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Crystal Harrell

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus alumna Crystal Harrell builds impactful career in local media and community advocacy

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Crystal Harrell, a 2018 graduate of the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus (PDC), is making a lasting impact in local media as a senior promotions producer at KESQ News Channel 3 while continuing to amplify community voices throughout the Coachella Valley.

Born and raised in the Coachella Valley, Harrell's passion for storytelling began at a young age through her love of writing and a family tradition of watching local news together. That early exposure inspired her to pursue a career in local media, where she could inform, uplift and advocate for the community that raised her.

Harrell earned a bachelor of arts degree in communication with a concentration in media studies and a minor in film at PDC. As a first-generation college student, she chose the campus

for its close-knit environment, strong academic support and ability to stay close to home while earning her CSUSB degree.

“The communication and media studies program at PDC gave me both the theoretical foundation and practical skills needed to pursue journalism, promotions and visual storytelling, all while maintaining a strong focus on community impact,” Harrell said.

During her time at PDC, Harrell credits supportive faculty and counselors for helping shape her academic and professional path. She extends special thanks to Robert Leo, her first communications professor, and Mariam Betlemidze, advisor for *The Coyote Chronicle* student newspaper, for their mentorship and guidance in building her confidence as a storyteller.

After graduating in 2018, Harrell began her career as a feature writer for *Coachella Valley Weekly*, where she later became head feature writer, focusing on arts and culture. She went on to contribute to *Palm Springs Life*, *Coachella Magazine*, *Desert Health* and the *Hi-Desert Star*, establishing herself as a trusted community journalist.

In 2022, Harrell joined KESQ News Channel 3 as a promotions producer and now serves as senior promotions producer. In this role, she promotes coverage of critical community issues, including environmental health, mental health awareness, disaster response, animal welfare and emerging technologies in education. Her career highlights also include assisting with the production of American Idol winner Abi Carter’s hometown visit, capturing promotional content at the Palm Springs International Film Festival, and traveling to the Dolby Theatre with viewers for *Kelly and Mark’s After the Oscars* live tapings.

Harrell has also worked on numerous initiatives with lasting community impact, including partnerships with FIND Food Bank to combat food insecurity, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital’s Dream Home Giveaway, and the Living Healthy initiative. She spearheaded the promotional logo design for Living Healthy, which promotes local health and wellness resources and hosts an annual public expo.

In recognition of her professional achievements and community leadership, Harrell was named to Palm Springs Life Magazine’s “40 Under 40” list.

Beyond her professional work, Harrell remains actively involved in giving back to the community in a number of ways: through alumni panels at PDC and College of the Desert; serving as marketing chair on the Board of Palm Springs Women in Film & Television; taking part in the advisory committee for this year’s Palm Desert Area Chamber of Commerce Emerging Leaders class; supporting local arts and culture; and engaging in patient education and advocacy for individuals living with autoimmune disorders through the International Pemphigus & Pemphigoid Foundation (IPPF).

“I am most proud of building a meaningful career while managing a chronic illness and using my platform to inform and advocate for others,” Harrell said. “Success, to me, means continued growth while staying true to my purpose as a storyteller.”

Harrell says being a CSUSB Palm Desert Campus alumna represents resilience, opportunity and pride – values she continues to carry throughout her career.

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The [CSUSB Palm Desert Campus](#) is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.

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