



SALARY STORY
SCOTT YEATMAN
Pilot
U.S. Air Force

We often pay lip service to the diversity that flavors our lives, but the military presence on the Emerald Coast – home to fighter wings and special operators – ensures that our neighbors are anything but boring. Scott Yeatman, an Air Force major and pilot, first joined the Army Reserve out of high school but later left for college, earning a pharmacy degree, which he eventually used to return to military service as an Air Force officer.

But little boys don't grow up dreaming of being Air Force pharmacists, and the call to fly was too strong. Six years later and he's "driving" those massive gray helicopters you sometimes see (and often hear) plying the Gulf Coast skies.

As a civilian pharmacist in New Mexico, Yeatman earned about \$65,000 in 1997 dollars. It's hard to make direct comparisons with military work, since so much remuneration is in the form of benefits and allowances, but he now earns roughly what he would have in his previous job. A military officer, especially one earning flight pay, never will get rich but can definitely live comfortably.

"It's a lifestyle, a culture you buy into," the married father of three said of the military career – a statement that implies both ups and downs. Few other jobs offer similar excitement, camaraderie or opportunities for leadership, but few other jobs make the demands of danger, deployments and separation from family.

"It's more than just a job," Yeatman said. "It defines who you are."
 – Anita Doberman



AROUND THE WATERCOOLER: SALARY Q&A



KIRK MCHENRY
Engineering Maintenance Technician

St. Joe Company WaterColor Resort

How long have you worked at your job?
 Eighteen months.

How much do you get paid?
 Twelve dollars an hour.

What does your job give you that is rewarding?

I enjoy fixing things, and it is gratifying to make the homeowners happy when you repair something they thought couldn't be fixed. Also, the environment and atmosphere I work in is absolutely beautiful.

How frequent do you receive wage increases?

I received \$11.50 for a year and then 6 months ago I was given a 50-cent raise.

Do you feel comfortable with your wage increases?

The maintenance department is allotted around a 4.5-percent raise annually, and it is performance-based. Therefore, I don't feel comfortable with my wage, because I feel the maintenance department in particular should be compensated more.

Would you consider your salary as an acceptable tradeoff for an exceptional quality of life?

Yes. I love my job. I work at one of the most beautiful resorts in Florida and wouldn't want to work anywhere else.



RYAN WEGNER
Certified Registered Anesthetist

Fort Walton Beach Medical Center

How long have you worked at your job?
 Eighteen months.

How much do you get paid?
 Current salary: \$135,000.

Do you feel comfortable with your wage and feel you get paid what you deserve?

Yes. My salary is right in the middle and very typical for this area. I also recognize that there is a high demand and shortage of supply for what I do. Therefore, the job security is great, and I am always in the driver seat.

What are your hours like?

I start at 6:30 a.m. and work until my agenda is complete. On average, I work eight to 12 hours a day, 40 to 50 hours a week. The overtime is sustainable, so I never mind working a little extra.

Since salaries in this demographic fall short of the statewide average, do you feel your wage is fair?

I recognize some neighboring institutes may pay a little more, but I have to remember the grass isn't always greener on the other side. For instance, some establishments pay more because they offer a sign-on bonus; consequently, I feel my salary is average and fair for this area.



QUENANN ROBINSON
Walton County Student Program in Community Education Coordinator

Bay Elementary School

How long have you worked at your job?

I previously worked as a SPICE coordinator for four years but have been at Bay Elementary in Walton County since August 2006.

How much do you get paid?

I gross around \$3,400 a month. It averages out to about \$17.50 an hour.

What is the most rewarding part about your job?

Just knowing that I am someone each child can trust and feel good about coming to if they have a problem is very comforting

How often do you receive wage increases?

Even though SPICE is a private program, it is filtered through the school system, and I am a Walton County School District employee. Therefore, the typical wage increase takes place annually.

Since salaries in this demographic fall short of the statewide average, do you feel your wage is fair?

Yes, I consider my wage to be fare compared to other individuals who do the same thing I am doing, primarily because I presume I get paid a little bit more than even teachers' aides get paid.



BOBBY MALONEY
Sergeant

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office

How long have you worked at your job?

Since April 1, 1990.

How much do you get paid?

Current salary: \$69,000.

Approximately what have the annual increases percentages been in your salary?

Anywhere from 4 to 6 percent.

What are some of the incentives you receive at your job?

Continuous training and continuing educational opportunities.

Since salaries in this demographic fall short of the statewide average in almost every, category do you feel your wage is fare compared to other individuals in this demographic?

Yes. The sheriff of Okaloosa County and leaders in this community have done a great job recognizing the people who serve our neighborhood, and we are compensated well.



WILMA OTT
Director of First Impression

*Chuck Lawson's Agency
DeFuniak Springs*

How much do you get paid?

I make approximately \$25,000 a year.

How long have you worked at your job?

Eight months.

Do you see potential opportunity for growth with the company you are employed with?

I see potential for a lot of growth. I have started from the bottom, and I am slowly but surely working my way up. Who knows – one day I may have my own agency.

Since salaries in this demographic fall short of the statewide average, do you feel your wage is fair?

I think my wage is fare. I am not doing too much work, and at the same time I am training and studying to better my skill in the field I am working in. Also, as my skills increase, my wage increases – which is a good incentive to study hard and push myself to new levels of growth.

Do you have benefits?

Yes. I have a good retirement, medical, and a life insurance plan.

– Erica Spivey



SALARY STORY
JOSH ROBINSON
Front Desk Manager
Emerald Grande

Desk” may be in his job title, but this is no desk job. Josh Robinson is in the thick of the Gulf Coast tourist industry as a front desk manager at the Emerald Grande resort. The hours can be long and the work challenging – the customer, after all, is always right – but Robinson loves the dynamic environment and the chance to interact with guests.

“We want to offer our guests the best experience and we strive for excellence, so it’s demanding,” Robinson said of the Emerald Grande. As he explained, the Emerald Coast increasingly is home to some of the best hotels and resorts in the country. The trend has been much less “redneck,” much more “Riviera.”

“I’ve been in the hospitality business for a number of years, first in Tennessee and now in Northwest Florida,” Robinson said. Trading the Smoky Mountains for the beach was a big change of venue, but top-notch customer care still is the name of the game.

He is happy about his choice of careers, and even long hours or vacation-time surges can’t dampen his enthusiasm.

“My job offers me full benefits ... the hospitality industry offers many great opportunities for growth and development,” Robinson said.

It takes a special person to work so that others can enjoy themselves – but for those with the right work ethic and attitude, the Emerald Coast’s thriving hospitality industry might be the right fit.

– Anita Doberman