

Q & A for NHC



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Your predecessor was here for more than 20 years and built quite a legacy during that time. How did you approach the position?

It was definitely some large shoes to fill. At first, it was overwhelming, but at the same time, I was excited. I came over from NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) on Virginia Key. I was with them for 11 years, and all of that experience prepared me for this moment. But there was no overlap. My first day at the job, Vivian was not here. I did not have a lot of guidance, but it all panned out.

How did you get into this?

I have always liked finance and administration. I came on board with NOAA in 1997 as an administrative assistant. I liked working in the science realm, especially where hurricanes are involved. I have always been fascinated with them, along with tornadoes and severe weather. At one point, I even thought of studying that and making it a career.

There are not a lot of women in meteorology. What stopped you?

Believe it or not, it was relocation. I was most interested in tornado research, and I would have to relocate to Oklahoma. Family for me does come first, so I decided to go directly into administration. I went to school for that, got an undergraduate and graduate

degree in Administration. I eventually will start on a higher level graduate degree within a year.

So, you grew into your position at AOML?

As the years went by and my responsibilities increased, I went from managing a very small sector at the lab to a larger sector.-as a Budget Analyst. I worked with reimbursable funding, procurement, personnel, and contracts. I loved working with people. ,

What made you make the jump to NHC?

It was a great career opportunity. It was going to be a while before I would be granted that opportunity at AOML. My boss still had a few years ahead of her before she retires, and the opportunity here came sooner. So, why wait?

What is a typical day for you here?

Well, being informed of every facility mishap that can go wrong. I am told about things such as plumbing issues, roof leaks, phone issues, exterior camera failure to property, contracts, procurement and HR related business. Principally, I manage and monitor our budget, to ensure we are on track.

It has to be made more difficult by having to work under “Continuing Resolutions”.

It is. What I had to do was develop an initial budget –based on FY09 expenditures, until official numbers are given out to all of the (NOAA) centers. I am banking that we are getting that at minimum, and creating projections with that. And I kind of have been working backwards. Of course, I am being conservative by not approving all purchase; rather only those items considered absolutely necessary or those that had been previously approved. Expenditures must be closely tracked.

What is your greatest challenge right now?

I think it is communication. I see a bit of a gap between our finance office and the centers. We had some challenges during the FY09 closing. This is due to finance being under staffed and undergoing major changes. We have been taking measures to put that out more, and progress is being made. In addition, when I accepted my position here at the NHC, I knew there had been several bumps in the road due to past events totally out of my control. This is why, since day one, I have tried to boost morale by joining several committees to promote group participation and social gatherings. I like to think that we are moving in the direction in which folks feel as if this is their second home –as I do. In my observations, it has gotten much better. I see people are a little happier, wanting to participate more, and that’s a move forward.

Do you see any changes coming for the building itself?

I do. We have renovated the front offices, which I initiated. I was not able to inherit my predecessors' office, and that was a big obstacle considering the amount of paper an administrator works with. All in all, the front office has had somewhat of a makeover. It worked out for everyone.

Do you have contact with the general public in your position?

Yes, it's mainly contactors. If they are soliciting business, they come see me. All of the business relationships of my predecessor have transferred to me now. Anytime we put out services for bid, I am the one meeting the contractors, giving the walk-through inspections, etc. It is quite a bit of involvement.

What do you do in real life?

I am an adjunct instructor at Miami-Dade College. I teach business courses and I teach English. I've been doing that for more than eight years and very much like it. It's a part of my life where I get to give back to the community-even though I get compensated for it. I enjoy being part of a learning environment.

So, if you are not working, and working, what's left?

I do a little charity work. In fact, part of that I'd like think I've inspired here. This year I brought the Toys for Tots campaign to NHC. In my free time, I have worked a great deal with team metro, which is a county agency that does a lot of food drives and independent events at Halloween and Christmas, all to raise funds for underprivileged families. So, that I have been doing for 11 years. I keep very busy.

Are there any leisure time activities?

Oh yes! I love beach volleyball and tennis.

Your predecessor retired in this position. What do you see yourself doing?

I love it here. I do plan on retiring in the government and I do see myself here long term.

Send comments to: nhc.public.affairs@noaa.gov