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OU student navigates new job

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Lauren Podell began her job as WDIV Local 4's newest traffic reporter on Thursday, Jan. 10. During one of her traffic reports, Podell described the morning commute as "boring." A few hours later, she ate her words as a tanker slid off an overpass and caused an explosion.

"Someone was truly testing me," Podell said of the challenge on her first day.

Podell, an OU senior, was scheduled to start an internship at WDIV Local 4 this winter. In November, she learned about open auditions for a traffic reporter position and decided to take a chance.

"I didn't have the direct experience with TV, but I knew this is what I wanted to do," Podell said. "This type of open audition is not something that happens in a top ten market."

Local 4 was recruiting an extra traffic reporter to help out with the 4 p.m. newscast. The audition process was a reoccurring segment on Local 4 news and the participants were put on the spot on live TV. The auditions went from 30 people to 15 to 10 to four people and ultimately two were chosen, including Podell. The morning traffic reporter left the station and Podell was tapped to take her spot.

"I was most nervous when we were going from 10 participants to four. I was the last person of the four that they called. I was really anxious. I just wanted it to be over. The process was excruciating," Podell said.

Despite her lack of TV experience, Podell always had faith in her ability to do the job. She had her own show on WXOU and participated in shows with OUTV.

"I always wanted a job in TV. I went toward radio first because I love music, too," Podell said. And there is also some history there. Her father, Doug Podell, is veteran radio broadcaster in Detroit and works as a DJ and program director for 101.1 WRIF.

"With my dad in the business and me wanting to follow in his footsteps, there is always pressure. Those are big shoes to fill," Podell said.

Her father was able to give her some insight into a career in broadcasting, but Podell said it was her education and experiences at OU that gave her the skills and confidence to take on the challenge. She even credited OU in her profile that aired during the auditions for the position.

"I know a lot about the business from my dad, but I learned almost everything I know how to do from OU," Podell said. Things like reading Teleprompters, hooking up microphones and being on camera she learned from OUTV. She also gained confidence through her weekly show on WXOU. "I give all the credit to Oakland University, because everyone there really helped prepare me for this role."

While Podell is adjusting from being a student with an internship and a campus radio job to a morning traffic reporter in a large market, she said the biggest adjustment has been going to bed at 7 or 8 p.m. to get up at 2 a.m. to make it to the station for the show's 5 a.m. start.

"I've been working this far in my life for this job. This is something I've wanted to do my entire life and I'm not going to let getting up in the middle of the night stop me," Podell said. "I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Guy Gordon and Rhonda Walker (morning anchors) and working at Local 4."

In addition to the morning news, Podell is fulfilling her internship at WDIV as well. A few days a week she is staying on to help with the noon newscast. She said she hopes to gain experience and possibly move on to reporting more than traffic.

"My long-term goal previously was to work in a top market, so being at that level now is amazing. I planned on working in a smaller market and working my way up. There is no better place to learn the ropes than a top ten TV market in your hometown," Podell said.

SUMMARY

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