest people I have met have been in the NWS; it's been a pleasure to serve with them. As Jim Bolden once said, "we need a secret hand shake." LOL



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This Quarter's Focus:

The NWS-Media Partnership

by Ron Block & Katie Moore



The relationship between the National Weather Service in Tallahassee (NWS) and the broadcast and print media is a symbiotic one through which we assist each other to disseminate timely information to the public to help protect life and property. NWS also provides its expertise in understanding the local climate and the intricacies of severe weather to the media, who relay this information to the public. In turn, the media delivers ground truth and verification that the NWS often needs when the data we're interpreting is not so clear cut.

"It sounds simple, but serving as a conduit between the experts and the public is the essence of media's role in society," says Gerald Ensley of the *Tallahassee Democrat*. The perspective of broadcast media is very similar. As Mike Morrison of WFXL (FOX) in Albany, GA notes, "Broadcast meteorologists strive to deliver accurate short- to medium-term forecasts and give people good information before, during and after high impact events". Mike says that the NWS office plays a key role in their success of attaining those goals. Ensley agrees, "Over my 35 years as a Tallahassee reporter, the NWS meteorologists and forecasters have been almost uniformly patient and informative every time I interview them. They have been willing to explain the weather, its historical background and data." Similarly, Jeff Burlew states, "In my 13-plus years at the *Tallahassee Democrat*, I've never known the NWS to be anything but helpful and informative. The meteorologists do a great job of making themselves available to us both on fair-weather days, when we may be writing about drought or some other weather topic, and when severe weather is bearing down."

"Two-way communication is critical in getting time-sensitive, potentially life-saving information to the general public," says Nate Harrington, broadcast meteorologist at WTVY (CBS), WTVY3 (CW), and WRGX (NBC) in Dothan, AL (pictured above). To help speed up the two-way communication, we use a special online chat known as NWSChat. For Nate, the benefits to this system are that, "we can relay to the NWS the reports we are getting on our end through viewer calls and e-mails. In return the NWS gives us a heads up when a new watch or warning will be issued, and describes conditions that are leading to the decisions that are being made." Cassanova Nurse of WTXL (ABC) in Tallahassee, FL agrees saying, "the NWSChat system not only gives me insight into their perspectives during stormy situations, but also acts as a two-way information line." NWSChat allows Cassanova to "quickly and easily inform the WFO of reports to aid in storm assessments". Additionally, we use social media networks to spread each others' reports and information. Mike says, "This NWS office does a great job of producing info-graphics, many of which I will proudly repost or re-tweet as they are concise and easy to understand by the public." NWS will also often re-post or re-tweet viewer reports sent from the local media. It is clear that the local weather office and area media demonstrate an effective partnership which benefits the community.

Recent & Upcoming Staffing Changes

By Mark Wool

After a period of stability in our office staffing, we welcome four new faces to the NWS Tallahassee community. During the first week of fall semester, FSU students Paxton Fell (left) and Bianca Hernandez (right) began volunteering at the office. Paxton is a junior meteorology student and will be working with the NWS for the very first time. Bianca is a senior meteorology student who volunteered over the summer at the NWS office in Tampa. While there, she interned with the NOAA Hurricane Hunters that operate out of MacDill AFB.

We are also very excited to welcome two new interns to the office. Emma Weston and Claudia McDermott will be filling two critical vacancies in our observation program desk rotation and their arrival is eagerly awaited later this month. Emma is a Texas A&M grad and has been working with the National Data Buoy Center (NDBC) in Gulfport, MS as a student (SCEP) intern beginning in 2009, then as a permanent NDBC employee since her 2011 graduation. Claudia has been working with the USAF (both active duty and in a reserve role) since she graduated from Northern Illinois University in 2008. She recently finished a reserve stint at Scott AFB in St Louis.





