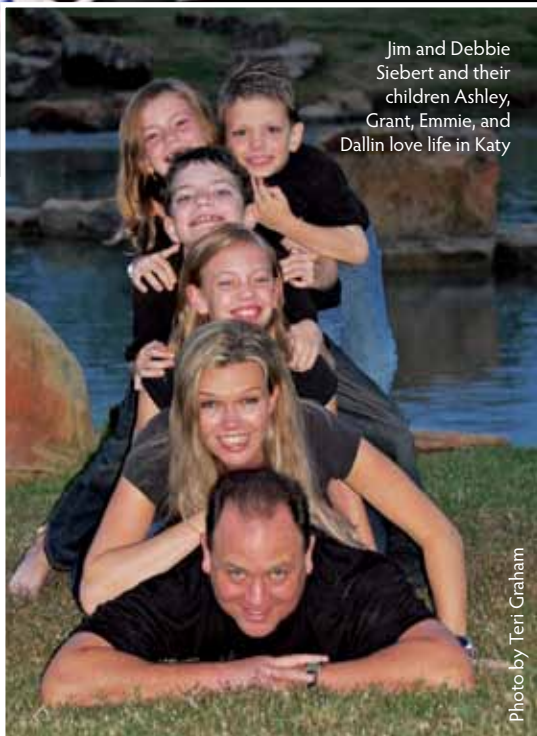


As chief meteorologist of Fox 26 News, Dr. Siebert strives to help viewers stay safe before, during, and after a storm



Photo by Micah Wyckoff



Jim and Debbie Siebert and their children Ashley, Grant, Emmie, and Dallin love life in Katy

Photo by Teri Graham

# Q&A with Dr. Jim Siebert

Fox 26 chief meteorologist shares about wild weather, his role in keeping viewers safe and informed, and fun family life in Katy

*Written by Mary Hogan*

As chief meteorologist, Dr. Jim Siebert shares his love and knowledge of weather with others every weekday on KRIV's *Fox 26 News*. A husband and father of four, he has called Katy home for six years, noting the area's excellent schools, family-friendly atmosphere, and welcoming neighbors. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family, teaching meteorology and environmental science courses at Houston Community College, and writing educational children's books. Dr. Siebert talks with *Katy Magazine* about his fascination with the weather, the value of family, and Katy living.

## *What do you like most about Katy?*

There are so many things that I love about living in Katy. First and foremost, it has to be the great neighborhoods and how people in Katy still take the time to know and care about their neighbors. I love that. I'll give you an example. When we first moved here, somehow our front door was left open and we weren't home. A nice neighbor made several phone calls trying to find us, because they thought somebody may have broken into our home. Within a few minutes I was home. The police and my neighbor were at my front door. Of course, we had just forgotten to close the door and I was

a little embarrassed, but the officer and my neighbor were so nice. They informed me that “we” watch out for each other in Katy, and I’ve never forgotten it.

### ***Tell us about your family.***

My wife Debbie and I have four great children, Ashley, Emmie, Grant, and Dallin. Their ages range from 12 down to 7. Debbie just finished her doctoral degree in music this past year and she teaches voice students. She also performs professionally and is currently working with another local singer and actor to build a performance theater and music academy here in Katy. It’s not a surprise that all of our children play the piano, sing, perform, and play sports.

### ***What is your typical day like?***

I get to work around 1 p.m., so I’m ready for our 2 p.m. news meeting. I always start that meeting with a weather briefing, because weather always sets the tone of what our station will be covering for the day. Then I spend the rest of the afternoon putting my forecast together by looking at computer models, satellite imagery, and radar when storms are breaking. I do the forecasts for the 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. newscasts, which are both an hour long. Of course, all of this can change when we have big storms or severe weather moving across our area.

### ***How do you balance career and family?***

That is always a challenge. During the school year, I get up extra early each day, so I can spend time with our kids before they go to school. During the summer, I have the mornings to take part in running them around to their different camps, music lessons, and church activities. It’s a lot of fun, and I should mention that I’ve become rather good at texting in an effort to keep up with my kids. I’m not home during the evenings, but my wife and I get to go to lunch a lot and that’s great. The weekends are also dedicated to my family. I’m not sure we can ever achieve a real balance, but we certainly try.

### ***Did you always want to be a meteorologist?***

Before deciding on meteorology, I was on my way to become a pilot in the air force. I was an Air Force ROTC cadet in college working toward a military career and flying. However, the air force was downsizing during the late 1980s, and the pilot classes before me were getting assigned desk jobs. They gave me the option of staying in or transferring out, and meteorology was waiting in the wings for me. Things have really turned out well.

### ***What sparked your interest in meteorology and earth science?***

As a child, I was terrified of lightning, so my parents spent time

teaching me how to be safe from it. That sparked my interest. Then, I began watching weather reports on TV, and I was hooked. I was fascinated with how anybody could figure out what the weather was going to do without looking out a window. Fast-forward to today with all of our new technologies, and I’m still fascinated with how we forecast the weather.

### ***What is the most rewarding part about your career?***

I love being in a position to help people stay safe before, during, and after a storm. I look for creating “teachable moments” during my weathercasts, which I hope give people a greater understanding of why we’re having our current weather and what’s going to happen soon. The more informed people are, the better choices they’ll make when they are in danger. The most rewarding

moments are when I go into schools or give hurricane talks and I’m able to share my love of the power of nature and other people get excited about it, as well.

### ***Have you faced any challenges along the way?***

One of the biggest challenges is that with each new job I’ve had to uproot my family and move several times. During my career, I’ve moved my family to Corpus Christi, Waco, Albuquerque, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and now Katy. That’s a lot of moving.

