

Shields up to the task in all kinds of weather

Christy Shields developed her fascination for meteorology under most unusual circumstances. The Butler, PA native has been with WTaj for more than six years and is the smiling face that weather-watchers look forward to seeing in the early morning before they begin their workday. Christy earned a B.A. Degree in Meteorology from Penn State in 2013.

The Chamber: What prompted your interest in meteorology and was there ever a career choice that you considered instead?

Christy: What prompted my interest in meteorology was that I was TERRIFIED of thunderstorms as a child. I would watch the Weather Channel and local news every day to make sure there was not going to be any severe thunderstorms in the forecast. The fear turned into a fascination and by 3rd grade I was set on becoming a meteorologist. I never wanted to be a television meteorologist, I always thought I would be a forecaster for the National Weather Service. When I was applying to jobs after school it was the TV stations that I was getting interviews with, so that made my decision to pursue that path of the career. Briefly in high school, I contemplated being a history teacher, but always went back to wanting to do meteorology.

The Chamber: What would people in Blair

Chamber Q&A

County be surprised to know about Christy Shields?

Christy: This is a tough question... what you would be surprised to know about me. I think one thing that is interesting is that my first name, Christy, was actually my Mother's Maiden name. Also, I don't talk about it much, but I love to read, so if you have any great book suggestions send them my way.

The Chamber: How do you psychologically handle the possibility that people will hate you over a botched weather forecast?

Christy: Truly I am still learning on how to deal psychologically with a botched forecast. I always feel horrible when a forecast doesn't pan out, because the whole point of this job is to keep people safe and help them plan their day. I think it is important that after a botched forecast to apologize and explain why it didn't happen like we thought. The science of meteorology has come so far, but it's still not a perfect science, considering we are predicting the future. Thankfully, we work as a team at WTaj and I always feel like four scientists trying to figure out a forecast, is better than one. I think the fact that we work as a team helps me

deal with the backlash that comes with a bad forecast. We really try to do our best, so if we are wrong, please be kind.

The Chamber: What advice would you provide to a young person considering a career in meteorology?

Christy: Advice I would give young people who want to pursue this career, or any career, is that if you work hard, it will all happen for you. Specifically, for students who want to be a meteorologist, passion for weather will take you far. I'll be honest, I struggled with math, and a lot of meteorologist is math based. I had to work extra hard through college to pass all the math classes, but if you have enough drive, it will work out in the end. In fact, I only had one TV meteorology class, so keep that in mind, the TV part is only a fraction of this career. Also, make sure to network and have mentors along the way. Finally, reach out to other meteorologists, this has helped me out a lot. Always be willing to listen and take the advice to improve and become better.

The Chamber: Who are your personal and professional role models and why?

Christy: My personal role models would be my



Christy Shields has built an impressive career as a meteorologist as the result of an unusual impetus - fear! The Penn State grad has been with WTaj for more than six years living her 'dream job.'

grandmother and my great Aunt Jo. My grandmother did not have an easy life, but yet she lives every day with a smile on her face. She is always finding the good in everyone and laughing along the way. I think it is inspiring to see her take any bad situation and rise above it. My great Aunt Jo went into the Army in the 1950's and she worked very hard and was career driven. I learned a lot from her to not listen to what others say around you and to follow your dreams. There are so many great role models in this profession, but if I had to pick one, I would have to say Ginger Zee from Good

Morning America. I think what she is doing for female meteorologists is fantastic and showing the science behind what we do. I also think it is great how she is letting people know her struggles with mental illness and reducing the stigma around these types of issues.

The Chamber: You're much too young for a "bucket list" but what goals and activities are high on your list of priorities?

Christy: Through most of my life becoming a meteorologist was my only goal. I am so happy to be living my childhood dream job at WTaj and I hope to be

doing this in Altoona for many years to come. I have found through my journey as a meteorologist, I truly enjoy doing outreach with schools to teach kids about STEM and my WTaj+ show Science with Shields. If you are a teacher, make sure to reach out, I love to help students learn about science and weather! My email address is cshields@wtajtv.com. I think on the horizon my next goal would be to work towards getting a master's degree in science education. Also, non-work related, I would love to travel more and that is high on the priority list as soon as it is safe to do so.

Another book in which the Butler did it: IU8 Director writes on school leadership

As many obstacles as the business community faced as a result of Covid-19, it's possible that the education community faced even more. Dr. Thomas Butler, Executive Director of Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8, headquartered in Altoona, was in an ideal position to witness how educators handled those obstacles and his observations have formed the basis for a new book.

Dr. Butler recently released, "School Leadership: Learner-Centered Leadership in Times of Crisis." His motivation was having watched school leaders "work themselves to the bone" to provide the best education for kids.

"The challenges were unbelievable and I was inspired by their work," Butler acknowledged. "I wanted to write a book that celebrated school leaders who went beyond just implementing directives from the State or Federal government. After all, the best solutions often come from local communities."

Much of his book focuses on what education can ultimately learn from business.

"I talk about how to nav-



Dr. Tom Butler was so impressed with what he saw from educators during the pandemic that it inspired him to write a book on school leadership.

igate a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) situation." Butler pointed out. "The idea of VUCA has been around the business world for decades but it has not been widely used as a framework for understanding the education sector. One of the goals of my book was to bring those kind of strategies from the business

world into education."

Butler's book is directed at school leaders who he hopes will feel empowered to scan their environment, see the challenges faced by their schools and then create their own solutions to problems based on their knowledge of their school community. He's also hoping that the business community will read it.

"Leadership is leadership regardless of the setting in which it is practiced," he noted. "I believe there are universal leadership strategies that can be learned by reading the book and applied to any setting."

(Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8 has been a member of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce since 2010).

APPOINTMENTS

Committee Chairs approved for 2021

The Blair County Chamber's ability to help promote the business agenda while also meeting the expectations of its members is heavily tied to the effectiveness of its committees. The leadership of those committees, subcommittees and roundtable groups (25 in all) is provided by volunteers who unselfishly make either one or two year commitments. Committee chairmanship has also been a good proving-ground for service on the Chamber's Board of Directors. Currently, twelve of the 21 Chamber Board members have at one time or another served as committee chairs.

- Ambassadors:** Sherri Stayer
- Attractions/Hotel Roundtable:** Patrick Schurr and Glenn Nelson
- BASICS Steering:** Chris Farrell and Neil Hollander
- BASICS/Rotary Career Fair:** Nicole Zernick
- BASICS Early Childhood Subcommittee:** Rodney Green
- Blair County Retail:** TBD
- Business Recognition:** TBD
- Committee of Non-Profit Businesses:** Natalie Depto-Vesey
- Executive Roundtable:** Philip Devorris
- Farm-City:** Joe Diamond
- Golf Tournament:** Michael Eardley
- Home Garden & Healthy Living Showcase:** Jimmy Burchfield and Randy Colyer
- Leadership Blair County Adult:** Sherri Stayer
- Leadership Blair County Alumni:** Jodi Cessna
- Leadership Blair County Youth:** James Gerraughty
- Membership:** TBD
- Presidents' Forum:** Philip Devorris
- Public Policy:** Chris Michelone
- Safety:** Lynn Gardini
- Sustainable Blair County:** Chris Foster
- Transportation:** Pat Miller
- WE-LEAd:** Sara Fiore Gunnnett
- Workplace Wellness:** Courtney Seidel and Phyllis Baker
- Young Entrepreneurs Academy:** Carol Gensimore
- Young Professionals:** Mariah Turiano

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