

## Second Life

It's no surprise that most people have hobbies or talents that relate to things other than work. Still, the notion that JPL might be a grey and boring place was not lost on me. However, as I soon found out, the variety of what JPL'ers enjoy doing outside of work is surprising.

As an intern fresh out of high school, I find myself often just at home or heading out to the movies with friends during my downtime. I mostly read or practice long boarding (it's basically a long skateboard used for cruising) during the time at home. My coworkers, however, are much wiser and have already discovered many of their passions. To my surprise many of them don't just work all day – even if they do seem like workaholics during work time – but have lives outside of work. Many of them have families that occupy their time but they also find time to do various activities: scientist Duane Waliser helps organize a local Roots and Shoots group, a youth organization focused on environmental education and community service.

Many of the JPL'ers here enjoy physical activities such as hiking, scuba diving, dancing, and running. One of my coworkers used to skydive and is even a helicopter pilot. My summer buddy, Vanessa Flesuras enjoys making her own jewelry and knows how to play the ukulele. There are also many artists here – both visual and musical. There are a few different bands that JPL employees have formed and Dr. Graeme Stephens is an excellent painter, his artwork on clouds is featured on the CloudSat website (there are even a few prints hanging on the walls in the office) and in research papers dealing with cloud history though art.

Of course, there are those that enjoy digital entertainment now and then. Another coworker of mine, Peter Falcon, enjoys his trilogies (Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, and God of War). There seem to be a few who had followed *Lost* but I have yet to find any fellow Gleeks or *Fringe* fans here.

All in all, I just find it pretty fascinating how diverse the people who work at JPL are. They aren't just scientists, engineers, and cubicle people (yes, there are cubicles here) but people who are interesting and fun to talk to both inside and outside of work. I am certainly learning a lot here about how different people can be and how fun a work environment can be. In fact, hearing about some of these hobbies makes me want to try them out at some point in time. The discussions they lead to are very entertaining and can show a lot about a person – like how no one here seems to appreciate (or know) Pokémon. I look forward to what else I can learn here. JPL culture is truly unique and very different from what I first thought – it is anything but grey and boring.