



**Press Clippings**  
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**Web**

**Title:** Criminal justice alumna revamps childhood passion for entertainment

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At age 9, Lauren Settles wrote skits and performed them in front of her church and any friends and family members willing to watch.

Acting and the entertainment industry has always been her passion, but when she went to college, she decided to focus on breaking into a more “reasonable” profession.

“When I went to college I decided to be practical,” said Settles, a 2009 criminal justice alumna.

But it didn’t take Settles long to return to her passion for entertainment. She now works as part of Philadelphia’s “We Talk Weekly” entertainment news radio and TV show, covering relationships, the entertainment industry and other news. It runs on WPPM FM station 106.5 on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., with podcasts on iHeartRadio, Spotify, iTunes, YouTube and Speaker. The TV show runs at 9:30 p.m. Monday nights on local Comcast channels 66 and 966, as well as Verizon channels 29 and 30.

The show’s crew is made up of two hosts: Charles Gregory and Lauren Settles, and one correspondent, Velvet Sparkle Howell. Settles and Howell go by their stage names, Lauren Sizzle and Sparkle.

Settles said she became a part of the TV show five years ago when she met Gregory at PhillyCAM, a nonprofit community-run media hub. Since then, the show expanded into a radio show, which Settles has been a part of for two years.

The crew focuses on entertainment news, but also does a hard news segment called “Good News/Bad News” that covers politics, world news and religion. Settles is the face of the entertainment segment, while Sparkle heads the news segment.

“The show gives you even more of that recipe of, ‘Hey, we will give the entertainment part, but we also can give you the information that will help you if need be,’” Sparkle said.

Because the show is run by an independent media company, Settles said the show is able to talk to big celebrities without having to follow a script. The team has interviewed celebrities like Mike Jerrick, Vivica Fox, Claudia Jordan and Darrin Henson.

“Since we are independent, we have no restrictions on what we can say,” Settles said. “I like the freedom. It’s just so much fun.”

The crew covers major Philly entertainment industry news like rapper Meek Mill’s 2017 arrest for probation violations. Gregory and Settles filmed at a rally in support of Meek Mill that took place outside the Juanita Kidd Stout Center for Criminal Justice on Filbert Street near 13th in November 2017. Their coverage included footage of Meek Mill’s mother, music producer Charlie Mack and rapper Rick Ross.

Obtaining this type of footage is harder for bigger media outlets to accomplish because “We Talk Weekly” is part of the Philadelphia community, Settles said.

“Being a part of a team that other people say, ‘We want what they have,’ is great,” Sparkle said. “When you come with less restriction, you are able to spread your wings wider, so that is what I enjoy about this family.”

Like Settles, the rest of the “We Talk Weekly” crew didn’t intend to work in the entertainment industry. Gregory is a 2005 Temple criminal justice alumnus and Sparkle is a 2018 Peirce College health information management graduate.

After school, Gregory became a credentialed celebrity wardrobe stylist, and now does styling in addition to university speaking gigs revolving around image and style behavior that aim to help people improve their interpersonal communication skills and business relationships.

For Settles, the best part of her career is the freedom her team has over their show’s content, which allows them to cover unique topics — while having a great time doing it.

“We are able to voice our own opinions and empower each other,” Settles said.

Gregory agreed the independence factor allows the team to listen to and tell different stories, while also having their own voices heard.

“It’s nice to let these ladies here have a voice because women voices in media are uncommon,” Gregory said. “We have this platform, so I’m going to make sure we have a voice.”