

BEA+



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*Through leadership, creativity, and collaboration,
the Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce will build
a fertile entrepreneurial ecosystem.*

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BEA+ is proudly produced by

The Cornwall and Area
Chamber of Commerce

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From the Board of Directors

One of the many rewarding and exciting responsibilities we have, as Directors of the Cornwall and Area Chamber of Commerce, is selecting the annual winners of the Business Excellence Awards.

It is our chance to formally recognize the exceptional organizations that shape the business community of Cornwall, Akwesasne, and the United Counties of SD&G. Each year, we have the privilege of reflecting on (and being inspired by) the multitude of great businesses that exist in our region.

Over the past year, we've seen so many new businesses establish themselves. It is truly inspiring to watch them start from an idea and flourish into a well-established company, many even reaching beyond our boundaries! This year, businesses receiving an award range from manufacturing to nonprofit, from recreation to hospitality, and more. This shows how well represented we are in each industry. What has been most rewarding is watching each of these businesses continue to develop and teach others that they, too, can be resilient and thrive.

The Cornwall Chamber's Board of Directors is made up of local business owners, operators, leaders, and entrepreneurs who understand what it takes for an enterprise to overcome obstacles and survive unexpected events. All the businesses in this magazine have their own unique story, and, in their unfolding, the Chamber was there to lead, support, advise, and advocate in whatever way possible. It must be working! Each year our membership grows, allowing us an even greater representation of the many businesses that make up the region's diverse commercial landscape.

We are very proud of every business that calls Cornwall, Akwesasne, and the United Counties of SD&G "home" and chooses to be a part of the Chamber's mission to build a fertile entrepreneurial ecosystem. This year—and every year—we get excited to look through last year's successes and highlight those who have really stood out. Each business depicted in this magazine has a uniqueness that we want to brag about! Please enjoy the second edition of the BEA+ magazine, and congratulations to all the winners!

Cornwall & Area Chamber of Commerce

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BEA Awards Night

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economical

OPENING DOORS

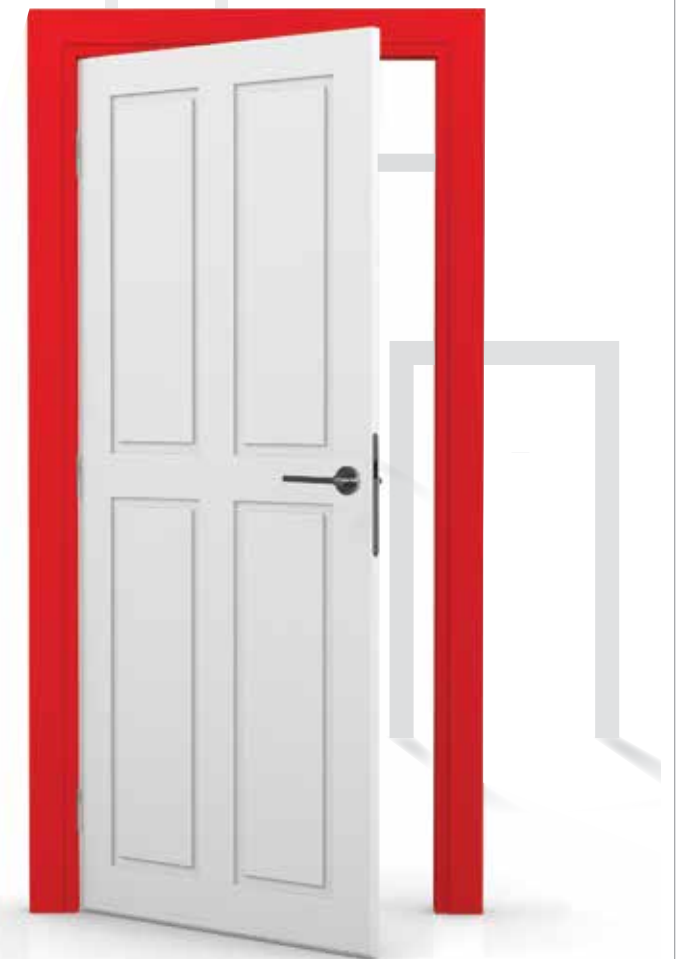
Community Connections and Growth

St. Lawrence College gratefully recognizes businesses and organizations in the Cornwall area who have played a role in helping our students become career ready by being a placement partner. During the 2021/2022 academic year, Cornwall organizations and businesses welcomed 570 SLC students from a multitude of programs and worked with the College to create 970 placement opportunities to date.

Placements are an integral part of students' experiential learning and the value SLC students bring to a placement includes energy, expertise, and enthusiasm. Student placements are part of programs in several fields:

- Supply Chain and Logistics
- Front-line workers in Health Care: Nursing, Paramedic, Personal Support Worker
- Business
- Environmental Science
- Community Services: Early Childhood Education, Social Work
- Computer Systems Technician

Learn more about hosting an SLC student on placement and connecting with your community college at placementatslc.ca




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Honourable Mentions

Saluting those who made their mark in 2021.



Marigold Market

Mother-and-daughter team Christine McCool and Mallory MacDonald opened Marigold Market with the vision to support local and regional vendors. Items from more than 50 artists and artisans are featured in their beautifully appointed space in Lancaster. Find everything from candles to clothing, baked goods to beautiful aprons, and pet accessories to products to pamper yourself.

shopmarigoldmarket.com



Fields of Gold

With an infectious passion for their community, husband-and-wife team Stephanie and Jakob Vogel took a huge risk in 2021 and opened a sunflower experience in North Stormont. Visitors in 2022 can enjoy the expanded 40 acres of sunflowers, a pick-your-own flower field, and a pumpkin patch.

fieldsofgold.ca



Sip & Scoop

This Cornwall company has remained successful by expanding throughout the year. They launched Snack District, a one-stop shop for specialty confectionery and exclusive drinks, and even started stocking The Cheesecake Factory products. Sip & Scoop is also highlighted for providing free drinks and meals to local frontline workers during the pandemic.

sipandscoop.com



Onkwehon:we Midwives

Lead Midwife and Clinical Director Jasmine Benedict and her team have serviced Akwesasne First Nation and other First Nation communities. By offering homebirths that embrace Haudenosaunee traditional knowledge and modern midwifery care, they provide safe, compassionate, and culturally appropriate prenatal, labour, birth, and postpartum care.

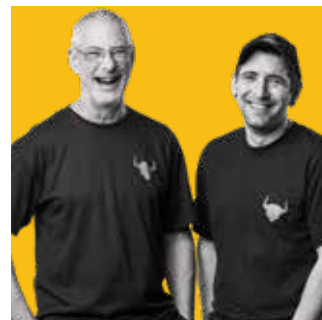
onkwehonwemidwives.com



QuestPTS Strength Training Gym and Massage Therapy

Owner and head coach Tom Irvine continually rolled with the pandemic punches and restrictions. When forced to close the doors to his Cornwall gym, he continued to support and work with clients through online training. When restrictions were lifted, he implemented all safety measures. No matter what he faced, he always had a positive attitude—and provided service with a smile.

questpts.com



Joe's Quality Meats

A welcome addition to downtown Cornwall, father and son Joey and André Jodoin made their dreams a reality when they opened Joe's Quality Meats, a full-service butcher shop. They offer choice cuts of meats, prepared meals, and desserts all while maintaining excellent customer service.

