

When the Going Got TOUGH, **AMANDA SALAS** Went PUBLIC

FOX 11 ENTERTAINMENT ANCHOR/REPORTER, WHO SHARED HER CANCER JOURNEY AND INSPIRED OTHERS, RECEIVES THE PRESS CLUB'S PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR IMPACT ON MEDIA BY CHRIS WILLMAN

“What an absolute honor it is to be recognized by my peers and the LA Press Club. This truly means the world to me,” says Amanda Salas, Fox L.A.’s “Good Day LA” entertainment anchor/reporter, about receiving the President’s Award for Impact on Media at tonight’s Southern California Journalism Awards.

Truth be told, Salas is in the midst of a victory-lap year with a *lot* of it-means-the-world moments. On the personal front, she is set to get married in October. On the career frontier, she just picked up an Emmy nomination, along with her Fox 11 team, for a special focused on National Cancer Survivor Month.

“Baby’s first Emmy nomination,” she crows.

And, bringing the personal and professional together, she is herself celebrating five years of being in recovery from cancer. It’s a journey that KTTV viewers know well, since sharing the developments in her story has been a key adjunct to sharing the entertainment news of the day.

“Where 2019 was one of the worst years of my life, cut to five years later and it’s one of the best years of my life,” Salas says. “If there’s one thing I want anyone to take away from this, it is the power of time to turn things around and to heal your heart and your health, so you can achieve things that you never dreamt possible. You just have to keep fighting.”

Salas’ cancer battle has been an often solemn and sobering addition to an alliterative list of interests and strengths she’d catalogued. “I always

said, ‘Puppies, puns and pop culture,’” she notes. “Now we’re adding that fourth P, philanthropy.”

In terms of the puppies, it’s more than giving dogs wet-nosed lip service. For the last four years, she has led a “Furry Friday” segment on “Good Day LA” dedicated to bringing animals to their forever home, inspired by her own experience with her rescue dog, January Jones (named after “Mad Men” actor January Jones).

The pun-manship isn’t just a passing thing. Salas once won an international pun competition called the Punderdome, put on by the people behind the popular board game. “I definitely use them on the air, when and where they’re fitting,” she says.

Wordplay actually helped Salas get her first professional gig. It was in 2008, when the Las Vegas native was about to graduate from Cal State Long Beach. The *Orange County Register* held an “Ameri-



Above: Salas returned to FOX 11’s “Good Day LA” sporting a pixie haircut just as the pandemic began.

Far left: Salas is engaged to be married in October to Randy Taylor.

Opposite page and left: Salas and her grandmother, Meema, share a bond that saw her through chemotherapy and more.

can Idol”-type audition to host a web TV show called “The Juice.” She remembers that hundreds of women auditioned.

“You had to basically just read copy for them and I knew that I had to stand out somehow,” she says. “They asked us to talk about how Christina Aguilera had a baby, and a lot of the girls were just doing a straight read. And I said, ‘Looks like this genie in a bottle is a genie with a bottle.’”

In 2017, Salas became a freelance evening news reporter for Fox 11 on the red carpet circuit. Eventually, she made the leap forward to a full-time position at the anchor desk, and a leap back in her clock settings for a prominent a.m. shift.

But career triumphs and calamity arrived hand-in-hand.

“I was 34 years old,” she says. “I had just gotten a promotion from freelance to staff in April,

and in June I got diagnosed. My professional life was in a great place, and for our jobs, you have to smile and put on a brave face. In the background, they were telling me they were gonna have to put a port in my chest to infuse the chemo. So I went on social media in my hospital bed one night and searched the hashtag #portscar, and I saw all these beautiful women proudly show off their badge of honor, their warrior scar. That ignited me to have a fire to say, if these brave women are putting themselves out there, I can use my own voice and do that. From that moment on, I announced my diagnosis, saying that I’m gonna need an army—an Amanda’s Army—to help me battle this.”

She continues, “I had gone to so many friends’ gender-reveal parties or bridal showers, and I hadn’t had any of those magical moments myself, so I said, ‘I’m gonna have a buzz party, where

PRESIDENT'S AWARD AMANDA SALAS

Salas's journey through treatment and recovery has encouraged her to be involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, right.



Clockwise from left: Hugging her grandmother at her graduation; supporting her interest in animal welfare; getting involved with Hyundai Hope on Wheels Pediatric Cancer Foundation; appearing at a Los Angeles Fire Department event wearing her Amanda's Army tshirt with a supporter; striking a pose during one of her cancer treatments.

people show up and they bring tequila, and every time the razor goes through my head, everyone's gonna take a shot, so we're all buzzed."

She and FOX 11 anchor Christine Devine both filmed it for social media. It went viral.

"Then people were starting to send me pictures of their buzz parties, and I felt like we kind of started something here," Salas says. "It felt good to know that women aren't hiding in their bathrooms, shaving their heads. They're saying, 'This is a process, and I'm gonna rock my bald and beautiful head.'"

Salas had barely returned to the air with her new pixie cut in 2020 when the pandemic hit. But even during the periods when she couldn't be on the air every morning, she was determined to take her recovery and pay it forward. She got involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. She has been an ambassador for City of Hope and worked on their DEI initiative. She's done public speaking and 5K events for the Hyundai Hope on Wheels Pediatric Cancer Foundation. Her "Amanda's Army" has raised more than \$100,000 for leukemia and lymphoma patients.

But she says awareness-raising is a separate priority. "I fight for cancer patients," she says. "That's where I use my voice and my board member status where I can, because I know firsthand what cancer patients need."

For all the challenges she has endured, there have also been light moments during the last five years. That includes Salas playing the small role of a TV reporter for two episodes of the Marvel series "She-Hulk."

"It was a show so much about women's empowerment that I was flattered to be a part of it," she says. "Sometimes I still look at my fiancé and go, 'I'm a small part of the MCU.' A very microscopic part, but still, Scarlett Johansson and I have something in common." 🍷

Congratulations
Amanda Salas

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GOOD DAY LA FOX 11
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