

[00:00:00] <music>

Annie: Hi friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host, Annie F. Downs. I'm so happy to be here with you today.

Before we dive into today's conversation, I just want to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors. This show is sponsored by [BetterHelp](#). Do you know I used to teach elementary school?

Well, as a former teacher, I always think about my teacher friends at this time of year because I remember there are so many big feelings at the end of the school year and so many things to get done. All of my mom and dad friends feel it, too. I know. I feel it. Why is May so busy? We've got to make sure we're leaving space to process those feelings and deal with our stress. And you know therapy is one of my favorite ways to do that.

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And just a reminder, the links to all of these codes and discounts are in the show notes below, whether you're watching on YouTube or listening on the podcast.

We also will email them to you every Friday in the AFD Week in Review. You want to make sure you are getting that email. So if you haven't signed up for that yet, that's also in the show notes below.

Intro: Today on the show, I get to talk with one of my favorite friends, Kimberly Schlapman. You probably know her from the massively popular, Grammy-winning country group Little Big Town. But did you know that Kimberly also loves to cook?

She has her own cooking show, a cookbook called *Oh Gussie!*, an adorable picture book for your kids called *A Dolly for Christmas*. If you don't have that one on your shelf, you need to get it before the holiday season. And y'all, everything she does is just amazing.

Today, as we head into Mother's Day weekend, we're talking about all the things, of course, music, motherhood, food, raising girls, all of it. We actually talk a lot about what if you don't have the life that you want. It's really beautiful. She has a really important point of view of that, of what she has experienced.

So she is just a delight. If you don't know her, you're going to fall in love with her. She was with us in Christmas of 2020 in our Christmas party episodes. We'll link to that in the show notes as well if you want to get some more of her story. It is incredible. She has an incredible story.

But here's today's conversation that you... Oh, this one just feels good. Y'all are going to love this conversation. Here's my friend Kimberly Schlapman from Little Big Town.

[00:02:56] <music>

Annie: Kimberly Schlapman, glad to have you back on That Sounds Fun.

Kimberly: I'm so happy to be here in person.

Annie: In person.

Kimberly: Last time we were on Zoom or whatever, and it was COVID. It was 2020.

Annie: Sweet Lily, who works with me, when she gives me a page to take notes on, it always says when the person was on. And it says, 2020 Christmas Party. I was like, Oh boy, I remember. Do you know what happened with that episode? Have I ever told you this, that your recording didn't end up on the machine?

Kimberly: Yes.

Annie: It was the last time I've ever been in charge of hitting "record" myself. When I tell you Jesus rescued your voice and your story, because your story was so important. It is so important. But that day you said some things that have impacted people. I mean, people talk about your episode to us a lot. And I thought, Lord, the enemy's trying to steal what you would do. Don't let me be in charge of technology.

Kimberly: Wow. And y'all got it back.

Annie: When I tell you, we sent it to our editor at the time, Chad, and he was like, "Yours is the only voice on here." And I'm like, Oh my gosh. He just kept trying and he

found, somehow, I mean somehow, blessed God in the sanctuary. I mean, miraculous. But so it is.

So we had you at Christmas, now Mother's Day.

Kimberly: Yay.

Annie: Happy Mother's Day.

Kimberly: Thank you.

Annie: Okay, so because it's our 10th year of the podcast, we are starting the show with, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you right now. What are you doing for fun?

Kimberly: Okay, what sounds fun to me as spring is here, what I love more than anything is setting a table on the deck or in the backyard with string lats hanging on top. And it's a long table, but it's not too long so that everybody can hear every conversation. And maybe we're celebrating something or it's somebody's birthday or somebody gets engaged or had a baby or something. And I just so envision it.

I was thinking about this. I actually fell asleep thinking about this. About all my little details. I would have mix-match vintage plates and linens and glasses and candles down the middle of the table and we'd be laughing and nobody would want to get up and leave. And then we'd start telling stories. I mean, that is how, whether it's with family or friends-

Annie: That's like a taste of heaven, right? That's like a taste of heaven.

Kimberly: Eric Pasley wrote that song, *The Countryside of Heaven*. I feel like, yeah, to me, that's the countryside of heaven.

Annie: When you talk about that, and you can picture that, did you grow up always having, like, you can see what isn't there, you can see how to build something beautiful? Is that natural for you?

Kimberly: I don't know that that's natural to me. That may be the most vivid account I have of what sounds fun to me. As I was laying in bed last night, I was thinking, I have a lot of things that sound so fun to me. But I was thinking, if I have to pick one, this is going to be it. So let me just think that through. And it came very vividly.

Annie: It's really beautiful. I was also thinking about you yesterday, knowing you were coming in, and I thought, if ever a person that is springtime as a person, I think it is

you. I don't know that there's another person built for "take us from darkness to light, take us from cold to warm, take us from... like longer days." You feel like a gift of longer days.

Kimberly: Aw.

Annie: I mean, I feel that in your cookbook, I feel that in your kids' book and what we experience of you. Tell me what you experience in the spring. Tell me what it's like this season for you.

Kimberly: I love the spring. I really have great affinity for the fall and the winter. I love sweaters. I love hot chocolate and all that stuff and Christmas. But when spring comes, it's like we get... whether we do or not, it feels like we get a new start. And things are blooming, and that means new beginnings, not only that we can see, but that we can feel.

I feel like also people are lifted up, people who don't do well in the colder, gray months. You know, they get revived. We get to be in the yard, and we get to play in the yard, and my girls get to run and jump on the trampoline, and my husband's always pulling weeds. We just spend more time together when it's springtime.

Then I just am so in love with flowers and fresh flowers and trees, and I love to watch them bloom in our yard. We've been there like 18 years. So I know what's going to bloom first, and what's going to bloom second, what's going to make a mess on the deck, and all that stuff. 18 years-

Annie: I mean, in *Oh Gussie!*, you write about when y'all found the house the first time you drove up the driveway.

Kimberly: Oh yeah. We knew-

Annie: 18 years ago.