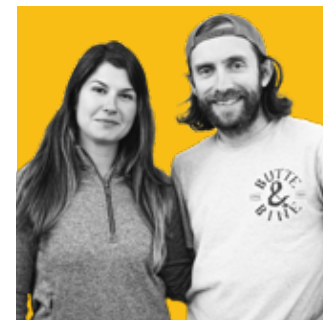
📍 [joesqualitymeatshop](https://www.joesqualitymeatshop.com)



W3G & Co.

In 2021, this nonprofit organization organized several seasonal markets including the Fall Harvest Market, Easter Market, Merry & Bright Christmas Market, and two rounds of Artisans at the Park at the Lost Villages. These events not only elevate the profile of local makers and artists, but they also raise funds that support local charities.

📍 [we3girlsandco](https://www.we3girlsandco.com)



Ferme Butte & Bine

Bravo to this French Canadian family farm located in Williamstown. Owners Emeric Deslège and Sylviane Dutrisac strive to foster discovery and community through their sustainably grown produce, homemade baked goods, and also their delightful historic farmhouse B&B.

fermebuttebinefarm.square.site



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CONGRATULATIONS

to the winners and nominees for this year's
Business Excellence Awards. Thank you for
making our community a richer place to live!



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You have all played a pivotal role in shaping Farm Boy into the fresh-market store we have become and we cannot thank you enough. Your loyalty and creativity have helped us to develop many beloved Farm Boy products which have become fan favourites and part of what makes our stores shopping destinations." ~ Jean-Louis Bellemare



farmboy.ca

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INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

Fieldless Farms

Award Sponsor



All Together Now

Planting the seeds and reaping the benefits of inclusivity.

It's a fact: Canada has the largest lettuce trade deficit in the world and imports more than 90% of its leafy greens from its southern neighbours. Cornwall-based Fieldless Farms is working to flip that script.

"We strive to produce Canadian-grown food for Canadians and to displace some of the imported product that comes into the country from the US," says Patrick Knowles, Director of Operations.

The company's first "farm" on Boundary Road isn't what you'd expect. There are no large countryside fields, no endless rows of greens, no big irrigation systems. Instead, their 20,000-square-foot space features shipping containers filled with towers that grow four types of lettuce. This is called controlled environment agriculture; this is the future of food.

This relatively new, cost-competitive approach allows the company to grow its ready-to-eat greens year-round without the use of herbicides or pesticides.

Founded in 2017, the company launched retail sales in July 2020 and has already secured space on the shelves of all Farm Boy locations across the province. Their line of four cut-lettuce mixes can also be found at select Metro and Your Independent Grocers locations as well as in the online grocery market, Burrow Shop.

No doubt this rapid growth is impressive. But there's something else that stands out about Fieldless Farms: A quarter of their 20-person workforce is made up of people living with disabilities.

Early on in their business journey, when they had many openings to fill, Patrick turned to Inclusion Alliance (IA), a consortium between Job Zone d'emploi and Performance Plus Rehabilitative Care Inc., a private company that pairs job seekers with disabilities and employers.

“

We have a chance to help people in the community who otherwise may not get the opportunity to work.”

By offering a gradual onboarding process, flexible work hours, and training tailored to a person's abilities, Fieldless Farms was able to start hiring people from the IA program. Unsurprisingly, it was a win-win situation for everyone.

"We have a chance to help people in the community who otherwise may not get the opportunity to work," says Patrick. "At the same time, it's helping us grow the company."

To prove his point, he tells the story of a particular employee who has been with the company for more than two years. This young man was

hired to fulfill cleaning duties for two shifts a week.

"He was faster than most, which was great. And he proved himself to be super reliable too," says Patrick. "So he's gone from two to three to four shifts in a short amount of time, and you know what? This has allowed him to now live alone because he has the income to support himself. I think that's a pretty good success story."

Fieldless Farms already plans to expand rapidly by rolling out new growing facilities in Toronto, Montreal, and perhaps even the West Coast by 2025. Patrick intends to prioritize their inclusive hiring practices.

"Finding similar programs to Inclusion Alliance in different cities will be near the top of our to-do list," he explains. "We've seen it work here and we like the result. I'm super confident we can replicate these positive outcomes."

That's economic growth that works for all.

fieldless.ca



ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT
DG Vintage

Award Sponsor



Vintage Vibe

Giving new meaning to the term
"fashion influencer."

While textile waste is one of the fastest-growing waste streams in the world, one local business is working to stem the flow. Dayna Gunn, the owner of dg vintage, is using her platforms—online and in-person—to share the importance of shopping secondhand.

The average Canadian throws away 37 kilograms of textile waste annually. That's a lot of t-shirts, jeans, and bedsheets going into the landfill or shipped overseas. "It's just mountains and mountains of clothes and textiles," explains Dayna.

Choosing vintage clothing over fast fashion offers an alternative to contributing to this waste. And it fosters creativity. "I just love that everything is one of a kind. You get to express yourself through fashion."

While vintage clothing is anything at least 20 years old, according to Dayna, true vintage is "anywhere from 1900 to 1970," and her favourite era is the '90s. "My customers go wild when I post the crazy pieces from the '60s and the '70s," but those types of clothes don't sell as quickly as her '90s and '00s band shirts and denim.

Vintage clothing is in Dayna's blood. "I grew up thrifting with my grandma," she says. But she took selling more seriously in the past two years, first launching sales through her social media presence on Instagram, Facebook, Etsy, and Depop.

In August 2020, she had her first retail experience when she rented one of the sea-can pop-up shops downtown. It was a revelation. "When I saw the turnout, it blew me away." Shortly after, she signed a one-year lease at 5 First Street East and turned the retail space into her own.

A huge part of Dayna's day-to-day activities revolves around sourcing her items. She handpicks every piece she sells, which means hours each week are spent visiting thrift stores, estate sales, and yard sales, mostly in SD&G, but sometimes as far afield as Ottawa or Montreal. Visitors to her shop—and to the e-commerce site she launched in March 2021—are met with carefully curated pieces. There's a wide selection from band tees to classic denim to funky dresses to distinctive accessories and all are high-quality, unique, and often made in North America.

Though she works hard for her business to succeed, she is ultimately interested in combatting fast fashion. "The most sustainable wardrobe is the

wardrobe that you already have," she says. But for those who are looking to add to their closet, she recommends people "invest in those minimal timeless pieces that you'll have forever."

Last fall, emboldened by her success and the appetite for vintage finds, Dayna signed a three-year lease and is hoping to work on an upcycled one-of-a-kind clothing line that she would produce entirely from vintage fabrics.

This kind of bold thinking is a far cry from the child she once was. "I was super shy growing up," she admits. "I honestly wouldn't talk to anyone."

Thanks to her passion for sustainable fashion and her ability to translate it into business, Dayna has clearly found her voice. Without a doubt, her customers and followers are hearing it.

