

Local & Vocal

Hap & Lori Houlihan are model Mom & Pops

By Kim Thomas

“While we have been focused in Washington on big companies—the Detroit automakers and big unions—the truth is that we’re not as concerned as we should be about the hundreds of small businesses who actually create two thirds of the jobs in this country. Small businesses are the engine of job creation in this country. Two thirds of the jobs come from small business owners.”

—Carly Fiorina, former CEO Hewlett-Packard

Hap and Lori Houlihan are vocal about buying local. This husband-wife duo of small business owners—Hap (a proprietor of Morris Book Shop) and Lori (Isle of You—are charter members of Local First Lexington. If you look him up, he says, “my ‘real’ name is Edward Thomas Houlihan IV, but everyone calls me Hap—if we get a call for Edward at home, we know it’s a cold call and hang up.”

His father, “Ed Houlihan, passed away earlier this year, he was one of Lexington’s best ambassadors.”



Hap and Lori Houlihan

The two are the quintessential Lexington couple.

Hap recalls, “Lori was a bartender at Lynagh’s Club in the early nineties. She was the prettiest, most ‘together’ woman I’d ever seen.”

She says, “we would see each other there and talk about

books. We bonded over John Updike and Hap gave me several Iris Murdoch paperbacks for my birthday the year we met. Even then we liked to talk books and biz.”

The two now have two boys Murphy (13) and Simon (8), and they live in what Lori describes as “a lil Gunnison Home on Edgemoor Drive that originally belonged to his Great Aunt Mary...he spent a lot of time there as a child as did a few of our friends (we’ve learned) as she was a Sunday School teacher and Girl Scout Leader and would have kids over to make corn husk dolls and other crafty things.”

Hap says of his wife today, “She’s still the prettiest, most together woman I’ve ever seen.”

The Houlihans are front and center at Local First Lexington, a grassroots, non-profit group created to help spread the word about the value of patronizing locally owned, independent businesses, to raise awareness of how important it is to buy local.

This Saturday, capitalizing on the popularity of their March Madness efforts in the Christmas Parade, they will again be drawing on the power of music—gathering with other local and vocal advocates, to spread their ‘buy local’ message via Christmas carols to Kenwick neighborhood, while singing and wassailing their way through the streets.

Hap believes that Local First Lexington could well have been started by any number of Lexington business people, “as evidenced by the fact that after we started up, we heard many people say, ‘It’s about time someone did that!’” but Steve Baron of CD Central was the first to get off his duff and take action. [SEE SIDEBAR.] Steve, Lori, Pat Gerhard of Third Street Stuff & Coffee, and Wyn Morris and I (from the Morris Book Shop) were the attendees of the first-ever meeting.”



Pat Gerhard of Third Street Stuff

In Lori’s view, the foremost impediment to LFL’s forward progress has been the incredible power of the national chains. “They have attractive national advertising campaigns with huge ad budgets behind them, and many have done a great job of building their brands. Let’s not forget that many chains were once mom’n’pops that did extremely well and eventually went national.”

Joseph-Beth Booksellers is an example of a local mom & pop shop founded in Lexington, that has gone onto regional success and multiple locations.

Lori’s store, Isle of You, a small boutique located in the historic Western Suburb of Lexington Kentucky, specializes in “streetwear and accessories for women, but you’ll also find small (but fabulous) collections for the men and children in your life.”

Her boutique serves as one of the anchors for the Western Suburb, a haven of local enterprise. Across the street is Stella’s Kentucky Deli. And the other end of Jefferson is anchored by Carleton and Livia Wing’s Wingspan Gallery (popular for both art and Thursday night dinners); *Ace Weekly* is next door to Wingspan; and across the corner, at Second and Jefferson, is another husband/wife duo, Krim Boughalem and Andrea Sims.

