

UT HONORS ANCHOR

Road from college to CNN wasn't easy for Christi Paul

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By RYAN E. SMITH
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Christi Paul is the last defense between you and badly written news.

A weekday anchor on CNN's Headline News, occasionally she comes face to face with, well, something like this:

There's one team that won't hear of losing. That's because they're all deaf.

Fortunately, she caught it ahead of time and ad libbed on the air. Such are the responsibilities of an anchor in the world of 24-hour news.

Getting into that world was no easy feat for Paul, 37, a University of Toledo graduate in town to be honored as an outstanding alumna by the college of arts and sciences.

"I couldn't get a job initially out of school," the Bellevue, Ohio, native told *The Blade* yesterday.

That was despite studying broadcast journalism at UT, interning at Entertainment Tonight, and having the kind of good looks you would expect from someone who was Miss Mansfield and participated in the Miss Ohio contest.

So she bounced around, working at times as a magician's assistant, a presenter at auto shows, and even singing the national anthem at sports games in Cleveland.

When Paul got a steady job in broadcast journalism, it was in Clarksburg, W.Va., where she was paid \$12,000 a year.

Now that she's on CNN — by way of Boise and Phoenix — she's not complaining.

Paul is based in Atlanta and anchors Headline News on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Beginning Monday, those hours will extend until 2 p.m. She came to the network in April, 2003, as a weekend anchor.

She said she sees the profession as providing a public service, so it needs to be careful to remain objective during times like these when many people's opinions are polarized.

"I still believe in unbiased news," she said. "We shouldn't be political ... My job is to tell you what's going on."

She acknowledges the complaint that a lot of the news these days is depressing and said it can weigh on her too. That's one reason she created a "Morning Pick Me Up" segment that draws on positive, inspirational stories from affiliates.

When she's not being saturated with news or prepping for interviews or other work, Paul has two young children to keep her busy.

She was joined in being honored yesterday by the UT college of arts and sciences by alumni John Potter, a retired judge and former mayor of Toledo; Roy Schneider, a medical illustrator at UT; and Nina McClelland, a chemist.

Contact Ryan E. Smith at: ryansmith@theblade.com or 419-724-6103.



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