"It's wild that people have learned something from me," she says. "The messages I get reassure me that I'm making a difference."

dgvintage.co

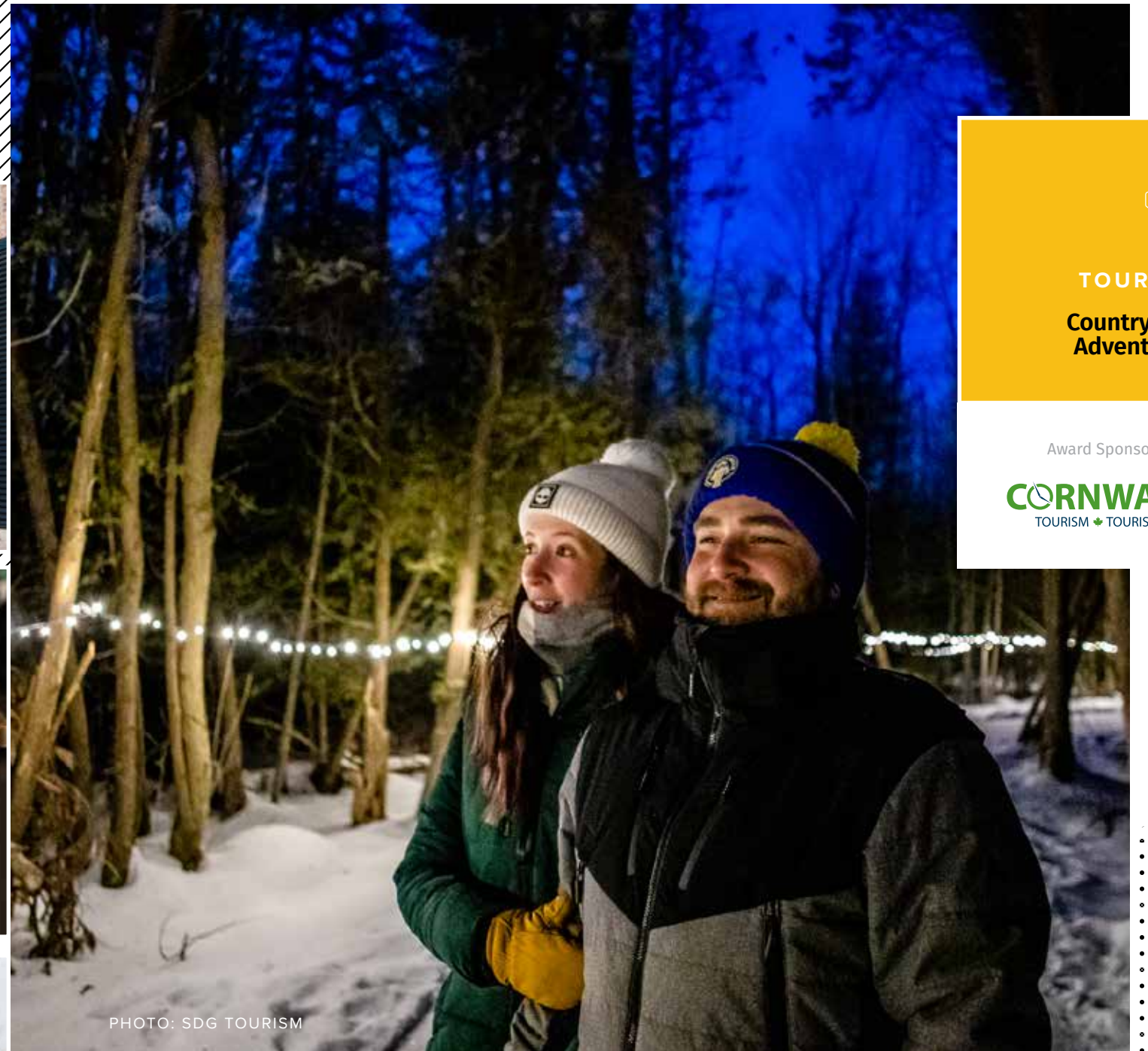


PHOTO: SDG TOURISM

Into the Woods

One man's vision leads to family fun in the great outdoors.



TOURISM
Countryside
Adventures

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In March 2017, Nicolas Seguin bought his 67-acre wooded property in Moose Creek with a vision in mind: To create an enchanting skateway through the forest. It was either that or turn the land into a field for growing crops.

Winter has always been Nicolas's favourite season and his dream idea came from wanting to help others love it too. Even though he was armed with the land and an idea, he wasn't sure the township would approve a required zoning change for his recreation destination, but he was hopeful.

Luckily, his zoning application was successful and that fall, he started selectively clearing the land. Having his logging and excavation company, Total Land Clearing, made creating his skating trail, if not easy, then at least financially viable. First he felled trees to make way for the trail, then flooded the base every time it dipped below -5 degrees. To turn his vision into a reality, he maintained a work schedule of 14-hour days, 7 days a week.

Countryside Adventures opened to the public in January 2018. That first season, with the three-kilometre skating trail complete, Countryside Adventures welcomed about 2,500 visitors.

In the 2020-21 season, when lockdowns meant that family and friends couldn't gather in homes, the outdoor getaway provided the perfect back-

drop for connection. Word of mouth (augmented by social media) spread and people were thrilled to be together enjoying the outdoors. That winter, visitor numbers topped 25,000. In the winter of 2021-22, despite a frigid January, Countryside Adventures saw similar numbers.

"I'm a really big family person," says the 34-year-old father of one who still gathers with relatives at his grandmother's house for supper every Sunday. In creating Countryside Adventures, Nicolas envisioned a place that would bring family and friends together, and the company's success makes him happy. "It feels good to see the kids having a blast and everybody having a good time, laughing and enjoying themselves."

Nicolas has made continuous improvements since opening Countryside Adventures. He now has 20 employees, and in addition to skating, winter visitors can go tubing and snowshoeing. He's added summer attractions as well: archery, axe throwing, fishing, and watercraft rentals for the pond he created. And he shows no signs of slowing down. Maple syrup production, summer cabin rentals, ice fishing, and an expanded tubing hill are all in the works for next year.

“It feels good to see the kids having a blast and everybody having a good time.”

Countryside Adventures is not only giving locals a reason to stay close to home but is also drawing tourists that would normally travel to the Ottawa Canal. The fire pits, food truck, nighttime lighting, ample parking, and the service with a smile—these things all contribute to the special lure of the place. Plus, “They say the ice is always better than the canal,” says Nicolas. “And it's really cold on the canal because it's open. There's barely any wind in the forest.”

People come all the way from Kingston, Brockville, Montreal, and New York, some of them regulars with season passes. When asked if he ever thought his business would be such a popular attraction, he responds with a sincere, “Not this popular, no.”

For Nicolas, days start well before sunrise and can end as late as midnight. In between, he sharpens skates, puts wood on the fire, hands out rentals, and fields about 150 emails and messages. The intensity of his business means sacrifices, especially in the winter season, but it's worth it to him. After all, great rewards come to those who blaze their own trail.

countrysideadventures.ca

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ABOVE +
BEYOND

Friends With Hearts

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MNP

Making Magic

Something special happens when good friends come together to spark joy.

Ten years ago, Amberly Coulter moved to Cornwall to put down new roots with her family. She not only brought the necessities for her new home but also all the positive experiences gleaned from working with Friends With Hearts Hamilton, a community “that works together to restore the magic of Christmas for families in need.”

After settling into her new city, Amberly turned to her good friend, Justine Viray-Levac, to start up a local chapter, Friends With Hearts Cornwall. The dynamic duo modified the FWH model to meet local needs and in 2014, approached Baldwin House to sponsor Christmas gifts for two families who were starting new lives.

Donations from local residents exceeded the pair’s expectations, and they needed to call in friends to help them wrap all the gifts. For Amberly, providing a special Christmas for people in difficult times was a cause dear to her heart.

“I wanted those kids to wake up [on Christmas morning] and know that their lives were going to be okay.”

In 2016, inspired by FWH’s good deeds, Christie Hollingsworth joined Amberly and Justine in their quest to help more and more families. (Christie had previously worked with Amberly

on the Cornwall Princess Project, an initiative that provided pre-loved prom dresses and shoes to young women in the community.)

By early 2020, 15 families had benefited from gifts and goods from FWH. And then...the pandemic changed everything. Shelters were no longer able to take in new clients, nor could they accept donations from the public. Simultaneously, residents at long-term care facilities were restricted from having regular visitors.