Their Wine + Market was featured on a Spring cover of *Ace*, when they opened the wine side of the store. A few months ago, they opened the Market side where shoppers and diners can now enjoy a baguette with everything from Kentucky Pear to Mountain Gorgonzola. The two heard everyone complaining about the lack of a grocery downtown. They decided to do something about it.



Krim Boughalem and Andrea Sims of Wine + Market

Just down Short Street from Isle of You is Greentree Close, home to L.V. Harkness, and Greentree Antiques (a perennial winner in *Ace*’s Annual Best of Lex Readers’ poll).

Hap is a proprietor of the new Morris Book Shop, on Southland Drive. In November, the popular shop hosted signings with Kenn Minter and Ed McClanahan (*Ace* cover, Nov. 20).

The Southland neighborhood is also home to one of Lexington’s most beloved pillars of shopping locally, the ever-expanding Good Foods Market & Café. Hap describes Anne Hopkins, of Good Foods, as part of the vital second wave of Local First.

When *Ace* first added “Best restaurant for locavores” as

a category in the Best of Lex Readers' Poll, not everybody even knew what it was.

Among the contenders this year were Good Foods, Alfalfa, Holly Hill Inn, and A.P. Roots on Romany.

Tis the Season

It does feel easier to find ways to buy local throughout the Summer, when the farmers markets set up shop around town and offer local residents their locally grown produce.

(See also Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*: Ace's pick book for 2007.)

But once the frost is on the pumpkin and it's time to retreat indoors for the winter, how can we find other ways to keep our local money in our local economy?

Ace intern Michael Porter came across this on the *Austin Chronicle's* website: "if every *Chronicle* reader this month shifts \$100 in holiday spending to a local, independently-owned store, it will equal more than \$40 million to help the Austin economy." He added in a Dec 9 Ace blog post titled The Power of Local, "I wonder what that statistic would look like for Lexington austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/AdIndex/GiftPages." (Lexington City elders took a big, pricey trip to Austin earlier this year for inspiration.)

The Houlihans suggests that this Holiday season, think about visiting locally owned, independent businesses.

From famed Kentucky bourbon balls to Shakertown candies and a plethora of local wineries like Jean Farris and Lover's Leap, the Kentucky Proud shopper can find something for everyone on their Christmas lists where you can be assured that most of the money you spend stays in Kentucky.

And if you want to be creative, after you spend your dollars shopping locally, you can even head over to the Art League this weekend and have Local Artists wrap your local treasures.

Yes, it is would be easy to drive through Starbucks for an iced white mocha latte, but a few blocks away is Third Street Stuff where you can have your hot chocolate topped with love and pink sprinkles (they're magical; that's all we're saying).

Proprietor Pat Gerhard is known for her art, her advocacy, her activism, her work ethic—complemented by hair and wardrobe that make it clear she is not part of Lexington's historic fat-cat good ole boy network. And yet, she has survived, thrived, and succeeded in creating a wildly popular venue for art, music, great food and drink, and a place where you are guaranteed to get good company along with your quiche.

All over town—Zandale, Clay Avenue, Lansdowne, Alexandria, Southland, all the way out to Brannon and Bellerive and Hamburg—you can find pockets of mom and pop shops that will be happy to help you keep your money in Lexington.

Downtown, for example, the merchants of Victorian Square and the Civic Center shops get enthusiastic if you ask where their Kentucky-made items are from. There, you will find clerks and owners who are happy to show you items made by local artists from locally-produced materials, such

as Kentucky agate, which is only found in three counties in Kentucky. One jeweler there exclusively uses Kentucky agate to design her beautiful one-of-a-kind jewelry and artwork. The Kentucky agate is "rockhounded" from creekbeds by Roland McIntosh, who is known as the source for baby asparagus at the Market each year.

One home and body shop is a local haven where, according to the manager, "you can throw a rock up in the air, and it'll probably hit something made in Kentucky."