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: Wow.

Kimberly: And it's just become home and we've done a lot to it. We've remodeled it and we've added on to it. It's just home for us. It won't be our forever home. I think our forever home will be close to our family in Georgia, but it's home and we've raised our girls there. When we do leave, it's gonna be awful.

Annie: Remind me what part of Georgia you're from.

Kimberly: Cornelia. Lake Burton.

Annie: Lake Burton?

Kimberly: Yes. I grew up going to Lake Burton. Listen, my papa had a house on Lake Burton, like one of the first houses, and he sold that thing for \$10,000 when I was a kid.

Annie: No.

Kimberly: And now I'm like, Oh, Lord, Papa, that's the worst thing you ever did to us.

Annie: Our next-door neighbors are from Cornelia. I mean, I grew up with the Hardy, the Hardy family.

Kimberly: Was it Timmy Hardy? Because Timmy Hardy and I were prom queen and king sixth grade.

Annie: Okay. So there was Tommy, Andy, and Ginny were the three who lived next door to us. Hey to my neighbors. I don't know if they listen to the podcast, but hey Tommy and Andy and Ginny.

Kimberly: Yeah. I don't think Timmy was part of that group. Timmy Hardy-

Annie: I bet they were maybe all cousins or something. I mean, if they're all Cornelian, they're all the Hardys-

Kimberly: They have to be.

Annie: ...one of the chances, yeah.

Kimberly: Oh, yeah. And Diane Hardy and Warren Hardy.

Annie: Yes, that's exactly them.

Kimberly: She was my math teacher.

Annie: Yes, for sure she was.

Kimberly: Yes, she was my math teacher. And her husband was such a doll and so kind.

Annie: He's still our next-door neighbor. And the kids come up all the time, the kids. I mean, they don't have a gazillion kids, but yeah.

Kimberly: Give Mr. Hardy a hug for me. That is crazy.

Annie: That is so funny. Yeah, Cornelia. Listen, nothing says summer to me like that corner of Georgia.

Kimberly: Oh, yes.

Annie: I mean, just give me the bowl of peanuts, give me the, like... sitting, getting a sunburn, getting seasick from being on the floating dock.

Kimberly: Yes, homemade ice cream.

Annie: Oh, take me into Clayton.

Kimberly: Oh, Clayton. I love Clayton. I love Clayton. That whole area.

Annie: That is, like, the very... yeah, there is something about it. Maybe, I think this is true for a lot of people. I was talking to a friend of mine who feels this way about the lakes in Michigan, and he just said, This is summer for me. And I was like, Oh, I wonder if everyone has... the place you grew up having this, like, oh, yeah.

Kimberly: Oh yes, yes. We went to all the lakes up in there. I learned to ski on Lake Rayburn. Rayburn. That's how we say it. That's not how you spell it, but that's how you say it. We now have a little place on Lake Hartwell. It's on the South Carolina side, but it's barely on the South Carolina side. But we love it.

Annie: What a good corner of the world.

Kimberly: Oh, love it.

Annie: People just don't even know.

Kimberly: No. A treasure.

Annie: Okay, you and I are gonna talk today about Mother's Day. And a lot of, obviously... also the Hardys, and also Mother's Day. Will you start with... I'm not a mom, I have never birthed a child, I'm doing a lot of mothering in my life.

Kimberly: You are. And you have the MiniBFFs, and you're a mother figure to them, and it's precious. And now you have a podcast.

Annie: It's the sweetest. I know. It's the sweetest. It is so fun.

Kimberly: It's wonderful.

Annie: There are some of our friends listening who Mother's Day brings a lot of grief. Maybe they've lost their mom. Maybe they are out of relationship with their family. Maybe they thought they'd be a mom by now and they're not. How do you come up to holidays like a Mother's Day in your history or even now that might bring feelings of both/and or might bring pain as well as you're supposed to celebrate, but...?

Kimberly: I'll tell you, I spent so many years desperately wanting to be a mama and trying to be a mama and just disappointment year after year after year. I know, I know that pain. And it is deep and real and it permeates you.

When you're deep in that despair of trying everything humanly possible to have a baby and you don't have one yet or you lost one, on the way, it's hard to celebrate something that means the greatest thing in life that you want, like being a mama.

I went through so many, so many years of that. And I have beautiful women in my family, and I've been an aunt forever and ever, and so I've always had a reason to celebrate mamas. But also deep in my heart for so many years, it was the both and, because it made me sad.

So for people out there right now wanting it so desperately, I know how it feels. My life might look glamorous in some ways, but the pain is the same. I feel all the feelings that people go through when they are experiencing that.

On the other side, like of my mama, I still have her in my life, thank God, but she has Parkinson's. And it has taken such a desperate toll on her that there will be a day when we won't be able to celebrate her in person on Mother's Day. As holidays like that come up, that becomes just super, super real to me.

But on the other side of it, the fact that God has given me the gift of being a mama, which is really all I ever wanted, oh, I am overjoyed. There aren't words to describe how being a mama makes me feel. "Mama" is my favorite word. It's everything to me.

Annie: I mean, and both those girls... I watched you on Instagram baking a cake a couple of weeks ago, and they were both in there with you. I was like, "This is the most hilarious chaos in the whole world. I love it so much."

Kimberly: It's chaos.

Annie: It's amazing.

Kimberly: It's chaos.

Annie: But they're lovely.

Kimberly: They're so precious. They're wonderful. My 16-year-old was just Cinderella in a musical that she was in, and it was just so fun. And then my little one, Dolly, is so spunky and so precious and so sweet and a firecracker, all of that rolled together. I mean, they just light up our lives. They're just our greatest gift.

Annie: Will you talk a little bit about... I mean, I told you this before we started, but when we surveyed our audience a couple of months ago, we found out that 9% of our audience is stay-at-home parents.

Kimberly: Holy cow.

Annie: So that means 91% of my audience, of our friends listening, are working, and we think about half of our audience is parents. So that means half of our audience is a working mama like you.

