

# Kimberly Hunt

## Making A Difference

By Judith A. Habert  
Photos : Lisa K. Miller

We often look at objects of beauty and simply admire them for what we see, without delving any deeper into what lies beneath. If we do take the time to examine them further, we often find that what lies beneath is as beautiful. I can honestly say that this is indeed the case with Channel 10 News anchor Kimberly Hunt.

I was lucky enough to have spent some time with her recently to get to know one of the women behind the face of our daily evening newscasts. We met in the unassuming cafeteria of Channel 10 studios in San Diego to chat about life, love and career as a member of the longest running Female News Anchor team in the country.

Kimberly Hunt and Carol Lebeau have been the standard in news in San Diego for the past two decades. What happens outside the studio when the cameras are off? Is life as glamorous as it appears? Of course there are guest appearances, meetings with celebrities and hob knobbing with the San Diego elite, but at the base of it all is a woman who believes that her celebrity should be used to give back, not only to our community but to charities around the world.

Kimberly grew up in the Napa Valley and at the age of 15 had already mapped out her future career goals. She knew from this young age that she wanted to become a news reporter. The initial interest came from her father, even though he wasn't in the news field. Kimberly's Dad was an officer for the California Highway Patrol. When Dad came home at night his briefcase would be full of reports of events that happened each day. It fascinated her when

she watched her Dad work; so much so that she briefly wanted to be an investigator. and then thought about wanting to get married and have a family so she decided being a reporter would probably be the best choice for her.

Once the seed was planted Kimberly ran with the idea, researching colleges until she happened upon the perfect program. Kimberly decided to attend San Francisco State University where she would major in broadcast journalism. She had heard wonderful things about their program and was not disappointed in her choice. There was a television station on campus which broadcast news five days a week, Kimberly quickly found her niche and settled in to learn all she could about the field she loved. As Kimberly stated, "One of the things I loved most about the program was that our advisor was straight out of the NBC affiliate in San Francisco and he ran the newsroom on campus as he did in real life. So we all learned every aspect of the profession. Our jobs changed frequently allowing all of us to get experience as reporters, directors, producers, camera operators, editors and on air news personalities. By the time I graduated I had done it all."



Kimberly didn't wait to graduate to get her feet wet in the industry. It was only her second year in college when she earned an internship at the San Francisco CNN bureau as an assignment editor. Along with classes,

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Kimberly interned three days a week, and shortly thereafter got a radio broadcast job on weekends. So when she graduated she already had three years of experience in various aspects of the field she loved.

As graduation time rolled around another event occurred that quickly shaped her life and career path. The ABC network news team out of New York came to San Francisco to cover the Democratic National Convention and they contacted her school in search of graduates to assist them during their week in San Francisco. Kimberly quickly applied for the position and was accepted. This was a huge break for her, being called upon to serve as a research assistant for Peter Jennings. Kimberly knew she was in her element and she worked as hard as she could to be the best assistant possible. This seemed to pay off, when during the last day of the convention, Kimberly was approached by the director of the convention. He told her that he had been watching the work she had been doing for the week and informed her that he needed an associate producer for Monday Night Football, and asked if she would be interested in the position. Already committed to a full time position at the radio station upon graduation, Kimberly decided to approach her boss to see if they could arrange her days off to accommodate this new offer. They were happy to do it, and Kimberly went to work for Monday Night Football.

Kimberly enjoyed her time there, but knew that what she really wanted was to get into television reporting, so she sent tapes out and a few offers came in. "I chose to go to Monterey California," recalls Kimberly, "It was a CBS affiliate and I was offered the position of anchoring the midday news and reporting for the nightly news." Kimberly quickly moved up to the nightly news position when the then current anchor moved on to another position. So here Kimberly was, only 6 months out of college and anchoring the evening news. Her time in Monterey was a blast. According to Kimberly, "At the time Clint Eastwood was mayor of Carmel. He would come in the station and we would interview him and do stories with him. Anytime he had a cause to fight for he would come visit us." Kimberly stayed in Monterey for 1 ½ years and was approached by a Sacramento station and a Dallas Sta-

