

CHANDLER LUTZ

Reporting on traffic in the pre-dawn hours

Chandler Lutz says she's not a morning person. But you'd never guess that from her poised, bright-eyed appearances at 4:30 am each weekday, when she beams her traffic reports to fellow early risers on "CBS Eyewitness News."

"You can't look tired or be grumpy," she says. "You've got to present to the public in the best way possible, even if it's still dark outside."

Since last August, the Moorestown native has been the go-to anchor for traffic updates between 4:30 and 7 am. That means this young TV personality is up and out the door by 3 am to head to work.

"I try to wake up with a smile, but I wish I could say it gets easier with time," Lutz says of her weekly routine. "Still, I'm so grateful to be doing what I'm doing, I can't complain. I learn more every day."

There was a time when the now-Center City resident figured she'd end up with a career in show business, having trained for years as a singer and actress. But these days, learning the ropes of the

news business has been a priority, and – two-plus years after college graduation – it's paid off.

Born in the Philippines to two entrepreneurs who later owned an internet security business, Lutz – an only child – spent her childhood in South Jersey. From an early age, it was clear she enjoyed an audience, and she began vocal training in grade school. At age 16, she took part in a holiday concert at New York's Carnegie Hall, where she had a solo – then forgot the first line of her song. The lesson? "I can't worry about the little things in life. Just go out there and try it."

A student at Moorestown Friends School from kindergarten through high school, Lutz – who was profiled in SJ Magazine at age 13 as a "Kid to Watch"

– decided to do a remote year as a sophomore. She moved with her father and cousin to Los Angeles to train with A-lister vocal coach, Seth Riggs.

Continuing her classwork remotely, Lutz cut an album during her time in L.A., and created a charity to help underprivileged families facing hardships due to illnesses, called the Believe in Dreams Foundation.

The nonprofit raised \$1 million to support many well-known charities, like St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

During her time on the West Coast, Lutz even landed a role in the 2011 independent film, "Walk a Mile in My Pradas," starring Dee Wallace and Tom Arnold.

"It was a great experience," Lutz says, adding that her venture into acting tied in with her charity work since "being in front of a camera came naturally to me." She also hosted an episode of MTV Extreme's "Cribs" in 2012.

But, it "got to the point where I'm a sophomore in high school and I need to figure out what direction I was taking," Lutz recalls. "I wanted to come back to my high school, and I knew I wanted to go to college on the East Coast, too."



After high school graduation, Lutz found the perfect fit at St. Joseph's University, where she majored in both communications & digital media studies, and entrepreneurial business. During her junior year at St. Joe's, Lutz became an intern in the WPHL TV sales department. There, she helped plan and run local marketing events, and created sales packages and presentations.

One day, she wandered over to the TV studio and, as she puts it, "it just kind of flipped for me. I did an anchor read for fun and took it all in. Suddenly, I could see myself in that role."

By September 2015, the start of her senior year in college, Lutz took a job as a newsroom assistant at WPHL, the first major step leading to her current-day career. In May 2016 – the same month she graduated from St. Joe's – she landed her first "real" journalist gig: a multi-media reporter with the station. She created content and managed the station's social media platforms, as well as conducting live interviews. By February 2017, she had advanced to traffic reporter/producer for the station.

In August 2018, Lutz debuted as a member of the Eyewitness News Team, taking over the role of traffic anchor. She also hosts a two-minute feel-good segment, "3 Cheers," that airs Thursday mornings and again during prime time, highlighting people giving back to help others.

"It's great to focus on unsung heroes who do so much without any thought for themselves," she says. The profiled subjects are selected through nominations submitted through the station's website.

Lutz has found the traffic anchor role is demanding. She could be in the middle of reporting live traffic updates in one of her ongoing one-minute "hits," and the information could change as she speaks.

"You can try to plan, but traffic is so changeable that, in reality, I ad lib every single hit," she says. Working with different traffic systems – including PennDOT and NJDOT – along with information from viewers who call in, is the ultimate "live reporting," she adds.

"It has totally taught me how to be flexible and think on my feet," she says.

While Lutz would love to eventually end up in entertainment reporting, she's content where she is for now. "I believe I'm where I'm meant to be," she says. "But you never know what's coming." ■