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: How do you balance the little big town, which we'll talk about, 25 years of being in this incredibly successful and so fun to listen to group-

Kimberly: Thank you.

Annie: There's a calling there from God. There is a calling to be a wife and a mom. How do you balance all that? How do you do this career while you're raising your kids?

Kimberly: You know, it's an experiment all along the way. It always has been. I'm a working mama, just like working mamas who work at a corporation or Walmart or whatever and go home and try to fix supper and try to do some laundry and get the kids in bed and love on them as best I can.

I do have help. I have an assistant who helps me with things... Like she helps me sometimes with the kids or sometimes she just keeps my plates in the air so they don't all crash. I'm sure you can identify.

Annie: I was gonna say, yeah, me too.

Kimberly: But I think we are a very, very normal family. I mean, we try to all gather around the supper table and hear the stories from the day and say a prayer before we eat together and hold hands. And some dinners are so much fun and peaceful and some are utter chaos and, you know, somebody runs off crying or whatever. It's just real life.

How do I balance it? Well, Little Big Town does have a team around us that helps us do things. But I liked being a mama. I like to do the work of a mama, and so I want to do as much of it as I can. I take them on the road with me as much as I can.

Annie: Were you the first to have kids?

Kimberly: Yes. And remember when I walked down your hallway a while ago and I saw your noisemaker-

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kimberly: Okay, you have these adorable little noisemakers. I have so many of those in my life. When I was pregnant with Daisy, well, first of all, I thought I couldn't get pregnant, and we got pregnant on our honeymoon, which is just a miracle. I've already told you that story.

But so yeah, I was the first one to have a baby on the road. So I bought everybody pacifiers for my baby and I bought everybody noisemakers for their bunk. Because I was like, My baby is going to be waking you up in the middle of the night. I'm sorry. And the band was just amazing.

Then after that, Phillip brought his baby on the road, and then Karen and Jimmy brought their baby on the road. And it's just normal to those kids. That life is so normal to them. But yes, I was the first, and so it was experimental the whole way. It was like, how are we going to do this? Well, I don't know. We were all on a bus together.

My husband, who's an incredible woodworker, he made this insert for one of the bunks for Dolly to sleep in.

Annie: Oh, wow Like a crib.

Kimberly: Yeah, like a crib insert that had a tiny little space for her to lay, and he padded it all out.

Annie: That's so smart.

Kimberly: I know, I know.

Annie: Brilliant.

Kimberly: Yeah. So everybody just chipped in. And Jimmy and Karen and Phillip were so good to Daisy as a baby and just picking her up and holding her and carrying her and, you know, helping poke a bottle in the mouth and all the things.

Annie: I think people... Well, I'll say I didn't know until I lived here and around y'all who do this as your job, that when you are on the road, it's part of your job, but when you're home, you have job... I mean, you're here today. Like y'all work when you're home too. So it's not like you're sitting home all day.

Kimberly: No.

Annie: You're like, "I'm either on the road or I'm at my house gardening."

Kimberly: No.

Annie: It's not like that. It's not like that. Y'all are writing and recording and being in podcasts and radio and all sorts of stuff.

Kimberly: For the first few months of this year, we've been working on a new record. We haven't been on the road.

Annie: Yes. When do we get the new record?

Kimberly: Oooh-

Annie: The world will know that at some point.

Kimberly: We'll talk about that later.

Annie: Yes. At some point, yes.

Kimberly: Some time. So, yeah, we do work. It's funny. I have this sweet neighbor lady and she's like, "Y'all are off." And I'm like, "Well, there's not a date on the calendar where there's a show, but nope, we're not off." We're almost always working, just like all moms and dads do. Just because we love being parents, and I love doing podcasts, and I want to do things like this, and I want to work on a book when I can, and all that.

Annie: It's always funny to me when people are like, "Oh, you're writing another book?" And I'm like, Yeah, you go to work every day, right? I'm like, don't you expect all of us to go to work every day?

Kimberly: Yes, that's right.

Annie: Like a doctor, is it like, oh, you're doing another surgery? What? I'm like, No, that's your job. I bet you are going to continue doing surgeries. Just like y'all will continue making albums and books and I'll continue making podcasts. So I think it is one of the funnier questions because I think there is this... when you don't live... when your community doesn't look like ours does, and people are on the road all the time, you don't... I just didn't know until I lived here how wild that... And the parenting, the unique parenting situations y'all have, because... You know, if y'all are on a tour and the girls aren't out with you, you're going to miss stuff.

Kimberly: Oh, yeah. And we tried that. We tried that. When my older daughter Daisy was in kindergarten, we put her in a local school for kindergarten because my husband and I were both public school kids, my mother was a teacher. And so it was important to us to do that. But then it wasn't.

So we did it for a year of kindergarten, and all of us were miserable. I was miserable. My husband was miserable. Daisy was miserable. It just did not work. So then we decided, well, let's try homeschooling. And then we experimented around with the right homeschool, and then we got Daisy into an online homeschool, which that was the dream. So she did that for years and years. And as long as we had Wi-Fi, she could do school because she could get online and see the teacher and all that.

What was amazing about that is she made friends on that online homeschool that would then come to shows. Like they lived in Chicago and they would come to the show in Chicago, or they lived in St. Pete and they would show... It was so fun. So she's got these friends sprinkled all over the country that she made on that online school that she actually gets to see sometimes at shows.

But now both girls are in a school that allows them to travel, which is even more amazing for us. So as long as they keep up with their work, especially Daisy because she's older, it's fine, they can travel.

Annie: One of the things that you're modeling that my parents did too was like, what works for each kid is what matters. I was public school almost all the way through, and I did the last two years of private school. My middle sister was mostly private school. My youngest sister did homeschool and private school. You know, so my parents just went like, what does this kid need?

Kimberly: That's so wonderful.

Annie: I think that's so honorable that they kind of were able to say, Okay, this is what this kid needs. What do we need to do to help this kid that needs this specific thing? And y'all are doing the same when you're like, we tried this, and it didn't work, so we tried this, and here's what works for our family.