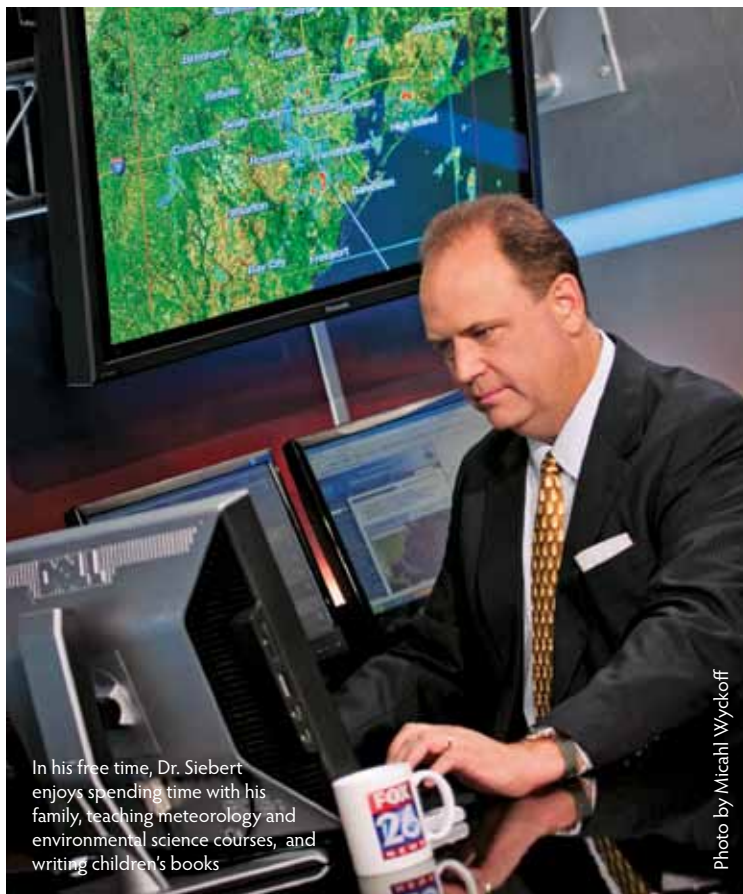
### ***What’s one weather story you’ve covered that really stands out?***

Hurricane Ike was the largest storm I’ve ever covered, so it stands out above all others. The hardest thing about the

storm for me was having to leave my family alone, while I went to work to help everybody else. I will never forget how it felt as I drove away to cover the storm. All of us have incredible memories from Ike.

### ***Tell us about the children’s book series you’re currently working on.***

I have written a couple of middle-grade books that I like to call weather adventures, where children are the main characters in a weather story. The stories are based on real weather events, and the idea is to teach meteorology concepts in an entertaining way. The end of each book features an explanation of how the storm or event has happened in the real world. The first book, *The Day It Rained Frogs*, is about a boy who goes through a storm when it rained frogs. Yes, it could happen. I’m still trying to find a publisher who wants to do a whole series of books.



In his free time, Dr. Siebert enjoys spending time with his family, teaching meteorology and environmental science courses, and writing children’s books

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### *What three adjectives best describe you?*

I had to ask my weekend meteorologist John Dawson to help me with this question. He says I'm entertaining, humorous, and focused. I'm guessing my wife and kids might have other words to describe me.

### *What have been some of your major goals?*

One of my largest professional goals was to become the chief meteorologist for a major market, and I've been very fortunate to accomplish that goal. On a much lighter note, I had a goal to catch a fish in Texas. We've lived here six years, and all of my kids have caught fish, but I've been unsuccessful. I just recently achieved this goal, and now I feel like I can look my children in the eye again!

### *What has been the most unexpected moment in your life?*

I have almost been struck by lightning three times in my life: Once when I was a young boy, once when I was trying to get home during a storm and it struck my car, and once when I was storm chasing.

### *What do your children think about seeing you on TV?*

My children didn't really think I had an unusual job until they got a little older and started going to elementary school. It was normal to see me on TV, and I think they thought everybody's dad did that for a living. Once they started going to school, I would give weather presentations for their classes. Their classmates thought it was cool, and I think that's when they began thinking their dad had a fun job.

### *What are some of your favorite Katy spots?*

Our family really enjoys going out to the many different ice cream shops in Katy. Now there are places where you get to put all kinds of toppings including fruits, chocolate chips, candy bars, and such in your cup, and we love to compare what each one of us gets.

### *What are your favorite ways to spend date night with your wife?*

Our favorite date is having date night at home. This started when our children were very small, and we couldn't afford to go out. After we put the kids to bed, we take turns surprising each other with some sort of fun food, snack, or treat and we watch a movie together. When your children are young, you often don't have time to slowly

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Debbie and Jim Siebert and their kids Ashley, Emmie, Dallin, and Grant enjoy visiting Katy's many ice cream shops for fun family nights out

Photo by Teri Graham



eat a meal, because you're so busy trying to keep up with the kids. It's a nice change taking time to enjoy each other's company, and now date night is a tradition.

### *What are some of your hobbies?*

I love playing with my family and I'd have to say that's my hobby now. We have a wonderful time playing different sports from basketball to soccer and we love to do all kinds of outdoor activities from boating to camping and fishing. Before having children, I was

a triathlete and I've been working myself back into shape to start competing again. I'm planning on competing in the Katy Triathlon at Firethorn this October and I'm really looking forward to it.

### *What would you say is your greatest accomplishment?*

That's an easy one: my family. On my tombstone it won't say meteorologist; just husband and father. KM

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