It was time to shift FWH’s focus. Amberly and Christie, veterans in health-care settings, understood what needed to be done. With Justine in agreement, they decided to sponsor the residents of St. Joseph’s Continuing Care Centre that year (and also in 2021).

Last year, the trio gathered recommendations from nursing staff and put together a resident wish list: one needed a new nightie, another one loved music, and another coveted costume jewellery.

“Small things that you wouldn’t think would matter, really do matter,” says Justine.



Small things that you wouldn’t think would matter, really do matter.”

When the call went out to the citizens of Cornwall and area, they rallied and made more than 1,000 donations. This generosity allowed FWH, with the help of many volunteers, to present gift bags to 208 St. Joe’s residents and 53 Sandfield Place residents. They were also able to donate many items to Riverview Manor, a community living facility, and Baldwin House.

FWH is headed by passionate women and masters of efficiency. They all work full-time jobs—Amberly works as a nurse for the Cornwall Community Hospital, Justine is an assistant coordinator for the Eastern Ontario Training Board, and Christie is the office manager for iA Private Wealth. To top it all off, they are each raising young families. But as Christie explains, “As long as you want to do it and you feel good about it, you find the time.”

They agree they don’t do this work for the recognition. They do it because they believe, as Amberly says, “That spark, that happiness, that little thoughtful thing can change anyone’s day and give hope.”

FWHCornwall





ENTREPRENEUR
OF THE YEAR

Ian Bentley

Award Sponsor



(Un)Arrested Development

It took a heart attack, a decision, and two decades of experience to bring the party to town.

As he lay in the hospital listening to the beeping of his heart monitor in November 2020, Ian Bentley took time to think. He was a 45-year-old heart attack survivor who had spent more than 20 years building an impressive career in the hospitality industry working for big hitters like Fairmont, Delta, and Park Hyatt. Plus a six-year stint as Food and Beverage Director of the NAV Centre in Cornwall that ended abruptly when COVID-19 arrived.

Though his heart attack had threatened Ian's life, it didn't put an end to his ambition.

"Everything I'd ever done was for somebody else. It was time to do what I was passionate about and to tap into all the industry connections I'd made," explains Ian.

Though Ian had established Bentley Hospitality—a full-service events consulting company—he wanted to host his own events, too. The idea for the Craft Shack took hold.

Once he recovered, Ian outfitted a mobile trailer with beer taps, refrigeration, and all the necessary items to throw a party. That part was fun, but the next part—putting together large events—had the potential to be stressful. Wasn't that precisely what he wanted to escape?

The difference lay in the process.

"I was in control," Ian says. "I could decide how much I wanted to do and at what speed. I could prioritize my kids, my wife, and my health. That was never an option before."

What grew out of Ian's idea was not only a major lifeline for him but also for many others. At a time when public health restrictions put a damper on our spirits, Ian launched the first Summer Social on Canada Day weekend. The four-day craft beer and music festival at Pointe Maligne was the first real gathering for the community.

"Going ahead seemed like the stupidest idea because with the restrictions, I could only let in 25 people at any one time," he remembers. "But in the end, we had a rotating door of people who wanted to try the best craft beer in Ontario and enjoy sitting on the banks of the St. Lawrence."

This success gave him the energy to keep going. He set up another seven events in 2021, and people flocked to attend. Ian estimates close to 4,000 people came through his gates; a quarter of whom were out-of-towners.

When winter came, Ian moved his gatherings to an indoor space, the

Craft Shack Hideout. Then opportunity came knocking, and he felt compelled to answer.

Early this year, Weaving Baskets Group (see p. 34) made Ian an offer he couldn't refuse and he signed on with the company as the Director of Hospitality. He will oversee the development of food, drink, and entertainment opportunities including a reimagining of the Cornwall Square, one of the landmark properties acquired in 2021 by WBG.

"I'm stoked," he says. "We're going to turn it into a hustling and bustling food and beverage hub with a Craft Shack component."

Ian is adamant that his role is to complement the existing businesses downtown. He can already envision people coming to the downtown core for a full night out—to eat, to drink, to shop, to take in a concert.

After everything he's been through and everything he's built, he once again finds himself in a position to develop something incredible and new. Ian has proven that you should always follow your heart.

bentleyhospitality.ca



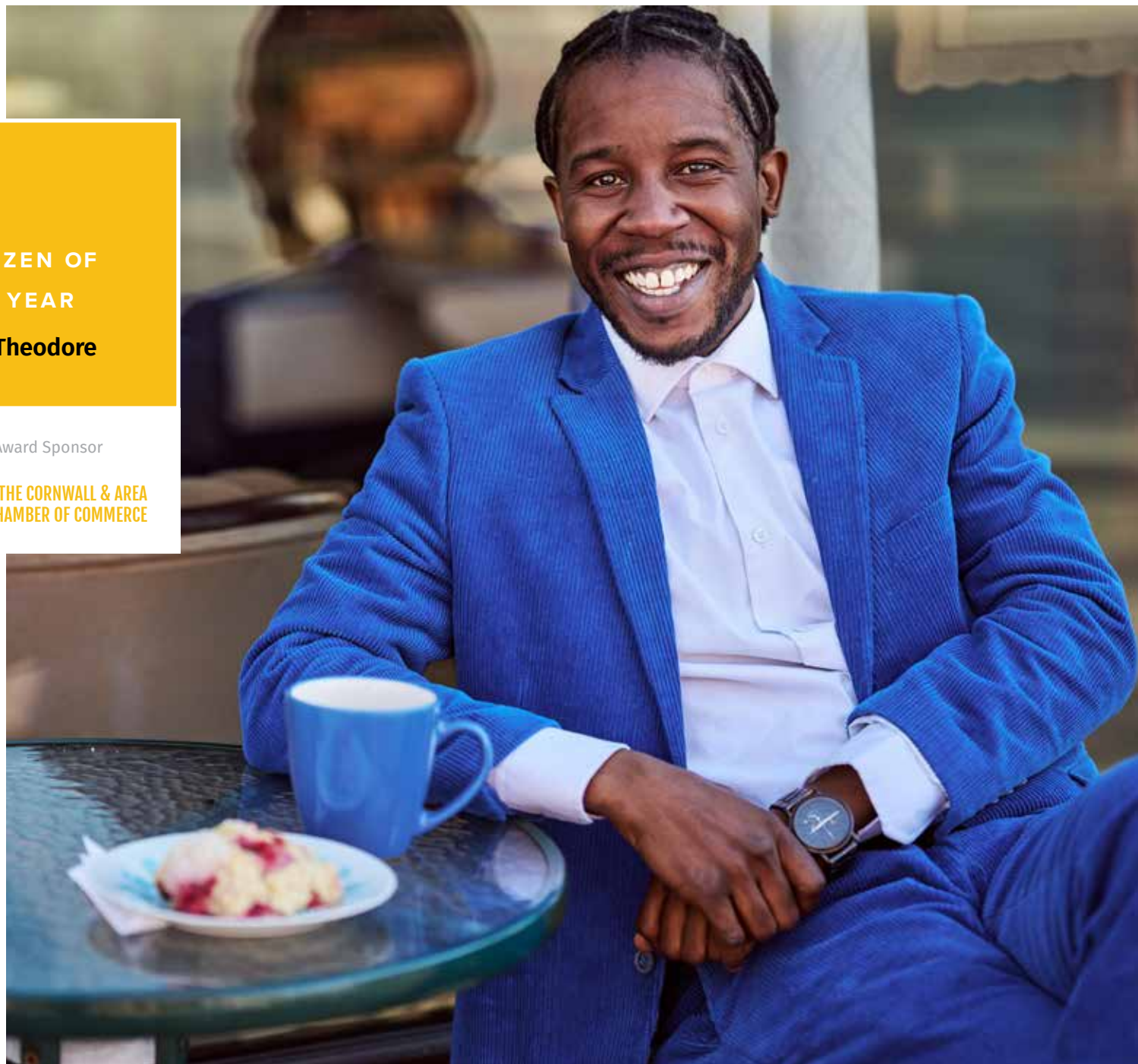


CITIZEN OF
THE YEAR

Lee Theodore

Award Sponsor

THE CORNWALL & AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Out There

When being seen and heard takes on
a new significance.