Kimberly: Yes, this is working so far. We just decided for Daisy, who was a little social butterfly, that it was time for her to have a friend group at school and best friends, school friends, and stuff like that. So that's when we found the school that works so far, really just perfect for us.

Annie: So when she's doing like Cinderella, is that through like a local acting or like a...?

Kimberly: Through the school.

Annie: Through the school.

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: Oh, that's so cool.

Kimberly: Yeah, yeah.

Annie: Wow.

Kimberly: This is really fun.

[00:21:39] <music>

Sponsor: Hey friends, just interrupting this conversation to tell you about one of our incredible sponsors, [MOSH](#). Okay, I'm over here trying to be a protein queen. You know this. So I love when I find a snack that has good protein in it and it is easy to keep with me on the go. And that is MOSH Bars. But get this, they also exist to support brain health.

MOSH is a company founded by Maria Shriver and her son Patrick Schwarzenegger with a simple mission, to create a conversation about brain health through food, education, and research.

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Sponsor: Y'all, I love when my [Thrive Market](https://thrivemarket.com) box shows up at my door because it means some of my favorite snacks and cleaning supplies have arrived. And I didn't even have to leave my house. Thrive Market has these protein shakes that I am addicted to. Plus, I'm on a bit of a gluten-free journey, as you know. They have a ton of gluten-free snacks that I love, like all the Simple Mills crackers and Siete chips.

I save money on every order. There is a deals page that I always check out, almost daily. It's embarrassing. And I typically save about 30% on every order.

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Sponsor: Shout out to [Claritin](https://claritin.com) for supporting this episode and providing us with some samples. So if you have read That Sounds Fun, you probably remember the story of me trying to get a dog and then realizing I was allergic. Sad day. This is why I'm glad I found Claritin D because an allergy attack is literally the worst. So I am thankful to have it on hand around my friends, pets, and other things.

Luckily for those of us who live with the symptoms of allergies, we can live Claritin-clear with Claritin D. It's designed for serious allergy sufferers. Claritin D has two powerful ingredients in just one pill. This double-action combination of prescription-strength allergy medicine and the best decongestant available relieves

sneezing, a runny nose, itchy and watery eyes, and itchy nose and throat, and sinus congestion and pressure with ease. Amen to that.

There are also a lot of seasonal allergy sufferers over here at AFD Inc. and at the That Sounds Fun Network. So Claritin D really works for this crew.

Ready to live life as if you don't have allergies? It is time to live Claritin-clear. Fast and powerful relief is just a quick trip away. So you can find Claritin D at your pharmacy counter. Just ask a pharmacist for Claritin D at the pharmacy counter. And you don't even need a prescription. Just go to Claritin.com right now and you can get a discount so you can live Claritin-clear. Use as directed.

Okay, now back to our conversation with Kimberly.

[00:25:30] <music>

Annie: When you cross bridges, like, we're on the Today Show and therefore I'm missing moms and muffins-

Kimberly: Yes, and it happens a lot.

Annie: I'm sure it happens. I mean, so many of my friends, when I used to teach school, my neighbor teachers would miss stuff at their kids' school. Are kids okay when that happens? What do you do? Do you have to make up for it? Do you apologize? Do you talk more about what you're called to do? Like, what's the move when something like that happens?

Kimberly: I think that there's disappointment. I think that it's just the way it is. I know that Daisy used to be disappointed when I'd have to miss something and she would say, why don't you just call Bobby and tell him you can't come to that show because I need you to come to school for my art class or whatever. Bobby was our tour manager at the time.

But then, you know, I would explain and, you know, Mommy's only going to be gone for a couple of days and I'll be back and we'll do this. As she has grown up, she totally gets it now. But not Dolly... Now I have to kind of explain to Dolly.

Eventually... well I think even when they're little, I think they get it, but there is disappointment. There's disappointment for me. I don't want to miss things like that. And when something is super important to the four of us in Little Big Town, we'll block on the calendar.

Like when it was time for Daisy's Cinderella performance, I was like, "Can't do it." If we have a family member getting married or something, Philip has a block for a family member getting married in a couple of months, we're not going to do a show because those things are very important to us, our family. We keep that in high priority.

Annie: I mean, 25 years of Little Big Town. How do y'all still get along? Have y'all just learned each other so well?

Kimberly: Oh, we know each other so well. I mean, what people don't really believe about us is that most of the time we get along. We rarely ever have discord. We don't agree on everything-

Annie: Sure.

Kimberly: But also, as we've grown and realized, we have four completely different personalities, which I think has also been a key.

Annie: It helps.

Kimberly: It helps, yeah.

Annie: Interesting.

Kimberly: I think that we've just learned our role in the band. Karen loves the business and so she loves to get in on all the business details and stuff. I don't. The boys don't. We had so rather not. So everybody's kind of got their own role. And we're so comfortable with that now.

And we do know each other like the back of our hands. Karen and I can talk through our eyes with no words at all.

Annie: Oh, I bet.

Kimberly: We can carry on a conversation. The boys are always like, what are y'all saying? I think also we were just blessed with the Lord putting the four of us together. I think there was just something special about our bond. We've been through a lot together. Also, we've been through the lowest of lows and the highest of highs. We've mostly always been together when those very lows and very highs have happened.

I think over our journey together, it just bonds us more and more and more and more and more together.

Annie: I've been doing this podcast for 10 years. This has been my full-time job for 12 years. I feel a tension between doing what I've always done and innovating and doing new things. Because part of me is a dinosaur, and I want to do what we've always done, and I just want it to keep working. The other part of me is like, what if we build a spaceship? The other part of me is totally different.

When there's four of you and a career has to journey and change, I just have to wrestle with myself when I'm trying to fall asleep. In the long run, everyone, for better or for worse, everyone else just kind of has to respond to my decisions, though I try to take in wisdom.

