

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

JAMIL STAFFORD



WHAT IS YOUR WORK SITUATION LIKE RIGHT NOW?

I am working remotely, unless I need to go in for something. I get to work on other projects at home while helping people, so I can be way more productive now. The biggest challenge is helping remotely with computer issues—it isn't really that hard, just more cumbersome.

Life itself is not really that different for me, I just don't get to talk to as many people now as before.

WHAT DREW YOU TO BLACKSBURG?

I'm originally from Bassett, Va., and it was close, in-state, and an excellent university to study aerospace engineering.

SO WHEN YOU WERE A KID, DID YOU WANT TO BE AN ASTRONAUT?

I wanted to be a rocket scientist. I have wanted to work at NASA for as long ...

...as I can remember. I wanted to build planes and rockets. I don't care about astronomy really—it's more of the flying part that interesting to me.

SO YOU PREFER BUILDING CRAFT OVER FLYING?

I used to want to fly them, too, but I got a chance to fly small aircraft for awhile and it was just boring. I lost my interest in it. Taking off is kind of fun, landing is kind of fun and challenging. Otherwise you're kind of just gliding along. For me, it was kind of like fishing: when you catch a fish, it's fun...when you first get on the boat there's some excitement, but the rest of the time you're just sitting there—I don't like it.

WHO IS SOMEONE WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Randy Pausch. He was a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon who had gone on to achieve his dreams in life, and found happiness along the way.



- Computer Support Specialist (Finance IT)
- Joined Finance IT: 2018
- B.S. in Physics (VT); currently pursuing M.S. in Aerospace Engineering, with concentration in Theoretical Plasma Physics
- jamils@vt.edu
- Job Duties and Responsibilities: "I fix computers and help people."



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WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR HOBBIES?

I love building and creating things, whether it's Legos, computers, engines, woodwork, programs, circuits, and whatever else that falls in my path.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

I'm honestly not sure what my first job was, but probably working in construction. I think it's very interesting and I'm glad I learned what I did—but the work isn't fun.

IF YOU COULD ONLY KEEP 3 APPS ON YOUR PHONE, THEY'D BE...?

(1) Music—I've gotta have my music, (2) Wikipedia, my absolute favorite reading material, (3) XKCD—when I need something more light-hearted and quick to read.

ANY RECENT WIKIPEDIA DEEP DIVES YOU'VE DONE?

It's usually just when I'm curious about something specific, like "who were the first people to drink tea?" and then I'll go and read the entire Wikipedia entry on tea.

BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE RECEIVED OR FAVORITE QUOTE?

"When everybody else around you is shooting for the moon, shoot for the stars. You'll never make it to the stars, but you'll pass the moon early on." - Dennis Muilenburg

FLUENT IN ANY OTHER LANGUAGES?

I speak Hebrew a little bit, I'm trying to re-learn it. I could speak it some as a kid but I don't have a lot of people to speak it with. My mother is from Palestine so growing up she taught me Arabic and Hebrew. She thought it was a smart thing to do and I'm glad she did. My Arabic is OK, but Hebrew is definitely a challenge.

FIRST THING YOU BUY IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY?

A Porsche 911 GT3 RS. I have a Hot Wheels version that I found walking through the Kroger here one day. It was the only one they had, but I went home, looked on eBay and they were selling for \$40—I bought mine for a dollar. There's also a Lego kit for the Porsche 911 that I want, but it's like \$300...

IF COULD HAVE LUNCH WITH ANY 3 LIVING PEOPLE, YOU WOULD CHOOSE?

Bill Gates (Microsoft), Chuck Yeager (broke the sound barrier) and Kip Thorne (Nobel winner in astrophysics).

EVER MET SOMEONE FAMOUS?

I met Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and will.i.am at a robotics competition in St. Louis back in high school. Will.i.am came and performed his new single with Justin Bieber at the conference. Kareem is apparently really interested in these things, so he just showed up and was walking around. I talked to him for little bit but was very distracted because he's literally twice my size. I met the CEOs of Boeing and Coca-Cola there too, it was a really odd mix of people who come to these events.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE... BOOK?

Probably Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut. The story is just wonderful, and Vonnegut's writing and humor is fantastic. Just everything about his books; I think the heavy Cold War influence and satire is what makes Cat's Cradle my favorite of his works.

SPORT?

I love to play soccer.

BREAKFAST CEREAL?

Honey Bunches of Oats

MUSIC?

Usually it's jazz, rock, or metal. My favorite artist is Elton John and favorite band is probably the Foo Fighters.

FOOD?

Shawarma

SPACE MOVIE?

Maybe the first half of *Interstellar*, but that kind of fell apart after they entered the black hole. But, up until then, they actually got all of the physics right.

SPOT ON CAMPUS?

Duck Pond