

## Mindy Kaling

Actress, writer, comedian

BY BEKAH WRIGHT

**M**indy Kaling, 35, seemed destined for comedy when her parents named her after the '80s sitcom *Mork & Mindy*. Born and raised in Massachusetts, Kaling attended Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and interned for *Late Night With Conan O'Brien* before graduating with a degree in playwriting. At 24, Kaling got her big break as a writer on NBC's *The Office*, where she also played Kelly Kapoor, Dunder Mifflin's customer service rep, who kept audiences up-to-date on pop culture. She received five Emmy nominations for producing *The Office* and two Screen Actors Guild Awards as part of the show's cast. These days, fans know Kaling as the ob-gyn (a role inspired by her late mother's profession) with a roller-coaster dating life on her Fox sitcom *The Mindy Project*, which returns for a third season this fall. Last March, Kaling channeled her speed demon to drive the pace car at NASCAR's Auto Club 400 at the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana.

### What was it like driving the pace car?

The idea of being scrutinized while I'm driving haunts my nightmares, but after a few laps, I felt more confident. The atmosphere was completely intoxicating. Everyone was so excited, the pit crew was gorgeous, the pace car was the smoothest drive ever, the gray of the road—this endless lap—was anesthetizing, in a good way.

### What was your first car and what do you drive today?

My first car was a '92 Jeep Cherokee. It had been my dad's, but he gave it to me when I was 17. Now I drive a Mini Cooper, which I've had since my second year as a writer on *The Office*.

**Are you a AAA member?** Oh, my gosh, yes, I've used my card

so many times. I've been jump-started about a half-dozen times and I actually use the discounts a lot.

### Being a Boston transplant, what about California has surprised you?

I often forget I'm in the great American Southwest—the part of the country novelist Cormac McCarthy wrote about where there are desert vistas. About three years in, I went to Joshua Tree and thought, *this is cowboy country*. I'm in the Southwest, and it's incredible.

### What other areas of the Southwest would you like to visit?

Death Valley, because I hear that some of the most staggeringly beautiful flowers blossom there in the spring. Then the Grand Canyon, because I've never been there,

though I'd be terrified a little. Aside from the Southwest, my dad is really into the Civil War, so, growing up, we visited battle sites, field after field. I was too young to understand it at the time, but now I'm interested in the Civil War, too, so it would be great to visit those places again.

**On *The Mindy Project* your character goes camping. Is that another way you'd see the country?** The camping lifestyle is something I could do forever. Hiking to get there ... not so fun.

**In a recent episode of *The Mindy Project*, several characters visited the L.A. area. Did you intentionally choose the locations featured?** I wanted to create this iconic shot along the flats of

Beverly Hills, these really wide, palm tree-lined streets. In my mind, I'd always seen myself driving down those streets in a Barbie pink convertible. On the show, we captured that with me and [co-star] Adam Pally driving in a convertible.

**Where do you like to eat in Los Angeles?** Loteria Grill, a Mexican restaurant that has the best huevos rancheros, my favorite food in the world. And Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles. My two faves aren't healthy, but they're delicious.

**You have such a busy schedule. How do you unwind?** Because of the show's hours, I sleep like a corpse. I'm also an avid slow jogger. I like to jog for an hour at a 12-minute pace, which for most people is almost walking. **W**