tion. While trying to decide in which direction to venture she received a phone call from San Diego. She knew instantly that this offer needed some attention. She flew to San Diego and a day and a half later was offered the job. San Diego would now be her new home. And it has remained so for two decades, a decision that she has never regretted. Kimberly joined Carol Lebeau and has, over the years, developed not only a wonderful working relationship, but a friendship that has stood the test of time. Kimberly even credits Carol with a large role in ending up with the man of her dreams. Kimberly remembers, "Two weeks after I



arrived in San Diego there was a weekend UCP telethon being held at the station and Carol was supposed to co-host it, but she came down with the flu, so I was asked to take her place. I was thrilled, but didn't know anyone in town yet. All I knew was that a San Diego Charger was going to be the other host, along with Jack White, a long time legendary news anchor." Kimberly came face to face with Billy Ray Smith. "He was just so nice," adds Kimberly, "A real Southern gentleman." They hit it off well, but life continued as it had for Kimberly, concentrating on her career and becoming the best news anchor she could be.

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Billy Ray would come into the studios once a week to be on air with Channel 10 sportscasters to discuss the Chargers. He would pass by Kimberly, give her a friendly hi and a wave but that was as far as it went. During one of these visits Carol asked me, "Hey Kimberly, what about Billy Ray, have you ever thought about him." And Kimberly replied, "He's a really nice guy, an incredibly nice guy, but he has never even remotely acted like he wanted to ask me out." Carol decided to play match maker to her dear friend and approached Billy Ray, asking him the same question and dropping a suggestion that maybe he should think about asking Kimberly out. This little nudge from Carol was all he needed and soon after he called and invited Kimberly to lunch. They never stopped dating from that lunch on, and after two years they were married. Billy Ray played professional football, following in his father's footsteps, for three additional years and today also finds himself on air as a sportscaster. They live in a beautiful home in San Diego with their 16 year old daughter Savannah. One would think with the busy schedule of a news anchor and a family life, full of volleyball games and family and business events, that there would be little time for the lady behind the news desk to venture beyond her daily duties. This is furthest from the truth when it comes to Kimberly



Hunt. Not only has she embraced numerous local and international charities, she has passed the passion on to her 16 year old daughter Savannah who at this tender young age already has her own charity which she works at feverishly to help make a difference. Together they are doing just that. Several years ago Kimberly decided that she needed to give

back to a community that has embraced her. She started out locally finding time to dedicate to many charities focusing on issues involving children, women, and law enforcement. One of her most passionate causes is the 11-99 Foundation which raises money for the families of fallen officers killed in the line of duty. This is a cause close to her heart since her father was a 30 year veteran of the California Highway Patrol and even more so, having lost her grandfather, a police officer, in the line of duty. Kimberly quickly adds, "That organization is near and dear to my heart. We owe these men and women in law enforcement a huge debt of gratitude."

This is another thing that Kimberly and Billy Ray have in common; he too has many charities with which he is involved. One of his favorite is the Wounded Warriors of Camp Pendleton. He has a foundation and he raises a lot of money that goes for local military. With two parents so deeply involved in giving back to the community, it is no wonder that the trait has also rubbed off on Savannah. At a very early age she learned the importance of helping those who need assistance. As Kimberly states, "In the past few years I decided that I wanted to do more. I wanted to keep supporting the local charities, but I also wanted to look outside my community. And the fact that I had a teenager made it important to me that I teach her about the world around her and that we need to help those in need." As a result, Savannah now

has her own charity that helps refugees, that she works with through the International Rescue Committee here in San Diego. In addition she is a young ambassador for "Opportunity International." Both Kimberly and her daughter are involved with this charity.

