

inside CNN

An exclusive inside look with your free CNN account

A conversation with the team behind 'Inside CNN'



Some of the CNN employees who have been featured by the "Inside CNN" newsletter, clockwise from top left: Ashley Strickland, Faith Karimi, Donie O'Sullivan, Sara Sidner and Ed Lavandera (with photojournalist Dave Ruff).

From CNN producer Kimberly Richardson:

Two years ago, an idea was born — and you're reading it right now.

"Inside CNN" was created as a behind-the-scenes glimpse into all the people who help the network operate around the clock. From our on-air talent to those behind the camera, these spotlights are available only to CNN's registered users and can't be found anywhere else on CNN — something that makes this newsletter unique.

To celebrate "Inside CNN" on its 100th edition, we wanted to turn the tables and shine a light on the team behind the newsletter.

Let's meet them.

What led you to pursue a career at CNN?

Leighton Rowell Lima: Being an Atlanta native, I'm pretty sure my parents saw a future for me at CNN starting way back in the fifth grade when I was host of my elementary school's morning news show. However, working at the network really became a dream of mine when I was in college. I learned French and Portuguese and majored in history with the goal of someday having a career in international news. My first job was in local news, and I learned so much, but when the chance to join CNN came along, I knew it would be the ideal opportunity to engage more deeply with stories happening around the world.



At the age of 2, Leighton Rowell Lima was already perusing the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Kyle Almond: I grew up a huge admirer of CNN, and it all goes back to the Gulf War. I was 9 years old at the time, and my father, a US Marine, was serving as part of Operation Desert Shield, which then became Desert Storm. I would wake up every morning and turn on CNN to get the latest news — and hope that my dad was OK.

I'll also never forget that historic night when **the air campaign began** and CNN journalists were broadcasting live from a hotel room in Baghdad. It became a **defining moment for the network**, and it always stuck with me. It was history unfolding in real time, and I was heavily invested.

Kimberly Richardson: I wanted to be just like Rory Gilmore, of course! Just kidding, although not too far from the truth. Like the beloved television character in "Gilmore Girls," I always looked up to the camerawomen that brought the frontlines to the headlines. The women that broke news and bucked stereotypes. To be someone that inspired young girls — showing them that they too could have a voice — that's what drove me here.



"To be someone that inspired young girls — showing them that they too could have a voice — that's what drove me here."

- Kimberly Richardson, producer

Tell us about your role within the organization.

Daniel Wine: Essentially I work on all things digital. That includes writing the push notifications you get on your phone and managing our social media platforms. I help to produce our Sunday **5 Things** and **LinkedIn** newsletters, in addition to this one. Our team programs the stories you see on **CNN's website** and app, and we write and test headlines to make them better. We study metrics to help with decision-making. People get their news in so many different ways, and we try to cover all the bases.

Almond: My primary role is copy editor and writer for CNN Photos. I work on many of the photo galleries and photo-driven stories that we publish online.

It's a great job because I get to cover such a wide range of topics across various sections. One day I might be working on **Tina Turner's life in pictures**. The next it could be writing about **the photos that have defined the war in Ukraine** or the **September 11 attacks**. Or maybe it's something fun and light-hearted, like the famous **"Saturday Night Live" portraits** or **these dogs living the good life in Palm Springs**. It never gets old!



George Keburia says goodbye to his wife, Maya, and their children as they board a train in Odesa, Ukraine, in March 2022, shortly after the Russian invasion. It is one of the photos that have defined the war in Ukraine. (Salwan Georges/The Washington Post/Getty Images)

Are there any editions you have covered with “Inside CNN” that stand out?

Lima: Getting to [interview Samira Jafari about her career at CNN](#) was a full-circle moment for me. I first met Samira when I was still in college — she was on the board of the University of Georgia’s student newspaper, and I was managing editor. She had already been working at CNN for several years, and I really looked up to her. As her colleague, I’ve become even more inspired by her and the work she does at CNN Investigates. It was exciting to reconnect after so many years and such an honor to help share her incredible story with our readers.



“It was such an honor to help share Samira Jafari’s incredible story with our readers.”

- Leighton Rowell Lima, associate producer

Tricia Escobedo: One of my favorites was “Who keeps CNN running during the holidays?” There are so many teams who work behind the scenes 24/7 to keep the network up and running and cover breaking news. It was fun to feature a few colleagues who rarely get the spotlight.

What excites you most about working on this particular newsletter?

Richardson: Connecting with others, without a doubt. It brings me joy to support those around me, and being the lead for “Inside CNN” has provided me the opportunity to do just that. It has truly been an honor to showcase all the talented people who make CNN what it is today.

Erica Hernandez: Learning! Just as much as our audience reads to learn more about CNN, I work on this newsletter because I’m eager to do the same. We’re all journalists here, after all — it’s in our nature to be curious. Even after almost five years at CNN, I still feel like there’s so much I want to learn more about. This newsletter is a wonderful outlet for my curiosity and creativity.



“This newsletter is a wonderful outlet for my curiosity and creativity.”

- Erica Hernandez, senior producer

Almond: I love being able to pull back the curtain a little bit and give readers some insight into what we do and why we do it.

I also think it's important that readers are able to put a face to our work. CNN isn't this monolithic entity deciding every story we cover. There are so many talented journalists in this company who work in various capacities and put their heart and soul into telling a story the best way they can. We are everyday, hardworking people just like you.