Management-Admin Team

Jane Hollingsworth, MIC
Jeffrey Evans, WCM
SOO (Vacant)
Doug Sherrick, ESA
Chris Duggan, ASA
Toan Tran, ITO
Hydrologist (Vacant)

Lead Forecasters

Ron Block
Mark Wool
Ken Gould
Jeff Fournier
Parks Camp

Journeyman Forecasters

Tim Barry
Kelly Godsey
Don Van Dyke
Alex Lamers
Donal Harrigan

HMT/Interns

Jim Bolden, OPL
Katie Moore
Emma Weston
Claudia McDermott

Electronic Technicians

Ron Eimiller
Clifton Bennett

Diversity & Outreach Efforts

By Ron Block, Mark Wool and Jeffrey Evans

The office remains active in both diversity and outreach activities. In June, the Diversity Team published its third *Tallahassee Topics* newsletter and hosted its third office heritage-themed meal and meeting. The day began with a Middle Eastern feast to celebrate Jewish Heritage Month. The meeting celebrated Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) pride month. The event was led by senior forecaster, Mark Wool (below left) who began the activity by highlighting the history of this movement. The office then engaged in a lively and, given recent Supreme Court rulings, relevant roundtable discussion led by local LGBT leaders. Jerry Edwards (below right) is long-time president of the Tallahassee Prime Timers, a social club geared toward middle aged and older gay men. Stephen Hall (at center) is Chairman of the Board of The Family Tree organization, which provides service and support for the local LGBT community. Our next meeting will be in October and will highlight Hispanic Heritage Month. The staff is looking forward to the Hispanic-themed meal.



With the advent of the summer season, hurricanes became the focus of our outreach activities. Led by Jeff Evans and Kelly Godsey, preparedness-focused presentations were conducted in multiple counties across North Florida, Southern Georgia and Southeast Alabama including a pair of rotary clubs. Kelly also developed a table-top hurricane exercise which Florida State University used to better prepare their community. In June, Alex Lamers conducted a hurricane talk for the Red Cross and HAM Skywarn group. In July, Jeff gave talks on severe weather preparedness to a senior citizens' center in Tallahassee, and to a *FIRST Lego League (FLL)* group in Panama City. Mark Wool led an office tour for the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs Youth Group.

The office continued to host four FSU graduate students who have assumed increasing responsibilities assisting the forecasters in their duties. During late August, we began participating in the Externship Program hosting a local high school senior who shadows the staff learning the operations of a NWS office.

Climate Recap for Summer

By Tim Barry

The climate for Tallahassee during the 3-month period of June 2013 through August 2013 saw temperatures that were slightly warmer than normal. The average temperature was 81.9 degrees, 0.6 above normal. The highest temperature recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 98 degrees on June 12th and 13th and the lowest was 69 degrees on June 7th, July 12th and July 13th. This marks the 2nd consecutive summer without the max temperature reaching or exceeding 100 degrees. The last time Tallahassee saw a 100 degree temperature was on May 26th, 2012. There were no temperature records tied or broken.

The biggest weather news this summer was the rain. Summer is Tallahassee's wet season and on average we get 38% of our annual rainfall in the 3-month period. This year Tallahassee received 30.90" of rain, 8.65" above normal, which is over half (52%) of what we would normally see in an entire year. This made it our 8th wettest summer on record. July was the wettest month with 14.96", which was 7.79" above normal. There were 25 days in the month of July with measurable rainfall (≥ 0.01) and 30 days with at least a trace of rain. This past summer, there were 22 days with at least a half inch of rain and 8 days with an inch or more recorded at the airport. The greatest amount in a 24-hour period for the summer was 2.92" from July 2nd-3rd. The following are new daily rainfall records: 2.53" on July 3rd, 2.5" on July 20th, and 2.2" on August 17th. Surprisingly, all of this rain occurred with only a single tropical system, Andrea, impacting the local Tallahassee area. The abundant rains were primarily due to a persistent weather pattern that featured an upper level trough over the eastern U.S. which helped pull deep layer moisture northward from the Gulf of Mexico and tropics.

Climate Outlook for Fall

By Tim Barry

The latest outlook for fall (September through November) from the Climate Prediction Center calls for equal chances of experiencing above, normal and below normal temperatures and rainfall. The average temperature for Tallahassee during fall is 69.3 degrees and the average rainfall is 11.42". Fall is on average our driest season so hopefully we will have a chance to dry out a bit after such a very wet summer. Early to mid-September is the climatological peak of the hurricane season which runs through the end of November. So far this season, there have been 6 named storms, none of which reached hurricane status. The updated 2013 hurricane season forecast by NOAA calls for 13 to 19 named storms; including 6 to 9 hurricanes. Three to five storms could reach major hurricane status with sustained winds of 111 mph or more.