When there's four of you that are shaping a career, how do you deal with the dinosaurs and the astronauts? Like, how do you deal with the pull of both of those? Do you feel that or am I making that up?

Kimberly: No, no, no, no, no. That's a thing, definitely. But I think also we're all usually in one accord as we go like, Hey, let's try this. Let's try this kind of project, this new thing that we've been doing the last four months. Let's do it. For the most part, we're all like, yeah, let's do it.

Now, when it gets into the nitty gritty of that particular journey, or highway of the journey, then inside there we might go, I don't know about that, let's try this, or no, that wouldn't work at all. There's more discussion and things to work out in the middle of it, but almost always we're all like, Yeah, let's do that. How about that? Yeah, let's do that.

Annie: Wow.

Kimberly: And then when we get in it and the details, that's when we're sometimes we're like, Okay, but how's this going to work out? I'd rather do this. But one thing we decided long ago is that for the four of us, if one of us feels uncomfortable with something, we're not going forward with it.

Annie: Oh, one and done. It only takes one person. Wow.

Kimberly: If one person feels strongly about something, we hear that and we're like, well, if your gut is so strong about that, we've got to listen to that.

Annie: And has it proved right?

Kimberly: Yeah. Yeah, it has.

Annie: I think that's really interesting. There are some other groups that I know and some other friends that are in multiple people and groups in Christian music and in country music, and it gives so much power to the one and shows so much humility from the others. Because you're like, well, that means one person can go, "I don't play Boston. I do not play Boston," and y'all don't get to go to Boston. Right?

Kimberly: Well, yeah, I guess so.

Annie: It's amazing.

Kimberly: Unless we'd be like, "Okay, let's talk about, why don't you want to go to Boston?"

Annie: "What is it about Boston?"

Kimberly: "Have you heard how great this is?"

Annie: That's right.

Kimberly: Or, you know, we might try to twist an arm. But, yeah.

Annie: I think it's a really beautiful, compromise-y thing. In my job as the only Little Big Town person, I'm the only Little Big Town, I have to chase humility a little differently, or I end up just being Devil Wears Prada and like, bring me this and bring me that and this is what we're doing. I miss the rub of other humans having the same call. and us running after the same thing.

Kimberly: That's true. But yeah, what you do is brilliant. And you've surrounded yourself with people who do sharpen you. They're smart and brilliant and they know you so well. I think you've surrounded yourself, obviously. I mean, you're hugely successful, and it's because of the people that are around. Same with us.

Yeah, there's us four, but we make sure that the people around us have our best interest at heart and give us good advice, and don't just say yes when we throw out a stupid idea.

Annie: Man, don't you hate when people just say yes?

Kimberly: I can't stand it.

Annie: I can't stand it.

Kimberly: I can't stand it.

Annie: Now, if I say, can we try something, and people go, No, we can't try, I'm pretty much going to throw you out the window. But I don't want people just to go, Okay, well Annie said we're going to paint everything purple, so it's purple. I'm like, no, do y'all like purple? Do you think purple's right?

Kimberly: Totally.

Annie: I'm the same way.

Kimberly: Another thing I thought about a minute ago is that in the beginning, well, we were driving ourselves around in a van, a minivan, the four of us.

Annie: Did you have a tour manager at that time?

Kimberly: No.

Annie: No.

Kimberly: No one. We started with just the four of us. We had an agent and a manager. They would get us gigs and we would rent a minivan and we would drive ourselves to Kingdom Come. And then we moved up some shows we did in a 15-passenger van and we'd have someone come along with us to help drive.

But one time we were on one of those longer drives in the 15-passenger where it's a very beginning where I think we were going to open up for Dwight Yoakam in Michigan. And we were in this van together and Karen had a yellow legal pad or somebody did and she's the best-

Annie: It feels like Karen.

Kimberly: It feels like Karen. And so we were like, Okay, let's make some ground rules. This was literally in 1999.

Annie: Wow.

Kimberly: And we were like, Okay, let's make some ground rules. So we started writing things out. Like you said, like, what if one person has a huge gut check? Okay, then we won't go forward with it. Those things we have kept. They're still there. They're still true. And that's another secret.

If there's a band that's about to start out right now, I can't more highly recommend that. That you sit down and think really carefully through, how could this go? How will this go if we are successful? And then don't sway from it.

Annie: Shelley Giglio, Louie's wife, they run so much ministry stuff, she says, we often plan for failure, we don't plan for success. And so she's like, you need to ask, If this goes well, then what?

Kimberly: Oh, yes.

Annie: She said, that's where people really get in trouble is they've planned for "if this doesn't go well, I'll call my dad and he'll help me pay back everything I hired. If this doesn't go well, I'll find another job." And they're like, oh, if this does go well and people recognize me at a restaurant, then what? If this does go well and I start getting offers to do something outside of the group I'm in, then what? I mean, that has saved me to picture both sides of that question.

Kimberly: Both sides, yeah. Because you never know. I mean, we all have huge dreams, but you never know which dream's going to happen.

Annie: 25 years in, do y'all have dreams that haven't happened yet?

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: Really?

Kimberly: Yeah. We want to be on Saturday Night Live so bad.

Annie: Oh, I want you to be on Saturday Night Live so bad.

Kimberly: So bad. That's one. We used to have Sesame Street as a dream, but we did that. We did it. So Saturday Night Live. The other thing we're working on this year is a big dream, and it's good Lord willing going to come to fruition. I mean, just making it 25 years.

When we wrote those rules down on that legal pad, we didn't think about 25 years. I mean, we thought, Oh, hopefully we're going to make it and we're going to... you know, we're going to make it. We didn't know what making it really meant back then. If someone had said, do you think we'll be together in 25 years? We would have burst out laughing. I mean, we couldn't even think that far ahead.

Annie: Do you get tired of singing like *Boondocks*? Are you tired of singing those songs?

Kimberly: No.

Annie: I'm not either. When I'm in your audience and I'm singing, I'm like, I'm not tired of singing *Boondocks*, but I'm not singing it every night and you're singing it every night.

