

Kim Coslett – Kaleo Cafe

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

The black-and-white photo hangs on the wall. It shows a young girl, maybe four years old, with a big smile, sitting at her grandmother's kitchen table. Maybe that scene was a foreshadowing of something yet to come. Today, the young woman pictured in that photo is operating an eating place of her own in rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Kim Coslett and her husband Kirt are owners of the Kaleo Café in Halstead, Kansas. They are natives, having grown up in the area. Kim is from Sedgwick, north of Wichita. She is trained as a nurse.

Kim and her husband worked for a year at a hunting preserve in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and then chose to move back to Kansas. Kim became a licensed nurse in Halstead and eventually the family settled there. Her husband Kirt has his own roofing company, Coslett Roofing. They have four children.

"We love the town, we love the people here," Kim said. She is also a talented musician, singing and playing in a couple of gospel and country music groups. When the nearby Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper held auditions for a singing group, Kim was not going to apply, but her aunt insisted that she do so. Kim not only passed the audition, she got the job. Today she sings with the Prairie Rose Rangers as well as the Kim Coslett Band.

In addition, Kim had long wanted to have a restaurant. She worked on the idea for years and was within an eyelash of renting space to open a restaurant in a neighboring community before she reconsidered.

Then she was approached about some downtown space in her hometown of Halstead. A woman was closing her art shop and gift gallery.

"I felt like it was the Lord at work, because it opened up at just the right time," Kim said. She rented and remodeled the space and opened the Kaleo Café in April 2011.

Why the name Kaleo? "We heard it at church," Kim said. "Our minister used the word in his sermon one day. He explained that Kaleo was Greek, meaning "to be called" or "to invite." I feel like I am called to do this, and we want to invite people to join us," Kim said.

So the Kaleo Café opened in the rural community of Halstead, population 1,880 people. Now, that's rural. The restaurant is artfully decorated in attractive colors, with glass vases and lighting for attractive accents above a corrugated tin wall.

The menu is upscale, featuring paninis, sandwiches and wraps, flat bread pizza, soups, salads, baked goods, and great desserts. One can find everything from turkey avocado wrap to citrus lime salad to lemon basil orzo, but there is also a kids' menu.

The restaurant is already expanding into a space next door. This will include a private dining room which will be available for rentals. Kim is already doing a lot of catering and is looking to host more birthday and tea parties for kids. As one might guess, music is featured in the restaurant each week on Friday nights.

The tables in the restaurant are classics which were found at an antique shop in Marion. They have laminate tops and stainless steel legs such as one might have found in

grandmother's kitchen. In fact, on one wall of the restaurant is a photo of Kim as a smiling young four-year-old, sitting at her grandmother's table.

She wants to encourage more of those memories of happy dinner times.

"I want to invite people to bring in pictures of them having various eating experiences," Kim said. "We'll post those in the restaurant and have a drawing for a free gift certificate."

Kim has found her niche. "I've always liked to cook, I've always liked to entertain and have people around," Kim said. "I'm a people pleaser."

It's time to leave the Kaleo Café, where a black-and-white photo hangs on the wall showing a happy young woman at her grandmother's kitchen. We salute Kim Coslett for making a difference by opening this restaurant and inviting even more people to the dinner table.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.