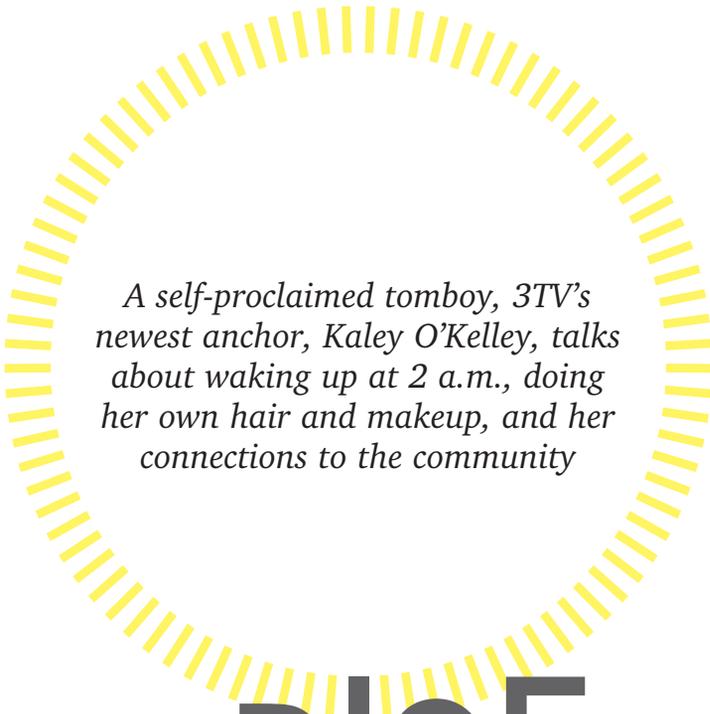


BY WENDY RUBICAM EVANS

PHOTO BY ERIC BLACKMAN



A self-proclaimed tomboy, 3TV's newest anchor, Kaley O'Kelley, talks about waking up at 2 a.m., doing her own hair and makeup, and her connections to the community

RISE and SHINE

Kaley O'Kelley joined the KTVK Channel 3 morning team in September of 2009 and is having the time of her life. The positive energy that emanates from the news anchor and morning show host is contagious, and she can't say enough good things about the station she now calls home. "There's a whole different culture here that makes it feel more like a home than any other place," she explains. With an impressive list of on-air experiences and four Emmy awards behind her, she couldn't be happier with the "dream job" she has today.

O'Kelley attributes much of her on-the-job fulfillment to the philosophy of the station management and the natural team dynamic she shares with her co-hosts, Tara Hitchcock and Scott Pasmore. "If we could roll tape during breaks, people could see how genuine our connection is. We're lucky, really lucky," she says. She loves the fact that the station's approach is very community-oriented and encourages her to really make connections and be a part of Valley life. "The people who live here are the heart and soul of what we're all about, and all of us collectively get to have a voice in that. The management here believes in that, and that makes working here the best," she shares.

This self-proclaimed "small town girl" has had a dynamic career as a news anchor, weather anchor and investigative journalist. She admits that opportunities | **continued on page 54**

Kaley O'Kelley—
enjoying her
“dream job.”



in the industry can create a hectic lifestyle when trying to build a resumé. While filling in frequently on *Good Morning America* on the weekends, she would have to walk off of the set on a Friday morning, hop a plane for New York by noon, land at 6 p.m., and get to bed as soon as possible so she could be on the set of *Good Morning America* before daylight on Saturday. It was during this period in her career, while juggling multiple on-air roles and talking possible jobs with CNN, Fox News and the *Today Show*, that her now-fiancé proposed and life planning became a priority. She says it was a “topsy-turvy” time in life for both of them, but she is thrilled to be settling into life in the Valley, with wedding plans in the works and a recently purchased home to move into.