Several years ago, at a food security working group meeting, Lee Theodore was asked to introduce himself.

“I’m a mover, a shaker, a community builder,” he said.

This bold statement reflects Lee’s approach to life. Despite describing himself as an introvert, this 36-year-old has become a public figure, tirelessly working toward bettering the community. It’s common to see him energizing the crowd at Art Walk, respectfully moderating difficult yet necessary conversations on social media, connecting community leaders, fundraising for nonprofits, engaging audiences as a guest speaker, working toward climate change awareness and action, and encouraging donations of clothing for refugees. Lee may not be formally attached to any specific organizations or any singular cause, but he does support as many causes as he humanly can.

“I know that I’m not meant or able to solve all problems everywhere,” he says. “But I have to enter into the arena and try to address it to the best of my ability.”

“

I know that I’m not meant or able to solve all problems everywhere. But I have to enter into the arena and try to address it to the best of my ability.”

not walked into before,” he says. “I need to be there so that others might consider occupying that space too. As we move forward as a community, we’ll make room for different ideas and people who are different.”

Lee admits he has never taken a prescribed path. He didn’t grow up in one place, go to one school, or work toward one singular career.

“In so far as just picking up and moving around, that is just my reality,” he says. “I live my life on my own terms.”

More than anything, Lee wants to continue “facilitating conversations and

When there is a call to help, Lee feels compelled to jump in. He calls it an “opportunity of the moment,” a chance to contribute his ideas and his energy to unique challenges.

What he also brings to the table is something that many ignore. In a world of stereotypes and historical negationism, and in the absence of representation, Lee understands that he plays the role of an ambassador.

“I’m aware that often I’m walking into situations other Black people have

not walked into before,” he says. “I need to be there so that others might consider occupying that space too. As we move forward as a community, we’ll make room for different ideas and people who are different.”

Lee admits he has never taken a prescribed path. He didn’t grow up in one place, go to one school, or work toward one singular career.

“In so far as just picking up and moving around, that is just my reality,” he says. “I live my life on my own terms.”

More than anything, Lee wants to continue “facilitating conversations and

connecting people.” Co-founding The Spicy Pearl with Roger Caron in 2019 played into his dreams of introducing patrons to authentic Caribbean food, but more so of giving them a space to discuss diversity, inclusion, and racism.

It turns out that Lee’s vision was spot on. After facilitating an introduction between newcomer Stacy Ottley and local lawyer Michele Allinotte, the pair mobilized with others and founded the Coalition for Unity, Respect & Equity/Equality for All (CUREA). But he takes no credit for the establishment of this racial justice and educational organization.

“Honestly, I just put two people in a room and trusted them to do the things they need to do,” he says. “And now I’m so relieved that they are taking on some of the heavy lifting, answering questions people in the community might have, and creating resources. And do you know what that does for Black people like me? It gives us a moment to exhale.”

And though organizations and allies take some of the burden off Lee’s shoulders, his work will never be done. In his mind—and his heart—there is still so much to do.



LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT

Allan Wilson

Award Sponsor



For Allan Wilson, a good life is measured by the depth of one's relationships and service to others.

The 57-year-old husband, father, grandfather, retired funeral home owner and director, OPP Auxiliary sergeant, and Knights of Columbus member has had many opportunities to build bonds with family, friends, and his beloved community.

"When I was 19, I worked for a man who was so involved in so many things and I thought, 'How does he find the time to do all this stuff? It's impossible!' But as I grew older, I somehow found my own way."

Despite 60- to 80-hour work weeks at Wilson Funeral Home—the business his father started in 1976 and that he and his wife, Bonnie, took over officially in 2007—Allan always found the time to be of service to others outside of work.

"My father told me that 'You never take out of the community more than you put in.' That really stuck with me," he explains. "I think it's our responsibility to give back in whatever capacity we can. If we can't give financially, then we give our time, or we give our heart."

Along with his five sisters, Allan started working at the funeral home when he was 12, decorating, vacuuming, dusting, sweeping the parking lot, and doing "whatever we could do as kids." Over the many years of working side by side, he witnessed how his father treated everyone—from grieving families to employees—with compassion and care. Allan followed his lead.

"In this line of work, in the dark moments of a person's life, you get really involved. It's so much more than a transaction," he says. "From our time together, relationships and even friendships grow."

Allan easily expresses pride in the connections he made with patrons, but he is most honoured by the dedication and passion of his employees.

"We had good people, and they were like family. We may have been the face of the business, but they were very involved. Wilson Funeral Home grew because they helped us get there."

The acquisition of Boulerville Funeral Home in November 2015 led to the



I think
it's our
responsibility
to give back
in whatever
capacity
we can."

company doubling in size, not to mention a Small Business of the Year Award from the Chamber of Commerce. Despite the success and the growth, Allan had his sights set on retirement.

"This work takes a toll on you, physically and mentally," he says. "I was already tired and retiring was on my radar."

He remembers going home almost five years later, in December 2019, and saying to Bonnie,

"That's it. I'm done." He picked up the phone and a month later, signed a deal to hand over the keys to new owners Alistair and Katherine McDonald.

In the two years since he closed a major chapter in his life, Allan has, for once, taken some time for himself with "no timelines and no expectation of what will happen next."

But his days are not spent on the couch. He continues to volunteer for the OPP Auxiliary, took on a casual position for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, and enjoys spending lots of time with his grandchildren.

"I like to say that I may have a few dull moments, but I never have dull days."

Making the Connections

When service to a community
is not only a duty but also a pleasure.



