



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

NWSEO MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Meet NWSEO Steward Todd Richards

(October 11, 2017) *"Slicing through the eyewall of a hurricane, buffeted by howling winds, blinding rain and violent updrafts and downdrafts before entering the relative calm of the storm's eye, repeating the often grueling experience again and again during the course of an 8-10 hour mission."* I first read this online (www.oma.noaa.gov) before touring with NWSEO AOC Steward at their new, spacious location in Lakeland, FL. This is the world of Todd Richards, and Aircraft Operations Center employees, Captain Hann and so many we had the opportunity to meet. We thought this was great timing to write NWSEO's first "Member Spotlight," showcasing the work, dedication and talent of a member, inspiring

others and connecting all of our union members.



Briefly tell us how you became a Hurricane Hunter with the Aircraft Operations Center?

I knew a couple of the guys that were already with the AOC from my time in the Navy. They told me when the job openings became available and I applied through the USA Jobs announcements. Definitely helped to have a couple friends already on the inside.

Describe the most unusual/interesting experience in your work.

I have had several interesting and/or unusual experiences here at the AOC, so picking the most unusual/interesting is tough. Our job as "Hurricane Hunters" is in itself unusual and interesting. But there are many other projects we do/have done that are just as unusual/interesting, such as:

DYNAMO (Dynamic of the Madden-Julian Oscillation) – A month long deployment to Diego Garcia researching the Madden-Julian Oscillation

VORTEX (Verification of the Origins of Rotation in Tornadoes EXperiment-Southeast) - Looking for tornado activity in storm fronts using our Tail Doppler RADAR

PECAN (Plains Elevated Convection at Night) - focused on nocturnal convection in conditions over the Southern Great Plains with a stable boundary layer (SBL), a nocturnal low-level jet (NLLJ) and the largest CAPE (Convectively Available Potential Energy) located above the SBL

Air Chemistry projects like SONEX, SENEX and CALNEX - where we remove all the weather instrumentation and equipment from aircraft and install air chemistry equipment turning our weather aircraft in to a flying air chemistry laboratory. These projects are conducted at low levels (about 1500') over areas of interest producing methane and ethane gases, CO, CO₂, and other gases either natural or man-made.

Where is your favorite place to be?

All though I do like the travel that this job requires, my favorite place is at home with my family, visiting one of the numerous theme parks in our area.

Where is the best place you've traveled to and why?

I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, going to the beach, offshore fishing and all the other water sports you can think of, so for me the best place I have travel to with AOC was Boulder, CO. I really enjoyed the mountain scenery, something I was not very used to seeing. This was during one of the Air Chemistry projects that had us flying out of Boulder for almost 6 weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed the outdoor activities that are available there, and most especially the lower humidity.

As an NWSEO Steward, what does true leadership mean to you?

Leadership is not something bestowed upon you or granted to you by virtue of your title or set of responsibilities. True leadership is invited and can only be given willingly by others based on who you are, what you do and how you do it. Leadership is revealed by what you inspire and what you enable; that is, by your success in eliciting positive actions, emotions and behaviors in others without the promise of reward or threat of punishment, and in producing positive tangible results through others.

Why did you join NWSEO? Or, what is your experience with NWSEO?

I joined because I understand the value of a Union. AOC at the time did not have a Vice-Steward, so I volunteered/was nominated. I wanted to help insure that our members were getting what they needed and deserved. I have seen management at my previous jobs abuse or ignore the rights of employees, so I wanted to make sure that wasn't going to happen here.

What is the most important technology/innovation you've seen in your lifetime?

I believe the emergence and evolution of the internet would be the most substantially important technology/innovation I have seen in my lifetime. The internet is good and bad. Good in the sense that we have great access to vast amounts of information. Bad in that that same information can now be used in ways we had not imagined before. The internet has helped drive technology to reach great achievements with its ability to share information and ideas globally. That ability has united us and also divided us. The internet has made us smarter allowing us to know more information about things we once may not have cared to know, and it has also allowed us to become too dependent on it for this information so we no longer seek greater knowledge in books from the library or by listening to someone with that knowledge to give. Imagine what would happen if the internet stopped, just was no longer accessible. There are generations that would not know what to do. I am not bad mouthing the internet, but it is just a tool that needs to be used properly.

We are so grateful for Todd's time and dedication to the work he and the AOC members and employees do every day and also, for kicking off our *NWSEO Member Spotlight* for us! We hope this will be a communication tool for NWSEO Members to get to know each other, from across the nation, connect even more and, together, support each other in our work and in building our membership. **Please submit your *Member Spotlight*, suggestions and comments to Christy Fox at mediarelations@nwseo.org.**



Thank You, Todd Richards and AOC!

<https://www.oma.noaa.gov/learn/aircraft-operations>
https://www.facebook.com/NOAAHurricaneHunters/?ref=br_rs

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees
than National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees
than National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.