Kimberly: That's so sweet. That's why we're not tired of it. Because it becomes an anthem, especially that song, it becomes an anthem for the fans. And we love doing that together. We feed so much off of people who are in the audience like on songs like *Boondocks* or *Better Man* or *Girl Crush* and-

Annie: Oh, *Better Man*.

Kimberly: *Better Man*. You see people like, Ooh. They're so mad. Or you see people weeping and sometimes you see men raising their fists which works for men too. I mean-

Annie: Why not!

Kimberly: And daddies, people's daddies you know they wish were better men and all this. So we thrive off of the interaction. And we really read our crowds. Like if we have a song that we're crazy about that we just think, "This is the cat's meow, this is gonna be amazing," and we get like the golf clap, we're like, eh. We're not gonna do that tomorrow night. Yeah, we have to listen. But I think, no, we're not tired of them.

And *Boondocks*, we have such an affinity for that song. It's like a firstborn.

Annie: Was that y'all's first big hit?

Kimberly: Yes.

Annie: Okay.

Kimberly: And you know, it was only a No. 9 on the charts.

Annie: What?

Kimberly: Yes. It was only a No. 9. But it's our biggest hit. And it's one of the top recurrents.

Annie: Number nine. Not in my heart. It went way higher in my heart.

Kimberly: Me too.

Annie: It went way higher in the songs I know every word of. So don't worry. It's really funny.

Kimberly: We don't get tired of singing those because of who we see when we're out there and what it means to those people.

Annie: So this summer people can see y'all out with George Strait and Chris Stapleton. And then will y'all have some of your own shows that aren't... or is that your whole summer?

Kimberly: That's our whole summer. But then in the fall, we're going out with Sugar Land.

Annie: I saw that!

Kimberly: Yes!

Annie: I could not believe it! How did you talk Sugar Land into getting back together? Only the power of Little Big Town could get Sugar Land back together.

Kimberly: Well, and our manager is very persuasive. He talked him into... I mean, he threw the idea out "Do y'all feel like getting back together for a tour with Little League Town?" And they said yes.

Annie: I cannot wait to see that show.

Kimberly: You have to come.

Annie: I mean, I am-

Kimberly: Whenever you want to come, just tell me.

Annie: Well, you're very kind. I will buy a ticket and just be there. I mean, what an absolute treat to get to see all of y'all together.

Kimberly: It's going to be so much fun. And we recorded a song together just like a month ago and did it on the CMT Awards. And it was so much fun to just be back together because we have toured with them at least twice in the past, and we always made music together. Like, they would say, hey, you want to do a song tonight together? And we were like, Okay. And we would get in the dressing room and work it up and sing it that night.

Annie: Gosh.

Kimberly: So we've made music together for a long time.

Annie: That is incredible.

Kimberly: We have to work hard.

Annie: Yeah, me too, I know.

[00:39:09] <music>

Sponsor: Y'all, we all love something that is customized to us, getting our favorite outfit tailored to fit just right, getting a custom piece of art for your house, listening to a playlist that's customized for us based on what we like to listen to. So why not use custom hair care?

We all have different hair textures and types and switching to a custom hair care routine has been so helpful for me. My hair looks healthier and shinier. Plus, [Prose](#) also has custom skincare, which is so great because we definitely all have different needs for our skin, too.

With Prose, it is all about personalization. You do their in-depth consultation, and they come up with your made-to-order products. There are millions of possible formulas, but only one is uniquely yours or mine. Prose isn't just better for you, it's better for the planet. They're a certified B Corp, they're cruelty-free, and they're the first and only carbon-neutral custom beauty brand.

Prose is so confident that they will bring out your best hair and skin that they're offering an exclusive trial of 50% off your first subscription order, you guys. Just go to prose.com/thatsoundsfun so you get your free consultation, then 50% off at prose.com/thatsoundsfun. That's prose.com/thatsoundsfun.

And now let's finish up our conversation with Kimberly.

[00:40:26] <music>

Annie: I was talking with a Christian group a couple of months ago, and they were kind of going out as headliners for the first time. So we were talking through, here's who you've opened for, here's who you've traveled with, what have you learned? I would love to know, when y'all are headlining, what's one of the big things you've learned from when you're an opener that you take into headlining that you wanna make sure, I wanna make sure our camp experiences this because we experienced that.

Kimberly: Okay, good dressing rooms.

Annie: Oh yeah, that's it.

Kimberly: Good dressing rooms. That's so important because we have spent so many... not that it was anyone's fault, but we've spent so many times crammed in a tiny little space, the four of us are in there, there's no bathroom, You can hardly even... you have to go somewhere else to change. So stuff like that's really important to us.

What you want in your dressing room is really important to us. What you get paid is important to us because, you know, it's only right to pay you what you're worth and not try to nickel and dime you. I do have to admit that we've had some really great openers. Did you know Chris Stapleton opened for us?

Annie: No. Really?

Kimberly: Yes. Zac Brown Band opened for us.

Annie: Oh wow.

Kimberly: Kelsea Ballerini. I mean, we've had really fun openers-

Annie: That's amazing.

Kimberly: ...who have then just gone on to explode. But it is very important that also our crew... our crew is phenomenal. They're so kind. They take care of people.

Annie: How many do y'all take out?

Kimberly: Around 30. I don't know the exact number, but like around 30.

Annie: That is unbelievable. Dear everyone listening, that means they provide for 30 families. That is 30 families y'all are helping meet all their needs. That is incredible.

Kimberly: Yeah, it's a lot. It comes with pressure.

Annie: I was about to say that's a lot of pressure.

Kimberly: Yeah. We respect their families also. We have our families, but we're not the only families. We have band guys who have babies at home and crew guys who have babies at home. So it's important that we take care of them.

Annie: One of my longest-term pals in Nashville, Evan, plays for you.

Kimberly: Evan! Yes, we love Evan!

Annie: And y'all take care of your band and crew so beautifully, financially and also experientially.