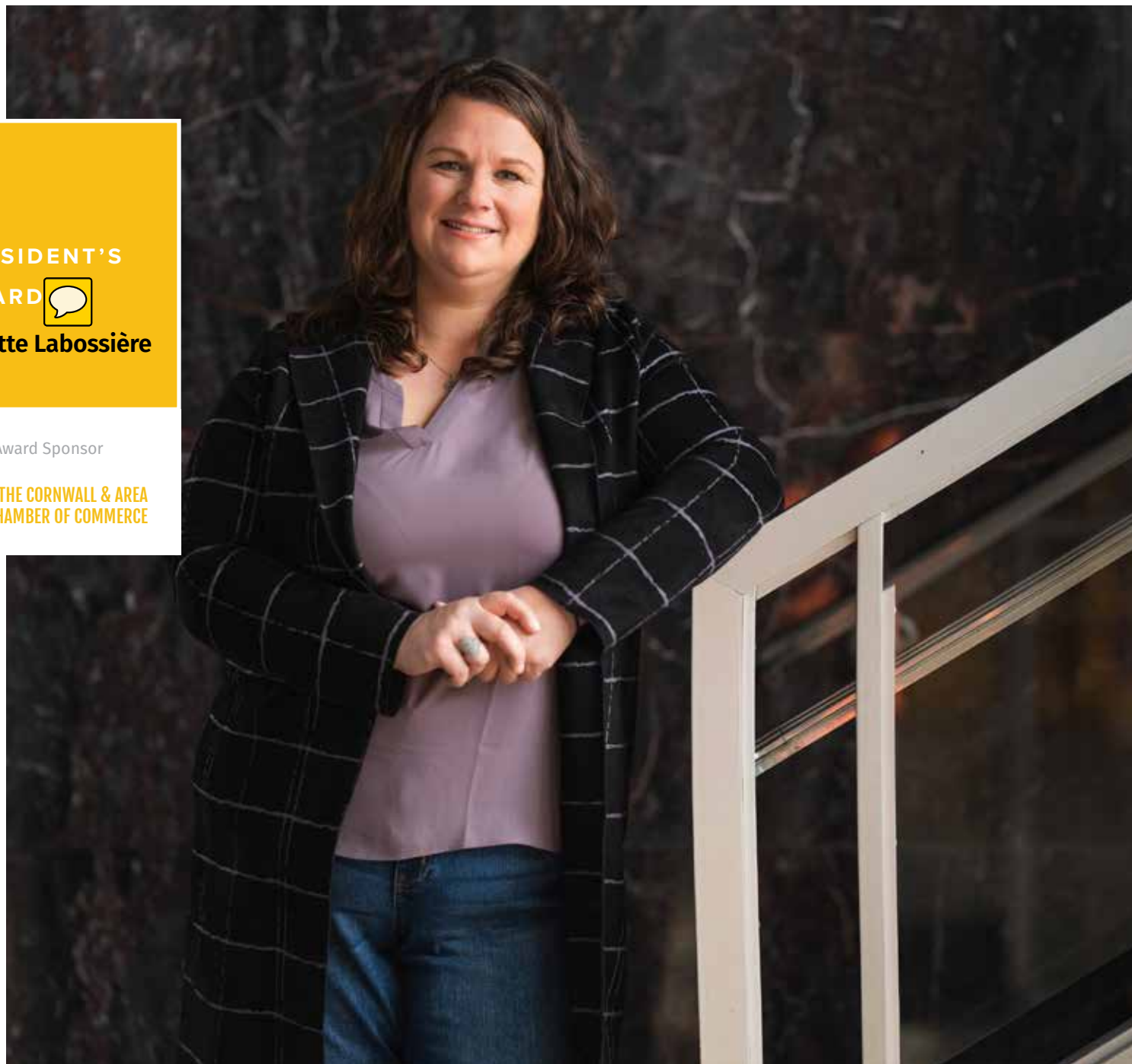
PRESIDENT'S
AWARD



Juliette Labossière

Award Sponsor

THE CORNWALL & AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Note: The President's Award is conferred on a person working in the nonprofit sector who dedicates themselves wholeheartedly to their work and exceeds the expectations of their position.

If there were Coles Notes for Juliette Labossière's earlier working life, they would go something like this: She received her bachelor's degree in international studies at Trent University, worked on an access-to-water community project in Ghana, taught English in Korea, worked for Katimavik in Fort Albany First Nation, and headed up a collaborative working table in Laval that tackled the region's social ills. For the past three years, she has skillfully helmed the United Way/Centraide of SD&G.

In 2021 and 2022, the United Way supported 16 local agencies, including Boys & Girls Club of Cornwall, Centre 105, Bereaved Families of Ontario, and Diversity Cornwall, to name a few. The total investment in the community was \$352,000, an increase of \$15,000 over the previous year.

For Juliette though—as for her organization—there is more to her work than agency funding. She knows it's possible to live up to the United Way's mission of improving lives and building community—when you pull in help from the right people.

"We have to ask ourselves, 'What do we need to do and how can everybody play a role around that one issue?'" she



We have to ask ourselves, 'What do we need to do and how can everybody play a role around that one issue?'"

needs and create actionable plans to address them. By June 2021, the council had distributed five rounds of emergency food hampers to more than 1,600 households per round. Grocery gift card distribution started in September 2021 and has continued into 2022.

Juliette also managed and disbursed a federal COVID-19 Emergency Fund with careful consideration. In total, \$762,967.88 was distributed into the community, funding 33 organizations and 58 programs. The program that stands out the most for Juliette is the Last Resort Fund.

"It was for people working paycheck to paycheck who faced a crisis and

says. "I feel like my job is to knit. This community is full of beautiful strands of ideas and passions. I can choose from those and knit us into that fabric that has to exist to support our communities."

Juliette, 43, continues to power through the pandemic by knitting a lot. In 2020, she led the United Way to partner with the Social Development Council (SDC) and establish the Regional Emergency and Strategic Response Council, made up of 20 regional agencies and service clubs. They have come together to define the community's most urgent

had a shortfall of money," she says. "Maybe they had to pay for a funeral or a new roof and then couldn't afford their electric bill. We helped a woman get her power back seven months after it was cut off. She just couldn't make ends meet."

After seeing the dire need for this type of help and "burning through that fund so fast," Juliette looked at the data and realized that 60% of the people didn't need a handout but a hand up. So she started laying the groundwork for the region's first-ever microloan project.

"We might hand someone \$2,000 and they'll have two years to pay it back with 2% interest. When one loan is paid off, we can take that money and help somebody else."

There's no doubt Juliette is passionate and devoted to filling the real needs in the community.

"I know I've had an excessively privileged lifestyle but not one without challenges as a single mom," she says. "I come to my work from a place of empathy, of imagining what it would be like if I didn't have what I have."

And what she has is two beautiful sons, an incredibly loyal support system of family and friends, a job leading an indispensable organization—and a community who that is more than willing to follow her lead.

