



**T**anya Foster works as a news anchor at a local television station, where she uses her skills at communicating to deliver important, sometimes life-saving, information to her viewers. She puts those same skills to work when she serves as an advocate on behalf of others, including those who cannot speak for themselves. If she sees an injustice, an inequity, or an exclusion, she dedicates her time and energy toward finding solutions. Tanya is passionate in her support for people with disabilities and for animals, and she spends many volunteer hours, in addition to her professional exposés, ensuring that the needs of the voiceless are heard.

Tanya knew at an early age that she wanted to be in television broadcasting. "I was 16 years old when I visited Bill Balleza at KPRC News 2 Houston in Houston, Texas, to see what it was like to be a journalist. He encouraged me and became my mentor. We are still close, and we talk about the first time I went to see him years ago and how he encouraged me. He is the reason I am where I am today," says Tanya.

In 2001, Tanya began her career as an anchor/reporter with KAUZ News, Channel 6, located in Wichita Falls, Texas. "I met Ben, my husband, at KAUZ. He was the production manager and directed the noon newscast that I produced and anchored. We started dating and we were married in 2004," smiles Tanya. In 2005, KXXV-TV, the ABC station in Waco, Texas, hired her as an anchor and hired her husband as the production manager.

Three years later, Tanya received a call from the news director at CBS 21 News. "He asked if I was interested in a job in this area. I accepted and my husband and I moved to Harrisburg," explains Tanya. Her family is so close that members gradually began relocating to Central Pennsylvania. "In 2008, after my sister and her family visited from San Antonio, Texas, during the Christmas holiday, my brother-in-law applied for a job locally and was immediately hired. Then my mother moved here from San Antonio," states Tanya.

# Giving a VOICE to the VOICELESS

By Mikell Worley

More recently her brother, a lieutenant colonel in the United States Marine Corp, returned from Afghanistan, and as it happens, his next assignment is at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He and his wife and their four sons moved to the area in July 2011. She notes, "My dad, my other brother and his family are the only ones who have not moved here—yet!"

There have been many memorable moments in Tanya's career. "In 2006, I was working as an anchor for KXXV in Waco, Texas, and my husband was the production manager. One Friday evening we were both at home when a tornado came through. We had gathered our dogs and our cat, and we were sitting in our bathtub for protection when both of our cell phones rang," remembers Tanya. "It was the station, telling us we had to come in because a tornado had just hit downtown Waco."

"It was 11:30 at night, pitch black, because the tornado had knocked out the streetlights. As we were driving, my husband told me to scan the skies with each flash of lightning—it was the only way we could tell if another tornado was on the ground. We arrived at the station, my husband grabbed a camera and was my photographer, and we went back out into the raging storm," recalls Tanya.

People were terrified. "We interviewed one young woman and her boyfriend who were so frightened that they drove their car into the local shopping mall." Tanya and her husband worked for 22 hours straight. They eventually returned to report the news at the station, which was operating on a generator due to power outages. "This is why I'm in the business, for moments like these. During disasters, people feel frightened and alone. I kept thinking about how they need to feel connected. It didn't occur to me until later that we hadn't slept for two days," muses Tanya.

Tanya's greatest passion is being a voice for others. "Not long after I moved here, the Center for Independent Living of Central PA in Camp Hill, 'found' me. They are a non-profit organization dedicated to providing support for people with disabilities, so they can lead independent, fulfilling lives. I have worked with them for more than three years, highlighting the inspiring successes of people living well with disabilities. In January, they

surprised and honored me by presenting me with their first ever Shoot Star of the Year Award. They gave me a plaque and bought me a star - an actual star in the sky - in my honor," says Tanya.

If Tanya sees a situation where people are being treated unfairly, she takes a proactive approach to remedy the situation. On a recent trip with her husband and her mom to President James Madison's estate, Montpelier near Charlottesville, Virginia, Tanya became frustrated. "My mom is deaf and during the tour, none of the video presentations had



closed captioning, nor was the guided tour translated into sign language. So when we returned home, I wrote an e-mail to the chief officer, stating that adding captions to accommodate the deaf and hard of hearing, and having a written version of the guided tour were easy solutions," says Tanya.

"He emailed me back, thanking me and telling me that they added captions and have a verbatim printout of the guided tour. My mom and I were so excited after reading the letter that we gave each other a high five."

Tanya's three dogs, Dixie, a yellow Labrador; Daisy, a Yorkshire Terrier; and Dora, a Chihuahua mix are fortunate to have a loving home with Tanya and her husband. Not all dogs have that advantage, so Tanya and her husband advocate on their behalf. "Dogs

are people, too!" Tanya laughs. "I'm a huge proponent for helping dogs find homes. My husband and I both volunteer at shelters. When we lived in Waco, Texas, I started a segment on the midday show I anchored at KXXV called 'Furry Friends Friday.' With the help of four local animal rescues and shelter, we placed more than 1,200 dogs and cats into loving homes."

She recently delivered a news report on the investigation exposing puppy mills. "Pennsylvania has a puppy mill epidemic. Our state has the most in the entire nation, with Lancaster County topping the list. It's a very secretive industry, and many people just don't realize the horrible animal cruelty that is going on in our own backyard—we want to get to the bottom of it," says Tanya.

Of all the stories that Tanya has covered during the years, the most memorable of Tanya's career is an account about a local Vietnam veteran. "He was shot in the head during the war, left for dead, but a heart surgeon stepped in to operate on his brain and miraculously saved his life," explains Tanya. "They reunited recently, and I told their incredible story on Veterans Day 2009. It was called 'Images of Bravery,' and I was awarded an Emmy for Outstanding Human Interest - News Feature and first place in the Pennsylvania AP Broadcasters Association for Feature Report. Being able to recognize two war heroes and getting so much positive feedback was heart-warming."

Just as her mentor did, Tanya encourages the young girls who contact her about her job as a news anchor. They look to her as an example and want to follow in her footsteps. "I encourage anyone who has a love for something to pursue it," says Tanya. "There may be hard work, but living your dream is worth the effort."

Tanya is not only fulfilling her dream, but her dedication and caring nature are improving the quality of life for those around her. ❀

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