

More women looking skyward

Number of female broadcast meteorologists on the rise

BY KIRSTEN HUDSON
 editor@kansan.com

Kathryn Clark, a tan 20-year-old blonde loves all kinds of weather. But when the sky darkens and a storm rolls in is when she really gets excited. Ever since she was a sophomore in high school, Clark, a Dallas junior, and her dad have gone out in his Yukon SUV chasing tornadoes just for fun.

"It's an adrenaline rush," said Clark, an atmospheric science major, and one of a growing number of women going into broadcast meteorology.

At the University of Kansas there has been a rise in the number of women taking meteorology classes.

Donna Tucker, associate professor of atmospheric science, said this was the first semester in her 15 years of teaching that an equal number of men and women had taken her senior weather analysis and forecasting class. The class had previously been male-dominated.

Nationally, the number of women in broadcast meteorology is on the rise. Of the National Weather Association's 980 members in 2008, 24 percent are women. That's up from 21 percent in 2006. In 2005, the American Meteorological Society reported that 19 percent of its 545 members in broadcast meteorology were women.

Though more women are going into the field, the ratio of men to women is still disproportionate.

"When I was a youngster myself, all I ever saw were men in the profession," said Erin Little, a broadcast meteorologist at KMBC-TV in Kansas City, Mo. "Now in any station across the country you see women in the field.

"Those that have a passion for it are realizing it's not just a man's profession," she said.

Katie Horner, chief meteorologist at KCTV 5 in Kansas City, Mo., said part of the reason more women were becoming meteorologists was because of the diminished stereotyping of women meteorologists.

"In the past, women were looked at as weather bunnies," she said. "Now, women have improved their image by obtaining degrees in meteorology — proving they are just as smart as their male counterparts."

But both women and men are likely to have trouble finding jobs in the field when they graduate. Tucker said meteorology jobs were available for about 10 percent of graduates and for 2008 and 2009, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects opportunities for broadcast meteorologists to remain rare and highly competitive.

The lack of jobs is also driving salaries lower and causing the job's perks to disappear.

Mark Reynolds, chief meteorologist of WJHL-TV in Johnson

City, Tenn., gathered information from more than 150 broadcast meteorologists in 210 markets. He found that news stations paid for 66 percent of meteorologists' haircuts in 2006 compared with 61 percent in 2008. Also, stations that paid for yearly gym memberships decreased from 19 percent in 2006 to 11 percent in 2008.

Despite these statistics, Clark said she wasn't worried about finding a job. She's looking into learning Spanish because she said there were only three or four Spanish-speaking broadcast meteorologists in the country.

No matter what happens with a job, though, she can always chase those tornadoes.

"I love all of it. All the good stuff," she said.

— Edited by Jennifer Torline

Voted Best Pizza in Lawrence!

Almost the Weekend!

Thursday special:
 16" Pizza
 2 Toppings
 2 Drinks
FREE DELIVERY!

ONLY \$12.99 plus tax

749-0055 • 704 Mass. • rudypizzeria.com

HAIR academy

Setting the Standard for Excellence
 2429 Iowa Street 785.749.1488

Voted **Top of the Hill's**
 BEST SALON 2005, 2006, 2007

Voted Lawrence Journal-World's
 BEST SALON 2005, 2006

Haircuts always \$7

Pink Chi Iron & Beach Bag \$110
 \$200 Salon value • While supplies last

Highlights \$20
 with coupon • long hair extra expires 11/30/08

All services performed by supervised students

The Etc. Shop

DKNY

928 Massachusetts
 843-0611
 www.theetcshop.com