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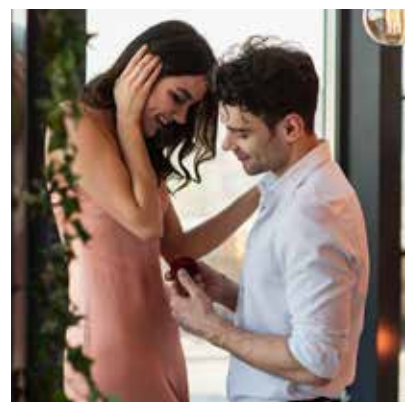
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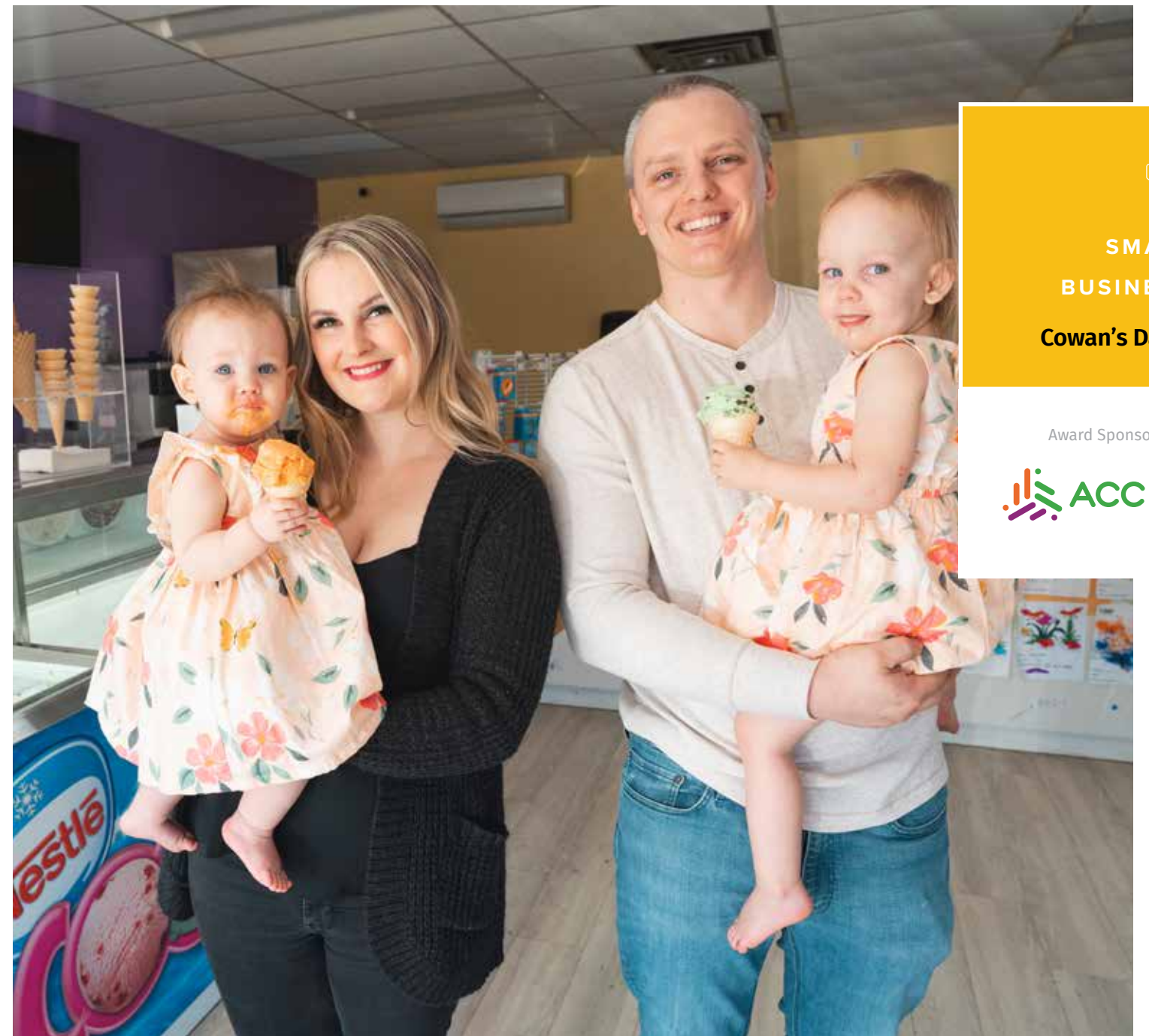
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**SMALL
BUSINESS**

Cowan's Dairy

Award Sponsor



The Big Scoop

A young family brings sweet treats—and more—to the community.

When Summer and Joel Stang set their sights on making Cowan's Dairy the place to be in Cornwall for ice cream treats and homemade sweets, they had no idea the impact they would have on the community—with far more than just desserts.

Summer moved to Cornwall in 2015, when she was just 18, to manage the new ice cream store and the adjoining business, Captain George's Fish & Chips. During the store renovations, a particular electrician caught Summer's eye. It was sweet serendipity, and a few years later, Summer and Joel were married. In March 2019, the newlyweds took over ownership of both businesses.

Summer always knew she wanted to be an entrepreneur. "As soon as I took over the store, I felt like there was an opportunity to do new things," she says. "As an owner, I was even more motivated to do them." At Joel's request, she tried making Cadbury Creme Egg fudge and posted a picture on Facebook. The post was widely popular and due to the added exposure, they shipped Creme Egg fudge all over the country. "It was crazy," says Summer.

Seeing this success lit a fire in her belly and showed her the potential in the business. "More than ever, I felt that opportunity to grow."

One happy year into this journey of growth, the pandemic crept into collective reality. Summer had the same thought as many small business owners: What would they do to keep their doors open? How would they keep their staff employed? What reason would compel people to buy from them?

It took a stroke of brilliance, a pivot, and lots of hard work for Cowan's to become a community lifeline. Their idea was a smart one: Meat and grocery suppliers had overstock that they no longer could offload to closed restaurants and schools, so Cowan's opened up their supply chain to their customers at a minimal markup. Since grocery stores were often out of products and many people weren't comfortable going into stores at all, the idea took off like wildfire.

Using Facebook, Summer communicated their product and price list to their customers,

"We can get you a five-kilogram box of chicken for \$50. The best chicken you'll ever eat, and the best price you'll ever pay." Steak, ground beef, bacon, lobster tails, cheese—whatever

Cowan's could get from their suppliers. People jumped at the opportunity to get restaurant-quality products at great prices. There were days they sold 250 steaks, over 1000 pounds of fresh chicken breast, and 300 pounds of bacon.

The feedback? "People were so grateful."

Sweet treats are still Cowan's raison d'être though. The lineups and awards for best ice cream, best cakes, and best dessert attest to this.

Though grocery items are no longer offered regularly, Summer knows that her responsiveness to the community is truly what makes their business special. "If we have a customer who wants the chicken that they love, I'll forever order it in." Isn't that sweet?

cowansdairycornwall.com

“As soon as I took over the store, I felt like there was an opportunity to do new things.”



LARGE
BUSINESS

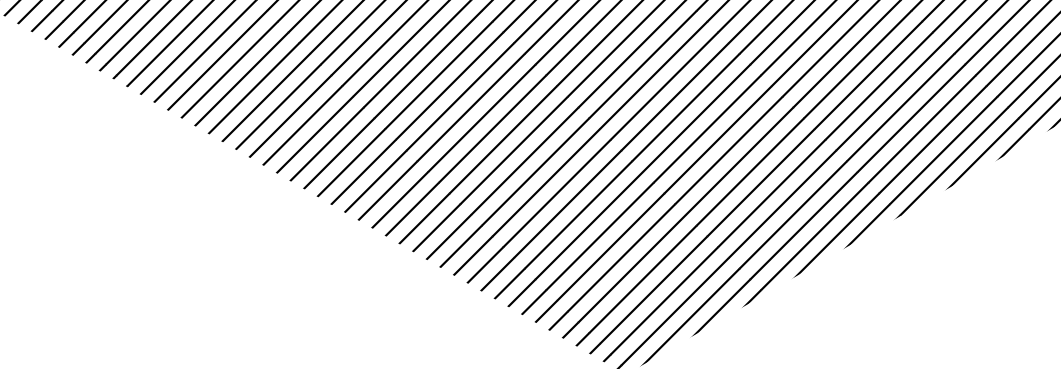
Cornwall
Roof Truss

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McDougall 75 YEARS

Raising the Roof

A Cornwall company thrives as it keeps up with the housing boom.



Whether he's driving around Cornwall or the countryside, Luc Lebrun always has his eyes open for new construction. Specifically, he's looking for houses, sheds, and barns that use materials from his company, Cornwall Roof Truss (CRT).

"The most rewarding thing is seeing a project going up and knowing that you're a part of it," he says.

With the help of his 40 employees, the business designs and manufactures engineered trusses and joists to support floors and roofs.

"Over the last six, seven years or so, things have been going very well," says Luc. "It's been very fast growth in the last few years."

It wasn't always this way.

When Fernand Lebrun retired from Multi Doors & Windows in 2010, he took over ownership of CRT with Luc, his son. The business was on life support but managed to keep some of the staff, and together they spent the first five years rebuilding their processes and equipment, everything from the

saws to the assembly tables to the trucks and trailers.

In 2018, Luc became the sole owner and president, and Fern stayed on as the director, overseeing operations. When the pandemic hit—and everyone wanted to renovate and expand their homes—business exploded. CRT's business doubled in 2020, then tripled in 2021, and is on track to double again in 2022.