The daily life O’Kelley has settled into starts at 2:30 a.m. every day, when she gets up and hops online to check news sources. She loves tuning into MSNBC’s *Way Too Early*, and then *Headline News* while she puts on her makeup and blow dries her hair. Yes, she does her own hair and makeup, and says she never feels pressure to look good every day. Covering Hurricane Ivan in 2004 was a life-changing experience for her as she weathered the



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storm along with local residents. “I got over myself—fast,” she recalls. “People were losing everything, and if I was really worrying about my makeup and my hair and the clothes I have on, I might forget about what it really is that we’re doing here. And I don’t ever want to do that.”

What she does want is to be the person you invite into your home every morning. She knows that with the number of media outlets available, you can get your news anywhere, and points out that her time slot also has unique challenges. “When people are waking up in the morning, they are inviting you into the most intimate part of their day. We’re in their bedrooms.” She puts herself in viewers’ shoes, knowing that she’d want to get her information from someone she feels a connection with, “someone I’d want to hang out with, not someone who’s intimidating.”

She is clearly a woman who loves to make connections, and literally gets chills when talking about her good fortune in landing where she is today. Not one to be satisfied with what’s on the surface, she is looking forward to exploring issues that are important to her and that will connect viewers in a meaningful way.

For example, her father’s personal experience with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has touched her deeply. In talking about PTSD, she says, “It is going to be a lifelong mission to me to learn more about the men and women who are still healing from those wounds—that’s where my heart is.” She feels she has found the place where she’ll have the opportunity to cover issues like these in the right way, and tell the stories that really matter.

O’Kelley’s love of community carries over into her off-air hours, as well. One of her favorite things to do is to ride her beach cruiser in her Old Town Scottsdale neighborhood, maybe hitting the farmer’s market or exploring “little pockets” that she insists you won’t

find if you spend most of your time in the car. She admits to being “nosy” and will hop off of her bike and investigate something new. “I love getting out and visiting with people to figure out what’s coming up next. There’s always something happening here.”

Would you recognize the polished host if you ran into her on a Saturday? She says when people do recognize her they often ask if she’s traveling incognito. With no hesitation, she says her “staple” clothing items are a white T-shirt, baseball cap, jeans and flip-flops. She prefers to go without makeup, carrying Handi-Wipes in her purse so she can remove her on-air makeup before she’s out the door after work. Although she is a former Miss Teen Washington, she explains that as a shy tomboy who played catcher for the softball team and has battle scars from being the soccer goalie, she was entered in the pageant as a dare by her older sister. Being a “face your fears kind of girl,” she took the dare, and decided to just have fun with it. Much to her surprise, she was the last girl standing on stage, next to the first runner-up, who is still a good friend today. “I look back and laugh,” she says with a smile. “I’m glad I got to do it, but I probably don’t fit that mold—at all!”

As an anchor, her on-air style is fairly conservative by her own choice. She’s got a lot of freedom to choose her wardrobe, and she and Hitchcock have begun coordinating looks, and adding a suit or jacket here and there. O’Kelley knows that Phoenix is a casual town, and she wants viewers to be able to relate to her. “When you’re waking up at 5 in the morning, you don’t want to look at a woman who’s just so tight that she’s not having fun, and our clothes do say something about us.” She likes to keep jackets bright to keep the mood a little lighter.

This practical girl says she’s “all about finding a great deal” and shops at Last Chance and My Sister’s Closet, picking up designer pieces that often have a great story behind them. She also loves the enclave of shops just north of Scottsdale and Shea, which she calls a “walking Mecca in Scottsdale” on a Saturday, where she frequents About Face Boutique and High Society Resale Boutique. She loves to incorporate artistic and funky elements into her look, and hopes to start incorporating some fun items into her on-air wardrobe.

With a happy outlook in her personal and professional life shining through, O’Kelley is on top of the world. “What an incredible time to be living in Arizona, and what an incredible time to be able to

go out and find stories and share them,” she says. In thinking about where she is today and the opportunities ahead of her, the upbeat anchor says with certainty, “I don’t think it’s about the title anymore, it’s about being able to be at a place where you get to do things like this.”

Wendy Rubicam Evans is a freelance writer and marketing consultant in Scottsdale. For more information visit www.rubicamwriting.com.



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