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OP-ED / Kris Kimel

## **If It's Fall In Louisville, it's Ideafestival**

By Kris Kimel

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Picture a couple of smart, young London entrepreneurs or creative types conferring over lunch at a Trafalgar Square café. It's late summer, 2012. The topic is a new breakthrough that will change the way millions of people go about some key aspect of their everyday lives.

"Are you going to Louisville this fall?" one asks. "Of course," the other responds. "It's **IdeaFestival**."

Now picture that conversation recurring in communities around the world that are hotbeds of scientific, medical, business, design and artistic inspiration.

Making Louisville synonymous with innovation, creativity and possibility is a little like making Sundance, at one time simply a small mountain village in Utah, synonymous with the premiere event for launching new voices in film. It's not a short-term proposition and it requires a culture that is receptive to, and nurturing of, novel, unfamiliar and sometimes just plain weird ideas.

Fortunately, we have found that both the raw seeds and the nurturing environment are here in Louisville in abundance. It's only a matter of time before the rest of the world figures out what **IdeaFestival** organizers and sponsors already have come to understand about what's possible in this community and state.

Already 15,000 tickets have been sold to attendees who will be coming from throughout the nation and around the world, and who will get a glimpse of the power of ideas and innovation in Louisville when they converge in our community for the fifth **IdeaFestival**. Launched and incubated in Lexington in 2000 and moved to Louisville in 2006, **IdeaFestival** is a world-class event that attracts leading and highly-diverse thinkers from across the nation and around the globe to explore and celebrate innovation, imagination and cutting-edge ideas.

Based at the International Convention Center, the event will feature interactive presentations by such news-making speakers as Apple computer co-founder Steve Wozniak; fascinating culinary creator, chef Homaro Cantu; and international fashion designer Karen Walker. Renowned science-fiction writer Ray Bradbury also will "visit" Louisville for **IdeaFestival**, although his appearance will be as unusual as some of the unexpected turns in the author's novels: he will appear, much like a hologram, live and life-sized in an apparent three-dimensional environment from a remote location, making eye-to-eye contact and interacting with participants.

**IdeaFestival** will showcase important ideas in science, the arts, design, business, film, technology and education. But it is also dedicated to the practical application of those ideas by exposing the strategic tools needed to synthesize and apply this knowledge in the real world. **IdeaFestival** is all about the bottom line.

Louisville is the ideal place for an event like **IdeaFestival** because it is a community that values and supports fresh involvement and breakthrough thinking. You don't have to grow up here or be a member of the "right" family to sit on an influential board, acquire funding to develop your business venture, or gather innovative thinkers from around the world to brainstorm new problems-solving initiatives and products.

At the Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation, the founder and lead organizer of **IdeaFestival**, we believe that, in the local, national and international marketplace of ideas, your only edge is your ability to out-innovate the competition. People and companies have the upper hand only when they implement ideas that add value and transform how people do things and see their world. That kind of innovation is possible in Louisville.

Another important value of **IdeaFestival**, like the city of Louisville itself, is accessibility. Strong support from our sponsors allows many **IdeaFestival** events to be free or priced at a level to allow participation by a large and diverse audience, including students and young people. This support is another key example of how way Louisville nurtures innovation.

So, Louisvillians, jump in. And bring your brains. Attend one of the many **IdeaFestival** events taking place here this weekend. Innovation will play a pivotal role in the quest by our community and state to continue building a competitive, dynamic, entrepreneurial economy. And we can all be a part of that innovation.

Just think to yourself: if it's fall in Louisville, it's **IdeaFestival**.

Kris Kimel is a founder and president of the Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation (KSTC), created in 1987.

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