

# BUSINESS

## Taking your business on the road

### *Airstream Life* publisher visits Ruston

By Mary Margaret van Diest  
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Rich Luhr had been a consultant in the cell phone industry. His wife Eleanor O'Dea had been a research and development chef. In the fall of 2005 the two decided that they wanted different lives for themselves and their now six-year-old daughter Emma Luhr.

"We decided that we wanted a lifestyle which had more fun in it," Rich Luhr began. "I loved writing and editing and traveling. We discussed all the possibilities and decided to sell our home in Vermont and travel the United States full time in an Airstream trailer recording our experiences."

The magazine *Airstream Life* began in 2004. It now has 6,000 subscribers but with a price cut from \$32 per year to \$16 per year the magazine is expected to reach 10,000 subscribers in 2007. Luhr also hopes to branch out from subscription only to being carried in bookstores this year. He writes about 40 to 50 percent of the magazine himself and gets the rest from freelancers. He said he views the magazine as a Smithsonian magazine for travelers — not just one for Airstream owners.

Since October of 2005 the family has crossed the United States five times. Their visit to Ruston fit conveniently in their travel

route through the South but they also had an enthusiastic invitation from Joe and Jody Brotherston of Ruston.

"Jody Brotherston writes a very well received column about interior design for Airstreams for the magazine," Luhr said. "She had told us a lot about Ruston and she arranged a delightful four day stay for us. We now have a weblog at [tour.airstreamlife.com/weblog](http://tour.airstreamlife.com/weblog) and we write about our experiences in a personal way every day. So we had four entries from our stay in Ruston."

The weblog actually has more readers than the magazine and it is strictly personal accounts instead of the format of the magazine which has regular articles on various topics. Approximately 12,000 people visit the site per month with a total of 30,000 visits total from them.

"We have had a wonderful time here with a lot of visits about which to write," Luhr said.

"We made a presentation at Squire Creek Country Club and we were very impressed to find such a beautiful development in the area. We were so graciously received and even got an invitation to come back and park there on our next visit."

Other local sites on the agenda included Lincoln Parish Park, Follette Pottery, Mitcham Or-

chards, Hart Associates, The Idea Place, Ruston Mayor's Office and a side trip to Gibsland for the Bonnie and Clyde Museum.

While the magazine does carry advertising, the weblog is not at all commercial. It is hoped that the reduction in the subscription price will increase the circulation which will in turn increase the value of the advertising.

"We do our best to turn out a really attractive and interesting publication and we find that people just don't throw them away," Luhr said. "They save the back issues and we even sell back issues for people who discover what we are all about and want to have those older copies."

In addition to the business aspects of their lifestyle, the family has adopted a nontraditional form of education for daughter Emma.

"We do have a regular first grade curriculum," O'Dea explained. "However, we do not have school as such for five hours five days a week. Probably 80 percent of Emma's education relates directly to the visits we make to parks and museums and historic sites. She already has 16 National Park Junior Ranger badges. She is very interested in art and currently wants to be a painter when she grows up."

Further information is available at [rich@airstreamlife.com](mailto:rich@airstreamlife.com).



Leader photo by MARY MARGARET van DIEST

**(From left) *Airstream Life* publisher Rich Luhr, his wife Eleanor O'Dea and their daughter Emma Luhr tour the press room at *The Ruston Daily Leader* as part of their tour of Ruston.**