

Alumni Spotlight

CUYAHOGA VALLEY CAREER CENTER

Leah Sadallah

Class of 2009



Leah Sadallah, a 2009 graduate of CVCC's Media Arts program instructed by Bernie Van Tilburg, attributes much of her success in the TV and film industry to her time at CVCC. Before enrolling at CVCC, Leah had struggled academically, but her passion for making home movies led her mother to encourage her to pursue the Media Arts program. "CVCC represented so much more than just a Media Arts program to me; it marked the moment I decided TV and film production would be my career." The hands-on, practical learning at CVCC gave her a strong understanding of various industry roles, including the technical side, which was instrumental when she later attended college. It was through this experience that she discovered where her skills and interests intersected.

A pivotal moment for Leah came during a frustrating class exercise. Struggling with a task, she asked her instructor for help. His response, "No, you can figure it out," surprised her. Looking back, Leah realizes that lesson instilled a vital confidence in her. "Mr. Van Tilburg didn't give me the answers, but he gave me the tools to problem-solve. That confidence has carried me through every challenge in my career."

Leah Sadallah is currently a Production Executive at Beyond Productions, where she has worked for the past four years. She moved to Los Angeles the day after graduating from college, knowing only a few college and CVCC alumni and with no job prospects. Determined and laser-focused, Leah made a promise to herself to apply to 100 jobs a day until she found one. After nine days and 900 applications, she secured her first role.

Soon after, Leah began coordinating, which quickly led to producing, and from there, her career took off. She has had the opportunity to develop and produce a wide variety of content, including unscripted series, documentaries, studio competition shows, scripted projects, branded content, commercials, photoshoots, music videos with top artists, and live events. Although she has worked across many formats, producing unscripted and documentary series remains her favorite. Leah is incredibly grateful to be doing what she loves.

"This industry is heavily influenced by connections. If people enjoy working with you, it can make a big difference. Of course, being skilled at your job is crucial, but equally important is building strong relationships and maintaining positive interactions. Navigating the many strong personalities in this field can be challenging for some. Early in my career, when I first started managing others, my leadership style was far from ideal. I assumed that being a manager meant giving orders. Fortunately, I had several incredible mentors who helped shape me into the leader I am today. One mentor, in particular, pulled me aside and explained that respect isn't earned by barking orders—it's about only being authoritative when absolutely necessary. These lessons have greatly influenced my management style and have helped me foster better working relationships. Without a good mentor, growth can be much slower, so I recommend finding someone you can learn from and rely on. Finally, if you're considering a career in production management, it's important to be objective when making decisions and avoid letting emotions dictate critical choices."

Leah reflects on her time at CVCC, where she gained a deep understanding of the industry and its various roles. Her experience at CVCC, particularly under the guidance of her teacher, played a significant role in her journey. "Mr. Van Tilburg taught me to think independently and to embrace my talents and interests," she shares. The lessons she learned at CVCC continue to guide her, and she's grateful for the strong foundation it provided in navigating such a competitive field. CVCC is so proud of you, Leah! Keep shining!

Written By: Makayla Robertson, CVCC Media Specialist