Photojournalist Taka Yokoyama was one of several CNN employees featured in a December 2021 edition of "Inside CNN." (Andy Buck)

A huge part of your role is asking the right questions. What do you think makes a good interview?

Wine: It's important to research your subject and get to know specifics about their background and experience. That often helps me come up with questions before we sit down to talk. Sometimes their answers lead you down a different path than you expected. I've found that the best interviews are conversations more than just a strict question-and-answer.



"The best interviews are conversations more than just a strict question-and-answer."

- Daniel Wine, producer

Escobedo: Trusting that everyone has an interesting story to share, even if they don't think they do. My friend Christie Corologos-Medina didn't think her role as a technical production manager was compelling enough to be featured in "Inside CNN." But readers emailed us telling us how fascinated they were with what she does during a live TV broadcast. They also loved her funny story about a colleague asking for her help to put a lavalier microphone on Dolly Parton.

Hernandez: I always have a few questions prepared when it comes time to conduct these interviews, but the real magic is in the follow-up questions. A good journalist knows they have to actively listen to what a source is saying to be able to ask the next — and usually the best — question.

What is something people might be surprised to learn about you?



Kimberly Richardson doing clicker play with her resident partner, Teddy. (Luvin Arms/Lauren Jackson)

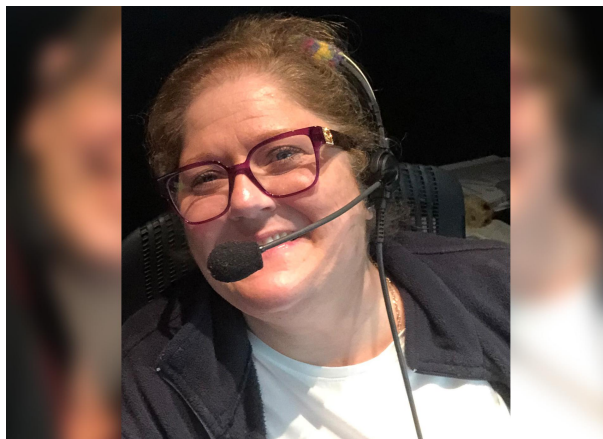
Richardson: I hang out with farmed animals ... a lot! As part of the enrichment program with an animal sanctuary in Colorado, I get to teach Teddy — a three-legged sheep — clicker play games and exercises. While many tasks are purely for fun and enrichment, others focus on bettering cooperative care, such as voluntary hoof trims, weighing and other necessary procedures. Interacting with Teddy and the other residents at the sanctuary is something I look forward to each week.

Escobedo: I have been at CNN so long that I used to see Ted Turner in the hallways at CNN Center here in Atlanta. I even got to ride the elevator with his former wife, Jane Fonda.

Wine: My husband and I travel whenever we can. Road trips, long weekends, cruises, you name it. I have visited 47 of the 50 US states, so there are three more to cross off the list. The good news? We still have plenty of overseas destinations left to explore.

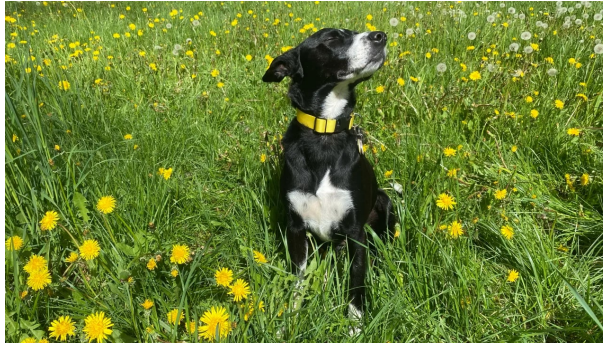
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in memoriam: Melissa Elkas



CNN is mourning the loss of Melissa Elkas, an electronic graphics operator who “touched so many of our lives” and whose “infectious laugh would echo through the hallways and brighten everyone’s mood,” CNN’s leadership team said in a statement. “Melissa took great pride, dedication and care to how we presented news and special projects to the world ... throughout her 26 years (at CNN),” the statement said. Melissa was based in New York and worked on numerous shows and specials, including **CNN This Morning** and AC360. “To say that she was a vital part of CNN would be an understatement,” Anderson Cooper said.

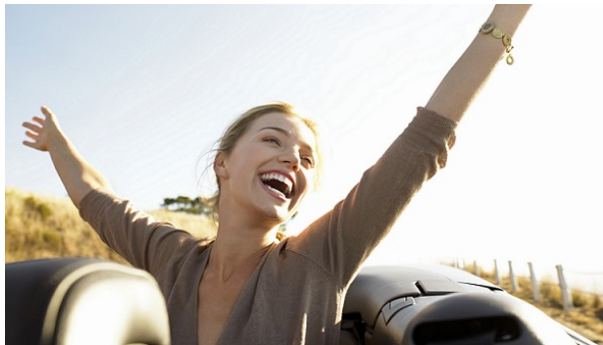
🇺🇸 *CNN insider rec of the week*



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In July, the CNN Underscored editors were introduced to a plethora of products, from a daily planner to a very nice dog collar. Whether you're shopping for yourself, a loved one or your furry best friend, here are **51 products we fell in love with last month.**

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👉 *we want to hear from you*

Got an idea for this newsletter? Let us know what you'd like to read about or what you've enjoyed so far. You can reach the team at insidecnn@cnn.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

- Edited and produced by Kyle Almond, Tricia Escobedo and Kimberly Richardson



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