In the Spotlight: OAR Hispanic Scientists

SHIRLEY MURILLO
What do you do at OAR?

I am a research meteorologist for the Hurricane Research Division (HRD) which is part of the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) in Miami, FL. My research involves studying the surface wind field of tropical cyclones. During the hurricane season I participate in hurricane research mission and fly into the storms. I am part of a team of scientists onboard NOAA’s WP-3D Orion aircraft collecting in-situ measurements.

How did you get interested in science?
I became interested in weather when I was young. Growing up in South Florida my first experience with a hurricane was when Hurricane Andrew made landfall in 1992. Seeing the damage caused me awestruck and intrigued to learn about hurricanes. I also attended a magnet high school where I got the opportunity to do an science internship at HRD.

Did you have any role models when you were growing up?
My parents were my role models growing up. They were dedicated and passionate about their careers. I admired these traits about them.

Do you have scientists who were heroes to you, and were any Latino?
Growing up I admired Sally Ride. At the time she was the only women scientist I knew of and had seen on TV. I felt empowered to pursue a career in science.

Where did you receive your education?
I received my Bachelor’s degree (Meteorology) from Florida State University and my Master’s degree (Meteorology) from the University of Hawai’i.

What are your thoughts on encouraging minority students to think of science as a career option?
Students should be encouraged to follow their dreams. I think that doing an internship really makes that dream a reality. It gives students an inside look as to what the career is all about.

Are you involved in any community/education outreach activities?
Throughout my career I’ve been involved in numerous outreach activities. I will be attending this year’s SACNAS and MAES annual conferences and giving a workshop on Careers in NOAA/OAR.

How have these organizations helped you?
These organizations have helped me build a network of peers in science.

JOHN CORTINAS
What do you do at OAR?
I’m a meteorologist and the program director of the OAR Cooperative Institute program.

How did you get interested in science?
Although I was always an inquisitive child, my interest in science developed in grade school because of the exciting things that I was taught by an enthusiastic science teacher.

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Hispanic Heritage Month

I have been involved with community/education outreach activities primarily within the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and the American Meteorological Society.

How have these organizations helped you?
These organizations have provided me with a large network of scientists and other scientific professionals from which to draw expertise and guidance on conducting research, and successful student and scientific career development.

Calendar of Hispanic Events

September 30 to October 3, 2010
The SACNAS (Advancing Hispanics/Chicanos and Native Americans in Science) National Conference & MAES (Mexican American Engineers & Scientists) Symposium will take place concurrently in Anaheim, CA. Shirley Murillo and John Cortinas will be representing OAR at these conferences. Website: www.sacnas.org and www.maes-natl.org

October 6 to 7, 2010
OPM sponsored Puerto Rico Federal Hiring Event and Training Workshop Series in San Juan, PR Email: Carmen.andujar@opm.gov

October 13, 2010
NOAA-OAR Hispanic Heritage Month presentation “Los Niños y las Niñas – Engaging Hispanics in STEM Guest Speaker: Marina LaGrave 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon Boulder, CO Email: Georgia.madrid@noaa.gov

October 20–21, 2010
2nd Annual National Image Inc Region VIII Training Seminar in Denver, CO Email: Jdavalos.natlimage@ymail.com

October 27–31, 2010
SHPE (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers) Annual Conference in Cincinnati, OH Website: www.shpe.org/shpe2010

November 29–30, 2010
3rd Annual Federal Hispanic Career Advancement Summit in Bethesda, MD Email: Clement.sara@dol.gov

Did you have any role models when you were growing up?
I do not recall having any role models as a child, but as an adult I have several role models that I have met throughout my career.

Do you have scientists who were heroes to you, and were any Latino?
While I wouldn’t consider any scientist a hero to me, there are many scientists from all backgrounds that I admire. My strongest admiration is for those that have strong affinity for being an outstanding scientist and are.

Where did you receive your education?
I attended several universities to obtain my degrees: University of Nebraska - Omaha, Metropolitan State College of Denver, and the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, GA.

What are your thoughts on encouraging minority students to think of science as a career option?
Because of the increasing need for people to be scientifically and technologically literate regardless of their career choice, I feel strongly about encouraging minority students that have an interest in science to pursue a career in some scientific discipline. The shifting demographics in the US indicate that this country must make sure that students from growing ethnic and racial populations are pursuing scientific careers to ensure that the US can improve the current standard of living through advancements in science. Without a corresponding increase of scientists from increasing ethnic and racial populations, the US may find that the majority groups that have traditionally supplied scientists are now decreasing with a corresponding decrease in the number of graduates with science degrees, leaving the US behind in achieving future scientific advancements that will be needed to solve the world’s problems.

