



Lee on the Today Show set while visiting an alum who is one of the show's Producers.

FEATURED MEMBER:

Lee Reynolds Crouch: The CT Challenge and Going Home

Lee is finally going home. And she is thrilled. As we talked at the Fairfield University Bookstore, she had just met the moving van at home, which was now en route transporting her 15,000 pounds of earthly belongings. She would be leaving Monroe after 30 years, and starting a new job, which she accepted only a few weeks before. The goodbyes were excruciatingly painful but Lee anxiously awaited her new life-in Oklahoma. She will be working where she grew up and went to school --at the University of Oklahoma, Gaylord College, the School of Journalism.

In January of 2013, Lee was named Director of Development for the CT Challenge, a nonprofit that supports post-cancer treatment survivors with exercise and nutrition. The CT Challenge Center is a beautiful, new tranquil building in Southport that brings together survivors in a relaxed atmosphere, helping them work towards wellness through nutrition workshops and exercise classes; there is no pressure to talk about their disease. Many survivors report that though their community means well when they ask about their health status, talking about one's illness all the time gets really old after a while. The Center looks something like a day spa with vast light wooden floors, a Pilates/Yoga room with tastefully colored mats, a posh bathroom with individual hairdryers, thick, plush white towels, and a beautiful open area for cooking classes, sampling and tea gatherings.

Lee's CT Challenge job followed a 30-year career in sales and marketing for hospital patient education and communication programs. She began by taking the "Fundamentals of Fundraising" course hosted by AFP Fairfield County in 2012. She was the first ever Director of Development. Previously CT Challenge funds were raised by the founder and through the annual bike event. She expanded the peer-to-peer fundraising to include corporate sponsors, corporate gifts and major gifts. Lee worked closely with her wonderful development committee of 25 individuals that she organized. Each person brought to the table different special gifts: some had means, others had numerous, and valuable relationships in the community. They were ambassadors for the organization and helped open doors for Lee.

The most enjoyable part of her position was in imagining and executing creative ways to engage, cultivate, and steward donors. Listening well to identify each person's interests, she made it her habit to plan outings to fabulous restaurants, golf courses, cooking classes, wine and painting parties, and other special destinations. "What's most important," she adds, "is to make an event-fun!"

What Lee really believes successful fundraisers have at their disposal is to tell stories very well. At the CT challenge, in the beginning, her storytelling to potential donors revolved around her Dad's experience. He was diagnosed with bone cancer when Lee was a senior in college. He is still alive today, and in large part, Lee believes, because he takes good care of himself with a careful diet and regular exercise. Then in 2014, Lee was diagnosed with colon cancer, caught very early. All of the sudden her passion for the mission, became even more personal. She understood deeply the fear of recurrence, the need to get back to normalcy, and the vital importance of exercising and eating right.

Other advice that Lee wants to impart to her fundraising colleagues is that it's important to ask for help

and advice on the job when you need it. She recommends calling colleagues and asking questions or seeking feedback whenever the need arises. She believes that AFP Fairfield County has been a huge resource for her "in learning how to do things right." She was a regular at luncheons and attended the annual AFP conferences throughout the country.

Her new position will be as the Director of Development for Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma, where she will cultivate relationships with major and prospective donors. Lee was recruited by the new Dean that she knew previously because of her service on Gaylord College's Board of Visitors. The newly appointed administrators needed someone to share their vision with and tell their story, which focuses on the changes in the fields of journalism and communications. Lee will talk to donors about the College's use of innovative digital technology and its state of the art building. Again, the Board of Visitors will be a key resource for Lee. She will also rely on well-executed individual donor research data, much of which was being conducted in anticipation of her arrival by an outside firm.

Lee's penchant for storytelling will march forward. Again, the account of her life will compel and move her mission at work-this time at her alma mater. Hers is an adventure of the local gal who moved from the easy going south to the exciting and competitive northeast -- and made it! She returned home a shining example of the importance of the education and skills acquired at the University of Oklahoma, School of Journalism.

By Anne Tack

Upcoming Events

March 17 Luncheon

[Maximizing Philanthropic Impact Through Planned Giving: sponsored by The Donor Motivation Program®](#)

Norwalk Inn and Conference Center, Norwalk

12:00-1:30 pm - registration/networking opens at 11:30 am

\$25 for members, \$45 for non-members. All are welcome.

1.5 CFRE credits



March 29 Webinar

[Five Simple Strategies to Boost Donor Retention](#), held at Norwalk Community College

1:00 - 2:30 pm



Photos from AFP social networking event at Wilton's Little Pub on February 29th



New Members

Joseph Gallagher

Director of Philanthropy

The Carver Foundation of Norwalk

Joan Lane

Program Manager

Southwestern AHEC

Renewed Members

Ceci Maher

Executive Director

Person to Person

Paul Sutera, CFRE

Senior VP for Advancement & External Affairs

Iona College

Contact Information

For more information on AFP Fairfield County, visit our website at:

<http://www.afpfairfield.org>.

For questions related to membership or to get involved with an AFP Board Committee, please contact Lorraine Gibbons

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For questions about events, contact Colleen Harkey at charkey@optonline.net.

For questions or comments about the newsletter, please contact AFP board member, Anne Tack at Tackwriters@aol.com.

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