



**Advertise
with us**
Details



Pennyrile HOME MEDICAL
VOTED "BEST HOME MEDICAL PROVIDER IN WESTERN KY"

If Quality Counts, Call or Request Us!

We Guarantee The Lowest Price!
1.800.445.8002
HOPKINSVILLE 270-885-2500

- Oxygen • CPAP • BI-PAP
- Power & Manual Wheelchairs
- 3 and 4 Wheel Scooters
- Hospital Beds • Lift Chairs
- Infant Monitors • Catheter Supplies
- Wheelchair and Scooter Lifts
- Porch Lifts & Ramps
- Walk-In Tubs & Roll-In Showers
- Personal Monitors (no monthly fees)
- 1000s of Other Items in Stock

Coag and Light Weight Portables Wheelchair and Scooter Lifts Stair Lifts Elevators Ramps Power Chairs

https://www.kentuckynewera.com/news/article_cb0c6839-2056-5646-9f8d-6c5b2584e616.html

Southern Exposure celebrates 30 years

By Zirconia Alleyne New Era Editor May 2, 2019 Updated 21 hrs ago



Photos by Zirconia Alleyne | Kentucky New Era

The picture window at 900 S. Main St. has become a downtown icon over the past three decades. Life-size photos of locals in their Easter best or wedding-day threads fill the frame as cars drive by. Holiday backdrops are meticulously planned by the longtime Southern Exposure staff whom owners Tony and Carol Kirves said get just as excited as they do about creating new scenes for passers-by.

"We wanted to use it to showcase the photography and to use it to contribute to what you see from downtown," Carol said.

Wednesday, anyone who passed by saw more smiles in the window than usual as Kirves celebrated 30 years in business at Southern Exposure. His wife, family and friends threw him a surprise party complete with cake, cookies and cards.

Customers and former staff stopped by to celebrate the moment and to thank Kirves for capturing so many of theirs.

"I was actually at their wedding reception, so I knew them before Southern Exposure," said Cynthia Atkins, a longtime co-worker of Carol Kirves at Hopkinsville Community College.

The college is actually what brought the Kirves to town in 1985. Carol, a native of Hopkinsville, landed a part-time job at HCC shortly after the couple graduated with photojournalism degrees from Western Kentucky University.

"I found a job first, so we got to come back to Hopkinsville," Carol recalled. "He worked at Camera World for a few months selling VCRs, and then he got the chief photographer job at the (Kentucky) New Era."

Shooting photography for news was a skill Kirves had been developing since he was a more at Bosse High School in Evansville. He was the go-to guy to take photos for the school newspaper and yearbook, and his principal sent him to a weeklong photojournalism program for high-schoolers at Ball State University.

"I remember on the way home from that week telling my parents I was going to Western to become a full-time photographer," he said. And that he did.

Kirves worked construction jobs his first summer in college to be able to afford the camera equipment he needed to get better.

He landed several internships at newspapers during college, leading Kirves to think he wanted to shoot for news. He worked several years at the New Era with longtime reporter and former editor Jennifer Brown, telling stories with photos all across the area.

"Tony made me brave that first year," Brown said, noting that the two got the New Era to print its first full-page photo essay in color.

"That was historic," she said.

After a few years of shooting photography for the paper, Kirves decided he wanted to try a different angle.

"Even though he was a trained photojournalist, he will tell you he did not enjoy taking photos of people in their worst moments in tragedy," his wife said. "During that timeframe, there was a murder here in town and a bad accident, and he didn't enjoy that. He would rather focus on people when they were happy, so he decided he wanted to open his own studio."

Southern Exposure began out of the living room of the couple's Slate Run apartment, and they'd often use HCC's Round Table Park across the street for photo sessions.

On May 1, 1989, they opened their permanent spot on South Main Street. Carol handwrote the first logo, which still welcomes customers at the front door.

Kirves remembers shooting 50 weddings his first year in business.

"I was cheap," he said, laughing. "I was only 200 bucks, so my name got out there, I got established and it just grew from there."

Through the years, Kirves has taken a wide range of photos, from weddings to Little League athletes to Ebonite bowling balls. In 2002, he made the shift from film to 100% digital, which Kirves said he was prepared for at WKU.

"I knew it was coming even back when I was in college," he said. "I had written a paper about how it was going to change photography, and it's amazing to me that some of the things I wrote in that paper have come true."

Kirves said shooting for newspapers prepared him to shoot wedding photography.

"In journalism, you don't come back without 'the' picture," he said. "You had to know what was on that film --- you couldn't see it like you can today, so you had to know what was on it."

Today, Kirves has contracts with nearly 20 schools in the region and he shoots 750 high-school senior photos each year, he said. He has six employees, including his son-in-law, Michael Baxter, who's married to the Kirves' daughter Amanda.

Kirves said Baxter is the future of Southern Exposure.

"He's been here about five years learning the business," Kirves said. "He's a great eye and a great artist, and hopefully the future will carry on."

Kirves, 57, said expansion is definitely on the horizon, but he plans to be on the corner of South Main for a long time.

"Every time I would turn this corner, I'd see that window and I would think 'Man, that would be awesome to have pictures in there,'" he recalled. "So, the visibility of it was always a draw for me for this location, and I think that it has helped my business be successful."

Reach Zirconia Alleyne at 270-887-3243 or zalleyne@kentuckynewera.com.



Planters Perks
CHECKING

So Awesome,
It Comes with
Its Own App.

[LEARN MORE](#)


Planters Bank
Member FDIC



