Erika Edberg Manternach ‘98
TV News Anchor

Please describe your work:
My job as a television news anchor is to think about what our viewers want to know as they get out of bed and get ready for work or get the kids on their way to school. First order of business: What happened since they went to bed? Secondly: What’s going to happen in the day ahead.

Every day, my co-anchors, producers and I compress local, national and world news into our 6 a.m. newscast. We write these scripts, read through and edit those written by our producers before we go on the air – which is why the alarm clock rings at 2 a.m. at my house!

We also record news segments that air on radio broadcasts throughout the morning on local stations. We then provide live news updates during “Good Morning America.” After lunch at 9 a.m., I head off to the news meeting to pitch story ideas. That’s when our producers decide the stories for the afternoon news.

How did you end up doing what you are doing?
In college, I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to follow a career in music or in TV news, so I did my best to pursue them at the same time. Thanks to Saint Ben’s and the many opportunities on campus, I was able to develop talents in both disciplines.

I took as many communication and news-writing courses as I could to hone skills in news judgment.

After graduation, I was lucky enough to get an internship at a TV station in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where a veteran news anchor took me under his wing and taught me all about TV news business. He coached me on content and I recorded my work or practice and critique. I helped answer phones on the assignment desk, tagged along with reporters and ran the news prompter (which, by the way, is more difficult than it looks!).

Eventually I made a tape of practice news stories and sent out at least 80 tapes across the country before landing my first reporting job in Rapid City, South Dakota. Within a few months I was moved to weekend anchor. My second job took me to South Bend, Indiana, for reporting and anchoring. Two years ago we moved to the beautiful mountains of Salt Lake City, where I anchor “Good Morning Utah.”

What does the public typically misunderstand about your work?
This business is not for the impatient, faint of heart, or people who expect glamour.

Even though local TV stations are where people often turn firsts for breaking news, I think local news gets a bad rap. At my station, we cover Utah and parts of four other states. Even if we had 100 reporters, there would inevitably be stories we would miss. Yes, we make mistakes. For the
most part, we’re just people trying to keep the pulse of our viewers, trying to do stories that interest them and balancing that with stories we hope they will care about.

**Which aspects of your Saint Ben’s experience have helped you?**
The classes I took in Communications made all the difference. I learned the fundamentals of composing an informative and intriguing news story. One of the courses I took was all about listening. I thought about everyday conversations in a completely different way after that class. It was good practice for this business, where you often have to think of what you’re going to say next while still listening to what someone is telling you. I’m a much better interviewer now because I learned how to be quiet and allow someone else the space to develop their thoughts out loud. I get my best interviews when I’m listening.

I still carry with me all the memories and experiences that came into my life at Saint Ben’s. From the very meaningful relationship I had with my Benedictine Friend, S. Katherine Howard, to the spiritual direction of S. Mary Katherine Holicky to the fun times with S. Lois Wedl in our dorm. I’ll never forget the strong women who helped me understand how to be a person of integrity, a determined, brave woman in a demanding career, and a person with a deep spiritual foundation. I think of them often.

I try every day to bring Benedictine values into my work. Needless to say, TV news does not always prioritize such values, but I feel that’s part of the reason I’ve been led to this line of work. I can’t change everything, but I can do my part to report with integrity, to guard people’s privacy when they need it, to share stories about people in need in our community, to be a sympathetic listening ear for someone in distress even if I’m on a deadline to report their tragedy. I hope that my work brings out the human side of storytelling, even in cases where it’s not a ratings-grabber.

And no matter where this career leads me, I’ll always be a Bennie.