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It's a micro finance charity which gives out small loans to very poor entrepreneurs in 26 nations around the world. You can hear the enthusiasm in Kimberly's voice as she explains, "I travel with them internationally and I have seen these clients myself and what they can do with 100.00 is just amazing. They build a business allowing them to feed their children, educate their children, cloth their children. They improve their homes, lay cement floorings over the dirt which helps cut down disease. Once they get their business working they hire people to help, they get another loan, they grow the business, now they are employing people. Now they are helping other people and they start branching out to the community. It raises up an entire community through these small individual loans."

Savannah has been around the charity scene for most of her young life, going to events with Mom and Dad and watching all that they did to give back. The true eye opener for Savannah was when Kimberly took her along on a trip to Vietnam with another international charity called "Room to Read" "Savannah was 13 or 14 when I took her with me to Vietnam with Room To Read, they build schools and school libraries for children who can't afford to go to school. We went to the Mekong Delta. We arrived at the tail end of the project. We came in and finished it off, put books on the shelves, and computers in the school rooms, chairs in the classrooms. Parents came in and they painted walls and tables and we opened the school."

Personally, as a family, Kimberly, Billy Ray and Savannah are ten year sponsors of a child from Vietnam. "While we were in Vietnam, Savannah and I were escorted on the back of motorcycles by local Vietnamese men into a very remote area of the Mekong Delta, an area that you cannot get to by car. We went to the house of the girl we were sponsoring, which had a thatched roof and dirt floors. At the center of the room was a wooden palette that the family of five slept on with one blanket. We spent some time with her and Savannah saw first-hand what an incredible family it was, the grace, dignity and pride that they possessed due to the fact that their child was going to be educated as a result of our sponsorship."

Through their charity work Kimberly and Savannah were told of a family from the Congo who lived in San Diego. Kimberly and Savannah wanted to learn more about them and they soon befriended them. They have a little girl, and Savannah started tutoring their little girl who speaks Swahili and

French. Savannah speaks fluent French, so she tutored her in French in order to teach her English. One day Savannah came home from their apartment and she approached Kimberly and said "Mom, we have to do something, they don't have a table and chairs and they only have one bed" So Kimberly set out to help Savannah raise money to buy the family some furniture. Once this task was accomplished Savannah realized that if there was one family in this situation there had to be more, so she decided to create her own charity called "Make this home," to help other refugee families. Even more amazing is the fact that when Savannah turned 16 last year she decided to forgo the usual sweet sixteen party and instead threw a sweet sixteen masquerade ball



fundraiser, asking all in attendance not to give her presents but to instead make a contribution to Opportunity International. Through her efforts she managed to collect close to \$20,000 for this wonderful charity. You can see the glow of pride in Kimberly's eyes as she tells me about her daughter and her dedication to helping others. Kimberly definitely has reason to be very proud.

It's been close to 20 years that Kimberly has been a fixture on our evening news so I asked how she felt things had changed in the profession over the years. "Well, the industry has changed, mainly because of the absolute flourishing of cable news, Internet news, and cell phone news. People have so many options these days."

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What does Kimberly love about her job? That's an easy question, "I love the experiences that I've had and the people that I had the opportunity to meet that I wouldn't normally have met if I held a different job. Going to academy awards, interviewing a sitting president at the White House, flying with the blue angels, spending a day with Oprah Winfrey, working with the police canine unit (where they put me in a leather suit and had the dog attack me,) following the Pope around for several days on a US visit, being at a naval station in Coronado with the navy seals during their Hell week. How would I have ever known that? Just day to day the people I meet. I meet interesting people, experts in their field, people doing great things in the world. I would never be able to meet them if not for this job."

Those of us who welcome Kimberly into our homes every night are also grateful to have the opportunity to get to know someone who takes such joy in helping others and who has invested so much in giving back to our community and the world.

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Kimberly believes that the most important part of her job is to present the news in an honest balanced approach. So I couldn't help but ask the question, "So do you love your job?" Kimberly didn't hesitate a moment saying, "I love it! I love it! I think that it is intrinsic that my blood starts to move a little faster, my brain starts to fire when there is breaking news. The adrenalin sustains it day after day. The more news there is, the more I live and breathe it. I got into the right business. If it is happening I want to be reporting it."



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