Another gift shop proprietor is quick to show the work of a lovely family-owned company from Leitchfield, Kentucky called "Caught Ya Lookin," that provides high-quality handcrafted luggage, handbags and accessories, made by experienced seamstresses, many who have been working with their company since it was established in 1979.

What you can do:

When asked how *Ace* readers can help support the local movement, Hap says, "A huge percentage of *Ace* readers are already on the bus," (at least they've been carrying the tote bags that say so since the 90s). He says, "They already understand that buying local is good for the character and diversity of Lexington, good for our tax base and local economy in general, and therefore ultimately good for themselves. But almost everyone can think about new opportunities to buy locally—that's why our logo includes the bow tied around a finger. I've always been a pretty decent customer of my favorite local businesses, but since I began actively thinking about it every time I open my wallet, I've discovered many new ways to keep more of my paycheck in town. That's what we ask of *Ace* readers and all Lexingtonians—to 'put your money where your house is,' and to keep that in mind at each opportunity.

Lori adds, "*Ace* Readers are invited to keep an eye out and join up and supply March Madness with their creative talents. Anyone in the community is invited to be a part of our band. There's always room for more musicians, artists and performers!"

March Madness...In December

After a big splash in the Christmas Parade with the March Madness Marching Band, Hap and Lori show their commitment by organizing efforts to draw attention to Local First Lexington's purpose by putting on their caroling caps and lifting their voices in song, marching in parades, using music and entertainment to give us cause to pause and think about where our hard earned money will be spent this Holiday Season.

The local movement can be credited with creative avenues to draw attention to their message. Hap says, "Lori came up with the idea of Local First Lexington having a presence in the Christmas Parade—I would say "awareness-raiser" rather than fundraiser—and we wanted to do more than just the typical 'businessman/politician in a car w/his smiling family' float that seems to pervade Lexington's parades. When Lori discovered what is now called 'March Madness,' she knew we were on to something.

There was about a month of planning & recruiting followed by another month of practicing and doing."

Although Lori had great support from Tripp Bratton, Teresa Tomb at Mecca, Jennifer Miller, Farhad Rezaei and

Indie Record Store helps Lexingtonians to "Think Local"

Lexington music store CD Central will accept gift cards from competing big-box stores such as Wal-Mart and Best Buy this holiday season, in an effort to get local residents to "think local" when doing their holiday and post-holiday shopping.

According to the National Retail Federation, an estimated \$25 billion will be spent on gift cards this year. Most will be issued by large national chains.

"Lexington is lucky to have a vibrant network of locally-owned, independent businesses, which offer a great experience for shoppers and help make Lexington the unique place that it is. Unfortunately, lots of people will be getting Christmas stockings full of gift cards redeemable only at faceless, corporate big-box stores with a limited selection of music," said CD Central owner Steve Baron.

CD Central will help local music lovers unload their unwanted gift cards by accepting them at full face value for CD, DVD and record purchases. The store will accept cards from competitors including Best Buy, Wal-Mart, Barnes & Noble, Target and Amazon.

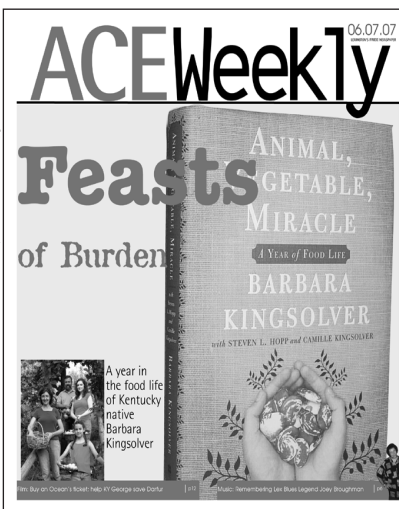
Baron said the gift card program has two goals: to introduce more people to the experience of buying music at an actual record store rather than a place that specializes in computers, books, or appliances; and to encourage people to think about the options they have to shop locally.

