Erica Grow

Job title: Meteorologist

Can you tell us a little bit about your job? What’s an average day look like for you?

My job can be very hectic! Every day is different. Some days I'm at work until after midnight, and on other days, I arrive at work at 2:30 a.m. The first thing I do when I get to work is go on the Internet and start looking at computer forecast model data. The data shows me how the atmosphere will move and evolve over the next several days. I compare and contrast the different model output against each other, and come up with the most likely conclusion. This conclusion is the weather forecast! I then input the forecast information into our weather graphics system. These graphics help me to tell the "weather story" when I’m giving the weather forecast on the news. Next, I put the updated forecast on our website and on the news ticker at the bottom of the screen during the newscast. Finally, I do my hair and makeup, put on the microphone, and double-check my graphics before we go on live TV. I'll also record separate weathercasts for our website, for our digital channel, and for usatoday.com. When I’m not on the air, I'm also providing weather updates on my Facebook and Twitter accounts. Believe it or not, there is some downtime in between the newscasts, as long as the weather is calm and pleasant!

How did you start on your path to a career in STEM and what did that path look like?

As you can probably guess, since I always loved science, I definitely knew I wanted to choose a STEM career. I started out at Penn State as a biology major with the intent of becoming a doctor, but I decided during my sophomore year that the medicine route was not for me! Penn State is renowned for its meteorology program, and it was just a perfect fit. Every course seemed to reveal another fantastic weather "how" or "why" that I had always wondered about.

What would you say to young folks who are thinking about a career in STEM?

Go for it! Don't worry if you don't yet know which exact path you'll take. Learn more about anything and everything that sparks your interest. Your career path will reveal itself!

Do you have any STEM heroes?

Absolutely! Neil DeGrasse Tyson is amazing. He does a phenomenal job explaining really complicated concepts in a way that his audience will not only understand, but in a way that also captures his audience’s fascination. The chief astronomer at the Franklin Institute, Derrick Pitts, uses a similar approach. I got to work with him when I was living and working in Philadelphia, and he inspires me to reach out and engage young people in my chosen STEM field. Then, there's the women in STEM who paved the way for people like me! Marie Curie, Amelia Earhart, Jane Goodall, and Sally Ride have been my favorites ever since I was a little girl.