

Reporter gets journalism fellowship

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Content

Local reporter Haley Jones is poised to take her career to new heights. The Lancaster News reporter is one of 61 journalists in the Poynter-Koch Media and Journalism Fellowship program, which kicks off next week.

The fellowship, sponsored by Poynter Institute and Stand Together Fellowships, is a year-long experience that gives early-career journalists the coaching, network and skills they need to have a long-lasting, successful career in journalism.

“I am so honored to have been selected as a ’23-’24 Poynter-Koch fellow, and to connect with other print journalists from across the country that are also in the beginning stages of their career,” Jones said. “I want to thank my editor, Jane Alford, for encouraging me to apply for the fellowship, and cannot wait to apply the skills I learn to my local reporting in Lancaster County.”

Jones joined The Lancaster News in December as a general-assignment reporter after graduating from Occidental College in Los Angeles in 2022, with a bachelor’s degree in diplomacy and world affairs, and a minor in writing. She wrote for her college paper all four years she was there. She also served as editor of her high school paper in Alpharetta, Ga.

“I grew up watching ‘The Today Show’ every morning and ‘NBC Nightly News with Lester Holt’ every night and knew I wanted to work in the news industry in some capacity since high school,” Jones said.

“I joined the team at The Lancaster News because as a first-year reporter, the mentorship my colleagues here are able to provide me from decades of personal experience in the industry is invaluable,” she said. “Being with a smaller staff, I have the opportunity to get to know everyone on a much deeper level than I would in a larger newsroom, but I can also earn the opportunity to take on more roles as I gain experience and credibility.”

Jones now covers education, Lancaster City Council, law enforcement/crime, courts and whatever else comes up each day. She says her favorite stories are the “feel-good milestone moments from Lancaster residents,” like the one celebrating the Allens’ 75 years of marriage.

“Haley has been an excellent addition to our small editorial staff,” said Alford, editor of The Lancaster News/Carolina Gateway. “We pretty much threw her in the proverbial deep end when she got here last December, and she came up swimming fast and hard. She’s been holding her own ever since, especially with tough stories like cyberbullying in the schools, the upcoming school bond, and the never-ending growth here.”

Jones admits she was a little daunted when she started her first official reporting job.

“I was nervous to take on many of the assignments by former reporters, some who had worked at the paper for 25 years, but had a seamless transition, thanks to Jane and Mac (Banks),” Jones said. “They answer my millions of questions daily and always set aside their work to help me brainstorm a lead or troubleshoot.

This fellowship will give Jones a big step up in her career, Alford said.

“I’m looking forward to seeing her develop as a journalist, especially through this program, which includes weekly mentoring and training sessions with seasoned journalists.”

Jones will complete her fellowship while continuing to work full-time at The Lancaster News. Fellows who are not already employed as journalists are placed at participating news organizations. The fellowship pays 60% of their salaries.

As part of the fellowship, they receive training to develop cross-disciplinary skills and accelerate their careers by connecting with seasoned mentors and award-winning journalists on a weekly basis and through three summits in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and St. Petersburg, Fla., where Poynter is headquartered.

Their real-world curriculum is led by Poynter’s Kristen Hare and Stand Together Fellowship’s Benét J. Wilson.

“This program builds up journalists’ skills through a focus on what they’ll need to do their jobs and what they’ll need to stay in this industry,” Hare said. “We can’t fix all the issues facing local news. We can prepare journalists for how to face it and thrive.”

Wilson, a veteran aviation journalist, served as an adviser and mentor to the program for three years before becoming Stand Together Fellowship’s director last year.

“With the rapid changes going on in the news industry, it can be difficult for early-career journalists to find their place and be successful,” said Wilson, who has mentored hundreds of journalists in her 37-year career. “We give our fellows the time, training and resources they need to not only survive, but thrive in newsrooms.”

Fellows also work on an innovation project throughout the year, with the goal of building something that makes their community, their newsroom or the journalism industry better.

For now, Jones is enjoying her job at The Lancaster News and looking forward to using what she will learn through the fellowship.

“I love that I never start the week knowing which stories I will cover, or what to expect from an interview. It is incredibly engaging to surrender control under a situation, and stop at nothing to pursue leads and fact find on an array of topics,” she said.

“I have enjoyed getting to know community leaders in Lancaster and develop professional relationships,” Jones said. “The progression of growth in the city that I have been able to see and cover in my seven months at the paper has been far busier than I expected, but so rewarding. I’m sure most leaders have received a call or FOIA request from me now!”

When she’s not busy reporting, Jones enjoys traveling, coaching lacrosse, which she played in high school and college, and looking for the next best music festival.

Child images

LANNWS-07-29-23 HALEY FELLOWSHIP MUG Haley Jones





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