

February 2013 Outreach



From Left: Forecaster Kirk Caceres, Forecaster Maria Torres and her son Daniel, spouse Omar Ledon and Lead Forecaster Joseph Tomaselli at the Whataburger Charity Pancake Breakfast; Forecaster Blair Scholl at the Los Fresnos Rodeo; Science Operations Office Douglas Butts and Maria Torres speaking at a career day at Long Elementary in Harlingen.

Thousands Served in a Fabulous February!

As 2013 kicked into full gear, the NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley staff kept busy promoting weather safety and preparedness across the Rio Grande Valley and Deep South Texas. Throughout the month staff members were involved in a number of activities, from educating bright young minds to participating in charity events. The following is a short list of the more significant activities that we participated in during the month:

- ❖ **Los Fresnos Rodeo.** February 1st and 2nd. Forecaster **Blair Scholl** and Lead Forecaster **Geoff Bogorad** were among the staff on hand to serve as official weather and rainfall observers. Unlike the [crazy conditions a year earlier](#), rain was never an issue and the show indeed did go on!
- ❖ **Rio Grande Valley Water Summit.** Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Barry Goldsmith** spoke to more than a hundred people on the dire spring 2013 drought forecast and potential impact on water supplies across the region.
- ❖ **Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo.** February 9th, South Padre Island. Data Acquisition Program Manager and resident herpetologist **Jim Campbell** staffed a booth and provided weather information to the hundreds of visitors that attended the event.
- ❖ **53rd Rio Grande Valley Regional Science and Engineering Fair,** February 16th, University of Texas-Brownsville (International Education and Commerce Center). Meteorologist **Erin Billings** and Forecaster **Blair Scholl** served as judges for the high school division.
- ❖ **American Association of University Women Luncheon,** February 16th, Harlingen. Forecaster **Maria Torres** spoke on her experience as a “STEM” success story (see separate article, below).
- ❖ **Whataburger Charity Pancake Breakfast,** February 17th. Lead Forecaster **Joseph Tomaselli**, Forecasters **Maria Torres, Kirk Caceres, and Justin Gibbs**, and Meteorologist-in-Charge **Steve Drillette** and families enjoyed a delicious breakfast at the annual event that benefits the “Teach the Children” campaign across the Rio Grande Valley.
- ❖ **AMBER, Silver, and Blue Alert Basic Course,** February 19th. Meteorologist-in-Charge **Steve Drillette** spoke to the class on the role of the Emergency Alert System and NWS in relaying these critical messages to maximize exposure, and for local agencies to partner with NWS on these and other non-weather emergency messages in the future to spread the word when danger is imminent and public safety is crucial.
- ❖ **University of Texas/Pan American Career Fair.** Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Barry Goldsmith** staffed a booth for prospective students and young professionals interested in careers in weather, information technology, and

communications at the UTPA Field House in Edinburg. Eight resumes were left with us; perhaps there's a future NWS Information Technology Officer/Specialist, social scientist/communications expert, or even a meteorologist among them!

- ❖ **Sears Family Public Safety Day.** Meteorologist-in-Charge **Steve Drillette** and Meteorologist **Erin Billings** attended and staffed a table at the Valle Vista Mall location in Harlingen.
- ❖ **Severe Weather Awareness Week Drawing Contest.** During the last week in February, meteorologist **Erin Billings** developed and promoted a contest for Rio Grande Valley school district children to produce safety, preparedness, and awareness drawings. From the hundreds of hand drawn pictures, several "winners" were chosen. Each winner's picture was presented in the daily weather briefing during Severe Weather Awareness/Preparedness Week, and posted to the US National Weather Service Facebook page.
- ❖ **School Visits.** Several visits were made during February to local school career-oriented activities by our staff.

Our staff is just a phone call, email, or Facebook message away from making arrangements to be part of your activities, weatherwise and otherwise. We've got plenty of room to accommodate your request, via in house tour or bringing our information to you. Drop us a line in one of three ways:

- Call. 956-504-1432, extension 1, will get you to our operations floor.
- Email. For school tours, contact [Mr. Jim Campbell](#), Data Acquisition Program Manager. For scientific presentations, contact [Mr. Douglas Butts](#), Science and Operations Officer. For all others, contact [Mr. Barry Goldsmith](#), Warning Coordination Meteorologist.
- Facebook. Like us today and send us a message at our Facebook Page.

We hope to hear from you soon!

Planting Seeds...Growing STEMs

“If you believe, you can achieve!” – Martin Luther King

“I get knocked down, but I get up again, you’re never gonna keep me down” – Chumbawamba, *Tubthumping*

On February 16th, Forecaster **Maria Torres** spoke at a luncheon for the membership of the American Association of University Women in Harlingen. Rather than speaking on weather and climate, Maria took the opportunity to tell her life story of her rise from being a young girl of modest means and unable to speak English, to the first person in her family to graduate from university *and* succeed as a Hispanic woman in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. Her compelling story included a combination of daunting challenges sprinkled with good fortune. Maria met each challenge head on and moved mountains, from learning English as a teenager to meeting the requirements to be accepted to Florida State University. She pursued her childhood interest in the weather and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Meteorology with a minor in Mathematics. During this time, she sought professional opportunity with the NWS in Miami; upon graduation, she was hired on a full-time basis with the NWS in Albuquerque before being promoted to Forecaster in Brownsville.

After her story was told, there were few dry eyes in the room.



Why?

Maria showed that women of all stripes can be successful – as a professional, a wife, and a mother – can succeed when given opportunity, believing anything is possible, and staying focused on navigating through difficulties to reach a goal. She is a real life example to young Hispanic women across the Rio Grande Valley that all things are possible – including having a winning career in a STEM field and helping support a family.