
My NASA Data - STEM Career Connections

Meet Janine Pollack, NASA Environmental Engineer



Job Title

NASA Environmental Engineer

Work Description

Learn about how Janine Pollack, an Environmental Engineer, got her start at NASA and the kinds of work she does as an engineer.

What do you do and what is most interesting about your role here at Goddard?

Every day is a little different. I do a number of tasks, which is one of the things I love about my job. I may be out taking water samples, in a meeting discussing ways Goddard can improve its environmental performance or out talking to employees about how they can be better environmental stewards.

Interacting with other employees on center is wonderful! I get to go all over the center talking to people who do all kinds of different jobs. Until I switched into this job, I had no idea how much I really enjoyed that.

What makes a good leader? What makes a good team player?

My current supervisor is fantastic. He is extremely intelligent and knows his subject matter, yet is constantly seeking our input on the latest issue. I'm surrounded by a group of amazing professionals. We are all willing to listen to each other and honestly like one another. We are almost a little family.

What is unique about you?

I am a local girl. I grew up in New Carrollton, went to Eleanor Roosevelt High School and graduated from the University of Maryland.

What has Goddard's mentoring program given you?

My undergraduate degree is in geology and my master's degree is in geography. I started working at Goddard as an earth scientist but soon transitioned to software development. Through Goddard's mentoring program, I was able to find my current position in the Environmental Office. The mentoring program is a great resource. My mentor pushed me to do some things that were painful at the time but helped me grow. I appreciate all his help. The best advice he gave me was not to run away from something but to run towards something. When I found what I wanted, I didn't just run, I sprinted.

What is the coolest thing you've ever done at Goddard?

I've done a lot of cool things here, but perhaps the best was starting the "Freecycle@Work" Program, which is a way for people to reuse small office items such as binders and whiteboards. People post items they no longer want or need and other people see these listings and can request the item. Everyone arranges for their own exchanges without a middleman. Headquarters has taken this program Agency-wide and each of the centers now offers it. I feel like a proud parent!

Our website is <http://freecycle.nasa.gov>.

What is the one thing you would tell somebody just starting his or her career at Goddard?

Take advantage of the various developmental and educational programs including the mentoring program. There are so many opportunities here. Get out of your office and find out what other folks are doing.

If you weren't in your current profession, what would you be doing?

I would be a landscape architect. Gardening has become my latest hobby, in particular, gardening with native plants. I enjoy being creative and artistic with nature. Our office has even recently given some talks related to gardening with native plants that were very well received.

What do you do to relax or have fun?

I constantly play soccer with my three boys. Either I am watching them play or they come to my games to watch me play. I love hearing them cheer me on. It's soccer all the time in my family! I also recently started cello lessons. I've never played a musical instrument before, but I wanted to challenge myself and try something completely different.

Where is your favorite place in the entire world and why?

I enjoy traveling the world and have seen many beautiful places. But my favorite place is the southwest corner of Ireland with the lush, green scenery and the peacefulness. The simplicity and beauty of nature really inspire me.