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## HIGHLANDER OF NOTE

# Signs of Success for Maggie Harlow

By Tracy Keller

**M**aggie Payette Harlow is a lot of things – wife, mother, successful entrepreneur, community leader, philanthropist and Highlands enthusiast. In fact, she wishes she could create a sign big enough to proclaim her affection for the Louisville neighborhood she calls home.

“The Highlands embraces everyone. There’s a vibe in this community unlike anywhere else. People are friendly and share a lot of my values; it’s an accepting atmosphere that offers an amazing quality of life,” Harlow says.

Harlow grew up in Elmira, NY, where her father, Tom Payette, owned a car dealership. In 1980, after buying a larger store in Louisville, the family relocated to the Highlands.

“I was delighted by the idea of moving

to Kentucky because I was horse-crazy and imagined every Louisvillian was issued a horse and barn at birth. I was a little disappointed to learn the truth!”

Harlow attended Atherton High School – across the street from the house where she spent her teen years – and later graduated from Indiana University where she studied painting. After college she returned to Louisville to work in her father’s dealership, but after 13 years in the family business, she decided it was time for a change and began looking for a business venture completely unrelated to automotive sales. Her search quickly led her to Sign-A-Rama because of its business-to-business model along with its regular schedule and opportunities for creativity.

Harlow along with her husband, Brian,

opened their Downtown Louisville franchise in August of 2003 and success soon followed. In fact, their store did over \$1.2 million in sales during their first year – a franchise record for a new location.

While never losing sight of Sign-A-Rama Downtown’s goal to be good stewards of the community, Harlow’s success has continued to grow along with her company’s.

In keeping with their goal, Harlow and her husband established Signs of Support – a grant program open to non-profit organizations in the community. The business gives about \$20,000 per year in signage services and products to charitable organizations in the area. Support varies from discounts to free signage and services.

“We discovered pretty quickly that there are many great organizations in



PHOTO: BRIAN BOHANNON / BRIANBOHANNON.COM

Sign-A-Rama Downtown owner Maggie Payette Harlow recently became president of the National Association of Business Women Owners’ Louisville chapter. Harlow lives in the Highlands-Douglass neighborhood.

Louisville worthy of support. It is so hard to choose the causes we give to within any given year," she says. "We must be inspired by their work and want to share in their success."

This year's Signs of Support recipients include Heine Brothers' "Breaking New Grounds" program and Project Women. Previous recipients include Home of the Innocents, St. Joseph's Children's Home and Highlands-Douglass Neighborhood Association.

Sign-A-Rama Downtown's work also can be seen around the Highlands at Tom Drexler Plumbing, Sevice Restaurant, The Blossom Shop, The Leatherhead, Dundee Candy Shop, Car Teck and Douglass Loop Barber Shop.

In June, Harlow became president of the Louisville chapter of the National Association of Business Women Owners (NAWBO). She says she sees a lot of similarities with this organization and the neighborhood she loves.

"NAWBO gives me a sense of community – a group of women with like-minded goals and a desire to work together," she explains. "The Highlands feels the same way. A co-operative attitude – a willingness to accept others and learn from them." \*



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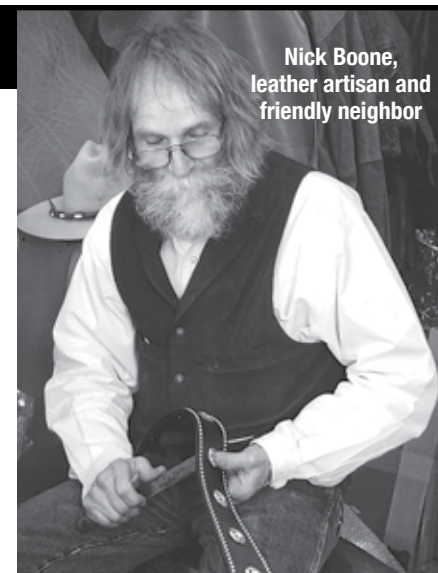
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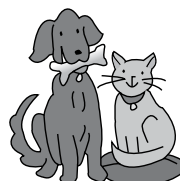
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