

Kim Alexander Livengood

She's had a publication, a clothing boutique, a PR agency and a hotel, worked with a Fortune 500 company, and now has a 5,000 sq. ft. indie indoor market called the Bazaar on Apricot and Lime that includes Hamlet's Eatery, a food truck.



She's always doing different things business-wise and it's always creative. She's had a publication, a boutique, a PR agency and a hotel, worked with a Fortune 500 company, and now has an indie indoor market and eatery. Which was her favorite? If I were to guess, I think it's her PR work. No, maybe the Bazaar on Apricot and Lime. Maybe Willow506? I should probably ask.

First, about her current venture. Kim runs The Bazaar on Apricot and Lime which is an indoor market with 40 local vendors - all owner-operated and from various creative categories including "...art, collectibles, clothing, jewelry, one-of-a-kind items, plants, home decor, gifts, and food," according to her Facebook page.

Outside, there's Hamlet's Eatery, a food truck that sits in a courtyard that's home to live music, mini expos, fitness events, pop-up markets, "hound happy hours" and more.

This latest burst of her creativity came about when her mother, Judy Alexander, was driving around and bought a 5,000 square foot warehouse in the northern part of the City of Sarasota. "Bought on a whim," as Kim describes it, but now, five years later, "It has taken over both our lives," she says with candor, but also enthusiasm.

"My mom is super smart and a professional volunteer, but never ran this kind of business before." Judy asked - insisted - that it be a "community" instead of just a business venture. But the latter is where Kim came in. Using her business skills and expansive PR skills, Kim maintains a strong social media presence across several platforms, constantly promoting events at The Bazaar. As for the market, it has a waiting list and her vendors are local businesses "who share our vision."

Three years ago, they added the space next door that Hamlet's Eatery now occupies. Kim operates both and her mom comes in every day. "She was the visionary," Kim states referring to her mother who saw potential in an empty warehouse.

The market is laid back with a big dash of playfulness and whimsy thrown in. Out front is an old truck painted in signature apricot and lime that was once her father's which he used to drive around downtown Sarasota — then with its distinctive teal and white color scheme.

Outside in the courtyard area is where Hamlet's Eatery is parked, serving vegan and non-vegan fare. Summers, usually a very tough time to have a restaurant, have "been really good" according to Kim, plus "it's a great place to hang out." Hamlet's meant more skills to learn like figuring out ordering food, what to serve, hiring and managing employees, but opening the restaurant, "added so much to the experience" at The Bazaar.

It was Kim's idea to work with the city to name the area the Limelight District back in 2020, the same year Hamlet's Eatery opened. She recalled seeing how well the Rosemary District was doing which made her work with the City's Planning Department for a year to "brand" the Limelight District.

The Bazaar is located in a less-traversed part of town, but it's a place that's still affordable and hasn't been condo-ized (yet). It's east of 301 and south of 12th street, a mix of light industry and now, in addition to The Bazaar and Hamlet's, is Creative Liberties, a gallery, art school and place for artists to rent studio space.

Barbara Gerdeman and Elizabeth Goodwill are Creative Liberties' owners and they opened a second space last month just down the street from their current location. Other businesses in the district include Sun King Brewery, PEL, Music Compound, Brant's Bookshop, Burgess Signs, Ed Smith Stadium, The Humane Society and more.

Having had a PR firm that worked with a variety of clients on their messaging and branding, she treats this business like a client and her mother as her boss. Kim grew up in Florida and graduated from Sarasota High. After grad-

uating University of Florida, she ran her own publication, Eclipse, for eight years before selling to Creative Loafing. As she recalls it, she was the "target audience" of her publication - a young person interested in nightlife, fashion, bars and restaurants—and it worked.

She sold Eclipse a month before going to China to meet her soon-to-be daughter, Chloe. She returned home, settled in and quickly became bored.

Next up was a boutique, Willow506 (yes, named after her daughter) which she ran for eight years until she sold it. At Willow506 she did all the buying for the store, as well as the merchandising, advertising, management, promotions, marketing, fashion shows and eCommerce.

Along with her husband, Robert, she became co-owner of Hotel Ranola from 2006 to 2009, turning a 1926 downtown apartment building into a nine-room boutique hotel that was consistently ranked in the top three Sarasota hotels on Trip Advisor. According to Kim's info "...before they sold the hotel, it was featured in the New York Times as one of the best places to stay in Sarasota."

Then Kim made a foray into the corporate world at Tervis (formerly Tervis Tumbler) for five years doing their marketing and PR. During her time, "the company grew from a local manufacturing company into a national brand with more than 8,000 retail partners and 35 company stores," according to Kim's bio. And from that experience came the impetus to start, in 2015, Eclipse, a PR agency.

But to answer the question at the beginning of this article, what she loves most is her involvement with FPRA (the Florida Public Relations Association) which has 16 chapters in Florida. "Wonderful people," she says emphatically of the collegial group of fellow public relations professionals.

The Central West Coast Chapter of the FPRA in Sarasota was named chapter of the year in 2022. She enjoys the association with colleagues because, "It's wonderful for learning and growing, but absolutely for the people - it's the most supportive group and not competitive."

Kim has APR (Accredited in Public Relations) and CPRC (Certified Public Relations Counselor) credentials — benchmarks of public relations professionals who have studied for and taken extensive tests to earn them.

Last year, several members from the Central West Coast chapter made a strong showing in the Florida Public Relations Association's (FPRA's) Golden Image Awards. Along with fellow member Sharon Kunkel, APR, Kim took top honors in two of the three professional divisions in addition to other awards earned by chapter members.

Hamlet's Eatery's "To Meat or Not to Meat" entry took top honors in Division C - Digital Tools of Public Relations, earning the Grand Golden Image Award. She also earned the Golden Image Award in the "Online Audience Engagement" category as well as a Judges' Award for an outstanding entry that achieves maximum return on investment.

Recently, The Bazaar received two SarasotaOut Awards for "Favorite Non-LGBTQ+ Owned Business" and "Favorite Boutique." "This means so much for The Bazaar to be recognized in the LGBTQ+ community," she commented at the time. "From the very beginning we wanted to be a place for everyone to feel welcome and loved."

Some have commented on Kim's "entrepreneurship" she notes, and she recalls being called "fearless." "Huh?" she reacts. "I never thought of it that way. My parents gave me confidence, my husband is a great support. You spend most of your time at work so you better enjoy it. I still get up and get excited...I love what I do." ☺

The Bazaar is located at 821 Apricot Ave in Sarasota. For more information, visit www.BazaaronApricotandLime.com or call 941-445-1938

STORY: Louise Bruderle

IMAGES: Evelyn England