Are you involved in any community/education outreach activities?

2 CONNECTIONS - EEO/Diversity Newsletter for NOAA Research
ESRL/GSD - Intern from Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) shares his experience.

My full name is Mario Rafael Lopez de Victoria Garcia. I was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico where I still live. I just graduated in May with my Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science from the University of Puerto Rico in Bayamon Campus. My interest in science includes computer programming and software, networking, web development, supercomputing and project management. I’ve been doing a little of everything here in GSD.

My first time participating in the HACU internship was last summer, in which I interned with the FAA in Washington, DC. There I worked with the office of Airports Planning & Programming in project management related work. I went back to Puerto Rico to finish my studies and in the summer of 2010 I decided I would come back and gain some more experience. I was picked by NOAA/GSD as a computer science intern to work with Pam Weber and her team in Boulder, Colorado. I was pretty excited because this time I was going to be a field intern. After working for the summer, I was asked if I wanted to extend my internship as a fall intern and obviously I accepted. Getting to work until December gets me even more excited because it would be my first time seeing snow. I hope it doesn’t get too cold, though, since Puerto Rico is always warm and humid.

My experience working for GSD has been unforgettable and rewarding. I’ve learned a lot and I’ve been open to work with different sections within GSD. I’ve worked with supercomputing, networking, system administration, web development, facility, data center and system support. This gives me a broad perspective regarding my interests in computer science.

This is the first year that GSD has used the HACU internship program and they have already signed up for next year. Pam Weber, GSD ITS Chief, said HACU was used very successfully at USDA where she formerly worked and Mario has been a real asset to GSD. Mario’s mentor is Jeff Van Buskirk.

For more information on the HACU internship program, please visit website at http://www.hacu.net/hacu/HNIP_EN.asp

ARL/ATDD
Lynne Satterfield volunteered time with the Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D), in Oak Ridge, TN. The mission of RFB&D is to create opportunities for individual success by providing and promoting the effective use of accessible educational materials. Lynne reads sections of books and checks the finished file recordings of other books for correctly placed marks. Lynn has been a volunteer of this program for several years.

GLERL
GLERL hosted nine students from the Summer Fellows program through CILER (Cooperative Institute for Limnology and Ecosystem Research), two students from the NOAA Literacy Fellow program, and two students from the Hollings Scholars program. In addition, there were eight students working with GLERL and CILER scientists at the Ann Arbor and Muskegon locations. Jo Ann Banda, a CILER student and graduate student at University of Toledo, studied and wrote an abstract on “Validation of HIF1α as a biomarker for hypoxic exposure to yellow perch.” Yellow perch is an important Great Lakes fishery that is experiencing an increase in hypoxic conditions.

GFDL
Nikolas “Nikos” Hatzianastasiou, a Fulbright Scholar from Greece spent the summer at GFDL reevaluating GFDL’s climate model with actual aerosol measurement data for the Mediterranean. Read more at: www.oar.noaa.gov/news/archive/2010/scholar_reevaluates_model.html.

PMEL
Dr. Meghan Cronin coached a team of 5th grade girls from Bryant Elementary School twice a week for an hour in preparation for a statewide math championship in Blaine, WA on April 17, 2010. The team placed 49th out of 107.

AOML
Kimmaree Horvath, a Hollings scholar from the University of Akron (Ohio), worked with Drs. Jim Hendee (AOML/ Ocean Chemistry Division) and Derek Manzello (NRC Post-Doc) this summer. Kimmaree received 1st Place recognition out of the more than 100 Scholars in the 2009-2010 Hollings program, for her presentation, “Coral reef response to climate change and ocean acidification: Building the base-line.” She helped with field studies on coral growth, bioerosion, and seawater CO2 from 6 reef sites in the Florida Keys.
At the opening plenary session, the Mistress of Ceremonies was KSHB (NBC) local news anchor Cynthia Newsome, whose knowledge, charm and humor made her an excellent choice. Saxton Walker, a young man unmistakably destined for great things, 17 years old and a former BIG Oratorical Scholarship Recipient, was also featured. His speaking and motivational skills and the experiences he referred to, far surpassed what my teenager presumptions were. It was suggested that we get his autograph now, as later its value was sure to rise. The keynote speaker, Dr. Randal D. Pinkett, received an MBA & Ph.D., from MIT and a Rhoads Scholarship and MS in Electrical Engineering from Oxford. He is the co-author of the book “Black Faces in White Places: 10 Game Changing Strategies to Achieve Success” and the winner of NBC’s hit show, “The Apprentice” with Donald Trump. He also attends the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, NJ, the church where I was married in 1979. Six degrees ... The essence of Dr. Pinkett’s message could be summed up in three words, Legacy, Legacy, Legacy. He said, “Success is what you do for yourself; greatness is what you do for others.” My favorite quote, “Sorrow always looks down, worry always looks around, and faith always looks up.”
Special Emphasis Activities

retention of Hispanics in the Federal government; and Thomas Saenz, President and General Counsel of the Mexican American Legal & Educational Fund (MALDEF) who spoke about current civil rights issues affecting the Hispanic community.

