



The Human Touch

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TOGETHER WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Lisa-Michele Church Becomes DHS Director Feb. 15

By Carol Sisco
DHS Public Information

Lisa-Michele Church will approach her new job as a problem-solver who enjoys dealing with complex issues that affect people's lives.

"Employees should know I'm a problem solver, I have high expectations and I'm fair," the new Human Services executive director said in an interview. "I'm very interested in learning what our employees do and in getting to know them."

And don't be surprised if the former newspaper reporter also asks everyone a million questions and jots down the answers after she starts work Feb. 15.

"My family is all afflicted with the disease of thinking we can write," Church said. "It began for me at the young age of 8 when I started a newspaper in my neighborhood with a manual typewriter. I reported on the activities of my cat and my family."

She eventually majored in political science, but Church also was a sports writer at Dixie College and later at the University of Utah. Although Church was born in Northern California, her ancestors arrived in St. George, Utah in 1861 and she moved there with her parents as a high school senior.

Church also worked for United Press International wire service where she covered the Joseph Paul Franklin murder trial, followed the story of Barney Clark receiving his artificial heart and wrote many court stories. She took a break from college between her junior and senior years to intern in Sen. Jake Garn's Washington D.C. press office. She later worked as his assistant press secretary for two years, thriving on the political atmosphere.



New DHS Director Lisa-Michele Church

Church returned to Utah and worked with Sen. Garn as a legislative aide for natural resource issues when wilderness battles were in full swing, mining reform was occurring and the first radiation compensation legislation was introduced.

"I loved being a reporter," she recalled. "But I needed to be in the fray where I could advocate and have more input over the way a case was handled." Church also realized women didn't have much chance on Capitol Hill without a graduate degree so she finished college and headed to law school.

During law school Church spent two years as a law clerk with the Bureau of Indian Affairs where she dealt with Indian welfare issues and also was involved in oil and gas leasing on reservations.

When Sinclair Oil moved their corporate office to Salt Lake City from Denver they wanted a staff lawyer. Church soon learned that Sinclair had resorts and hotels as well as the oil business. The

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Lisa-Michele Church ...

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issues varied from environmental to employment discrimination and everything in between.

“The endless variety appealed to me,” she said. “I wanted to be on the front lines right out of law school. I also had some great mentors who gave me plenty of opportunities.”

Church loved the complexity of corporate law.

“I never heard the same question twice. There was always a new problem presenting itself in a new way. I like that,” she said.

Church enjoyed being a behind-the-

scenes strategist at Sinclair and building relationships with mid-level managers. She ultimately left and joined her husband David’s private practice to spend more times with her sons.

“My kids were 8 and 11 then. I felt I’d been sold a bill of goods by everyone who said you should stay home with children when they’re little and go to work when they get older,” she said. “It was just the opposite for me. Right when my kids needed me the most I had to figure out how to be vice-president/general counsel and supervise several departments. It required traveling to different company locations in 20 western states. It just didn’t work with my family. I needed to slow down and get a sense of my personal priorities.”

Son Matt is now 17 and a high school junior. Sam, 14, is in the eighth grade. Both fully support their mom’s demanding new role. They know she always has “a million things” going on anyway.

Besides working full time, Church is a community volunteer. She started at the Rape Crisis Center, now called the Rape Recovery Center, in 1985.

“I learned a lot about community and service issues there,” she said. She also served as a board

member and president of the Women Lawyers of Utah.

“We did a lot of volunteer things for professional women and worked with legislators on children’s issues and domestic violence,” Church said. Later, she served on the Judicial Nominating Commission “which enabled me to see the kind of people drawn to judging.” Juvenile Court judges Kimberly Hornak and Bob Yeates were among

those chosen during her term. She also was an ex officio member of the State Bar Commission and served on numerous bar committees.

“I am concerned that people don’t often see lawyers as part of a helping profession,” Church

said. “I was fortunate in that I had a good job so I could devote a lot of time to community service. It was as essential to me as my paying job.”

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Lisa-Michele Church

Crisis Counselors Needed

By B.J. VanRoosendaal Substance Abuse & Mental Health

World events continue to make emergency planning an urgent concern in Utah. An opportunity to volunteer and help in the event of an emergency will be available soon for mental health or substance abuse professionals or paraprofessionals.

Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health would like you to consider becoming a state certified crisis counselor. The Division held it’s first statewide training conference last August on “Crisis Counseling For Disaster and Bio-terrorism Events.” The successful initial training marked the beginning of training a significant group of professionals to assist in disaster crisis counseling.

Everyone is aware that Utah is prone to earthquakes, but no one could have guessed Salt

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