Kimberly: Yeah, we want to. We make an effort because we want them to feel loved and feel how valued they are to us, how valuable they are to us.

Annie: It's so important to me that environment where people work is something the boss thinks about. Because I'm like, If my people don't... we had a lunch yesterday and three of our women on staff are pregnant. And I said to everyone, I was like, Listen, if your private life is not flourishing, then something is wrong here too. Like, if we haven't made a place where your private life, where you're like outside of work life is healthy, then we're not doing a good job here at the office.

So when I see people getting pregnant and dating people, I'm like, "That means the environment is right for growth. That's what we want. We want growth. So I feel like y'all on the road... I mean, I have friends that are out with you. You do the same. You offer people... This was true when I had a classroom. This is true in your home. Of like, how do we build an environment where people can flourish? We can't control everything. I'm not a perfect boss, friend, employer, anything. But if we can build a place where people flourish.

Kimberly: That's so true.

Annie: It matters.

Kimberly: And that reminds me-

Annie: That's what mamas do.

Kimberly: Yeah. And that reminds me, another very important thing to us is what people eat on our tour. Not what they eat, what's provided for them to eat. Because when you have to spend weeks on end eating deli sandwiches, not that there's anything wrong with a deli sandwich, but when you have it every single day or in every meal and all that, it wears on you.

So we have found that for morale, it's better if we bring out catering with us and we provide really good meals for everybody and healthy meals and good choices. I mean, not that we don't have fried chicken, but good choices for whether you're a vegetarian or just a good southern eater. And you know that also comes into account on budget.

So we have to make these decisions. And of course we can make a lot more money if we just had ham sandwiches. But that's not okay.

Annie: And you won't last 25 years.

Kimberly: No, no. And you won't have a group of people working around you that you trust to speak for you. They are our first line of I don't want to say defense, but... our crew are the people that people first see, like at a venue.

Annie: That's right. They're your first line of reputation.

Kimberly: Yes, that's much better, yes. And they represent us so well, and that means so much to us.

Annie: It's because they feel loved, seen, cared for. When we go out on the road, you know, I only do three weeks at a time. It's not as intense a tour as what y'all are doing. But our rule is Sunday nights on the bus, we can have bad after-show food. We can eat gross on Sunday nights, but every other night... Because I want everyone to get up the next morning and feel okay. I want people getting home healthier than when they left.

Kimberly: Oh, that's so good.

Annie: At Christmas time, everybody's home, right? Unless they're doing a Christmas tour, everybody's home. So all these, particularly guys, would come off the road and I'd be like, were you in a fight for four months? What have you been doing? Like, you look like road hard and put up wet, as they say. And so much of it is that they're on tour not taking care of themselves emotionally, spiritually, or physically. So I was like, well, this is what I'll learn from watching these men come home. Like they've come home for more and they have not. They've only come home from tour. But they go like, When people go out with me, I want them to feel healthy.

Kimberly: That's so good, Annie.

Annie: But it's because y'all model stuff. I watch Lady A do that. I watch y'all do that. I watch a lot of the Christian artists do that. It matters to me that they're also your first line of reputation when you're home.

Kimberly: That's right.

Annie: Hey, you're not going to want to go out with Annie Downs. If you go on the road with Annie Downs, you're going to be exhausted. And she's kind of a tyrant. If we weren't on mics, we could talk about artists that people say that about. They pay okay, but they're not fun to be with and you work 24-7. I don't want to be like that.

Kimberly: You are speaking our language. It's exactly how we feel. We have to take care of our people. I grew up with a chip on my shoulder because my daddy worked himself half to death. And he was not appreciated. That's been so important to me always. He wasn't treated well. I just kind of have a chip on my shoulder about that, which I think that chip's okay.

Annie: Yeah, that's right.

Kimberly: That's my reason for why.

Annie: It shaped you into the boss you are. I think that helps. Does everyone in Little Big Town, do all four of you have, I don't want to say a side project because your books and your Instagram, you're cooking a strawberry cake. None of that's a side... I mean, it's like just another expression of your calling.

Kimberly: I brought you goodies. They're in my car!

Annie: Okay, great!

Kimberly: Oh no, they're in my car!

Annie: Oh, we can't wait! Well, that's fun! Your car's still here, I think, right?

Kimberly: Hopefully. But I hope they're not melty and stuff. Oh my goodness, I totally forgot!

Annie: That's so sweet, though. Thank you.

Kimberly: I'm so glad you said that. It's not strawberry cake, though.

Annie: That's okay.

Kimberly: I'm so glad.

Annie: Do all four of y'all have other expressions of what you're called to do? Like, you have your cookbooks and you have your kids' books. Is everybody working on other stuff?

Kimberly: Everybody has interests, you know, whether the public will ever see those or not is one thing. I mean Karen's passion for fashion—oh that's good—is amazing.

Annie: I love it.

Kimberly: And also now she's producing some people and she writes songs. They all write songs more than me. I enjoy it, but it's not as much of a passion for me. But she even has a small publishing company, and she's really helping people along to get started in that kind of thing, or helping people re-cultivate themselves and, you know, come back out again.

Jimmy and Phillip, both... Jimmy is always making music and Phillip too, behind the scenes at their homes. Jimmy made, I guess he won't mind if I say, he even made a whole record just because he wanted to. And Phillip's always writing songs and always doing things.

And Phillip has a great affinity for farming. He was telling us a couple of days ago, he was about to plant his beans, his flat runner beans. And Jimmy also does... he's been planting fruit trees. So everybody has hobbies. You know, we all dabble and support that. Yeah, that's a good thing.

Annie: That's beautiful. Yeah, because it just feels like when you have your hand... I mean, if people don't have *Oh Gussie!*, the cookbook, it is such a beautiful... I mean, this is like the Mother's Day gift.

Kimberly: Awe.

Annie: It is such a beautiful... I mean, the writing is beautiful. The recipes are awesome. Also tomato and apple soup?

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: I had never even heard about it until I saw it in here.

