

Merriest Main Street: Bardstown to be featured on Today Show

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Bardstown comes alive during the holiday season, with festive décor along North Third Street, multiple events through the city and the plethora of Christmas cheer. Thanks to the city's Hallmark Christmas appeal, Bardstown will feature as the final "Merriest Main Street" live on the Today Show.

Bardstown-Nelson County Tourism Commission President Stacey Phelps was in a meeting when she got the call from the producers of the Today Show on Wednesday. She recalls thinking the phone call was prank initially, but soon realized Bardstown has truly been picked to feature on the segment.

On Friday, Dec. 20 at 8:25 a.m. “Merriest Main Street” will be livestreamed straight from Court Square to the Today Show in New York City. Phelps said they’re asking anyone who wants to come downtown arrive by 7:30 a.m. with all their holiday attire and Bardstown cheer — stating they want it to be as big as possible.

“We started the planning process immediately,” Phelps said. “We want to spread the word. We want everybody to know what’s happening. We want as many people in our downtown. We’ve already started planning what we want to do, what we want to focus on, the things that we want to have in our downtown during that time.”

Phelps said the Tourism Commission and the Bardstown Main Street program will have a little over a week to plan their appearance on national television. However, Phelps said she knows she wants as many community members as possible present on Friday.

Santa and Mrs. Claus are already guaranteed an appearance during the Christmas spectacle, with The Grinch and a reindeer secured as well. Prior to her conversation with The Kentucky Standard on Thursday, Phelps said she’d had the idea to have carolers present as well. She said she’s also ordered 100 Santa hats for attendees to wear.

At this time Phelps said she is uncertain about possible road closure for the event, but encouraged the community to keep an eye on the Visit Bardstown Facebook page for possible updates.

Randi Mouser, Executive Director of Bardstown Main Street, said as an organization they’re proud to bring the magic of Christmas to life each year. The program hosted the annual Light Up Bardstown and Shop Small Saturday events following Thanksgiving. They’re also responsible for downtown’s holiday décor and signature Christmas tree.

“The moment on season ends, we begin planning the next, the constantly finding new ways to make Bardstown the merriest place in America,” she said. “Our goal has always been to shine as the top Christmas town and we are proud to receive this accolade, celebrating our community as one of the most merry and festive towns.”

Phelps said she'd watch several videos of the previous segments since getting the news. She said they want to highlight all of Bardstown — showcasing it on a national level. In her role in Tourism, Phelps said she's traveled all across the U.S. promoting the city. Every time, it is the main street that pulls in potential tourists.

She gives praise to the Mouser and the Main Street team for all their work on bringing North Third Street to life.

“We're known for bourbon, but our main street — people come here just to visit the small-town charm and our main street,” she said. “Randi Mouser has done an amazing job, along with her board, to create what our downtown looks like, and has preserved it and beautified it to what it is today. We owe her so much credit for everything she does for the downtown and her board, and we're just super excited to have them.”

In the last six months, Phelps said they've had some of their biggest media pushes to date — the upcoming appearance on the Today Show being their largest. In November alone, Phelps said the city's been featured in numerous magazines and they were syndicated four times by Yahoo News and MNS. If the commission had paid to be in the article, it would have cost \$3.4 million.

“One thing that we do, but a lot of people don't realize, but that all was called earned media,” Phelps explained. “We didn't have to pay for that. We hosted a writer at some point, and those stories were syndicated multiple times. Our goal is to always be out there.”

With a week to plan the appearance at Merriest Main Street, Phelps said there are still many moving pieces to outline. However, she said she knows crews from a local NBC affiliate will be filming later Thursday Dec. 19 to gather stock footage and possible road closures will be announced a later date.

Through all the planning she said the city's appearance on the show is about showing to the nation what those in Bardstown already know.

“We’re super excited it’s happening,” she said. “The Today Show definitely is very big for us. We already know these things. We know how great Bardstown is, and we know how beautiful it is, and we know why we are the most beautiful small town in America, and now we get to show it off to everybody else.”