CD Central is a member of Local First Lexington, an alliance of locally-owned, independent businesses.

According to LFL, locally owned businesses keep more money in the local economy than their national competitors, provide more stable employment, contribute to the unique character of Lexington, and provide a level of choice and customer service unavailable elsewhere.

As for the competitor gift cards redeemed by CD Central customers, Baron said CD Central will use them for routine store purchases such as cleaning supplies, computer parts, or hardware. "And that'll be one less CD that Wal-Mart will sell," Baron said. ■

This sidebar also appears on the December 13 Ace blog at <http://aceweekly.blogspot.com>.



Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*



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diately and he got Tripp on board to write a couple of simple arrangements."

Lori is grateful to Bratton, Rezaï and also to Teresa Tomb from Mecca, all of whom "were absolutely key for their professional artistic support. Their guidance coupled with the band uniforms that Jennifer Miller supplied helped to make us a more cohesive unit both in sight & sound."

Getting "well practiced" musicians on board, was not easy, though. Lori explains, "We had several good drummers from day one, but we were very short on members who felt comfortable playing lead melodies on a horn. The Cheetah Girls were playing at Rupp that day and a few of the musicians who wanted to play with us needed the money from the load out gig more than they needed to march with us. Luckily, John Pope was recruited and joined up on performance day. He added some very nice trombone solos to the arrangements." Lori laughs that organizing the event "has been a lot more FUN than any of us realized it would be."

Our weekly practice sessions were a highlight for all of us and we quickly realized that we weren't just putting together an event band, but that we were all gaining a new community of friends."

The transition from marching to caroling seemed natural to Lori, since after their premiere performance in the parade, many of the musicians expressed an interest in continuing their musical get-togethers. With the St. Patrick's Day Parade so far off, Lori noted that, "everyone involved had made new friends and many had reawakened some interest in musical expression. Carla Brown was on Facebook posting about the Christmas decorations on her house in Kenwick. [In case you aren't aware, there are always really fantastic decorations in that neighborhood.] We decided it would be fun to gather the band and wander around Kenwick caroling and checking out the decor. We haven't practiced. It will be completely improvisational and everyone is welcome to join us....who knows what will happen....Hopefully lots of singing and laughing...." ■

Lori and Hap Houlihan, on behalf of Local First Lexington, invite you to join them on December 20th: "Oh come all ye funful! We're going to carol in the Kenwick area and require your sonority! Music will be provided but if you have any songs that you would like to sing, bring a few sheets along. Bring whatever you need to, ah, fortify yourself. There will be a jigger or two of Santa's Eggnog provided. Saturday, 7pm, Dec. 20 The carolers will gather at 227 Owsley Ave.

Kenwick Caroling

Buy Local

◆ Studies have shown that when you buy from an independent, locally owned business, your money is used to make significant purchases from other local businesses, service providers and farms—continuing to strengthen the economic base of the community.

Also, significantly more tax dollars are kept in Lexington, helping to support schools, civic services and community improvements.

◆ Where we shop, where we eat and have fun—all of it makes our community home. Our one-of-a-kind businesses are an integral part of the distinctive character of Lexington. Can you imagine Lexington without the Kentucky Theatre, for example? (Those years when it was closed were a dark time for downtown, and for all of Lex.)

◆ Keep it Green. Locally owned businesses are good for the environment. They can make more local purchases requiring less transportation. This means contributing less to sprawl, congestion, and loss of beautiful Bluegrass landscape. (Check out the Fayette Alliance for more info on that.)

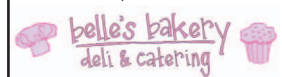
◆ A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based not on a national sales plan but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a broad range of product choices. ■



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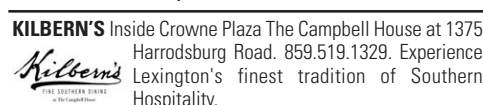
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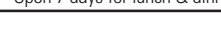


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