Kimberly: It's really tasty. It's really good.

Annie: We get adorable-

Kimberly: That's Daisy. I know.

Annie: I mean, look at her.

Kimberly: She's so little.

Annie: She is so little.

Kimberly: She is so little.

Annie: One of our friends sent in a question asking... Gussie is what her grandmother was called as well. Explain to us how you came up with this title.

Kimberly: Did you grow up hearing people go, Oh, Gussie? Did you hear that?

Annie: No. Uh-uh.

Kimberly: Okay. Well, in my family, like all the women said, Oh, Gussie or Gussie all the time. It was like either a celebratory word or even a hidden cuss word.

Annie: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

Kimberly: So it's like, Oh, Gussie, that's amazing.

Annie: Got it.

Kimberly: Or if you, you know, ruin something, you go, Oh Gussie. You know, it's both.

Annie: Yeah, that's right. So I never thought much of it. I just have always said it my whole life. And when we were finding a title for the cookbook, my manager and some other people were like, you have to call it *Oh Gussie!*. And I was like, why? They said, "Because you say it all the time." So I was like, "Well, okay."

Annie: Do people think your name is Gussie sometimes? Or do they know?

Kimberly: I haven't come across that. Well, people do call me that, like, just because that's also my Instagram. So maybe they do. I love it.

Annie: Well, dear everyone, it's Kimberly. Okay, what did we not talk about you want to make sure we talk about? Anything missing?

Kimberly: I had some notes.

Annie: Okay. Pull out your notes.

Kimberly: Let me see if there is anything else I wanna-

Annie: Why are you so kind to take notes? That is so sweet.

Kimberly: Well, I just wanted to make sure that I came prepared and all that.

Annie: That's so kind.

Kimberly: First of all, this is not in my notes, but I have so loved your reading the Gospels.

Annie: Oh, thanks.

Kimberly: Oh, man. It's so good.

Annie: It's been a joy to get to do. Yeah, it has been a joy.

Kimberly: It's so good.

Annie: So kind of God that we... I mean, how lucky are we in the English language that we have so many Bibles we can choose from. There are still so many people on earth who don't even have a Bible in their language and we just get to read it out loud.

Kimberly: Yes, we get to read it out loud.

Annie: We have five on my shelf.

Kimberly: Oh, I know. You know, that reminds me... this is also not on my list. But that reminds me we went to play for the troops Thanksgiving of 2004, and we landed in, I believe it was Kyrgyzstan. And I just happened to... we had been on a plane for 30 hours. So I happened to have my Bible out and reading it, and we landed at this, I think it was Kyrgyzstan airport. And the flight attendant came by and she said, "You're gonna need to put that away." Because for some reason there were people coming on the plane and I had my Bible there. So for the first time in my life I was like, Oh my word. Yeah, some people can't just pull out their Bible and read it anytime and wherever they want. That struck me so hard.

Annie: I've had the hardest time being in the Bible myself this last... for like about two weeks. My brain's making a lot of decisions. So when I sit, I just am not doing good reading. So today I was like, "Downs, we are getting this together." And I like put on the audio Bible. I like hit the Holy Bible app, the YouVersion. I started playing it out loud. And I was like, "If you're not going to read it, I'm going to make you listen."

Kimberly: "I'm going to make you listen." It's awesome. But I love the gospels. Like I was just listening to the Matthew one this morning. And then I love the one... Luke, with the female perspective. How cool? I never thought about any of that.

Annie: I know. Bethany was so... yeah, I loved it. Thank you. It's kind of beautiful.

Kimberly: I love it.

Annie: I'm grateful to get to do it.

Kimberly: I love it.

Annie: Okay, so will you come back anytime you want to?

Kimberly: Yeah.

Annie: If the next project allows for a conversation, we'd love to have you back.

Kimberly: Yes. I've got my fingers in some stuff.

Annie: Okay, good. Okay, good. Thank you. Happy Mother's Day to you. You're such a good mother.

Kimberly: Oh, thank you.

Annie: It is beautiful to watch. I love being your friend. I'm so grateful.

Kimberly: Thank you. My mother was everything. She was a school teacher, and she spent every extra hour, minute of every day loving on us and doing things for us that made us feel loved. She's just been incredible. And my daddy, too. It's not Father's Day yet. They are in the same category, you know?

Annie: Amazing. I feel very lucky too. We are lucky for the mamas and to get to mother the way we do.

Kimberly: Yes.

Annie: So lucky.

Kimberly: That's right. And my hubby allows me to mother the way I feel called to mother. I'm also just so blessed there too.

Annie: All right. Love you, friend. Thanks for doing this.

Kimberly: Love you, Annie.

[00:54:11] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't she the best? Oh my gosh. Listen, if you get a chance to see them live, if you have never seen Little Big Town live, please, just absolutely please, just please. They are so good.

So make sure you are following Kimberly on social media, tell her thank you so much for being on the show. And you've got to go back and watch some of her cooking episodes or shows or reels on her socials. They are so fun.

And get your copy of her cookbook, *Oh Gussie!*, what a great Mother's Day gift. It is not too late. Gents, if you order today, it will come in time to BTU by Mother's Day. But grab her cookbook, *Oh Gussie!* and her kid's book, *A Dolly for Christmas*. It is so sweet. Y'all will absolutely love it.

If you have any questions from this episode, just drop them in the Q&A box on your Spotify app, if you're a Spotify listener. And you can send them to us on Instagram @thatsoundsfunpodcast, we'll try to answer them there as well.

If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook. All the places you may need me, that is how you can find me.

And I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home, do something that sounds fun to you, and I will do the same. Today what sounds fun to me is seeing my mom on Mother's Day. So I cannot wait. Happy Mother's Day to Mrs. F. Downs.

Y'all have a great weekend. Take care of yourself this Mother's Day weekend. Whatever you need, take care of yourself. And we'll see you back here on Monday with our friend, Michael N. Smith, the Nester. Y'all are gonna love it. We'll see y'all Monday.