

Feeding America, One Step at a Time

SAMANTHA HARRIS

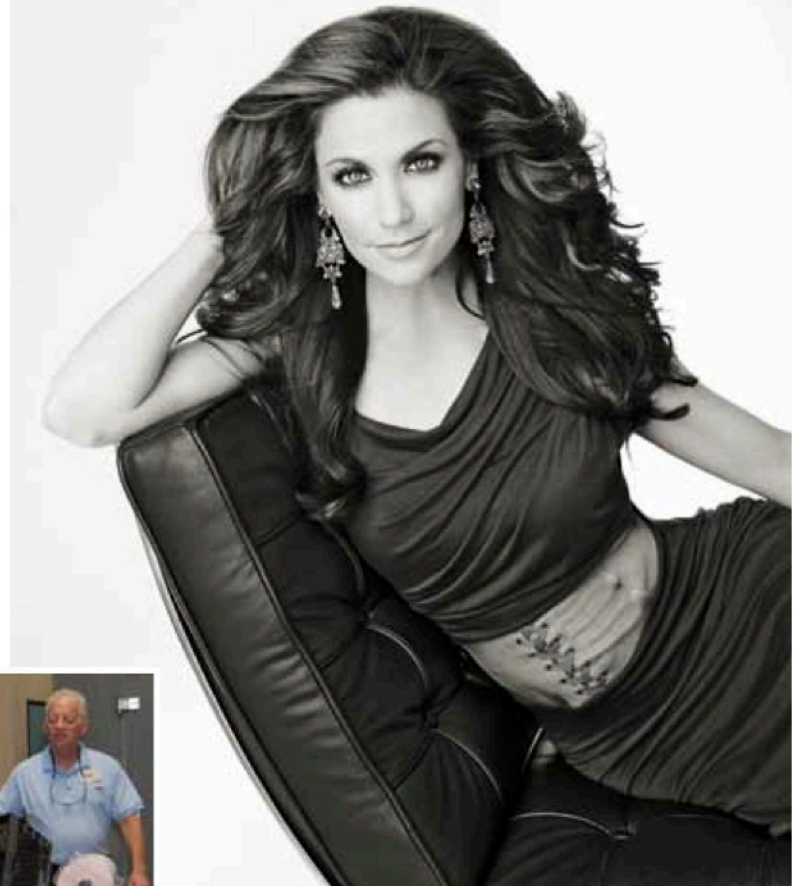
“Going live in 10 seconds,” with more than 150 live shows as co-host of “Dancing With the Stars,” this is a familiar phrase to me. Energy is always paramount when hosting a live show, because you need every synapse firing, so you can think fast on your feet. I would snack on a healthy balance of protein and carbohydrates before each show. Flash forward to 2012, and I needed tremendous energy to power through 16-hour days on the set of NBC’s “Stars Earn Stripes.” Thankfully, I work in a world where craft service is plentiful, and 3-course, catered meals abound.

Unfortunately, that is not the case for the nearly 49 million Americans who are food insecure, meaning they do not always know where they will find their next meal. As a mom of two little girls, knowing that 16 million of those people are children (that’s 1 in 5), is something that disturbs me to the core. Research has shown that food insecurity and hunger are serious threats to children’s health, growth, and development. The idea of not being able to put plentiful, nutritious food on the table for my girls is a horrifying thought.

As a kid myself, growing up in what I like to call Cow-Country, U.S.A., (aka Minnesota), I had beyond my fill of every meat and dairy product you can name. It was as if I was aiming for a heart attack by age 12, with the amount of butter, cream, and red meat I consumed on a weekly basis. Slightly nauseating, now, as I look back on it. After moving from the “Land of 10,000 Lakes”, to the “Land of Endless Sunny Days” (Los Angeles), I quickly became a healthy eater, who exercises almost as often as TMZ gets a celeb-sighting tip! These healthy habits are naturally being passed along to my girls, Josselyn (almost 5) and Hillary (who turns 2 in January). How grateful my husband and I feel, that our fridge is full and our girls have lots of fresh fruits and veggies to gobble up.

As an anti-hunger advocate and longtime member of the Entertainment Council for Feeding America, I have become more and more aware of the issues surrounding hunger in our country, a country where 68% of adults above the age of 20 are overweight or obese. What a staggering thought, when 1 in 6 adults don’t have enough food to eat on a regular basis. Good, healthy meal choices play a huge part of controlling weight and other health related issues.

Thankfully, Feeding America’s food banks secure and distribute nutritious and wholesome foods from the 3 billion pounds, annually, of donated food and grocery products through a network of approximately 61,000 food assistance agencies, such as food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, and after-school programs. I have found that volunteering at these food pantries can be very rewarding. So much so, that I have even enlisted the help of my daughter Josselyn. I love that from an early age, she is learning the importance of helping others and



giving back to our community. She makes my heart happy when she asks when she can go back and help again!

Samantha Harris is a TV personality, wife, and mother of two. Samantha is an active member of the Entertainment Council for Feeding America. September is Hunger Action Month, so please take five minutes to visit www.HungerActionMonth.org and find out how easy it is to help.