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On Location

LAGUNA BEACH PHOTOGRAPHERS KRISTIN KARKOSKA AND ANNA GODDARD TAKE CLIENTS OUT OF THE STUDIO TO CAPTURE STUNNING FAMILY PORTRAITS FILLED WITH PERSONALITY.

By ASHLEY RYAN



For family portraits, Karkoska recommends wearing colors that mirror the background, like blues, grays and earth tones.

Capturing Candid Moments

It's been 20 years since Kristin Karkoska started working as a professional photographer, with a story that begins and ends right here in Laguna. In 2002, she opened a children's portrait studio that doubled as a hair salon and birthday party venue. After five years, when she made the decision to close that business, Karkoska opened a small photo studio in a downtown cottage, inviting past clients to join her for special discounted sessions.

"We ended up having 214 families that we photographed in that three-month period and they had a choice," she recalls. "They could shoot in the studio or they could shoot on location—and we only had nine people that wanted to shoot in the studio." This quickly showed her that photo shoots were trending toward the outdoors, so she ditched her studio and hasn't looked back since.

Karkoska now runs Blue Sky's Studio,

a portrait company that relies heavily on the natural beauty of Orange County, especially Laguna Beach. "The thing I love about Laguna—and, honestly, it's more and more that I don't leave Laguna to shoot—is there is such a variety here and I still find new places. ... All the beaches are super different," she notes. From famed locales like Victoria Beach and Heisler Park's Picnic Beach to Treasure Island, you'll find everything from palm trees, flowers and succulents to caves and rocks in the water to change up the backdrops. But the options don't end there, as Karkoska also loves shooting in Laguna Canyon's wilderness parks, in front of the artistic murals at The Hive shopping center and even around the downtown area in an effort to capture more urban scenes.

During a Blue Sky's Studio session, expect to get a variety of images and an endless

amount of family fun from the shoot. After starting out with a few technically beautiful shots, she likes to mix it up and bring some silliness to the experience. "I want to start out with doing it the right way and then, I think, organic is always better," she explains, adding that she often incorporates hugs, tickling, hand-holding, whispering and more between family members.

"I love to be creative," Karkoska says. "I love to just go out and play. ... I love that every day is different."

When it comes time to decide what to wear, Karkoska provides clients with a list of styling tips. She says to skip the typical khakis and white tops and focus instead on two to three colors (of the same brightness level) while also avoiding busy prints. And she says it's best to try to mirror colors in the background, like blues, grays and earth tones.

Because Karkoska has been taking family portraits for the last 15 years, she has witnessed the evolution of these photographs being used for holiday cards and special announcements firsthand. And just as she did when first starting out, she provides heirloom pieces that provide tangible memories with every shoot. "My highest value is to have people walk away with something beautiful from the session," Karkoska explains.

While digital photos are included with most orders, she prides herself on crafting metal and canvas prints, luxurious cards, curated wall galleries of five to six images as well as photo albums that tell the family's story. "When you have albums, when you have stuff on the wall, you look at it [and] you cherish it," she notes. "It's something that grows in value over the years."

BLUE SKY'S STUDIO:
949-510-3862; BLUESKYSSTUDIO.COM



Photographer
Kristin Karkoska

FROM LEFT: BLUE SKY'S STUDIO; CAMERON KARKOSKA

Setting the Scene

Laguna resident Anna Goddard and her husband, Collin, make up Goddard Studios, a photography service that focuses on everything from engagement and wedding shoots to sports, portraits and events.

"When you know each other so well, you're not in each other's way and it made sense for us to work together, especially on weddings," Goddard says. "However, family portrait photography is something I started doing on my own."

The inspiration for this branch of the business came about from realizing she could do something many other photographers couldn't. "I noticed that so many family portraits at the beach were too staged. I didn't see any great lifestyle shots—the amazing moments that can and should be achieved—that any family deserves to have. Photos need to show happiness, personality [and] connections between family members, [plus] have movement and great energy. I felt like I was able to give that to people, and that's what made me want to shoot family portraits."

You'll find Goddard shooting all over town, from the stunning beaches to Moulton Meadows, Heisler Park and even the golf course at The Ranch at Laguna Beach. While she says that her clients sometimes pick the location, they usually leave it up to her, allowing her freedom to experiment and find the outdoor venue that suits the family best.

These outdoor settings, she says, were a natural progression away from the limitations of a photo studio. "It only makes sense that people want a great outdoor backdrop in which they can move around freely," Goddard adds. "... An outdoor location ... [is a more] relaxed setting, which is great for lifestyle photography and amazing portraits."

One of her favorite things about working with families is facing the difficulties that arise, from trying to make everyone feel at ease to providing high-quality images. "I



Photographer Anna Goddard

Goddard tries to capture lifestyle shots that are more spontaneous than staged.



never want to rush them; if a child is having a moment, I'll just wait," she reveals. "It's a balance between my guidance and what naturally ... evolve[s] during the photo shoot, and I'm always ready to capture the special moments that ... occur."

Goddard sometimes also likes to include props that are relevant to her subjects' interests, like a surfboard, or items that enhance the scene, like seashells on the beach.

The result is beautiful photographs that showcase the essence of a family, which she says is a great keepsake. "Instead of having a framed photo in your living room, you can now share ... [family portraits] on

social media, have digital slideshows and easily make beautiful holiday cards and albums online," she adds.

The joy that can be found in these photos stems from the families, but the idyllic location doesn't hurt. "The weather can't be beat—[Laguna has] great sunsets and it allows for great lighting even when it's overcast," Goddard says. "Any location you pick in this town will provide an amazing backdrop. ■

GODDARD STUDIOS: 949-499-4200;
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