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Small Town Charmer

Economic developer Kim Huston's new book celebrates life in Kentucky

By Kim Thomas

Kim Huston, author of *Small Town Sexy*, likes to say she is "living large in small town America and loving every minute of it." She proves her adoration for simple and uncomplicated pleasures when as she extols the virtues of living in towns "with sometimes no more than an aluminum 3 ft. x 2 ft. road sign with a name on it ... where we are taught by teachers who taught our parents ... where we pull over when a funeral procession goes by."

Huston will be signing her new book at the Ace Holiday Hop at Woodland Computers (on High Street) this Friday, November 20 at 5 pm, along with Leslie Guttman, who will also be signing copies of *Equine ER* (see *Ace Weekly*, October 21, 2009).

Huston, who now lives in Bardstown, is an economic developer by profession, and says, "For those of you who are not sure what that is — including my Dad — my job description tells me that I 'seek to improve the economic well being and quality of life for a community and/or county by helping create jobs and growing the income and tax bases.'

"Lexington is bordered by a handful of smalltowns, like those profiled in Huston's book, including Georgetown, Versailles, Nicholasville, Winchester, and Paris. She comments, "As I say in the book, and I believe it true in so many instances, that small communities are only as successful as their neighboring big cities. In my community of Bardstown, we feel the economic suc-



Author, Kentucky Native, and economic developer Kim Huston

cesses and the failures in Louisville, because many of our residents are employed there. If UPS or FORD does well, our residents who work there stayed employed. Layoffs and shutdowns will

our residents and many are forced to drive outside of communities."

The success factor is also important in tourism. "While the Kentucky Derby is located in Louisville,

so many of the neighboring communities benefit from the visitors who will travel, eat and stay in hotels outside the city. The World Equestrian Games will be a huge boost for not only the economy of Lexington but for numerous surrounding communities as these visitors will want to see and experience more that the state has to offer."

Huston believes that "Lexington is one of the 'best of both worlds' cities. The city is large enough to attract great companies, a diversity of restaurants and retail, and it's a wonderful sports town with a

top university. However, with that said, it is not overwhelming large. You can get around very easily, run into someone you know walking down Main Street and within minutes be driving by a beautiful

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—Kentucky native and economic developer, Kim Huston

horse farm where the sky just opens up."

She also emphasizes that Kentucky has unique market advantages. "Kentucky is fortunate to have some of the greatest small towns in the country and

many of them are located here in Central Kentucky like Danville, Berea, Midway, Versailles, Nicholasville, Mt. Sterling and Winchester. Each of these communities has developed a niche for success and each is economically vital. These communities have gained national attention for their location and highway accessibility, quality of place, cost of living, breathtaking scenery and bottom line, just a wonderful seductively charming way of life."

As she charmingly weaves her tales of growing up in the small town of Bloomfield, Kentucky (Pop. 886), Huston reflects on how her close-knit family shared their home with her grandmother (whose LTD Huston would sneak out and take for a spin at the age of 14) and reveals nuggets of wisdom that only a small town observer could ferret out, i.e., how she sold hedge apples "for a nickel, guaranteed to ward off spiders if you put them in your closets," which is a valuable piece of information, since the hedge apple's purpose has always been one of those elusive and unsolved mysteries of life. This glimpse into her childhood is just one example of the many stories that could not be told by someone raised in a bigger city. As the daughter of two educators, Huston's family enjoyed three-month summer vacations, and the road trips afforded to such a family no doubt instilled a natural curiosity for what life was like in other small towns, "driving from one end of the state to the other, visiting Kentucky's great state park system."

After graduating from the University of Kentucky, Huston spent some time as an intern on WVLK, working with Ralph Hacker and Dick Gabriel. Thereafter she began her broadcasting career in Bardstown, and was host of the 1990 television series called *On Location*, much like Charles Kuralt's *On The Road* series. Huston's fascination with off-the-beaten-path locales eventually manifested itself in her book, *Small Town Sexy: The Allure of Living in Small Town America*. Don't let the name fool you. This book isn't *Sex & the City Relocated* – it's stories about small towns, from the perspective of an economic developer.

She speaks from experience, as a small town girl who cherishes her roots – and as a professional who is helping develop her town's economic prosperity. "Small towns aren't just for small businesses anymore. The internet has made sure of that ... Towns joining the wired world of technology realize that you don't need an office tower in Big City USA to do a million dollar deal, you can do it from Main Street USA."

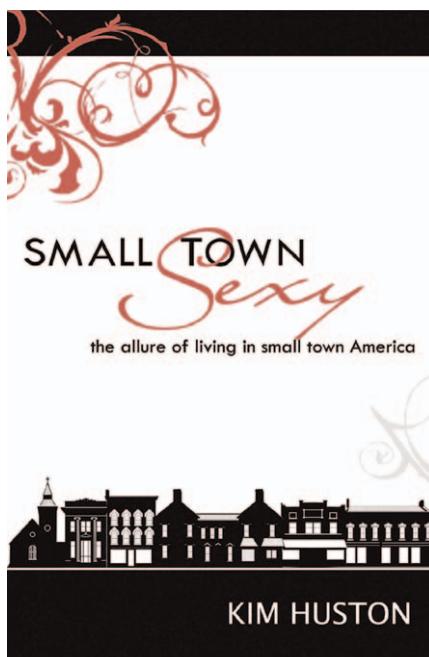
The romance reaches beyond business interests. "There are 20- to 40-year-olds coming back home with a real desire to raise their families in communities where they grew up. And, retirees are drawn to many small towns that have the climate, recreational opportunities and accessibility to highways and airports that they are seeking."

The author admits, however, that not everyone shares her love for the small town lifestyle. "As I explain in the book, not everyone is going to enjoy a not-so-big city way of life. No, there are not always the job opportunities, and no you won't find a diversity of restaurants and nightlife and chances are you will have to drive to a larger city for more shopping opportunities, but what you are going to get are small business entrepreneurial opportunities, great Mom and Pop diners and specialty shops featuring local arts and crafts. More importantly, you get a place where people understand that size has no bearing on the kind of lifestyle you can have there."

Kim Thomas, a former writer for The Thoroughbred Record, grew up in Florence, Kentucky before it was Y'alltown, when the Mayor was also a math teacher and fireman.

Kim Huston will sign *Small Town Sexy: The Allure of Living in Small Town America* at the Ace Gallery Hop, at Woodland Computers, 507 East High Street, Lexington. Friday, November 20, 2009 at 5pm.

Leslie Guttman, author of *Equine ER: Stories from a Year in the Life of an Equine Veterinary Hospital*, will also sign her book at the Ace Holiday Hop.



KIM HUSTON

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