CRT is doing everything it can to keep up with demand as builders double the number of houses they usually put up in a year. They added another 7,000 square feet to their warehouse for a total of 16,500, brought in a laser system that makes their builds more accurate and efficient, and purchased the lot next door to allow for more storage and less "ship as we build."

Despite the growth in terms of production, there's no doubt that material shortages have made Luc's job harder. He's been forced to travel out west, to the Maritimes, and even to South Carolina in search of materials to build his trusses and joists.

He's also chosen to stay loyal to local customers by making sure he can supply what they need. That meant narrowing their geographical area to Cornwall and SD&G with a radius of about 80 kilometres; pre-pandemic his projects were as far as Ottawa and Gatineau.

"We wanted to be able to keep honouring and filling orders from local customers," he says. "I've always believed in long-term relationships with them. It's really been amazing to deal with everyone in town. They're by far the easiest people to work with."

Luc commends the whole local building industry for rising to the challenge of increased demand. Without CRT, the housing landscape would surely look very different, too.

"It's really fantastic to see how much energy everybody brings to this housing boom," Luc says. "I count myself very lucky to be able to help out and supply as many builders as possible."

cornwallrooftruss.com



The most rewarding thing is seeing a project going up and knowing that you're a part of it."



COMMUNITY
IMPACT

Tri-County
Literacy Council

Award Sponsor



On a Roll

A community-based organization provides training and inspiration through life's twists and turns.



“What we really push here is essential skills.”

Dina McGowan likes to tell people she’s “probably one of the happiest teachers you’ll ever meet.” As the Executive Director of the Tri-County Literacy Council (TCLC) for the past 35 years, she’s played an important part in leading the agency’s mandate to provide literacy instruction based on essential skills training. Tutoring, assessment, curriculum writing, lecturing, recruiting—she and her team of 10 staff and ~100 volunteers have done it all.

Though the word “literacy” appears in the agency’s name, literacy training isn’t a full representation of their scope of work.

“What we really push here is essential skills,” says Dina. And those essential skills align with needs in the labour market.

TCLC responds quickly to market needs because the organization does its research ahead of time, finding the gaps and preparing curricula to fill them. As an example, they’ve offered training for jobs in the service industry, childcare, and healthcare, all sectors that have seen labour shortages exacerbated by the pandemic. And when the need arose, the organization deftly pivoted to online training, creating programs for everything

from online job interviews to mental gymnastics. One of their programs—Tablet Training for Seniors—has even been adopted by various organizations across Canada and even as far away as the Netherlands.

All services and training at TCLC are completely free and available to adults 18 years and over. Classrooms are managed by qualified teachers who have been trained to ease the path for people who may have been disappointed by their previous school experience. Really, it’s a kinder, gentler way of educating those who, says Dina, “Come forward, identify a need, and do something about it that can impact their entire life and perhaps the community as a whole.”

Pre-dating the pandemic, the Canadian Trucking Alliance described a “cataclysmic shortage in the trucking industry.” Forecasts showed a shortage of 34,000 to 48,000 truck drivers by 2024. So when the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development contacted Dina in 2020 to help promote the sector as an exciting and viable employment option for women and youth, she and her team jumped in the driver’s seat. They created a bilingual awareness program aptly called “Take The Wheel/Prenez le volant.” Imple-

mented in 2021, their compelling marketing campaign blanketed the region with recruitment events, flyers, swag, truck decals, and video.

Dina is quick to herald this accomplishment. She has seen one of the biggest gains locally with Second Career, an Ontario government initiative that offers skills training and financial support for eligible laid-off workers.

“People have been opting for truck driving,” she says. While there’s no data confirming the Take The Wheel program contributed to the increased interest in this career path, it seems likely.

With reason, Dina and her team at TCLC are proud. “It’s one of our biggest and most successful ventures, not just in 2021, but ever.”

While the program is scheduled to gear down this September, Tri-County Literacy Council will continue to identify the needs of the community, build curricula for vocational training courses and continue to assist with skills upgrading and continuous learning. That’s what you call a driving force.

tricountyliteracycouncil.wordpress.com



ECONOMIC IMPACT

Weaving Baskets Group

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Doubling Down

What happens when a development group
buys Cornwall's biggest anchor property?



When Cornwall Square was originally developed at 1 Water Street in 1979, it was heralded as a key piece of the city's urban renewal efforts. The indoor mall was exciting and served as a one-stop shop with about 50 retailers including anchor tenants, Steinberg's and Sears. It's estimated that more than 20,000 people showed up on opening day.

Fast forward 40 years. Cornwall Square was no longer a shining beacon of shopping. Many of the retail spaces were empty, and promises of revitalization by mall owners never came to fruition.

In 2021, local development company Weaving Baskets Group (WBG) took over ownership of the nine-acre site and 250,000 square feet of rentable space. "The Square" was a "must-have" for the growing company, according to Tom Hughes, WBG's vice president.

"There's nothing else like it around here. We knew we could do great things with it."

Many had never heard the name "Weaving Baskets Group" until the sale of the monolith at the base of Pitt Street. But in truth, the company has

been consistently investing in real estate since its founding in 2013.

Their portfolio now includes more than a million square feet of commercial space, and the group intends to double that in the next five years. In 2021 alone, WBG had several other impressive projects on the go. WB Hub opened as a gorgeous, waterfront-facing co-working space at 703 and 705 Cotton Mill Street. Their redeveloped Seaway Centre at 1400 Vincent Massey Drive welcomed Fines Home Hardware into the former Kmart space; further investment will improve the facade on the north-side building. And permits have been secured to turn the former St. Gabriel's Catholic Elementary into a 17-unit apartment building.

WBG is definitely in an aggressive expansion phase.

"[Our] focus is on purchasing and developing properties that will make a difference to the residents of Cornwall, Akwesasne, and SD&G," says Tom. "We know we can help fill the need for housing, retail, entertainment, or food and beverage."

To prove how much the company is invested in the betterment and growth of the community (not to mention the success of the company), Tom lists off their latest hires, all locals. Ian Bentley (see p. 24) has been hired on as Director of Hospitality. Taylor Fitzpatrick is the Construction Manager for their new residential real estate division. Luc McCabe joins them as Executive Chef. Dale Allen is the new Director of Business Development. Tracy Bissonette serves as Community Coordinator at WB Hub. Tom expects to add another 10 to 12 new hires to his team this year alone.

Though he always has his mind on the big picture, Tom can't hide his enthusiasm for the redevelopment of Cornwall Square.

"We see the former Sears space as a huge attraction," he says. "We have plans for two or three restaurants and entertainment too. The goal is to get people into the mall 12 months of the year."

Those are part of the long-term vision. For now, they are working on attracting new commercial tenants and are focused on driving traffic into the mall with novel draws like pop-up events, a farmers' market, and job fairs. And they're also pushing hard to overhaul the food court as quickly as they can.

"We're not scared to try anything and take a bit of a risk," he says. "We want to send the message that we're different than the average company."

weavingbaskets.ca

“We’re not
scared to try
anything
and take a bit
of a risk”

The 2021 BEA Award



For this year's award for the Citizen of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, and President's Award winners, the Chamber turned to Jordan Thompson, the acclaimed artist behind Mohawk Art & Design. His fine work—pen and ink on antlers, buffalo skulls, canvas, and watercolour paper—mostly reflects the natural world and Indigenous themes.

The three award winners will receive an original print of this piece which represents the history behind our region, an area rich with culture, wildlife, and beauty.

Jordan's portrait of Kateri Tekakwitha, a Catholic saint, has hung in the Vatican for more than a decade.

CJSS and CFLG have made it their mission to not just entertain and inform our community but to connect to it on an emotional level and to inspire people daily.

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