One workshop, “Federal Agency Hispanic Employment” included a panel of Senior Executives who gave information on strategies and initiatives undertaken by their agencies to increase Hispanic representation. Rafael De Leon, EPA, said that the first thing he did when he became HEPM was to eliminate the zeroes. “Nothing sticks out like a zero and the goal was to get one Hispanic in each of the major occupations at EPA.” He said that while Hispanics are still underrepresented at EPA, they did eliminate the zeroes. He also spoke about a new initiative to attract Hispanics to EPA called Beyond Translation. Some of the goals of Beyond Translation is to identify environmental and public health challenges in the Hispanic community and translate them into partnering opportunities, as well as prepare students through activities promoting careers in STEM. “There is more to being a Latino then just translating documents” said De Leon, “we need to think about the health of our community and make EPA culturally relevant to the Hispanic community.”

Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) visit NOAA in Boulder

Larry Gehring and Nate Slattengren, from DVR, gave a very informative and educational presentation to members of the OAR EEO Advisory Committee on 8/27/10. DVR is Colorado’s leading placement organization for people with disabilities.

Larry provided an overview of DVR. He said that they are charged with helping individuals with disabilities prepare for work, obtain employment and maintain employment. They also partner with Federal employers to recruit qualified candidates, facilitate accommodations and support current employees. Larry said that individuals with disabilities represent a significant source of productivity and encouraged NOAA to take advantage of this under-used employment source.

Nate talked about using the Schedule A hiring authority and the White House Executive Order on Increasing Federal employment of Individuals with Disabilities. He said agencies don’t have to post and publicize the position and don’t have to go through the certificate process. DVR will assist NOAA in using their contacts and resources to find qualified candidates.

For more information on Colorado DVR, please call Nate at 303-866-2217 or email nate.slattengren@state.co.us. You can visit their website at www.dvrcolorado.com. You can also contact the OAR EEO office at 303-497-6732 for a copy of their presentation.

National Vocational Rehabilitation contacts for other OAR states:

- Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  Eladio Amores, Phone: 303-941-359-7811 Website: www.fjobconnections.com

- Michigan Rehabilitation Services
  Barry Reinink, Phone: 517-373-4041 Website: www.michigan.gov/mrs

- State of Washington – DSHS – DVR
  John P. Evans, Phone 360-725-3647 Website: www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr

- MD Division of Rehabilitation Services
  Jo Anne Materkowski, Phone: 410-554-9387 Website: www.dors.state.md.us

- NJ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  Cheryl Casciano, Program & Planning Development Specialist
  Phone: 609-292-4967 Website: http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/DVRindex.htm

- OK Dept. of Rehabilitation Services
  Belen Burkhalter, Program Manager, Phone: 918-581-2083 Website:www.okrehab.org
ABOUT US

The EEO Office provides services to OAR employees, managers and applicants for employment.

VISION OF EEO OFFICE
To assist the Agency in creating a diverse workforce that is inclusive and free of discriminatory and retaliatory actions.

EEO MISSION
To bring awareness to employees, applicants for employment and management about EEO through the following:

Empowerment: Consultation services to employees, managers and applicants for employment.

Exposure: Recruitment and outreach activities for short and long-term recruitment.

Education: Federal EEO Mandated training.

Evaluation: Monitor employment statistics to prepare reports for NOAA, DOC, EEOC and OPM.

NEWSLETTER

Connections is published quarterly by the OAR EEO Office. The purpose is to share accomplishments and to link Diversity, EEO and Science within all of OAR laboratories and programs. If you have any newsletter ideas, suggestions and stories, please send to:

Georgia Madrid
georgia.madrid@noaa.gov.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

If you believe you have been subject to discrimination on the basis of your race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age (over 40), disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, or retaliation for participating in activities protected by the civil rights statutes, you must contact an EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the alleged discrimination to preserve your rights under the law.

Please contact the NOAA Civil Rights Office to initiate EEO counseling:

Voice: 301-713-0500
Toll Free: 1-800-452-6728
TDD: 301-713-0982
FAX: 301-713-0983
Website: www.eeo.noaa.gov

Mediation

NOAA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office provides mediation and other services and seeks early resolution.

Voice: 206-526-6171
Fax: 206-527-6928.
Website: www.adr.noaa.gov