

# az-lifestyle

STYLE | DINING | PEOPLE | FITNESS | TRAVEL | FASHION | MARCH 2011

## THE FAMILY ISSUE

BALANCING ACT mom, career, & charity work.

FAMILY VACATIONS are we there yet?

LET'S MOVE! getting kids healthy.

FAMILY FUN best local spots.

plus:

TRUCK FOOD gourmet on wheels.

TARA HITCHCOCK giving back.

JUDY KAYE returns to atc.

PHOTOGRAPHY as art.





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# TARA HITCHCOCK-

*'You Can Always Do More'*

Tara Hitchcock — no relation to the film legend — directs her own Valley classic every day. The anchor of “Good Morning Arizona” is an ebullient television host, dedicated mother and wife and engaged community member who supports charities such as Best Buddies, Childhelp and Celebrity Fight Night, which raises money for Parkinson’s Disease research.

COMMUNITY PROFILE | BY DAVID M. BROWN

Her debut in the Valley began in the spring of 1996 when Phil Alvidrez, news director for 3TV from 1986-2003, took note of her while searching for a successor to Jodi Applegate as host of 'Good Morning Arizona.'

"Tara was working in her first TV job at a small station in Texas. When we saw her audition tape, we knew 30 seconds in that she was something special," he recalls. "I remember she included a clip where she was interviewing a little boy. Contrary to what it may seem, interviewing kids isn't always easy, but Tara was able to relate and get the boy to talk and not look silly or patronizing doing it. We flew her to Phoenix and offered her the job that day."

"Over the years I have had the opportunity to work with many wonderfully talented people," he continues. "Tara is one of the best ever. She has a unique ability to be herself on TV. What you see is what you get with Tara. She loves people, and I think that comes through to viewers. She is a terrific interviewer because she is interested in people and actually listens to what they say."

Tara was formerly with KBMT, Beaumont, Texas, where she was a general assignment reporter, producer and news anchor for two and half years. She had been there for 2 ½ years, eating lots of crawfish, she notes with a smile. ▸

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Opposite page: The family in San Carlos, Mexico.

This page: Tara with Mohammed Ali at the Founders' Dinner and Live Auction at Celebrity Fight Night, 2010.





This page Tara with  
Best Buddies.  
Opposite page: Tara  
with Best Buddies  
Ambassador, Charlie.

Tara had hired an agent just the week before. "I FedEx-ed tape. My agent said she had a 'feeling,' over-nighted it to Phil Alvidrez who flew me out the next day and following that offered me the morning gig. I couldn't believe it and was so amazed I had the job. All I thought was I'm in Phoenix. If I get fired tomorrow, I was in Phoenix."

She wasn't fired, and 14 years later, she's become not only one of the most respected television professionals locally but an active community member. "If you ask my associates at Channel 3, they might say I do more charity work/events than anyone there," she says. "I just feel like it's part of my job, and I love it. If you feel bad, I say do

hot yoga and some charity work: Problem solved!"

Tara assists with the Foundation for Blind Children, Florence Crittendon, Hacienda HealthCare, Courtney's Foundation, Women Against MS as well as For Those Without a Voice, a foundation benefiting children and animals, which her friend TC Shutler founded, and Beauty of a Bonzer, an annual charity concert which benefits several charities, including Special Olympics and SAARC. She and her sisters also participate in the two-day Avon Walk for Breast Cancer every other year in honor of their grandmother.

"Tara is the most committed person I know. When she sets her mind to something, she makes it happen," notes Kathleen Rubi, former director of Best Buddies – Arizona and now senior director of state development for Special Olympics Arizona. Rubi traveled with Tara and her husband, Kenn, to California about two and half years ago to attend a national Best Buddies event where Tara cycled 90 miles to raise money for Best Buddies. "That's when her passion for the program and its importance started, and she has been a dedicated to raising money and awareness for it ever since," Rubi recalls.

In addition, Kurt Warner's First Things First has asked her to host its March event, and she will also emcee the Arizona Kidney Foundation's Dancing with Stars gala later this year. Every holiday season, she's involved with TV3's sponsorship of Christmas Angel and its food drive.

"I've worked side by side with Tara for more than

15 years and I can tell you one thing: she spends a lot of days emceeing lunches or doing charity events late at night," Scott Pasmore, her 3TV associate, says. "I often wonder if she even has a house to go home to."

That Scottsdale home — it exists — includes her husband, Kenn, whom she met in Telluride while on assignment for the station in January 2002, and three children from his previous marriage: Dane, Dylan and Alex.

How important are the children to her? "They all got down on one knee with their dad and proposed in 2004, and we married on top of a mountain in Telluride in October of that year," she recalls. "We also took the kids on our honeymoon to Australia." In the wedding ceremony, Dane was the best man, Dylan the ring bearer, and Alex and Tara's three sisters were bridesmaids.

Alex, 22, is graduating from Arizona State University in May; Dane, 20, is a junior there; and Dylan, ▶



“If you feel bad, I say do  
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Problem solved!”

– Tara Hitchcock



15, is a freshman in high school. Completing the family is a “very cocky” French Brittany spaniel, Jacques, who, according to Hitchcock, “worships my husband and secretly plans my demise.”

She planned on her reporting career when she was in the sixth grade in Plano, Texas, near Dallas. Born in Chestnut Hill, Pa., she moved with her family to Massachusetts and New Jersey and then to Texas, where her parents remain. “I had no friends, was very shy, and a teacher noticed something and told me about an after-school current events class. I loved the news and remember thinking: It looks like fun and it’s never boring. The news always changes, and my biggest fear was being bored.”

At Plano High School in Dallas, she competed in speech/debate tournaments nationwide, graduating in 1988. For her undergrad, she double-majored at Boston College in political science and communications, and later earned a master’s degree in journalism at Northwestern University’s distinguished Medill School of Journalism. During her academic career, she was chosen in 1990 to be one of 30 students to tour the Soviet Union.

She continues that travel passion. This past Christmas Eve, the family returned from Egypt and they are often in Telluride,

where they began as a family, as well as San Carlos, Mexico, and, one of the most beautiful places in America, upstate New York, in particular, Lake George, where her father’s family has a few places. Here, on May 10, 1775, the Green Mountain Boys led by Ethan Allen captured the British-held Fort Ticonderoga and helped direct the ultimate success of the Revolution. “That is my favorite spot from childhood: They call the Fourth of July in Ticonderoga ‘The ‘Best Fourth in the North.’ The kids love it and want to go every year, and that means the world to me,” Tara shares. Being that great stepmom and wife inspires her as she continues to drive herself to being better for them, the station and her community.

“Challenge yourself: You can always do more,” she says.

“With Tara’s talent, she could work anywhere,” Phil says. “But she’s chosen to make the Valley her home — and Phoenix television, and Phoenix, are better because of it.” □

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Opposite page: Tara and family visiting stepson Dane, at ASU program in Barcelona.

This page: Tara and her husband Kenn at Moraine Lake near Banff celebrating their anniversary.

